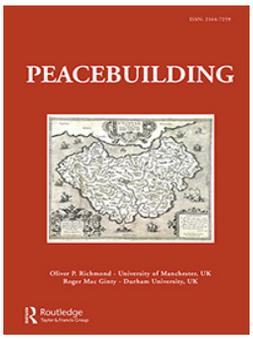

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Imagining national security through the body's organisation: conscientious objectors in South Korea

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ABSTRACT

This article studies how reimagining the body's organisation can also lead to reimagining national security in the context of conscientious objectors to military conscription in South Korea. Despite decades of persecution, they have ceaselessly opposed the almost sacred belief that the military is vital for securing lives. I discuss national security through the body's organisation because both focus on which interests are vital or redundant. To expose a dominant mode of imagining security and provide an alternative, I read and juxtapose the state's and the objectors' texts while considering competing imageries of the organic organisation and the Body without Organs. The juxtaposition shows that while the South Korean state advances the state-centric and militaristic imagery of national security that moulds the individual into the subject of the state, conscientious objectors propose less state-centric and more dynamic national security that preserves human potential to become something else.

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Body; organic organisation; Body without Organs; national security; conscientious objection; South Korea

Introduction

The main objective of this paper is to study how imagining the body's organisation differently can help reimagine state-centric and militarised national security in the context of South Korean conscientious objectors.[1] The objectors often publish an announcement explaining why they refuse military service. Jayoo Kim, a conscientious objector, ends his announcement with the following sentences,

> Why conscientious objectors refuse to be conscripted is very simple. They are urging people to be more imaginative about our society. . . . . Rather than taking things like the military for granted, I believe that the world and our lives can genuinely change when we foster the power to imagine different ways together.[2]

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[1] A conscientious objector to military service is 'an individual who has claimed the right to refuse to perform military service on the grounds of freedom of thought, conscience and/or religion'. See United Nations Human Rights Committee, 'Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief. Framework for communications. Conscientious Objection', (2001).

[2] Jayoo Kim, 'tae-hak-kŏ-pu-e i-ŏ kun-tae-kŏ-pu-e to-chŏn-hap-ni-ta', [Following rejecting the university, I reject the military] World Without War, http://www.withoutwar.org/?p=20918 (accessed November 2, 2023). [in Korean]

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From Kim's remarks, conscientious objectors seem to invoke what Cornelius Castoriadis calls social imageries: creative forces that answer society's fundamental questions, such as 'Who are we as a collective?; What do we want?; What do we desire?; What are we lacking'? Castoriadis argues that answers to these inquiries shape society's identities, aspirations, perceptions of the world, and protocols for interacting with the world.[3] I suggest that such social imageries can operate at the everyday level.

National security is such a social imagery. As David Campbell stated, rather than being a pure reflection of reality, security is a social imagination of what to secure against whom and how.[4] In this respect, security is about imposing hierarchy and priorities. For example, since 1951, South Korea has conscripted all physically eligible males over 18.[5] For over half a century, the South Korean state has imprisoned conscientious objectors in large numbers[6] lest they 'jeopardise the military and, hence, the vital common interest of national security upon which the constitutional rights and freedoms of individuals stand'.[7] The decision indicates that the freedom of conscience is secondary to national security supposedly guaranteed by the uninterrupted continuation of conscription.

Despite persecution, through the public announcements of their intention to refuse conscription in the courtrooms and on the streets, conscientious objectors have consistently voiced their disagreement with the widely held belief that the military ensures security. The objectors' convictions expand beyond pacifism and anti-militarism, as they also mention ecologism, sexual rights, patriarchal masculinity, and personal histories. Notably, the objectors' public announcements reflect how they have come to be in such discord with the society in which they grew up. In this regard, the objectors motivate reflections on the relationship between the individual and the state.

Therefore, this paper also focuses on another social imagery, the body's organisation, because both national security and the body's organisation deal with the relationship between parts (often deemed secondary or dispensible) and the whole (usually considered a priority). Importantly, across societies, the tropes of the bodily organisation have framed the social imageries of whose interests align with the standard or vital interests and whose interests are considered partial or secondary.[8] For example, suppose the South

[3]Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 146–7.

[4]David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 62.

[5]Similar to other countries, in South Korea, conscription has infused society with the culture of militaristic masculinity which idealises the 'able bodied' male conscripts over men unfit or unwilling to engage in combat and women, categorised either as sexualised objects or caring mothers. See Insook Kwon, *Tae-han-min-kuk-ŭn kun-tae-ta* [*The Republic of Korea Is the Military*] (Paju: Cheongnyeonsa, 2005), 65. (in Korean); Ihntaek Hwang, 'Militarising National Security through Criminalisation of Conscientious Objectors to Conscription in South Korea', *Critical Studies on Security* 6, no. 3 (2018): 296–311.

[6]As of 2017, around 19,000 South Korean men have been imprisoned for refusing military service since 1951. Before the Constitutional Court's 2018 decision to introduce unarmed civilian service, each year, around 600 South Korean men were indicted and sentenced to 18 months in prison for refusing to serve in the military. Dong-Chul Kim, 'Ch'ŏm-ye-han non-lan yang-sim-chŏk pyŏng-yŏk-kŏ-pu … kuk-che-chŏk ch'u-se-nŭn? [Sharp controversy "conscientious objection"…What is the international trend?]', *Yonhap News Agency*, October 7, 2017. (in Korean)

[7]Constitutional Court of Korea, 'The Constitutional Appeal against the Military Service Law Article 88 Section 1 Clause 1. The Constitutional Court's Decision Case, 2002heonga1', (2004); Constitutional Court of Korea, 'The Constitutional Appeal against the Military Service Law Article 88 Section 1 Clause 1. The Constitutional Court's Decision Case, 2008heonga22', (2011).

