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Plus Ça Change? South Korean Public Opinion of the US during the Trump Administration

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The objective of this chapter is to assess South Koreans' opinions toward the US and President Donald Trump using available public opinion data. To this extent, it asks some basic questions. How did South Koreans view the US over the course of the Trump administration, and how do these views compare historically and relative to other regional leaders? Further, how did South Koreans view Donald Trump, both as a politician and as someone who took an exceptionally active interest in peninsula affairs, especially with regard to North Korea? Were there any notable differences across subgroups, such as age cohorts, and, if so, what more can they tell us about contemporary South Korea–US relations?

Building a longitudinal data set from Pew Research Center Global Attitudes Surveys that covers the period 2002–19, this chapter assesses these questions by looking at the following: first, the image of the US from the perspective of South Korea and how opinions compared to other regional actors (China, Russia, North Korea, Japan) during the Trump presidency and historically; second, approval of Donald Trump, compared to other regional leaders (Xi Jinping, Vladimir Putin, Kim Jong-un, Shinzo Abe) during the Trump presidency and leaders from these respective nations historically, including the US president; and third, opinions of major Trump administration policies, focusing on Trump's negotiations with Kim Jong-un but inclusive of other policies, such as immigration restrictions and the US–Mexico border wall. In addition, this chapter looks at select subgroups by age, political identification, and gender to determine who supports the US today, in addition to looking at who supported (or opposed) Donald Trump and his North Korea policy.

The chapter will proceed as follows. The first section provides an overview of the state of US–South Korea relations during the Trump years, setting up the relevant questions and empirical concerns. Following that, the second section reviews the data and methodology used for analysis. The third section analyzes the data findings on South Koreans' attitudes toward the US (as a country), President Donald Trump, and Trump administration policies. The fourth section then considers relevant subgroup analysis. Lastly, the chapter concludes with a summary of the findings and a final discussion.

US–SOUTH KOREA RELATIONS DURING THE TRUMP YEARS

The US's relationship with South Korea, as a long-time ally with whom the US shares deep person-to-person, state, and nonstate actor ties, is key to the US's presence in the Asia Pacific writ large, but even more so regarding its status, aims, and objectives in Northeast Asia.

The interstate relationship has long been defined by the Mutual Defense Treaty signed in 1953 following the Korean War. The bilateral defense treaty is a defining feature of the so-called San Francisco System of military alliances that defined the regional order throughout the Cold War.[1] Despite significant changes, most notably democratization in South Korea and elsewhere in the region, the treaty and forward-deployed military personnel continue to define the relationship and broader region today. "Freedom's Frontier," as some affectionately call it, South Korea is one of only three consolidated democracies in East Asia (Taiwan and Japan constituting the other two). It is even more important, then, to understand South Korean public opinion toward the US during the Trump administration.

A populist authoritarian,[2] Trump did nothing less than militate against the liberal international order and in fact against US democracy itself.[3] It is widely acknowledged that Trump's disdain for America's allies, countries he often likened to "free riders," put enormous strain on relationship

[1] K. Calder, "Securing Security through Prosperity: The San Francisco System in Comparative Perspective," *Pacific Review*, 17, no. 1 (2004): 135–57; H. Chae, "South Korean Attitudes toward the ROK–U.S. Alliance: Group Analysis," *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 43 no. 3 (2010): 493–501.

[2] P. Norris and R. Inglehart, *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019).

[3] S.M. Patrick, "Can Trump's Successor Save the Liberal International Order?" *World Politics Review*, February 10, 2020. www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/28526/can-trump-s-successor-save-the-liberal-international-order.

and alliance management.[4] Given his preferred brand of diplomacy and politics regarding the US relationship with the Korean peninsula, including alliance management with South Korea, Trump's four years in office will likely be remembered as inconsistent and, at times, contentious. And if neither of these, it will at least be remembered as confusing.

Trump pursued an alternative foreign policy toward both South and North Korea. Threatening "fire and fury like the world has never seen" against North Korea, there was concern that the US, under Trump's direction, might take unilateral action against North Korea, thereby ensnarling South Korea in an unwanted conflict with the North.[5] His relationship with the Moon Jae-in administration in Seoul was marked, at least initially, by quarrelsome demands for greater cost contributions for US Forces in Korea and the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defense battery,[6] in addition to other contentious ideas like ending the Korea–US Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA).[7]

But even after Trump openly questioned the value of the alliance and the US relationship with South Korea during his presidential campaign, upon settling into office he rolled back some of his more controversial positions and pursue a relationship at least somewhat more in line with expectations for a US president today.[8] Although he openly discussed the possibility of troop reductions, due to cost and equity concerns, such radical changes in US defense policy and alliance management would ultimately prove mere bluster, as was often the case with Donald Trump regarding a score of major issues.[9]

[4] B. Klinger, H.P. Jung, and S.M. Terry, "Trump Shakedowns Are Threatening Two Key US Alliances in Asia," *Brookings Institute*, December 18, 2019. www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/12/18/trump-shakedowns-are-threatening-two-key-u-s-alliances-in-asia.

[5] P. Baker and S.H. Choe, "Trump Threatens 'Fire and Fury' against North Korea If It Endangers U.S." *New York Times*, August 8, 2017. www.nytimes.com/2017/08/08/world/asia/north-korea-un-sanctions-nuclear-missile-united-nations.html.

[6] J. Kim, "South Korean Public Opinion," Asan Institute for Policy Studies: Special Forum, February 27, 2018, www.theasanforum.org/south-korean-public-opinion.

[7] M.Y.H. Lee, "Trump Wants to End 'Horrible' South Korea-U.S. Trade Deal. Koreans disagree," *Washington Post*, September 14, 2017, www.washingtonpost.com/world/trump-wants-to-end-horrible-south-korea-us-trade-deal-koreans-disagree/2017/09/13/fb528b3e-9627-11e7-a527-3573bd073e02_story.html?utm_term=.cf240bf27521.

[8] K. Gamel, "Trump Presidency Will Test Longstanding US-South Korean Alliance," *Stars and Stripes*, November 9, 2016, www.stripes.com/news/trump-presidency-will-test-longstanding-us-south-korean-alliance-1.438657.

[9] J. Shafer, "The Truth at the Center of Trump's Hollow Threats," *Politico,* May 27, 2020, www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/05/27/the-truth-at-the-center-of-trumps-hollow-threats-285044.

Indeed, in his November 2017 speech to South Korea's National Assembly in Seoul, Trump left aside much of the over-the-top bravado and offensive name-calling, by then common behavior from the president, to focus on the threat posed by North Korea's nuclear weapons program.[10] The speech signaled a hawkish approach to Pyongyang, and while it is hard to read into it any indication of the summits with Kim Jong-un to come, it did at least send a message that North Korea policy was to be given more attention than perhaps other international issues. Although the relationship would continue to experience moments of heightened tension, especially regarding defense cost-sharing as defined by the Special Measures Agreement, there were no fundamental changes in the US–South Korea alliance.[11]

Trump also demonstrated a willingness to support President Moon and his pro-engagement approach with North Korea, or at least not completely to oppose it.[12] Trump would eventually engage in unprecedented bilateral, face-to-face meetings with Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un in 2018 and 2019 in Singapore and Hanoi, respectively, and again in 2019 at the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) after the G20 Osaka summit.

