Nothing Is More Precious Than Independence and Freedom

The Ninth Asia Newsletter (2026)

Dinh Q. Lê (Vietnam), *Untitled*, 2004.

Dear friends,

Greetings from the desk of **Tricontinental Asia**.

On the anniversary of Vietnam's liberation, the **International People's Assembly** and Tricontinental Asia launched the 'Hands Off Asia!' **campaign**, calling for the removal of US and NATO bases from Asia, an end to aggressive military pacts, and respect for Asian sovereignty. On this occasion, we organised a **webinar** with Asian women intellectuals and organisers – from Hanoi, Isfahan, Naha, Taipei, Manila, and Seoul – who came bearing different chapters of the same imperial book.

Vietnam: The 'Four Nos'

The Marxist-Leninist translator **Luna Nguyễn** insisted that the liberation of Saigon in 1975 did not end US imperialism. Today, Vietnam is besieged less by armies than by the soft powers of sanctions, NGO networks, and what she called 'clandestine counter-revolutionary activity' by Western funding agencies and other global financial institutions. To normalise relations with Washington in the 1990s, Hanoi was forced to assume $145 million in debt accrued by the defeated Saigon regime. Vietnam paid the United States, in effect, for the bombs that had massacred its own civilians. That odious payment was settled only seven years ago.

Out of this experience came the **'Four Nos'** of Vietnam's defence policy: no military alliances; no alignment with one country against another; no foreign military bases on Vietnamese soil; and no use or threat of force in international relations. While Washington has pressed for naval basing rights along the Vietnamese coast for decades, the answer has always been no.

Kidlat Tahimik (Philippines), *Magellan, Marilyn, Mickey & Fr. Dámaso. 500 Years of Conquistador RockStars*, n.d.

Iran: Protection Became Exposure

Speaking from Isfahan, Iran, weeks after a ceasefire in the US-Israeli aggression on her country, **Dr. Setareh Sadeqi** of the University of Tehran turned to a region where many had said yes. The Persian Gulf monarchies have leased their land and airspace to US militarism. From Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar to Naval Support

Activity Bahrain to the Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia, the Persian Gulf monarchies have joined a dense network of US logistics nodes.

These bases were sold as a shield; the recent war revealed them to be a target. Since October 2023, US occupation facilities in the region have endured more than 170 documented **attacks**, and regional losses now exceed $50 billion. As Sadeqi put it: 'The host country does not merely host the shield. It hosts the target set'.