[8]See Shigehisa Kuriyama, *The Expressiveness of the Body and the Divergence of Greek and Chinese Medicine: Muscularity and identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 161; Paul U. Unschuld, *What Is Medicine?* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1999), 187; and Taejin Kim, 'Body Politic and Governmentality in Modern Japan: Constructing Meiji Constitution and Metaphor of Body', *The Review of Korean and Asian Political Thoughts* 16, no.1 (2017): 255–85.

Korean state is imagined through the body's hierarchical organisation of organs. In that case, it may become reasonable for the state to prioritise only particular lives in the name of national survival and deem other lives redundant. To disrupt dominant imageries of bodily organisation, I bring up what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari termed the organic organisation and the Body without Organs.[9] The former assumes a more hierarchical relationship, and the latter assumes a more dynamic relationship between the parts and the whole. In this regard, this paper engages the millennia-old but still influential tradition of body politic.[10]

I collected two types of material through online archival search and fieldwork in South Korea. The first is the South Korean state's narratives on conscientious objection. The South Korean Constitutional Court decided on conscientious objection in 2004, 2011, and 2018. I also consulted the objectors' experiences with applying for the alternative service, which appears in the blog posts, brochures, and interviews of the objectors. The second is the narratives by South Korean conscientious objectors. World Without War, the most prominent non-religious anti-militarist and pacifist NGO in South Korea, has kept good records of many conscientious objectors since the beginning of the 2000s. I consulted two books published by the NGO, which altogether convey 83 public announcements by the objectors from 2001 to 2014.[11] I also collected 92 posts published on the NGO's website which include public announcements, prison letters, essays, and news interviews produced by the objectors. I limit my research materials to those produced after 2001 because conscientious objection has been widely considered a political rights issue rather than an exclusively religious issue from the 2000s. Most research materials were available online or had already been published. However, I conducted three fieldwork from 2019 to 2021, during which I introduced myself, bonded with World Without War's activists, and familiarised myself to the objectors' activities by attending their events and trials.

Regarding the analytic method, I follow Michael Shapiro's recommendation on discussing subjects, such as South Korean conscientious objectors, that encourage reflections on the prevailing conditions of imagining the world.[12] First, I devise competing conceptual frames of knowing: the organic organisation and the Body without Organs. Then, I read the materials through the frames, producing two competing readings. I read the South Korean court decisions and other relevant government records in light of the ideas on the organic organisation. Then, I read the announcements of South Korean conscientious objectors while considering the ideas on the Body without Organs. When reading, I emphasise what position the reading can reinforce rather than figuring out the explicit or underlying meaning of the material. Last, I juxtapose the two readings to stage a disruptive encounter that exposes and challenges the familiar ways of imagining the body's organisation and security.

[9]Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2005), 4.
[10]Body politic (without 's') is likening a state, nation, or collective to an organic body. Body politics (with 's') denotes politics that operates through managing or governing organic bodies. Creation myths across ancient societies commonly tell the story of how the world is borne out of a single body.
[11]*We Refuse Military* (2014) and *People Who Won't Hold Guns* (2008).
[12]Michael J. Shapiro, *Studies in Trans-Disciplinary Method* (New York: Routledge 2013), xv.

The juxtaposition reveals that South Korean conscientious objectors' narratives depict a more open and less hierarchical relationship between the part and the whole, preserving individuals' potential to become something else other than the subjects of the state. Therefore, the objectors' narratives provide resources for imagining less state-centric and more dynamic security, conducive to transforming an antagonistic conflict environment. Meanwhile, the South Korean state advocates the everyday imagery of a more hierarchical relationship between the commanding head and the limbs and organs that obey. Thus, the state advances the state-centric and militaristic imagery of national security that renders individuals subjects of the state.

Regarding the body politic, this paper exposes a dominant mode of imagining security and provides an alternative. Over 30 years ago, Richard Ashley prompted his readers to problematise the embodied figure through which the state represents itself domestically and internationally.[13] Cynthia Weber queers this figure to destabilise the state's identities.[14] Building on Ashley and Weber, this paper sophisticates the study of this figure through bodily organisation. The bodily organisation is significant because it is an everyday imagery about the individual body that can shape imageries of the body politic. For example, I introduce Deleuze and Guattari's competing imageries of the bodily organisation, the organic organisation and the Body without Organs to open space for reimagining the security of the South Korean body politic.

Also, previous literature on conscientious objection has focused on how conscientious objectors around the world tend to disrupt masculinised citizenship, subordination of the feminine, and belief in just wars through resisting conscription or certain types of warfare.[15] However, inspired by conflict transformation literature,[16] this paper is interested in how South Korean conscientious objectors' personal stories, read through the Body without Organs, can provide resources for a longer-term, everyday level transformation of the discourse, culture, and institution which has reproduced state-centric and militaristic imagery of security. Notably, given that militarism and politics that erode democracy in the name of survival or just war thrive through non-elite and lived experiences,[17]

[13]Richard K. Ashley, 'Living on Border Lines: Man, Poststructuralism and War', in *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*, ed. James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro (Lanham: Lexington Books, 1989), 261.