The first of the two US–North Korean summits constituted the first ever meeting between sitting heads of state from the US and North Korea. It followed a period of tense relations, which included North Korea's testing of, it claimed, a hydrogen bomb and later an intercontinental ballistic missile (both in 2017). The meeting resulted in a joint statement, which contained a security guarantee for North Korea and a general commitment to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, in addition to other agreements. The following year's summit in Hanoi was cut short over fundamental disagreements regarding North Korea's nuclear program and what Pyongyang was willing to give up in exchange for denuclearization.[13] Although both summits were ostensibly about the

[10] A transcript of the speech can be read here: https://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/07/politics/south-korea-trump-speech-full/index.html.

[11] P. Stewart and I. Ali, "Exclusive: Inside Trump's Standoff with South Korea over Defense Costs," *Reuters*, April 10, 2020, www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-southkorea-trump-defense-exclusiv-idUSKCN21S1W7.

[12] K. Kasulis, "Moon Bets His Legacy on Meeting with Trump," *The World*, June 28, 2019, www.pri.org/stories/2019-06-28/moon-bets-his-legacy-meeting-trump.

[13] E. Rosenfeld, "Trump-Kim Summit Was Cut Short after North Korea Demanded an End to Sanctions," *CNBC*, February 28, 2019, www.cnbc.com/2019/02/28/white-house-trump-kim-meetings-change-of-schedule.html; A. Panda and V. Narang, "The Hanoi Summit Was Doomed from the Start: North Korea Was Never Going to Unilaterally Disarm," *Foreign Affairs*, March 5, 2019, www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-korea/2019-03-05/hanoi-summit-was-doomed-start.

denuclearization of North Korea, it is widely held that neither summit yielded any new or substantive commitments from either side. It was, however, a unique moment of diplomacy for both North Korea and the US, with obvious implications for the security of the Korean peninsula and thus South Korea.

The point of this chapter, however, is not to analyze the diplomatic efforts of the Trump administration during either of the two summits per se, but to examine South Korean public opinion toward the US during this period. How did the South Korean people respond to the developments just described? This is the central question addressed here.

In addition to knowing what South Koreans thought overall, it is equally, if not more, important to consider how opinions differed among some relevant groups. To more deeply explore what South Koreans thought of the US and the Trump administration, this chapter also looks at how opinions vary by age cohorts, political identification, and gender. If there are differences in how these groups appraise South Korea's relationship with the US, then that is relevant insight. It can inform an understanding of "shared values" as a basis of contemporary alliance management and how, going forward, South Koreans are likely to view the US–South Korea alliance.[14]

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

To do the empirical research for this chapter, a longitudinal database was created from the Pew Research Center Global Attitudes Surveys from 2002 to 2019. The repeated cross-sectional surveys are conducted by the Pew Research Center with local survey and panel partners, although not all countries are surveyed every year. The surveys are fielded worldwide and contain a broad selection of questions including those pertaining to the "US image," in addition to other questions about the world economy and world leaders. Data is made publicly available two years after being collected.[15]

The common core of questions is used to survey respondents from target countries about their opinion of the US, asking them whether they

[14] US Department of State, "Joint Statement of the 2021 Republic of Korea – United States Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting ('2+2')," March 18, 2021, www.state.gov/joint-statement-of-the-2021-republic-of-korea-united-states-foreign-and-defense-ministerial-meeting-22.

[15] The latest data available is from the Spring 2019 Global Attitudes Survey (updated March 2020). Read more about these surveys in the Global Indicators Database at www.pewresearch.org/global/database.

have a "very favorable," "somewhat favorable," "somewhat unfavorable," or "very unfavorable" opinion. Also asked are questions about confidence in world leaders, including the President of the United States (POTUS). Respondents are asked to state how much confidence they have in leaders "to do the right thing regarding world affairs" and are given the options of "a lot of confidence," "some confidence," "not too much confidence," or "no confidence at all."

In this chapter, both common questions are explored for every year for which data is available for South Korea.[16] In addition to South Koreans' opinions of the US, additional countries and leaders from other regional powers in Northeast Asia are considered in order to situate the US vis-à-vis other relevant actors. The actors included the European Union (EU), China, Japan, Russia, and North Korea. The years collected and sample sizes are listed in Table 2.1.[17] The analysis throughout this chapter is based on summary statistics. Survey weights are applied throughout.

Besides exploring the opinions of the US and the US's image, questions in 2019 that ask respondents their opinion about Trump-specific policies are also explored. This battery of items includes the following subjects:

- US withdrawal from international climate change agreements
- Building a wall on the border between the US and Mexico
- US withdrawal from the Iran nuclear weapons agreement
- Allowing fewer immigrants into the US
- The US increasing tariffs or fees on imported goods from other countries
- US negotiations with North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un about the country's nuclear weapons program

Respondents are asked whether they "agree" or "disagree" with each. For this chapter, an overview of what South Koreans think of each policy move is reviewed for context, but the focus is on Trump's policy of negotiating with Kim Jong-un over North Korea's nuclear weapons arsenal.

[16] Probability samples of the 18+ adult population were collected by various polling vendors. The questions are not administered to South Korean respondents every year, but there is sufficient coverage.

[17] For more on survey methodology, see the Pew Research website's overview for South Korea: www.pewresearch.org/methodology/international-survey-research/international-methodology/all-survey/south-korea/all-year.

TABLE 2.1 *Pew Global Attitudes Surveys used*

Survey year	Sample size
2002	719
2003	525
2007	718
2008	714
2009	702
2010	706
2013	809
2014	1,009
2015	1,005
2017	1,010
2018	1,007
2019	1,006

After a longitudinal overview of South Korean attitudes toward the US and President Trump and policies specific to the Trump administration, attention is turned to understanding certain subgroup dynamics, looking at how attitudes toward key questions considered here differ (or not) by age cohort, political identification, and gender.[18]

SOUTH KOREAN VIEWS OF THE US AND REGIONAL ACTORS, 2002–2019

This section reviews the high-level empirical findings of the research. For years in which data is available, it looks at South Koreans' favorability ratings toward the US from 2002 to 2019 and compares them to ratings of four other regional actors (China, the EU, Japan, and Russia). Then, it looks at confidence levels for POTUS and leaders of the same regional actors, except the EU.

Figure 2.1 shows favorability ratings of South Koreans toward the US and others. Focusing on the US, 2002 and 2003 stand apart, with

[18] Age cohorts are defined by common groupings across the life cycle (18–29, 30–39, 40–49, 50–59, and 60+). Political identification is measured with a political scale question, which asks respondents to indicate where they would place themselves on a scale from 0 ("far/extreme left") to 6 ("far/extreme right"). Respondents answering 0–2 are counted as "progressive" and those choosing 4–6 are counted as "conservative." "Centrist" is for respondents who answered 3. Gender is measured by whether the respondent identifies as "male" or "female."