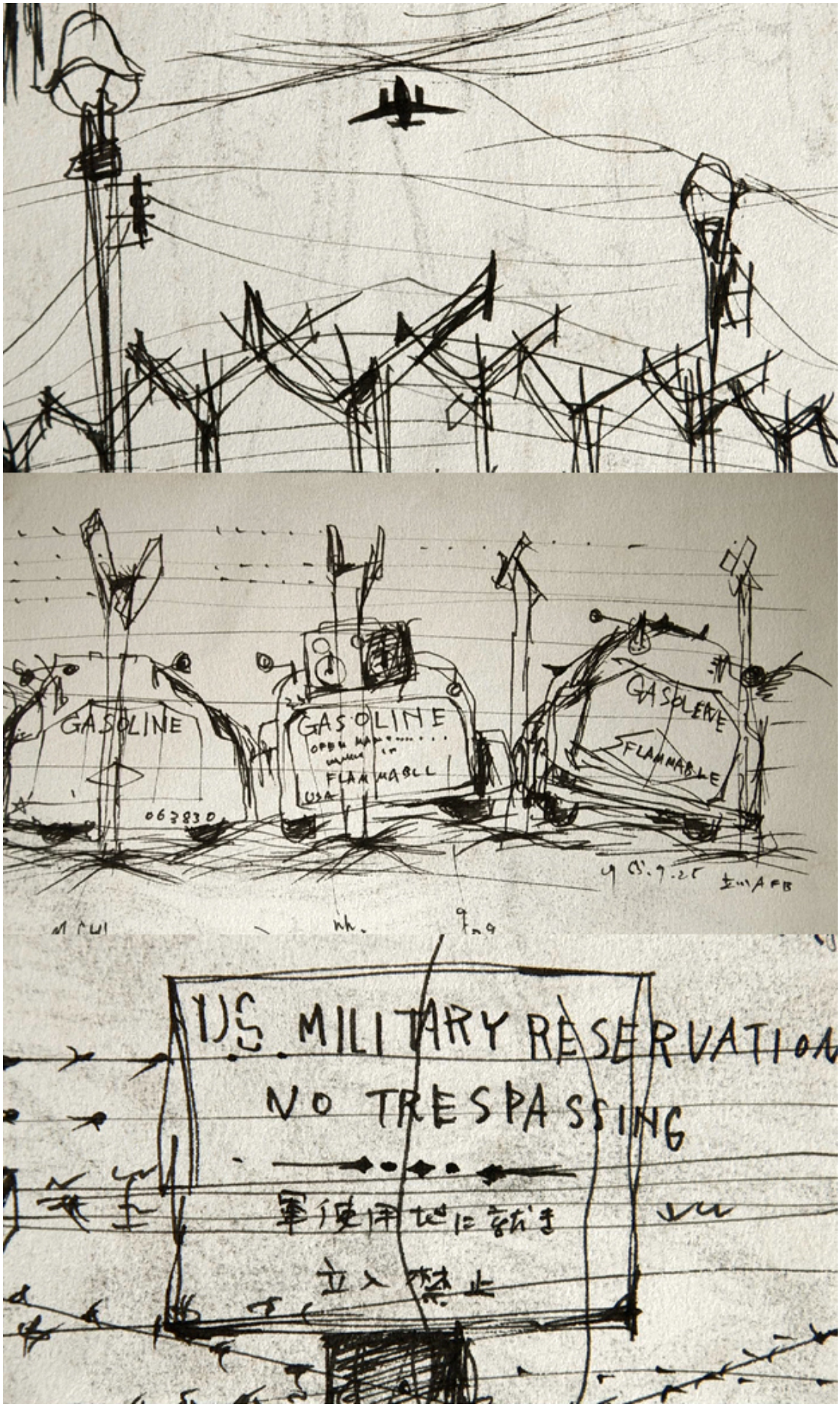
The myth, she explained, is held in place by ideology. In her article '**Hyperreal Warriors and the Orientalist Foes**', co-authored with Christopher Weaver, Sadeqi traces how Western discourse manufactures Iran as both timelessly irrational and invincibly menacing. In this narrative, the only answer is permanent dependence on Washington. Her conclusion provides necessary clarity: 'Security requires distance from the imperialist power, not dependency on it'.

Okinawa, Japan: The Iron Storm Has Not Ended

Keiko Yonaha of No More Battle of Okinawa traced a chain of betrayals experienced by her people. In the Battle of Okinawa (1945), one in three or four Okinawans died. Two secret pacts appended to the US-Japan San Francisco Peace Treaty (1951) granted Washington the right to maintain bases anywhere in Japan and to seize operational command of Japanese forces in any crisis. Forced US military land seizures by bayonets and bulldozers drove Okinawan farmers into exile, some as far as Bolivia. Today, Okinawa with 0.6% of Japan's territory hosts roughly 70% of the country's US military facilities.

The cost of militarisation is paid physically, psychologically, and ecologically. **Okinawa Women Act Against Military Violence** has documented sexual crimes by US troops since 1945. A five-year-old girl was raped and killed in 1945. A nine-month-old baby in 1949. A fifth grader was raped by three US soldiers in 1995. A twenty-year-old woman was murdered in 2016. A girl under 16 was raped in 2023, her case concealed for six months by Tokyo. The contamination of drinking water by 'forever chemicals' like PFAS cannot be investigated because the US-Japan Status of Forces Agreement bars Okinawans from their own soil.

In December 2021, the two governments confirmed that Okinawa would be the front line of any so-called 'Taiwan contingency' – that is, a launching pad for US intervention in the event of a crisis in the Taiwan Strait. Keiko reminded us that mass protests in 1969 had once defeated US President Richard Nixon's madman theory to expand the Vietnam War with nuclear weapons. Her point was that movements can still defeat empires.


GASOLINE
GASOLINE
FLAMMABLE
GASOLENE
FLAMMABLE
US MILITARY RESERVATION
NO TRESPASSING
軍使用地につき
立入禁止

Nakamura Hiroshi (Japan), sketches of the US military base at Tachikawa, 1955.