[14]Cynthia Weber, *Queer International Relations: Sovereignty, Sexuality and the Will to Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[15]Merav Perez and Orna Sasson-Levy, 'Avoiding Military Service in a Militaristic Society: A Chronicle of Resistance to Hegemonic Masculinity', *Peace & Change* 40, no. 4 (2015): 462–88; Sara Helman, 'Negotiating Obligations, Creating Rights: Conscientious Objection and the Redefinition of Citizenship in Israel', *Citizenship Studies* 3, no. 1 (1999): 45–70; Daniel Conway, *Masculinities, Militarisation and the End Conscription Campaign: War Resistance in Apartheid South Africa* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012); Ayse Gül Altinay, *Myth of the Military Nation: Militarism, Gender, and Education in Turkey* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Özgür Heval Çinar and Coskun Üsterci, *Conscientious Objection: Resisting Militarized Society* (London: Zed Books, 2009); and Maja Zehfuss, 'Military Refusers and the Invocation of Conscience: Relational Subjectivities and the Legitimation of Liberal War', *Review of International Studies* 45, no. 4 (2019): 569–87.

[16]Marko Lehti, *The Era of Private Peacemakers: A New Dialogic Approach to Mediation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2019); John Paul Lederach, *Little Book of Conflict Transformation* (New York: Good Books, 2003); Thania Paffenholz, 'International Peacebuilding Goes Local: Analysing Lederach's Conflict Transformation Theory and Its Ambivalent Encounter with 20 years of Practice', *Peacebuilding* 2, no. 1 (2014): 11–27; and Rasmus Bellmer and Frank Möller, 'Active Looking: Images in Peace Mediation', *Peacebuilding* 11, no. 2 (2023): 136–51.

[17]See Christine Sylvester, 'War Experiences/War Practices/War Theory', *Millennium* 40, no. 3 (2012), 483; Nick Vaughan-Williams and Daniel Stevens, 'Vernacular Theories of Everyday (in)Security: The Disruptive Potential of Non-Elite Knowledge', *Security Dialogue* 47, no. 1 (2016): 40–58.

sustainable peacebuilding in the Korean Peninsula should take into account how its residents' daily life, language, and politics are ridden with the militaristic and state-centric imageries.[18]

Next, I provide contrasting ideas of bodily organisation: the organic organisation and the Body without Organs. Then, I read the South Korean state's narratives and the South Korean conscientious objectors' narratives in light of the two ideas. I conclude the article by reflecting on the findings.

The organic organisation vs the Body without Organs

In my view, the South Korean state's reasoning that the conscientious objectors 'jeopardise the military and national security' likens the military to an incomparably vital organ for securing the South Korean nation. To give more detailed discussions on how the body's organisation can frame national security, I set side by side what Deleuze and Guattari termed the organic organisation and the Body without Organs.[19] The former assumes a more rigid hierarchical relationship between the parts and the whole. The latter assumes a more open and dynamic relationship between the parts and the whole.

Probably the most popular visual representation of the organic organisation is the frontispiece of the first edition of Hobbes' *Leviathan*. In the frontispiece is the image of the sovereign or the Leviathan, whose body comprises numerous minute individual figures, nameless people directing their gaze towards him. Staring outward, the sovereign's head/face is the only discernible part.[20] In the first analysis, I read the research materials while considering two ideas on the organic organisation.

The first idea is that there is a vital commanding organ that represents the interests of the whole. Writing on an American body politic, Bernd Herzogenrath points out that a Hobbesian head is a privileged part that speaks for the whole body, dissolving and funnelling the body's complexities into an authoritative hierarchy under a single imagined wholeness.[21] In other words, the presentation of *Leviathan*'s frontispiece presents a single commanding origin capable of moulding a transcendent form out of the world's chaos, controlling the proliferation of meaning. Similarly, John Protevi sees in *Leviathan* the imposition of the soul that commands and 'whips the body into shape', a leader descending from heaven to salvage people from chaos and impose order.[22] The organic organisation presumes a head representing the common interest and inflicts a hierarchy among the body's parts. Each organ part must work to ensure the survival or protection of the most vital or commanding organs; similarly, social institutions must also work in harmony for the good of society.[23] On the whole, the Leviathan represents the organic organisation that subsumes all the constituent parts under a single entity in the name of the survival of the whole.

[18]Nak-chung Paik, *The Division System in Crisis: Essays on Contemporary Korea* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2011); and Roland Bleiker, *Divided Korea: Toward a Culture of Reconciliation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).
[19]See note 9 above.
[20]Ibid., 176.
[21]Bernd Herzogenrath, *An American Body-politic: A Deleuzian Approach* (Lebanon: University Press of New England, 2010), 4.
[22]John Protevi, *Political Physics: Deleuze, Derrida and the Body Politic* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2001), 8.
[23]Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (London: A&C Black, 2006) 8.

Following the presence of the vital commanding centre, the second idea is that each body part must be defined in relation to the centre. As the head distributes the organs in an orderly manner, it creates a stratified sedentary space with no place for the organs to become something else.[24] In particular, the head always demands the organs to have an essence; such essence defines the organ's supposedly unified and eternal identity.[25] Žukauskaitė argues that, as an organ cannot simultaneously reside in multiple dimensions, such identification works through negation and exclusion.[26] If the body parts are seen as strictly organised, resisting their pre-given function can appear as a disorder, illness, decay, or even death.[27] Similarly, if a component is separated from the entirety to which it belongs, it loses its identity because being a distinct part is one of its fundamental characteristics.[28] Therefore, invoking possibilities of becoming something else that is not considered contributing to the centre or the whole is illegal and heretic.