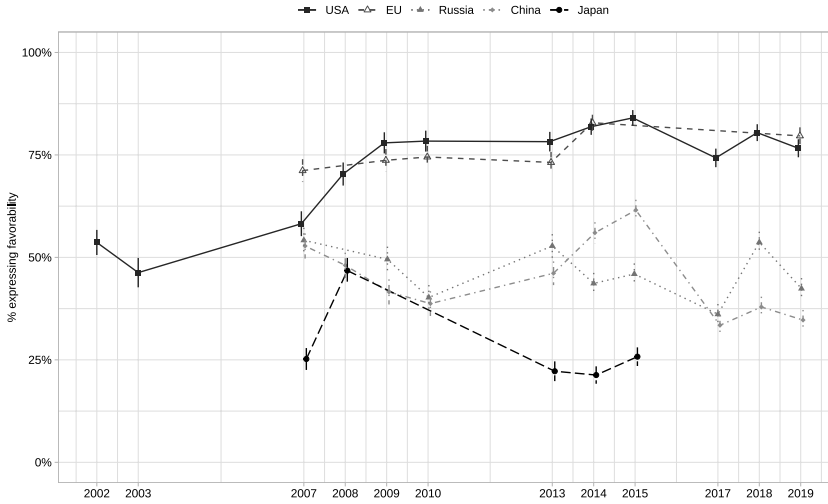

FIGURE 2.1 South Koreans' favorability ratings toward the US and select regional powers, 2003–19
Source: Pew Global Indicators Database. Error bars = 95% CI.

only 54 and 46 percent, respectively, saying they hold a favorable view (very much or somewhat) of the US. During the George W. Bush years, the status of the relationship was considered, at best, "ambivalent."[19] There was obvious tension in the alliance, exacerbated by the death of two junior high school students who were hit by a US armored vehicle.[20] Further, liberal President Roh Moo-hyun's domestic and foreign policies, especially regarding North Korea and the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), were at odds with American aims, and specifically those of President Bush.[21] According to polling data covering the period after South Korea's democratic transition, opinion toward the US as a country had never been more negative than during the George W. Bush administration.[22] The future of the relationship was very much an open question at this time.

[19] E.V. Larson, N.D. Levin, S. Baik, and B. Savych, "Ambivalent Allies? A Study of South Korean Attitudes toward the U.S.," RAND Corporation Technical Report, March 2004, www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/technical_reports/2005/RAND_TR141.pdf.

[20] D. Kirk, "Road Accident Galvanizes the Country: Deaths in Korea Ignite Anti-American Passion," *International Herald Tribune*, July 31, 2002, www.nytimes.com/2002/07/31/news/road-accident-galvanizes-the-country-deaths-in-korea-ignite.html.

[21] B.K. Kim, "The U.S.-South Korean Alliance: Anti-American Challenges," *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 3, no. 2 (2003): 225–58.

[22] Larson et al., "Ambivalent Allies?," p. 45.

The relationship, however, did not exactly collapse. Although it was a low point, nearly half of the population still favorably appraised the US. Further, as Jiyoon Kim points out,[23] although Roh sought autonomy from the US, he negotiated closely on several key strategic issues, including the war in Iraq (South Korea sent troops) and the proposal for a free trade agreement with the US (what would become the KORUS FTA). He also made an official state visit to Washington, DC. Continuities notwithstanding, within the period of observation considered here the Bush administration's rule was unquestionably a low point in terms of how South Koreans viewed the US.

South Korean attitudes recovered in Bush's second term (2005–8) and would rise even more with the election of Barack Obama in 2008. In 2009, 78 percent of South Koreans favorably appraised the US. This number would reach its peak of 82 percent in 2015, in the second to last year of Obama's Presidency.

How did opinions change with the election of Donald Trump in 2016? Using three years of data (2017–19) the conclusion is: *not much*. After a modest decline (to 74 percent) following Trump's election, the proportion of South Koreans with a favorable view of the US would again rise to 80 percent in 2018 and then decline, but only slightly, to 77 percent in 2019. The new baseline for South Korean public opinion toward the US set under Obama remained during the Trump years.

Notably, for all regional actors except for the EU, the favorability of the US was significantly and sustainably higher. In 2019, views of the US were 35 percentage points higher than Russia (42 percent) and 42 percentage points higher than China (35 percent). At 80 percent, the EU's approval was higher, but not by a statistically significant amount. From the Obama years going forward, there were significant differences in opinions toward the US and others, with the US viewed much more favorably (again, the EU notwithstanding). Approval of China dropped below 50 percent between 2015 and 2017, which overlaps with the election and rise of Chinese President Xi Jinping. For years for which data is available for Japan, the differences in approval relative to the US are even greater than that for Russia and China.

Having established country approval over the better part of the last two decades, what, then, do South Koreans think of US presidents? Figure 2.2 reports the proportions of South Koreans who express

[23] Kim, "South Korean Public Opinion."

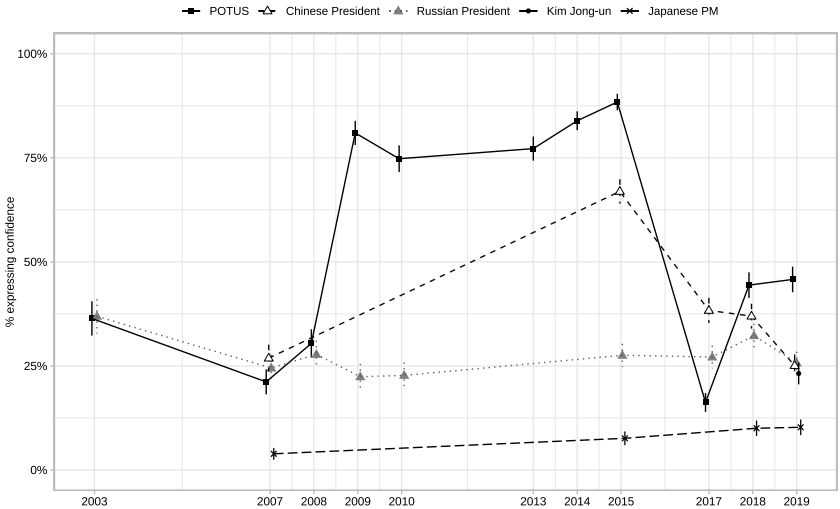

FIGURE 2.2 South Koreans' confidence in POTUS and select regional leaders, 2003–19
Source: Pew Global Indicators Database. Error bars = 95% CI.

"some" or "a lot" of confidence that POTUS will do the right thing regarding world affairs from 2003 to 2019.

We see, again, a negative appraisal during the George W. Bush years, with less than half of South Koreans expressing confidence toward POTUS in 2003 (36 percent) and less than a quarter in 2007 (21 percent). During the Bush presidency, only Shinzo Abe, prime minister of Japan, registered significantly lower confidence (4 percent). However, as observed with approval of the US as a country, Barack Obama restored confidence in the presidency in the eyes of South Koreans. Confidence in President Obama never dropped lower than 81 percent (in 2010) and ended on an exceptionally high point in 2015, at 88 percent.

How did public opinion of POTUS change with the election of Donald Trump? The data suggests an interesting story. Immediately following Trump's election, confidence in POTUS collapsed from 88 percent to 16 percent – an enormous 72 percentage point decline. Trump's positions on key alliance issues, as already discussed, and probably the image and politics of Donald Trump himself were coldly received by South Koreans.

