

Reframing Korea in Contemporary International Studies: Narratives of Identity, Memory, and Power

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International Studies is increasingly urged to reconsider how knowledge, identity, and power are constituted in a world where familiar boundaries and assumptions no longer account for changing realities. Long treated as a site of economic success or geopolitical tension rather than as a source of theoretical insight, the Korean Peninsula offers fertile ground for such rethinking. Its history of colonisation, division, and accelerated modernisation has produced contested narratives of progress, memory, and identity. These narratives reveal how unresolved historical legacies intersect with emergent domestic and international tensions, turning the region into an experimental arena for exploring how international order coexists with the past, while imagining a range of possible futures.

As contemporary international conflicts increasingly draw lines between 'us' and 'the Other,' this panel posits that the study of memory and identity politics is not a peripheral concern but a central frontier for International Studies. Through four perspectives spanning migration narratives, environmental politics, popular culture, and international development cooperation, the papers collectively examine how stories and discourses reproduce, negotiate, and occasionally unsettle established hierarchies of recognition and belonging. Taken together, they illustrate how South Korea's postcolonial experiences, geopolitical insecurities, individual life stories, and transnational cultural flows each shape, challenge, and reconfigure narratives of identity and memory in both domestic and international contexts. In doing so, the panel positions Korea not merely as a case but as a vantage point from which to theorise how symbolic, historical, and cultural forces configure power and order in contemporary International Studies. Recasting narrative and recognition as analytical bridges between the everyday and the international, the panel suggests new conceptual, methodological, and pedagogical directions for a more reflexive and inclusive discipline.

Track Classification: International Studies of the Mediterranean, Middle East & Asia Working Group