To summarise my discussion, the organic organisation enforces a vital centre that hierarchically orders each body part. Prioritising the head that commands is the common sense understanding of the bodily organisation operating at the everyday level. In the first analysis, I read the research materials through the abovementioned ideas to discuss how the South Korean state has imagined national security through the organic organisation. However, as the organic organisation refuses to recognise the heterogeneity of bodies, it can reproduce the same Leviathan in the name of security and progress.

In this regard, I discuss the Body without Organs, which opposes the organic organisation.[29] The Body without Organs recognises the potential of the constituents to become something else, to reinvent themselves beyond extant categories.[30] For the second analysis, I emphasise the two ideas on the Body without Organs that are relevant to national security.

First, every constituent coexists with each other non-hierarchically. The Body without Organs is infiltrated by formless, inconsistent substances, with movement in every direction, unrestrained energies or unpredictable characteristics, and unhinged or fleeting particles.[31] Therefore, the constituents of the Body without Organs express a body with no underlying organisational principles or hierarchy.[32] Žukauskaitė points out that the body potentially exhibits a variety of dimensions without necessarily being consumed by a higher dimension.[33] For example, through training, my hands can become more apt at playing the guitar than writing. An ultimate objective may not bind my hands; the hands can become something else. For such a body, no organs exist as disconnected pieces from a missing whole, nor is there a regression back to an undifferentiated state.[34] Similarly, DeLanda brings up the 'relations of exteriority' whereby a part can be detached

[24]Audrone Žukauskaitė, 'Immunity and Contagion as Two Modes of Biopolitics', *Subjectivity* 10 (2017): 251.
[25]DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society*, xiii.
[26]Žukauskaitė, 'Immunity and Contagion', 252.
[27]Herzogenrath, *An American Body-politic*, 29; Marin Terpstra, 'From the King's Two Bodies to the People's Two Bodies: Spinoza on the Body Politic', *Early Science and Medicine* 25, (2020): 47–48.
[28]DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society*, 9.
[29]Ibid.; Slavoj Žižek, *Organs Without Bodies: Deleuze and Consequences* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
[30]Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 293.
[31]Ibid., 40.
[32]Ibid.; Brent Adkins, *Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus: A Critical Introduction and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 40; and Manuel DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 10.
[33]Žukauskaitė, 'Immunity and contagion', 252.
[34]Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 164–5, 182.

from a whole and attached to another, where it will have different interactions.[35] In DeLanda's words, 'a relation may change without the terms changing'.[36]

Second, as a hierarchy does not bind constituents, the constituents can become something else. I bring up the concept of *becoming*, implying the ultimate unfixability of the body's constituents. According to Patty Sotirin's interpretation of Deleuze and Guattari, becoming does not demand answers to where one started, how one progressed, and where one ended.[37] Instead, becoming indicates one is 'always in the middle' and in-between as it spreads, grows, occupies, infects, and populates.[38] Hence, becoming implies a dynamism that attempts to escape any initial state, essence, or interpretive centre.[39] In a feminist reading of Deleuze, Claire Colebrook writes that becoming can be read 'not as the becoming of some subject, but a becoming towards others, a becoming towards difference, and a becoming through new questions', removing man and human as the interpretive centre.[40] Such a disarticulating, experimental, and nomadic body might be seen as deviant, for example, schizoid, drugged, or masochistic from an organic organisational perspective.[41]

To summarise, through the Body without Organs, all constituents can coexist with one another non-hierarchically while preserving the potential to become something different. Then, the Body without Organs challenges the non-cognitive, pre-intentional, common-sensical, or everyday notions of how the body is organised or the priorities of the body's well-being and survival. In the second analysis, I read the research materials through the two points to discuss how South Korean conscientious objectors' narratives indicate the inchoateness and disorganisation of the Body without Organs.

The military as the vital commanding organ of national security

I show how the South Korean state has imagined national security through the organic organisation. To this end, I read the research material, South Korean court decisions on conscientious objectors and other relevant texts in light of the organic organisation. My reading of the texts demonstrates that the South Korean state imposes the military as the vital organ of national security while reducing individuals to subjects of this organ.

First, I read the South Korean court decisions and other texts while considering the commonsensical notion that the body depends on a centre, a head or a heart, vital for all constituents' survival or interests. As I have discussed earlier, the organic organisation often equates the security of the vital commanding centre, such as the 'head', with the survival of the whole body. Considering this, I bring up the South Korean Constitutional Court's 2004 decision on whether the government should introduce an alternative service which does not involve military training. The decision reiterates the Constitution's Article 37(2), which states that the state can restrict the freedoms and rights of citizens for national security purposes. Then, the decision defines national security as 'the indispensable precondition of the state's survival, preservation of the territory, and

[35]DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society*, 10–11; and DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory*, 10.
[36]Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 55.
[37]Patty Sotirin, 'Becoming-woman', in *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts*, ed. Charles. J. Stivale (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2011), 118.
[38]Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 293.
[39]Ibid., 275; Žukauskaitė, 'Immunity and contagion', 251.
[40]Claire Colebrook, 'Introduction'. in *Deleuze and Feminist Theory*, eds. Ian Buchanan and Claire Colebrook (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2000), 12.
[41]Žukauskaitė, 'Immunity and contagion', 251.

protection of the lives and safety of citizens, and also the basic premise for all citizens to exercise their freedom and rights'.