However, the leaders of regional powers did not fare any better. Over approximately the same period, confidence in Xi Jinping (Chinese president) began a sharp decline, while confidence in the Russian president

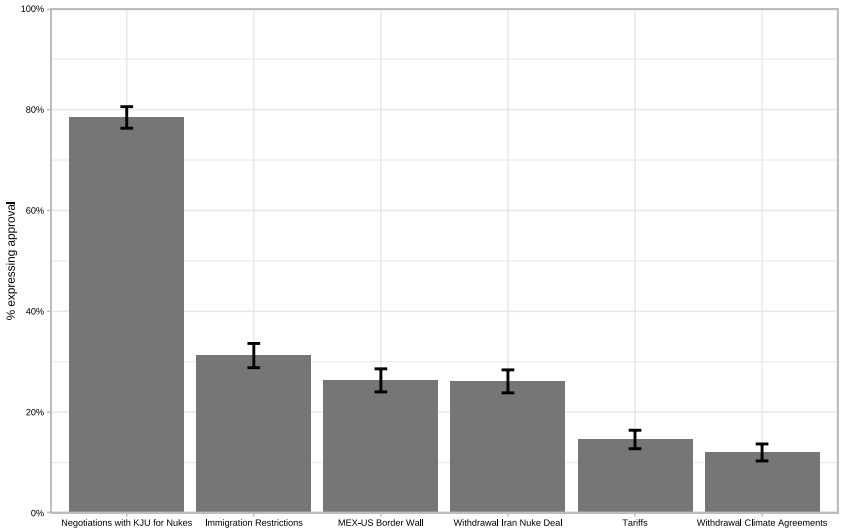

FIGURE 2.3 South Koreans' approval of Trump administration policies, 2019
Source: Pew Global Indicators Database. Error bars = 95% CI.

remained consistently low, as it did for the Japanese prime minister and Kim Jong-un (for whom data is available only in 2019).[24] Despite hitting a low point in 2017, confidence in Trump made a significant rebound in 2018, climbing to 44 percent (a sizable 28 percentage point rebound).

Figure 2.3 shows the percentage of South Koreans who approve of key policy actions taken by the Trump administration. With the notable exception of negotiations with Kim Jong-un over North Korea's nuclear weapons, these policies were negatively assessed. Approximately two in three people disapproved of Trump's immigration restrictions and roughly three in four people reacted negatively to plans for an extended and reinforced Mexico–US border wall, the US withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), or the "Iran nuclear deal." Even less popular were increasing tariffs on imported goods and withdrawing from climate agreements. South Koreans, the data indicates, largely prefer a US administration that is engaged with and open to the world.

What stands apart from all items reported is Trump's policy of engaging North Korea on the country's nuclear weapons program. In 2019, 78 percent of South Koreans approved of this policy. As indicated in the

[24] For Russia, the president was Vladimir Putin for all years except 2008–10, when it was Dmitry Medvedev.

joint North Korea–US statement from the Singapore Summit in 2018,[25] the US committed to providing an improved security environment and Kim Jong-un committed to "lasting peace and complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," a phrase and long-time policy stance taken by Pyongyang that would be repeated (with South Korean support) in the Pyongyang Joint Declaration of September 2018, too.[26] Although the second Trump–Kim summit, held in Hanoi on February 27–28, would end without a deal, highlighting some fundamental misunderstandings in the Trump administration regarding what Kim Jong-un committed to (a fundamental misunderstanding of what "complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" means, in the opinion of the author), it was certainly established that Trump was interested in taking steps toward denuclearization in North Korea. Whether his approach was doomed to fail from the beginning, lacked an appreciation of what North Korea thinks, or ignored the long and acrimonious relationship between Pyongyang and Washington is considered beside the point. The objective was clear, even if the instruments and understanding employed to achieve that objective were not.

Regarding the US image and the Trump administration from the South Korean perspective, the empirical findings presented thus far show several things. First, following recovery from the early George W. Bush years, the US remained very positively regarded. In fact, high favorability of the US remained even as confidence in the US president plummeted, suggesting that the image and ideal of the US are not necessarily linked to the person who occupies the Oval Office. Trump may have been poorly appraised, but the positive image of the US remained. This is a relatively simple finding, but one nevertheless worth underscoring.

Second, after an initial bottoming-out of confidence in POTUS in 2017, we observe a significant increase in support (+28 percentage points) in 2017, which continues into 2018. The reason for this change is not clear but is obviously worth considering. What might explain it?

One possible, and rather straightforward, explanation is that Trump's about-face on North Korea policy was viewed as enabling South Korean President Moon Jae-in's pro-engagement policy with Pyongyang, thereby bolstering his approval with those who most support President

[25] *New York Times*, "The Trump-Kim Summit Statement: Read the Full Text," June 12, 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/06/12/world/asia/trump-kim-summit-statement.html.

[26] National Committee on North Korea, "Pyongyang Joint Declaration of September 2018," September 2018, www.ncnk.org/node/1633.

Moon – namely, South Korean progressives. The 2018 Pew survey was fielded from May 25 to June 19, so it would have captured any change in sentiment following this announcement and indeed the summit itself, which was held on June 12. The same logic would hold for 2019 (with confidence in POTUS at 46 percent). The top-line numbers, however, do not reveal the reason behind the variation or whether this interpretation is correct.

At the time of the survey (May 27–July 11, 2019), we observe a high level of support for Trump's North Korea policy. Although most of his policies were poorly rated, South Koreans were shown to approve of a US foreign policy that engaged North Korea, at least on the issue of nuclear weapons.

To better understand South Koreans' favorability ratings of the US during the Trump administration and to further explore the rise in confidence toward Donald Trump and approval of his North Korea policy, the next section examines whether opinions vary by select groups. Specifically, it looks at age cohorts, political identification, and gender. By doing this, we get a more nuanced view of South Koreans' view of the US during the Trump administration. Further, differences in opinion can be identified and explanations of why opinions changed can be considered.

A CLOSER LOOK: BREAKING DOWN THE NUMBERS BY SELECT GROUPS

In this section, we examine the three outcome variables explored in the previous section by age cohort, political identification, and gender in 2017 and 2019 – that is, the first year of Trump's administration and the last year for which we have data. Before looking at how the numbers break down, let us consider why we ought to consider how opinions differ among these groups.

It is common to consider opinions by age for all sorts of reasons. Older people tend to vote more, younger people are the future, and so forth. However, in South Korea the distinctive differences in formative years' experiences – if defined by the researcher as the kind of regime and political system in which one comes of age, as is often done – provide a strong theoretical motivation to consider our questions across age cohorts.[27]

[27] See S. Rigger, "Taiwan's Rising Rationalism: Generations, Politics, and 'Taiwanese Nationalism,'" Policy Studies No. 26 (Washington, DC: East-West Center Policy Studies, 2006); and R. Dalton and D.C. Shin, "Growing Up Democratic: Generational Change in East Asian Democracies," *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 15, no. 3 (2014), 345–72.

Consider that those 18 years old at the time of the country's democratic transition (1987) would have been about 50 years old in 2019. Then, those younger (the 18–29, 30–39, and 40–49 cohorts) would have come of age under democratic rule and those older (50–59 and 60+), under authoritarian rule.

The division of the population is not scientific; age cut-offs for cohorts or generations are at least somewhat arbitrary. However, opinions have been shown to straddle this divide regarding the US and political and social life more generally, and the difference in formative years' experiences is suggested as an explanation for these differing views.[28] For instance, evidence shows that while most South Koreans support "democracy," views of what democracy substantively means differ by pre- and post-democratic transition generations. Those who have grown up with democracy are more likely to hold beliefs consistent with liberal democracy than citizens from the authoritarian generation.[29] Given the emphasis placed on "shared values" as a foundation of the US alliance system in East Asia, it is important to know whether those most likely to share the liberal democratic values espoused by the US support *actually* approve of the US – and, if they do not, then why.

As for political identification, evidence shows that South Koreans' views of the US are conditioned by their political identities and, specifically, their views of regional security and North Korea.[30] It is widely held that conservatives see North Korea as a political and security threat and are thus more supportive of the South Korea–US alliance. Progressives, on the other hand, are seen as = more skeptical of the value of close US ties.[31] They view North Korea as a potential partner in establishing peace on the peninsula, leading eventually to national unification. The US, to many progressives, is an impediment to this goal. Thus, they prefer a more independent relationship.