Taiwan, China: Ideological Colonisation

Professor Chen Meei-shia, emerita of National Cheng Kung University and founding chair of the **Diaoyutai Education Association**, framed Taiwan, China, as the third in a line of imperial interruptions: Dutch (1624–1662), Japanese (1895–1945), and 'US military and ideological control, almost un-ending', from 1950 to today. Forty years of martial law (1947–1987) and White Terror backed by Washington produced the mass graves of those who fought for democracy or reunification with mainland China.

When Washington normalised relations with the People's Republic of China in 1979, it withdrew its troops from Taiwan but kept the leash. Through the **Taiwan Relations Act**, every US president has authorised arms sales. The most recent is a $400 billion package that includes US troops training Taiwan's army.

The deeper apparatus is ideological – an educational system, fellowship pipelines like the East-West Center, and a compliant media industry have engineered a mainstream consciousness that Chen describes as 'pro-American, anti-communist, anti-China'. Withdrawal of troops, Chen warned, 'does not mean less evil than ideological control'.

M. Hill, AICD (Australia), Screenprint from a protest against US President Richard Nixon and the war on Vietnam, 1970.

The Philippines: From Tripwire to 'Pax Silica'

Corazon Valdez Fabros, co-president of the International Peace Bureau, spoke against the live machinery of **Balikatan 2026**, the largest war games in her country's history. Seventeen thousand troops from seven nations are on Philippine soil; Japanese Type-88 missiles have been positioned on sovereign land; fuel depots and ammunition hubs have been carved into the Subic municipality, northwest of Manila.

According to **SIPRI**, 2025 global military expenditure has reached an unprecedented $2.9 trillion, with the United States alone responsible for $954 billion, one-third of the planet's war budget. 'Every peso and dollar squandered on war', Fabros said, 'is a direct theft from the people's fundamental right to survival'.

The war economy reaches the kitchen table. Philippine inflation runs at 4.1%. The Strait of Hormuz, closed by the US-Israeli war on Iran, holds two million Filipino overseas workers hostage. Meanwhile, under the brand name Pax Silica, a 4,000-acre US high-tech manufacturing zone has been carved out of New Clark City. It is, in Fabros's words, 'a colonial enclave granted diplomatic immunity and governed by US common law for up to 99 years'.

Lockheed Martin, Intel, Micron, and Applied Materials are not technology companies. They are the architects of the missile systems being tested in Filipino seas. 'This is not innovation. It is occupation dressed up as progress'. Her demands, drawn from the **Stop the War Coalition Philippines**, are direct: cut military budgets, reject Pax Silica, abrogate unequal agreements, and defend the West Philippine Sea as a global commons.

Korea: A 'Fixed Aircraft Carrier'

From Seoul, Hwang Jeongeun of the **International Strategy Center** read aloud the words that empire now speaks without disguise. In August 2025, Donald Trump **told** a summit he wished to 'get ownership of the land where we have a massive military base' in Korea. In May 2025, United States Forces Korea commander General Xavier Brunson **called** the Republic of Korea 'a fixed aircraft carrier floating in the water between Japan and mainland China', the closest allied presence to Beijing. Brunson also **announced** a 'kill web' fusing the militaries of South Korea, Japan, and possibly the Philippines into a single networked system targeting the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, China, and Russia.

The 28,500 US troops, 62 bases, and 95 million square metres in South Korea are being repurposed. Presented as a defence of Korea, they are becoming an instrument against China, while Seoul is pressed to raise military spending to 3.5% of GDP. The architecture, Hwang warned, threatens to bury the Korean dream of inner-peninsular reconciliation.

Poster for the Hands Off Asia! webinar by International People's Assembly and Tricontinental Asia, 2026.

The Long Refusal

The map of the world is dotted with some 902 known US military **bases**, many of them in Asia. The myth common to all of them is that they protect their hosts. The lesson, from Okinawa to Manila, from Bahrain to Seoul, is that they import war and exact a price in broken bodies, poisoned water, stolen land, and household hunger. Occupation is always sold as protection.

But Asia has not forgotten how it fought empire. The Battle of Okinawa did not silence Okinawa's witnesses. The White Terror did not extinguish Taiwan's labour movement. The Iranian people, after four decades of brutal sanctions, refuse humiliation. As Hồ Chí Minh insisted: 'Nothing is more precious than independence and freedom'. That is the inheritance of liberation, and it is the demand of the present.

Hands off Vietnam. Hands off Iran. Hands off Okinawa. Hands off Taiwan. Hands off the Philippines. Hands off Korea. Hands off Asia!

Warmly,

Tricontinental Asia