

**LUISS** 

**Degree Program in Political Science**

Course of Asian Culture and Politics

**The Americanization of South Korea:  
U.S. influence on  
South Koreans' daily life**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the phenomenon of Americanization of South Korea, with the prospect to identify whether South Koreans currently perceive it to be strongly present in their common life circumstances and to what extent. The results of this project have been obtained through comparison of published academic literature and empirical research, particularly focused on American influence on: South Korean film market, movie consumption and distribution, beauty standards, and higher education, along with Koreans' perception of the U.S. and ROK-U.S. bilateral ties. This thesis deals with interiorized western values by South Koreans, their awareness of American influence, and future expectations on South Korea's relationship with the United States.

### **Abstract In Italian**

Il presente lavoro esamina il fenomeno di Americanizzazione della Corea del Sud, con la prospettiva di identificare se i Sudcoreani al momento lo percepiscano come fortemente presente in circostanze comuni delle loro vite e fino a che punto. I risultati di questo progetto sono stati ottenuti tramite il confronto di pubblicazioni accademiche e ricerca empirica, focalizzate particolarmente sull'influenza statunitense su: il mercato cinematografico Sudcoreano, il consumo e la distribuzione di film, gli standard di bellezza, e l'istruzione superiore da una parte; dall'altra, le impressioni che i Coreani hanno degli Stati Uniti e dei rapporti bilaterali ROK-U.S. Questa tesi tratta di valori occidentali interiorizzati dai Sudcoreani, la loro consapevolezza dell'influenza statunitense e future aspettative sulla relazione della Corea del Sud con gli Stati Uniti.

## Introduction

The creation of the Republic of Korea (ROK) and its people have been accompanied by constant support and exchanges with the United States of America since the very dawn of the nation. It is undeniable how said relationship has influenced South Koreans' lives, introducing them to different values, habits, perspectives that have made their way into people's homes, daily activities, and that are now part of what we know as South Korea.

This undergraduate thesis aims at looking into some relevant Americanized frameworks of Korean life – according to academic publications on this phenomenon – and revealing how strong Americanization is perceived by South Koreans nowadays. Please notice this paper provides an unpretentious and not exceptionally innovative interpretation of what is a highly discussed and analyzed argument in the academic field. Nevertheless, the empirical research conducted during this project reveals a few insightful takes of South Korean citizens on the topic at hand.

This thesis is structured into three chapters. Chapter number one overviews literature on the Americanization of South Korea and social responses to it. The Americanization of ROK deals with three main cultural aspects, namely film consumption and distribution, beauty standards, and higher education. Follows the subchapter on Koreans' perceptions of the United States and social responses to American influence, which are divided into positive sentiments and anti-Americanism.

The literature review in the first chapter allows the comprehension of cardinal concepts that serve as foundation to the operationalization of the empirical research depicted in the second chapter, and the interpretation of obtained results, extensively illustrated in chapter 3.

The research aims at answering the thesis question, “Do South Koreans perceive the U.S. influence to be strong in their daily lives?”, thanks to contextualization and elaboration of empirically collected data. Information has been gathered via survey composed of mixed queries submitted online to a sample of South Korean citizens of at least 16 years of age.

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Ultimately, this thesis examines how deeply South Koreans perceive their lives to have changed due to U.S. influence, and to reveal their opinions on the current ROK-U.S. relationship and future possible evolutions of these themes.

## Chapter 1: American influence in South Korea – Literature review

This chapter provides theoretical discourses aiming at presenting and understanding some of the most common frameworks of daily life in contemporary South Korea, which have constantly been influenced by globalization, especially undergoing a westernization process that sees the United States as its main source, along with South Korean citizens' perception of said phenomenon.

This literature review is therefore organized into two main sections, one focused on cultural influence, the other on South Koreans' image of the U.S., investigating societal and political aspects.

Publications give us an overview of mentioned phenomena from South Korea of the early 2000s to contemporary ROK in 2020s, in order to paint a clear image of the evolution of American-brought habits into South Korean society, and be able to find correlation between cultural influence and perception of the U.S. as a state, so to analyze changes in how South Koreans feel about U.S. soft and hard power.

### • Cultural Influence

#### *a. Society*

Ever since the Japanese colonial period, South Korea has been subjected to external cultural influence and even pressured into changing traditional practices due to historical circumstances.

After the Korean War, and consequently the division of the Korean peninsula into two different countries, South Korea has been sustained by its number one ally, the United States, which have been responsible for the spreading of typically western values (mainly pragmatism, individualism) and practices into daily activities of post-war South Koreans.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charles K. Armstrong, "The Cultural Cold War in Korea, 1945-1950." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 62, no. 1 (2003): 71–99. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3096136>.

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As far as this thesis is concerned, American influence is to be researched in three main aspects of social life, namely film productions, distribution and consumption, beauty standards according to South Koreans, and higher education.<sup>2</sup>

### *i. Most imported and watched movie productions*

Entertainment has always been one of the best strategies to convey political messages and values to masses, and motion pictures have surely served many government states gain supporters or lead their citizens a certain way.