[28] K.H.S. Moon, "Korean Nationalism, Anti-Americanism, and Democratic Consolidation," in S.S. Kim (ed.), *Korea's Democratization* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 135–57.

[29] S. Denney, "Democratic Support and Generational Change in South Korea," in G.A. Brazinsky (ed.), *Korea and the World: New Frontiers in Korean Studies* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 179–202.

[30] H. Chae and S. Kim, "Conservatives and Progressives in South Korea," *Washington Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (2008): 77–95; Chae, "South Korean Attitudes toward the ROK–U.S. Alliance"; S.B. Moller, "Domestic Politics, Threat Perceptions, and the Alliance Security Dilemma: The Case of South Korea, 1993–2020," *Asian Security* 18, no. 2 (2021): 119–37.

[31] One could use "liberals" interchangeably. This chapter does not distinguish between "liberal" and "progressive."

Accordingly, those left of center tend to favor engagement with North Korea, even unconditionally, which is often at odds with US and Korean conservative policies meant to induce political reform or denuclearization. As Seung-ook Lee explains, since the transition of power to Korean progressives in the 1990s, North Korea policy options changed fundamentally.[32] No longer was Pyongyang seen as a purely political and military object; it was also now approached as an "object of development" through which cooperation would bring mutual economic and political benefits.

It stands to reason, then, that understanding how those who identify as progressive or conservative view the US is important and can inform interested parties on whether attitudes are changing and, if so, why.

Lastly, we look at how opinions differ by the gender of the respondent. At first glance, the reason for looking at opinions of men and women separately may not be obvious, but given the vulgar, sexist, and demeaning language used by President Trump when referring to women, it stands to reason that electing such a man may have consequences for how women and those offended or otherwise opposed to sexist attitudes elsewhere view the US and the president himself.[33] Further, given the recent backlash against feminism and the rise of misogynist discourse among some conservatives in South Korea, with a surprising uptake among young Korean men, it is fair to ask whether someone like Trump may appeal to some Korean men.[34]

What do we find? Figure 2.4 shows favorability toward the US across all three groups. Generally, support registers at or around the averages of approximately three in four (74 percent in 2017 and 77 percent in 2019), and there is little substantive difference in opinion between the two years of observation for any group. We also observe a noticeable difference in opinion by political identification on two scores. First, in 2017, only

[32] S.-O. Lee, "A Geo-economic Object or an Object of Geo-political Absorption? Competing Visions of North Korea in South Korean Politics," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 45, no. 4 (2015): 693–714.

[33] S. Frothingham and S. Phadke, "100 Days, 100 Ways the Trump Administration Is Harming Women and Families," *Center for American Progress*, April 25, 2017, www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2017/04/25/430969/100-days-100-ways-trump-administration-harming-women-families.

[34] N.S. Park, "Why So Many Young Men in South Korea Hate Feminism," *Foreign Policy*, June 23, 2021, https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/06/23/young-south-korean-men-hate-liberals-feminists; S. Finlay and J. Song, "Why South Korea's Young Men Are Turning Conservative," *Pursuit*, August 13, 2021, https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/why-south-korea-s-young-men-are-turning-conservative.

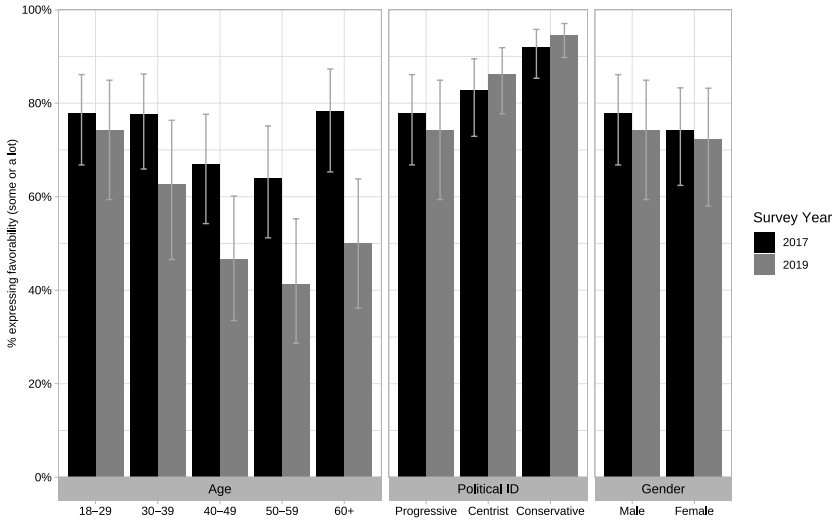

FIGURE 2.4 South Koreans' favorability toward the US by select groups, 2017 and 2019
Source: Pew Global Indicators Database. Error bars = 95% CI.

64 percent of progressives held a favorable view of the US, compared to 84 percent of conservatives (a sizable 20 percentage point difference). Further, among progressives, we observe a 12 percentage point drop (from 64 percent expressing favorability in 2017 to 52 percent in 2019).

On average, more than half of those identifying as left of center approved of the US near the end of the Trump years, but this is significantly lower than centrists (75 percent) and conservatives (88 percent). It is not unexpected to see the least number of people expressing favorable views of the US among this group, as noted earlier, but the drop is notable. There is little difference in opinion by gender, and none of it is statistically significant.

Among age cohorts, we see that in 2017 and 2019 the highest proportions of people expressing a favorable view of the US are in the 60+ cohort (2017) and the 18–29 cohort (2019). Perhaps most significant here is that not only do young South Koreans view the US favorably, but they were also the most likely to do so in 2019. South Korea's young democrats (as in those raised fully under liberal democratic institutions) positively appraise the US. There is goodwill there, and that bodes well for the "shared values" approach to alliance management going forward. The difference with older age cohorts, although lower (except for the 60+ cohort, who also hold the US in very high regard), should not be cause for great concern.

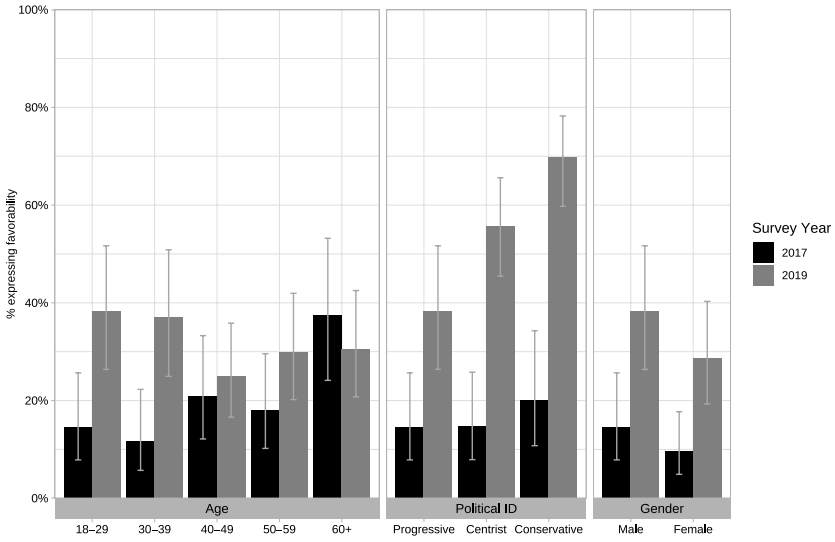

FIGURE 2.5 South Koreans' confidence in Donald Trump by select groups, 2017 and 2019
Source: Pew Global Indicators Database. Error bars = 95% CI.