Similarly, the Constitutional Court's 2012 decision states, 'All Constitutional freedoms and rights are subject to the principal limitation that they should be exercised within the scope of enabling coexistence with others within the state and not jeopardising the legal order . . . '.[42] The decision arbitrarily limits Constitutional freedoms in the name of coexistence and the legal order. This limit produces the space for the prioritised interpretive centre. Notably, the 2004 and 2012 decisions consistently uphold national security against an individual's freedom of conscience, which is meaningless without the freedom to manifest or express one's conscience. The most conspicuous hierarchical pairing appears to be national security versus freedom of conscience. I suggest this hierarchical pairing indicates that the court treats national security as an interpretive centre for passing decisions on the relationship between individuals and the state.

Remarkably, the court's decisions establish that the military is central to realising national security. The Constitutional Court's 2004 decision indicates that the military is an indispensable guarantor of national security and specifies that conscription is vital to the military. The decision states,

> By fulfilling and enforcing the 'Duty to National Defence', the Act disputed in this trial aims to ensure the acquisition of human resources and the fair sharing of the military service duty under the military service system. The system's ultimate purpose is to realise a Constitutional interest called national security, and conscription guarantees the continuation of the system.[43]

The decision states that the stable supply of new conscripts to maintain the military is central to guaranteeing national security. In so doing, the decision establishes the pervasive notion that the military is the vital organ of the South Korean political body. So far, I have focused on how the South Korean state pairs the military, the vital organ of the body politic, with freedom of conscience, a secondary concern.

Second, I read the research materials through another commonsensical idea that the vital centre's interest (e.g. survival) defines the body's constituents. Although the government introduced the alternative service in 2020, the South Korean state claims to possess the authority and capacity to assess the authenticity of one's conscience. For example, the Alternative Service Review Committee, established to screen 'genuine acts of conscience' from draft evasions, requires the applicants for the alternative service to submit a personal statement. Below is a part of the instruction by the Review Committee for writing the personal statement:

- Has the applicant demonstrated a conscience throughout the overall life experiences, including growing up, household, school, and work?; explain in detail the process and the motivation.
- Explain in detail (including what/why/where/when/who/how) what the applicant did in a religious organisation, civil organisation, and the like, based on his conscience.[44]

[42]Constitutional Court of Korea, *The Constitutional Appeal 2012*.
[43]Constitutional Court of Korea, *The Constitutional Appeal 2004*.
[44]Alternative Service Review Committee, 'How to apply for the alternative service.' [in Korean] https://www.mma.go.kr/simsa/contents.do?mc=mma0002422 (2020).

In reading the instructions, I focus on the fact that the state demands the applicant to identify one's conscience as something consistent and tell a coherent and articulate story about the conscience. In my interpretation, the demand for the personal statement is premised on the idea that one possesses a coherent centre powerful enough so that the centre has been consistent throughout one's life history. And this centre must have been decisive in one's refusal of military conscription. As DeLanda suggests, in the scheme of the organic organisation, a constituent being a part of the higher dimension should be the defining property of the constituent.[45]

Notably, having had to fill out their applications as per the Alternative Service Review Committee's instructions, many conscientious objectors who appeared before the Review Committee expressed discomfort at the questions that attempted to judge the worth of their conscience. Soo-Hwan Oh, who applied for the alternative service, stated in an interview with *Voice of People*,

> The reviewers were weirdly curious about the gap between the day I refused to be conscripted, and the day I first participated in the conscientious objection seminar. I had to answer how many times per month, for how many hours, and how actively I participated in the activities related to conscientious objection. Any 'gaps' must be filled with clearly identifiable and quantifiable categories. I felt that I must prove every moment of my life to them. However, one's conscience doesn't always manifest in an expressible or tangible form.[46]

Similarly, Min Kim, who applied for the alternative service, struggled for five hours with the same questions thrown at him repeatedly during a one-on-one interview with the Review Committee's reviewer. Kim said,

> The reviewer couldn't understand that I coalesced with a wide variety of struggles for human rights no matter which organisation I belonged to. The reviewer was also suspicious that I can still reserve time for supporting social movements and taking photos of their struggles, although I work part-time and barely make a living. It felt as if I was talking to a wall. For five hours, both of us were very frustrated.[47]

In reading the above quotes, the logic behind the Review Committee's questions is that one's core identity exists, and one must have been constantly working to sustain and develop this core identity. The applicants are pressured to present a story that appears linear, coherent, and consistent in the eyes of the authorities, who intend to test the authenticity of the applicants' conscience by repeatedly throwing similar questions. An incoherent or inconsistent conscience will not pass the screening for a 'genuine' conscience. I suggest that such a test supposes the head or the interpretive centre, which cannot fathom one's wanderings through the inherently uncontrollable and undefinable life.