The US remained favorably appraised throughout the Trump years, but we know from our analysis = that the same cannot be said of Donald Trump himself. Figure 2.5 reports the same group analysis but for those expressing confidence in POTUS to do the right thing in world affairs. We see here that in 2017, confidence in POTUS hit rock bottom across the board. Relative to the average for that year (16 percent), there are a few groups expressing higher levels of confidence (those 60+ at 27 percent and conservatives at 23 percent), but these numbers are still extremely low when compared to confidence expressed in Barack Obama as POTUS.

The more interesting finding here is clear to see: Confidence increased from 2017 to 2019 across all groups. Except for the 40–49 age cohort, the upper bound of the confidence interval for all age cohorts exceeds the 50 percentage mark.[35] In fact, for the 18–29 cohort, the average exceeds it at 52 percent. The same can be said for males (51 percent) and conservatives (58 percent).

Absent detailed analysis, one might conclude that Trump's overtures of peace for denuclearization pushed numbers up across the board for pursuing peace and/or enabling South Korean President Moon Jae-in's

[35] The upper bound of the confidence interval is the highest point where we can say, with 95 percent confidence, the true value is located.

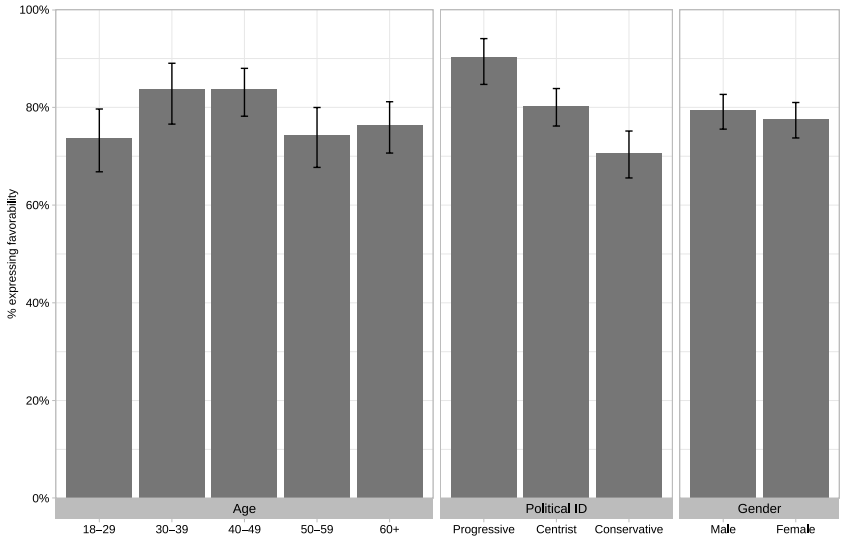

FIGURE 2.6 South Koreans' approval of Donald Trump's North Korea policy by select groups, 2019
Source: Pew Global Indicators Database. Error bars = 95% CI.

pro-engagement agenda. But then we would expect to see a large – and, arguably, the largest – increase in the percentage of those expressing confidence in POTUS among progressives. This is *not* the case. One of the biggest gains between the years of observation is seen among conservatives, or those *least* likely to approve of a pro-engagement policy with North Korea. These are somewhat puzzling findings, especially when we consider them alongside the approval data on Trump's North Korea policy.

We see in Figure 2.6 that Trump's preference for negotiating with Kim Jong-un over North Korea's nuclear weapons program was a *very* popular policy among the South Korean population by age, political identification, and gender. The lowest level of approval observed is for conservatives, but at 71 percent one would be hard pressed to call that low in an absolute sense. It is unexpected that conservatives would approve of an engagement policy with North Korea, especially given the exceptionally hardline stance conservatives have taken since, at least, the sinking of the *Cheonan* naval corvette and the bombing of Yeongpyong Island in 2010.[36] What might explain this counterintuitive finding? It is hard to say for certain with the data analyzed here, but some reasoned conjecture is certainly warranted.

[36] T.J. Kang, "Lee Myung-bak: North Korea Sought Inter-Korea Summit Meeting 5 Times," *The Diplomat*, January 30, 2015, https://thediplomat.com/2015/01/lee-myung-bak-north-korea-sought-inter-korea-summit-meeting-5-times.

One plausible reading is that conservative opposition to such policies today is reserved for the domestic opposition and Korean progressives in particular. Thus, the North Korea policy of a foreign leader, and an American conservative at that, is evaluated in a nonpartisan way; the policy is evaluated on its merit. Koreans across the political spectrum favor peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and, we see here, support an American president pursuing that via negotiations with Kim Jong-un.

More broadly, the findings indicate that conservative opinion is not unequivocally hardline on North Korea. Previous research finds "a developing consensus" among all political groups that the current purpose of the South Korea–US alliance is to promote "inter-Korean reconciliation."[37] South Koreans, it stands to reason, may simply be responding according to this shared preference. Despite a rocky start, it is not a stretch to say that the Trump administration at least *tried* to pursue a policy that promoted inter-Korean peace and reconciliation. Whether the actions of the Trump administration could, in fact, accomplish this goal is beside the point.

Another explanation, somewhat different but not wholly unrelated, is that Trump's brash style of populist-authoritarian politics was an attractive change of approach for many South Koreans. We observed earlier that, in addition to approving of Trump's North Korean policy, conservatives positively appraised Trump as a world leader in 2019 after negatively assessing him in 2017 (see Figure 2.5). The same cannot be said of progressives. This is a puzzling divergence in outcomes worth unpacking.

Considering that the main conservative candidate for South Korean president in 2016 was Hong Jun-pyo, another self-described political "strongman" who characterized himself as Korea's version of Donald Trump and China's Xi Jinping, it is not surprising that conservatives would take a liking to Trump, too.[38] These political figures are not entirely different. Once the brawn and bluster over alliance cost-sharing and claims of free riding subsided, South Koreans were presented with a curious scenario: a Hong-like candidate willing to sit down with Kim

[37] Chae, "South Korean Attitudes toward the ROK–U.S. Alliance."

[38] M.J. Lee, "[Party debate of the Liberty Korea Party] THAAD issue, Hong Joon Pyo 'A battle of guts' Kim Jin-tae 'Pro-U.S., not pro-China, is a given'" [한국당 경선토론] 사드문제, 홍준표 "배짱 승부" 김진태 "친중 아닌 친미가 당연"], *Kukje Newspaper*, March 26, 2017, www.kookje.co.kr/news2011/asp/newsbody.asp?code=0100&key=20170326.99002101802.

Jong-un and negotiate. The interpretation of the findings then goes as follows: Conservatives, generally, approve of Trump as a likable personality and world leader, and they approve of his North Korea policy because of this affinity. There are plenty of qualitative examples that can be used to illustrate the awkward tension for some South Korean conservatives, who find themselves torn between their adoration for Trump and their uneasiness with his choice to engage North Korea. Following the Singapore Summit, during which Trump praised Kim Jong-un, Cho Won-jin, a Park Geun-hye loyalist and far-right politician, is quoted by a Reuters report as saying, "Trump said Kim is an 'amazing leader', thus legitimizing him. This makes us, the patriotic citizens, feel betrayed."[39] Yet the views of those identifying on the right end of the political spectrum are moderated by their positive views of both the US and Donald Trump. The same Reuters source notes a belief, at least for one person interviewed, that Trump could seek regime change if denuclearization of North Korea failed.

Centrists fall somewhere in between, a position befitting their label. Progressives, however, express a more conflicted opinion. They do not approve of Trump as a world leader, but they do support his negotiations with Kim. This is, presumably, because Trump's policy is in line with their own policy preferences and enables the policy agenda of President Moon – a leader they do support. This leads to more counterintuitive positions being taken. Consider Choo Mi-ae, the former leader of the South Korean Democratic Party (representing progressives). She is on record as criticizing the Democratic Party of the US for undermining Trump's efforts at achieving a peace deal with North Korea. In early 2019, she is reported as saying, "The US Democratic Party (the majority in the House of Representatives) is preoccupied with undermining the Trump administration's performance." Choo is also quoted as being critical of US-based media think tanks (namely, CSIS and 38 North) for creating a "bad atmosphere" with their coverage of North Korea's missile developments; the implication being that such coverage undermines Trump's political ambitions in Korea, which progressives support.[40]

[39] J.M. Kim and M.W. Park, "South Korea's Diehard Trump Supporters Hail 'Guardian of Liberty,'" *Reuters*, August 6, 2018, www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-southkorea-conservatives-idUSKBN1KR030.

[40] D.H. Son, "Korean Democrats Are Dissatisfied with the US Democrats, 'Why Are They Undermining Trump's Performance?'" [韓민주당, 美민주당에 불만 "왜 트럼프 성과 깎아내리나"], *Chosun Daily*, March 17, 2019, www.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2019/03/07/2019030702461.html.

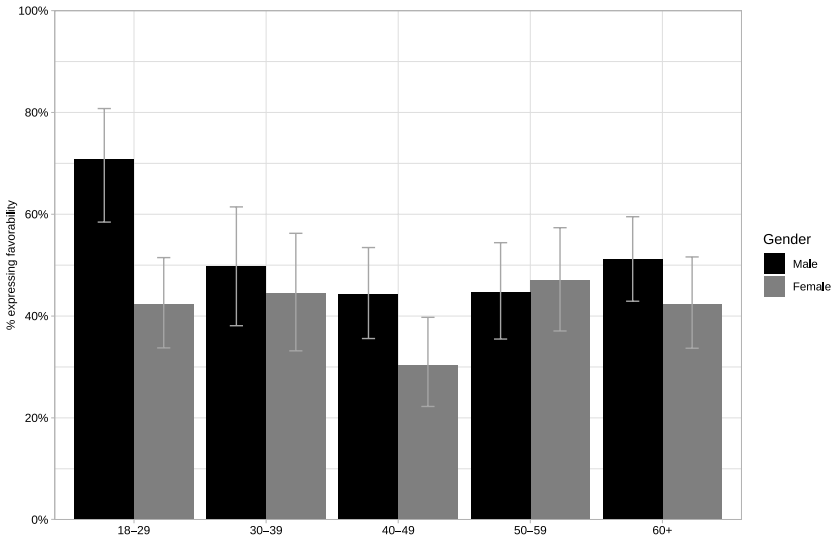

FIGURE 2.7 South Koreans' confidence in Donald Trump by select groups, 2019
Source: Pew Global Indicators Database. Error bars = 95% CI.

Lastly, there is something to be said about the gender of the respondent and the approval of Donald Trump. There are no significant differences in opinion by gender toward the US or in approval of Trump's North Korea policy. But regarding confidence in POTUS, we see a 10 percentage point difference in opinion between males (51 percent) and females (41 percent) in 2019. There is, of course, a significant increase for both genders between 2017 and 2019, as observed for all groups except progressives. But it is nevertheless interesting and arguably instructive that there remains a difference in opinion by gender. As research already cited argues, many South Korean men – especially younger men – are turning to conservativism in response to a broader social change and especially changes in gender norms and relations.

To conclude the group analysis section, Figure 2.7 shows confidence in Donald Trump as a world leader in 2019 by gender and age. There is some concern given the small sample sizes of these subgroups, so one should read these numbers cautiously. However, the findings are in line with expectations, given what we know about the gender dynamics of Trump supporters and new trends in South Korea. Across all but the 50–59 age cohort, men are more supportive than women about showing confidence in Trump, although the differences are not large nor are they statistically significant – except for the 18–29 age cohort. Tellingly, a large percentage of men in this age cohort (71 percent) express confidence in Trump.

This finding is in line with and corroborates existing research findings that young men are turning to conservative firebrands and authoritarians like Trump as a response to changing social dynamics. Trump is reflective here, like elsewhere, of domestic preferences and developments. There is clearly more research to be done.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This chapter set out to assess South Koreans' opinions toward the US and President Donald Trump within the context of the last two decades. A specific focus was then given to changes in opinion during the Trump administration and attitudes toward Trump-specific policies, especially his approach to North Korea. Using a longitudinal dataset, constructed with data from the Pew Research Center Global Attitudes Surveys, the data and analysis were used to tell a story of the US, from the perspective of one of its longest-standing and most important allies. The findings are instructive.

First, the findings show that, following the somewhat tumultuous years of the George W. Bush and Roh Moo-hyun administrations, which set a low point in South Korean public opinion of the US, attitudes started trending positively with the election of Barack Obama. Favorable opinions of the US remained throughout the Trump years, even as confidence in the US president to do the right thing on the global stage bottomed out. The disconnect between opinions of the US as a country and confidence in POTUS is notable. It suggests a sophistication in South Korean attitudes and a disaggregating of what the US stands for – today and historically – and who may be representing the country as an elected leader.

Notably, aside from the EU, which South Koreans view as favorably as the US, the US remains by and large the most favorably assessed regional state actor. Less than half of South Koreans view China favorably, consistent with global trends, and neither Russia nor Japan is viewed with much enthusiasm.[41] For the years data is available, Japan garners barely a 25 percent favorability rating and Russia is scarcely more popular than China.

[41] L. Silver, K. Devlin, and C. Huang, "Unfavorable Views of China Reach Historic Highs in Many Countries," Pew Research Center: Global Attitudes and Trends, October 6, 2020, www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/10/06/unfavorable-views-of-china-reach-historic-highs-in-many-countries.

Second, while confidence in the US president plunged following Donald Trump's election to the presidency from its high point during the Obama administration, it rebounded considerably in years two and three of Trump's administration. Notably, excluding his first year, confidence in Trump was higher than it was for Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un, and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Even when Trump was relatively unpopular, he was still more popular than the regional alternatives.

While it may seem unremarkable to some that South Koreans do not hold Russia, North Korea, and China, as well as their leaders, in high regard, it is nevertheless noteworthy that these countries and leaders are considerably less popular than the US and its leadership. Further, until recently, the region was China's to lose. As things look at the time of writing, China, and Xi Jinping in particular, is losing it.

As noted, however, the reason for Trump's noted rebound is mainly explained by increases in confidence among centrists and, especially, conservatives. It was not, contrary to reasonable expectations, driven by progressives satisfied at Trump's enabling of Moon's pro-engagement North Korea policy – or some similar reason. As explored in more detail in this chapter, Trump's authoritarian populism and unique brand of politicking resonated with many South Koreans, especially those identifying as right of center and men. Above all else, it underscores that South Koreans' opinion of Trump largely reflects their domestic preferences and opinions.

Third, analysis of South Korean public opinion toward major Trump administration policies shows that South Koreans prefer a US administration engaged with and open to the world. This preference is evidenced by very low approval of Trump's decision to pull the US out of climate change agreements and the Iranian nuclear deal, in addition to the poor reviews of implementing tariffs, restricting immigration, and preferring a Mexico–US border wall.