As Deleuze and Guattari point out, state policing or lawful violence simultaneously captures, constitutes a right to capture, and contributes to creating what is being captured.[48] No matter the complex process of one's becoming, the screening process

[45]DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society*, 9.
[46]Seok-young Kang, 'Tae-ch'e-pok-mu 1nyŏn, chin-tcha yang-sim-tch'ach-nŭn sa-hoe-sŏ sal-a-nam-ki [One year into alternative service, how to survive in the society which demand "real conscience"]'. *Voice of People*, [in Korean] https://www.vop.co.kr/A00001570013.html (accessed May 16, 2021).
[47]Kang. 'Tae-ch'e-pok-mu 1nyŏn'.
[48]Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 448.

lets the South Korean state to function as the final authority on deciding the authenticity of one's conscience and to pass decisions on that conscience in the form of 'yes or no'. Therefore, by inflicting ideals of security and survival over complex and heterogeneous everyday life, the state limits people from exercising their potential to become something else.

The South Korean state's words stated below show that resisting or rebelling against one's place in the militarising hierarchy makes one abnormal, dangerous, or meaningless. In the eyes of the state, the objectors who reject being subsumed by the hierarchy would appear contradictory and treacherous. In this regard, below are the questions most frequently asked by the prosecutors during the conscientious objectors' trials:

- Why do you refuse the national duty of military service?
- Conscription is the law's expression of the constitutional duty to the national defence. Do you intend to refuse other constitutional duties, too?
- Do you think you cannot carry out military service duty, but others should carry out the duty? Who will protect the country if everyone refuses to serve like you?
- You are still carrying out the duty to pay tax. What do you think about the tax being spent on the military and buying weapons?[49]

The prosecutors compare the objectors' resistance to conscription with other duties. Through such comparisons, the prosecutors assert that the grounds for the objectors' refusals are meaningless or questionable since the objectors act inconsistently and contradictorily. The objectors had to refuse the comparisons altogether to avoid falling into the prosecutors' trap. I suggest such refusal renders the objectors incomprehensible while confirming the military as the vital organ that captures or defines one's life experiences, the logic of organic organisation.

In the second part of this section, I have read the South Korean state's narratives on conscientious objection in light of the idea that the constituents are defined through particular vital interests of the whole. The South Korean state has attempted to make sense of the objectors' conscience while adhering to the fact that the military is a vital organ for national security. Also, advocating individual conscience, the objectors have been made abnormal or incomprehensible subjects.

To summarise this section, I read, in light of the organic organisation, what the South Korean state says about conscientious objectors. My reading has highlighted that the South Korean state understands national security through the ideas that each constituent of a collective body is subordinate to a vital commanding centre and that each constituent is defined concerning the centre's survival. Overall, the South Korean state has imagined national security through the scheme of an organically organised body, whereby the military is the vital centre indispensable for individuals' survival. In the next section, I show how South Korean conscientious objectors can disrupt this ingrained logic of the organic organisation and potentially transform the everyday imagery of state-centric and militarising security.

[49]World Without War, *Pyŏng-yŏk-kŏ-pu-cha-tŭl-i manh-i pat-nŭn chil-mun-tŭl* [*Questions frequented thrown at the objectors*], Brochure, [in Korean] (2019).

Challenging the state and military's centrality in securing lives

This section demonstrates an alternative mode for imagining national security differently. With this aim, I read South Korean conscientious objectors' announcements of their intention to refuse the military draft through two ideas relevant to the Body without Organs. My reading of the objectors' narratives challenges an everyday imagery of national security in South Korea, the state and military's centrality in securing lives, through proposing a more open relationship between the part and the whole.

First, I read the research material while considering the idea that, for the Body without Organs, every constituent coexists with others non-hierarchically. I highlight how conscientious objectors challenge society's traditional and sensible practices and rules that predetermine individuals. Such a rule is the exchange between the military duty and the citizen's right as a 'rite of passage', which produces an adult citizen instead of a 'freeloader'. However, Hyun Gong, a conscientious objector, suggests that rights and duties are not exchangeable. He states,

> The duty and the right stand independently. Importantly, we must not forget that the key objective of a community should be to secure the human rights of its constituents. The duty exists to protect human rights. The duty should serve human rights and not the other way around.[50]

Through prioritising human rights, Gong rejects the predetermined function and place imposed on individuals through military duty. Regarding the relationship between an individual and the state, conscientious objectors disrupt the taken-for-granted status of the individual's duty to the collective. Their objection indicates that individuals' sacrifice for collective survival has sustained the duty-right exchange.

Also, in challenging the military's status as the foremost guarantor of national survival, South Korean conscientious objectors identify their objection as an inevitable choice. For example, Ji-hwan Ahn, a conscientious objector, states that his objection has been an unavoidable and natural choice,

> Some people consider us daydreaming idealists. However, we cannot forget the things we saw, the things that were thrown at us, and the things we had to endure with all of our bodies, the 'realities', the images of the enemy. We couldn't stand aside idly because we saw and felt them.[51]

Ahn speaks as if his objection has been a natural course of action. From the perspective of mainstream politics, his words may appear simply idealistic and incomprehensible. However, he shows that he has no choice but to be affected by their irreversible 'readings' of his life experiences. Like Ahn, conscientious objectors convey a sense that their detachment from the militarised social hierarchy is an inevitable choice.

Along with this sense of inevitability, the objectors defy the common sense that a mere individual action will not go very far in transforming society. In a letter to his friends,

[50]Hyun Gong, 'P'yŏng-hwa-wa in-kwŏn-ŭl wi-han in-kan-ŭ-lo-sŏ-ŭi, hwal-tong-ka-lo-sŏ-ŭi ŭi-mu [The duty as a human and an activist towards peace and human rights]', in *U-li-nŭn kun-tae-lŭl kŏ-pu-han-ta* [*We Refuse Military*] ed. World Without War [in Korean] (Okcheon: Podobat, 2014), 223.