The analysis also showed that South Koreans support policies that they perceive as promoting inter-Korean peace and stability. South Koreans were very supportive of Donald Trump engaging Kim Jong-un over his country's nuclear weapons program. Other surveys showed that South Koreans approved of Trump's summit diplomacy with North Korea, even if, by the second summit, much of the excitement and anticipation of a peninsula-redefining breakthrough began to wane.[42] Notably, the

[42] K.H. Kim, "Optimism and Pessimism over the Implementation of the North Korean Agreement Ahead of the North Korea-US Summit" [북미정상회담 앞두고 北 합

data analyzed here was collected after both US–North Korean summits, so the fact that Trump's North Korea policy remains highly regarded is an indication of what South Koreans prefer from a US administration – engagement and negotiation with North Korea over an existential threat in nuclear weapons.

As the Biden administration determines the direction it wishes to go in regarding its alliance with South Korea and what to do regarding North Korea's nuclear weapons program, the findings presented here are of value. Reports indicate that Biden will revert to an alternative approach in dealing with North Korea and the question of denuclearization, favoring incremental approaches pursued via lower diplomatic channels rather than the more conspicuous "leader-to-leader" approach favored by Trump. Although some read Trump's approach to negotiations as one marked by bold proposals, such as the Hanoi Summit proposal of complete dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear weapons program in exchange for sanctions relief and substantive economic aid, there is evidence that what was ultimately pursued differed little from previous US administrations – that is, incremental relief for incremental changes, with an end goal of complete denuclearization.[43] In fact, this case is made by both Bob Woodward in his book on Donald Trump, *Rage*, and John Bolton in his memoir covering his time in the Trump White House, *The Room Where It Happened*.[44] While this approach would be more consistent with previous administrations, it may not be the approach most favored by South Koreans.[45]

Many will see the Biden administration as repairing US relations with South Korea after a contentious and uncertain four years under Trump, an interpretation supported by developments such as a new agreement on military cost-sharing and more positive-in-tone dialogue

의이행 낙관·비관 팽팽], *Yonhap News*, February 15, 2019, www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20190215053800001; Gallup Korea, "Understanding of North Korea and U.S.-North Korea Summits, Economic Outlook" [북한·북미정상 관련 인식, 경제 전망], February 14, 2019, www.gallup.co.kr/gallupdb/reportContent.asp?seqNo=987.

[43] C. Lee, "Experts: Biden Thought Likely to Reverse Trump's North Korea Policies," *Voice of America*, February 2, 2021, www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/experts-biden-thought-likely-reverse-trumps-north-korea-policies.

[44] B. Woodward, *Rage* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2020); J. Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2020).

[45] D. Wertz, "The U.S., North Korea, and Nuclear Diplomacy," National Committee on North Korea (NCNK), October 2018, www.ncnk.org/resources/briefing-papers/all-briefing-papers/history-u.s.-dprk-relations.

between top US and South Korean officials.[46] Moon Jae-in's official state visit to Washington, DC, indicates that more friendly relations with South Korea will define Biden's term. But it is not yet clear – at least at the time of writing – whether a break with all parts of Trump's approach to the Korean peninsula is wise. In terms of a willingness to do more than pursue "strategic patience" with North Korea, there is broad support among South Koreans for engagement. Although it may be the preferred approach, a foreign policy that engages with Pyongyang is a complicated matter. It is unclear what the substance of such an approach would involve today. Disagreements between Seoul and Washington over a possible end-of-war declaration underscore the difficulties.[47]

Even so, Moon Jae-in called upon the Biden administration to build upon "achievements that were made under the Trump administration," emphasizing that "dialogues can pick up the pace if we restart the Singapore declaration and seek concrete measures in the negotiations."[48] The implications of the breakdown in negotiations between the US and North Korea and the subsequent souring of North–South relations for the new and conservative Yoon Seok-yeol administration remain unclear, but since North Korea acquired a nuclear arsenal in 2006, there has been little evidence that Pyongyang is willing to pursue denuclearization – not, at least, on terms preferable to either the US or South Korea. While there was some question as to whether there would be any continuation of a pro-engagement North Korea policy in Seoul, the election of Yoon has put to rest this idea. The Yoon administration, in a fashion expected of a conservative administration, has sought to strengthen defense ties with Washington. It has not considered building

[46] K. Ferrier, "Biden Takes the Right First Steps with South Korea, but a Long Road Lies Ahead," *The Diplomat*, March 12, 2021, https://thediplomat.com/2021/03/biden-takes-the-right-first-steps-with-south-korea-but-a-long-road-lies-ahead; M.R. Gordon and A. Jeong, "U.S., South Korean Negotiators Reach a Cost-Sharing Accord on Troops," *Wall Street Journal*, March 7, 2021, www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-south-korea-negotiators-reach-agreement-on-troop-cost-sharing-11615142406; T. Harris and H. Lee, "A New Chapter in U.S.-South Korea Relations: Seoul Embraces a Broader Role in Asia," Center for American Progress, June 25, 2021, www.americanprogress.org/article/new-chapter-u-s-south-korea-relations-seoul-embraces-broader-role-asia.

[47] C. Chung, "US, ROK Hint at Disagreements on Ending Korean War after Top Diplomats Meet," *NK News*, October 31, 2021, www.nknews.org/2021/10/us-rok-hint-at-disagreements-on-ending-korean-war-after-top-diplomats-meet.

[48] H. Shin, "South Korea's Moon Urges Biden Admin to Follow Up on Kim, Trump Summit," *Reuters*, January 18, 2021, www.reuters.com/article/us-southkorea-northkorea-usa-idUSKBN29N08Q.

on any of the Trump administration achievements and the Biden administration shows no desire to do so either.

To conclude, it is worth considering the future of the US–South Korean alliance amid some fundamental shifts in the region over the last few decades. Although the US remains the preferred security guarantor for South Korea and East Asia's other democracies – and even non-democratic partners (e.g., Vietnam) – the foundation of Washington's security commitment is no longer based on asymmetric economic relations. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, China has upended the US as East Asia's leading trading partner and economic power. East Asian countries, such as South Korea, still maintain strong trading relations with the US, but no longer is "security secured through prosperity" in the same way it was in the second half of the twentieth century.[49] However, given China's bellicosity and authoritarian excess, the populations of East and Northeast Asian nations view China in an increasingly negative way.[50] It seems unlikely that China is going to replace the US as the preferred political power in the region, but what does that mean for the US today?

Where Washington and Seoul shared a commitment to anti-communism for most of the twentieth century, today the two countries are more closely bound by their democratic political cultures, personal ties, and commitment to freedom and security. There is an importance placed on shared values and commitments to similar ideals: namely, liberty, democracy, and human rights. The public opinion data analyzed here shows that there is a solid foundation upon which Washington can build toward a more mature and long-lasting relationship with countries like South Korea, if it chooses to do so. To avoid turning the region into a complete "powder keg," it may be imperative that the relationship not be entirely defined by military ties.[51]

[49] Calder, "Securing Security through Prosperity."
[50] Silver et al., "Unfavorable Views of China Reach Historic Highs in Many Countries."
[51] V. Jackson, "American Is Turning Asia into a Powder Keg: The Perils of a Military-First Approach," *Foreign Affairs*, October 22, 2021, www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2021-10-22/america-turning-asia-powder-keg.