[51]Ji-Hwan Ahn, 'A, o-nal il-in-ŭi a-na-k'i-sŭ-t'ŭ-lo-sŏ kuk-ka-ŭi yŏk-e kŏ-pu-han-ta [Ah, today I refuse my part in the state as an anarchist]', in *U-li-nŭn kun-tae-lŭl kŏ-pu-han-ta* [*We Refuse Military*] ed. World Without War [in Korean] (Okcheon: Podobat, 2014), 196.

Hoon-tae Kim tells how he fights the triteness of the everyday and how this is significant for him. He writes,

> Above all, I try to live wholeheartedly. Hence, I keep a diary, meditate, and pray. Every day, I desperately struggle to go beyond the trite daily life. . . . Is there any hope? I don't know. Probably, I'll always end up losing. But it's okay because, through this endless game, I can feel that I'm alive. Whether I win or lose doesn't matter much.[52]

Conscientious objectors, including Kim, defy the social utility approach because living their lives according to their convictions matters most. As such, the objectors constantly flee from the familiar hierarchies of setting priorities. Therefore, I suggest that the objectors resemble Deleuze and Guattari's 'war machine'.[53] The 'war machine' does not worry about its function, place, and utility in society. Instead, the 'war machine' battles to preserve its potentiality and proclaims its inevitability against the state. Even if the state persecutes, the objectors still find significance on their own.

So far, I have read the texts produced by South Korean conscientious objectors in light of the idea that the Body without Organs refuses to subsume itself under a prioritised objective. The objectors refuse to accept the predetermined role and position imposed on individuals through the military obligation. In doing so, they also convey a sense of inevitability and self-significance that can disrupt the commonsensical imageries of priorities in one's life and society.

Second, I read the text produced by South Korean conscientious objectors in light of the idea that, for the Body without Organs whose constituents are not bound by a hierarchy, the constituents express the potential to become something else. Mainly, confronting a pervasive belief that one must equally carry out a duty along with one's fellow citizens to 'initiate an adult life', conscientious objectors often reflect on 'what life to live'. An example is Moo-Seok Kim's announcement,

> Beyond the choice between the military and the prison, choosing the prison forced me to ask, 'What life to live'? Choosing the prison would've been difficult if I compromised in the face of the logic of competition and survival, which this society often imposes on us.[54]

Whatever the reasons for refusing conscription, the objectors share that they have wondered about their future despite the prospect of the delivery of enlistment slips, inescapable imprisonment, and the ensuing stigmatisation and difficulties in life. Similarly, Gil-Soo Jeon, a conscientious objector, says he tries to be true to his character rather than following a grand narrative. Jeon says,

> I have usually compromised my convictions for what society expects of me. However, choosing an alienating and hierarchising space like the military is out of the question. If the military sustains itself by suppressing my character, it benefits neither the people nor myself.[55]

[52]Hoon-tae Kim, 'Na-ŭi pyŏng-yŏk-kŏ-pu so-kyŏn-sŏ: chŏ-ŭi kkum-ŭn choh-ŭn sŏn-saeng-nim-ip-ni-ta [My letter announcing my refusal to be conscripted: I dream of becoming a good teacher]', in *U-li-nŭn kun-tae-lŭl kŏ-pu-han-ta* [*We Refuse Military*] ed. World Without War [in Korean] (Okcheon: Podobat, 2014), 161.

[53]Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 355.

[54]Moo-Seok Kim, 'Na-nŭn chŏng-ŭi-wa p'yŏng-hwa-e tae-han sin-nyŏm-e tta-la pyŏng-yŏk-ŭl kŏ-pu-han-ta [I refuse conscription to follow my conviction on justice and peace]', in *U-li-nŭn kun-tae-lŭl kŏ-pu-han-ta* [*We Refuse Military*] ed. World Without War [in Korean] (Okcheon: Podobat, 2014), 229.

[55]Gil-Soo Jeon, (conscientious objector's announcement written without a title), in *U-li-nŭn kun-tae-lŭl kŏ-pu-han-ta* [*We Refuse Military*] ed. World Without War [in Korean] (Okcheon: Podobat, 2014), 218.

As such, South Korean conscientious objectors are more intent on 'choosing one's own life', even if that choice jeopardises their future by sending them to jail. For the objectors, military service is not the rite of passage into adulthood but what injures one's potential to become something else as life unfolds.

I also read the objectors' texts as expressions of the 'indeterminate organs' which refuse to be reduced to familiar stereotypes.[56] For example, in the memoir of his 'prison days', Hyunmin, a conscientious objector, suddenly realised he was not the free subject he had once imagined himself to be. He states,

> All of a sudden, I was frightened that all the trivial things I enjoyed before imprisonment were, in fact, the most important things. Apart from the fact that I don't belong to mainstream society, I felt bitter that, with my criminal record, I'd be left with minimal options for properly making my way into society. One cannot expect an enhancement or advancement through conscientious objection. ... I used to frequently utter grandiose concepts like 'flight', 'transversal', or 'expérience limite'. The conscientious objection made me realise that I've never truly experienced any. I also realised they aren't as charming as they sound.[57]

Hyunmin attends to his feelings to reflect upon the self. He realises that he does not fit into the typical popular and sensible image of the monk-like conscientious objector who possesses an unyielding determination and is disinterested in rather worldly desires. His quotes suggest that if one forces oneself to fit into the purified, familiar, and socially acceptable categories that quickly make sense to the broader audience, one's body is bound to signal a lack or an excess.

Upon receiving such signals, conscientious objectors recognise the self as inherently divided. Notably, they realise that they harbour incomplete and divided voices. For example, in his announcement to refuse conscription, Eun Jo perceives the self as inherently far from complete. He states,

> I will never arrive at the perfect, ideal, and undivided self. However, it's still meaningful to strive to get there. In life's uncountable moments of confusion, manifesting, revising, and developing my convictions is only meaningful to me. One does not have to be perfect. I only believe in the self that does not cease to make my own choices, although I expect them to be imperfect.[58]

Eun Jo is not interested in figuring out if he is an ardent and consistent pacifist or how to prove his conviction most effectively. He is more concerned that he decided to make choices for himself anyway. In this regard, he positions himself as an 'indeterminate organ' in South Korean society and expresses the willingness to become something else.

In the second part of this section, I read the texts produced by South Korean conscientious objectors in light of the idea that the Body without Organs expresses the potential to become something else. In doing so, I underscored that the objectors resist the state's attempts to reduce them to subjects of the military. I also highlighted how the objectors locate themselves as 'indeterminate organs' that escape mainstream society's pressures. To summarise this section, I read South Korean conscientious objectors' texts while considering the ideas on the Body without Organs. The reading suggests that, as the

[56]Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The logic of sensation* (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), 47.
[57]Hyunmin, *Kam-ok-ŭi mong-sang* [*A Prison Dream*] [in Korean] (Paju: Dolbegae, 2010), 314–15.
[58]Eun Jo, (conscientious objector's announcement written without a title), in *U-li-nŭn kun-tae-lŭl kŏ-pu-han-ta* [*We Refuse Military*] ed. World Without War [in Korean] (Okcheon: Podobat, 2014), 174–75.

objectors imagine a more open relationship between the part and the whole, they can also inspire national security premised on preserving human potential to become something else. The objectors can, albeit little by little, transform the everyday imageries on the hierarchical bodily organisation and militaristic and state-centric national security.

Conclusion: imagining security that preserves human potential

I studied how imagining the body's organisation differently can reimagine national security in the context of South Korean conscientious objectors. I juxtaposed two readings to expose an institutionalised mode of imagining security and propose an alternative mode. The first was my reading of the South Korean state's narratives on conscientious objection in light of the organic organisation. The second was my reading of the South Korean conscientious objectors' narratives while considering the Body without Organs.

On the one hand, reading South Korean conscientious objectors' narratives in light of the Body without Organs revealed that the objectors resist an ultimate point of interest (e.g. military), which imagines individuals to be always in motion and become different. In this respect, the Body without Organs opens a space at the level of everyday imagery that can envision a new security paradigm that is less state-centric and more pluralistic. On the other hand, the South Korean state's narratives on conscientious objection justify suspending rights to freedom of conscience in the name of the survival of the collective body. Therefore, reading the state's narratives while considering the organic organisation indicates that the South Korean state advocates a more hierarchical relationship between the commanding head and the limbs and organs that obey. The everyday imagery of such a body is considered sensible and advances the popular state-centric and militaristic imaginations about national security.

This paper has been about linking seemingly unrelated things. First, this paper linked different levels of analysis: the everyday imagery of the bodily organisation and the imagery of the body politic's security. I showed how Deleuze and Guattari's contrasting concepts of the organic organisation and the Body without Organs offer recipes for imagining a more dynamic and pluralistic mode of securing lives. Second, this paper deviated from previous literature on conscientious objection by linking South Korean conscientious objectors' seemingly trivial personal stories with the long-term transformation of the militaristic and state-centric imagery of national security.

The coronavirus pandemic and climate change have indicated the ever-transforming modes of affecting each other in coexistence. Therefore, the struggle over setting collective priorities will become more critical for envisioning political communities' strategies for preserving life as a species. This situation raises a profound philosophical concern about emphasising the body as a source of individual agency: as the 'head' loses command, promoting individual agency as a means of imagining security might jeopardise the survival of life as a species.[59]

Deleuze and Guattari did warn against becoming the 'cancerous body', whose becoming proliferates endlessly, and the 'empty/suicidal body', which lets the outside flow to control the individual entirely.[60] Also, as Franciso Varela states

[59]This concern is raised by a reviewer of this article.
[60]Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 163.

on the opening up of possibilities, 'There are natural limits but there is no densely woven, blocking, and stifling system of rules'.[61] As uncertainties around the globe rise, more societies voluntarily give up their freedom in search of certainty. In this respect, this paper has highlighted freeing life from the grip of the organic organisation through recognising the Body without Organs. Practically, this would mean being constantly self-reflective but also being curious and opening oneself up to affect and be affected by others. In the inevitable course of constantly forming different assemblages to increase our potential to meet unpredictable challenges, sympathising with other's certainties and acknowledging them as the expression of their life course must be conducive to preserving life as a species.[62]

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[61] Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Humberto R. Maturana, and Bernhard Poerksen. 'Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela on Science and the Humanities: The Poerksen Interviews', *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 40, no.1 (Spring 2006): 43.

[62] See Maturana and Varela's discussion on structural coupling and recognising other's certainty. Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela, *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding* (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1992): 245–46.