South Korea's case has been no different; from the Early Occupation Period in 1948 on, the U.S. troops and representatives launched a cultural policy to accompany their military action, in order to establish a strong American sphere of influence in the South of the Korean peninsula, that could expand to its northern part, and eventually lead to the unification of Korea under the Republic Of Korea (ROK)'s government in its entirety.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, following modifications of the Korean education system so to structure it along American lines, the U.S. government implemented active propaganda programs, among which the so-called Motion Picture Program Abroad (MPA) played a crucial role: American films were shown in occupied areas throughout the duration of the cold war period with the purpose of meeting “the need of reorientation and reeducation in these occupied or liberated countries”, quoting 1948 secretary of the U.S. army K. C. Royall.<sup>4</sup> MPA Vice President F. S. Harmon wrote the goal of the program to be presenting ‘the American way of life’, with the aim of convincing locals of the U.S.

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<sup>2</sup> Seong Won Park, “The Present and Future of Americanization in South Korea.” *Journal of Futures Studies* 14, no. 1 (2009): 51-66. The Hawaii Research Center.

<sup>3</sup> Charles K. Armstrong, “The Cultural Cold War in Korea, 1945-1950.” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 62, no. 1 (2003): 71–99. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3096136>.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*; National Archives, RG 319e, 1, U.S.A.



good deeds and the simple daily life of American men and women, avoiding outspoken propaganda, yet showing how convenient liberal democracy and capitalism could look like.<sup>5</sup>

Contemporary South Korea is obviously the result of previously presented cultural and political processes, for its establishment placed it under the western, U.S.-led, part of the globe; to this day, despite having a quite thriving movie industry, the South Korean film market is characterized by a massive presence of Hollywood productions.

However, according to a research study on competition between Hollywood films and domestic ones in South Korea, published in 2006 on the *International Journal on Media Management*, the Republic of Korea falls within those few countries where domestic movies have still been benefitting of more than half of market share, ever since its film industry started growing in 1999.<sup>6</sup>

Heavy American interference was perpetrated various times, like in the very year 2006, when, as many other countries, South Korea was pressured by the U.S.'s Motion Picture Export Association to decrease the number of screen days for domestic movies in theatres, thus provoking a major loss for South Koreans filmmakers and the whole domestic film market in terms of tickets sales, especially in 2008; despite it, ROK's movie industry managed to get back up afterwards, recording one of the highest moviegoers turnout in the world to this day and managing to bring domestic cinema to a new peak in 2013.<sup>7</sup>

It's pretty fair to describe the South Korean film market as made up of almost equal parts domestic motion pictures and Hollywood ones, totaling market share greater than 95%.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Charles K Armstrong, "The Cultural Cold War in Korea, 1945-1950." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 62, no. 1 (2003): 71-99. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3096136>.

<sup>6</sup> Moon-Haeng Lee, Eun-Kyoung Han, "Competition: Hollywood Versus Domestic Films: Release Strategies of Hollywood Films in South Korea." *The International Journal on Media Management* 8, no. 3 (2006): 125-133. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s14241250ijmm0803\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1207/s14241250ijmm0803_3).

<sup>7</sup> Kyung Hyun Kim, "South Korean Cinema Story in the Digital Age: 21<sup>st</sup>-century success on a 20<sup>th</sup>-century medium?" in *Routledge handbook of Korean Culture and Society*, ed. Youna Kim (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2017), 25-34.

<sup>8</sup> South Korean Film Council (KOFIC), 2005.

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Nevertheless, South Koreans generally tend to have a preference for domestic productions or foreign mega blockbusters, therefore calling for diverse marketing and release strategies for American movies in South Korean movie theatres, which mostly consist in well targeted advertisement, the predilection for flexible release dates as a means to either avoid direct competition with South Korean films or take advantage of their audience to further obtain visibility, and securing a high screen quota so that moviegoers are encouraged to watch Hollywood products.<sup>9</sup>

These marketing strategies along with U.S.'s Motion Picture Export Association's pressure on Korean institutions were definitely part of the reasons why the South Korean Film Council (KOFIC) – between January and October 2008 – recorded only 41.2% of movie goers in South Korea watched domestic films, compared to 50.7% who saw U.S. films, in spite of Koreans' general preferences.<sup>10</sup>

Nonetheless, the situation has been rapidly changing during the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. According to South Korean Film Council data on the top 50 blockbusters watched in South Korean theatres in 2023, 22 were domestic films, followed by 20 U.S. productions and other 8 Japanese motion pictures (see table in Appendix I). Among those 50 biggest grossing movies, the top 3 sees South Korean productions in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place, namely '12.12: The Day' and 'The Round Up: No Way Out', while 3<sup>rd</sup> place is occupied by Pixar Animation Studios 'Elemental'.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Moon-Haeng Lee, Eun-Kyoung Han, "Competition: Hollywood Versus Domestic Films: Release Strategies of Hollywood Films in South Korea." *The International Journal on Media Management* 8, no. 3 (2006): 125-133. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s14241250ijmm0803\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1207/s14241250ijmm0803_3).

<sup>10</sup> Seong Won Park, "The Present and Future of Americanization in South Korea." *Journal of Futures Studies* 14, no. 1 (2009): 51-66. The Hawaii Research Center.

<sup>11</sup> South Korean Film Council, Korean Box Office Information, 2023, [http://www.koreanfilm.or.kr/eng/news/boxOffice\\_Yearly.jsp?mode=BOXOFFICE\\_YEAR&selectDt=2023&category=ALL&country=ALL](http://www.koreanfilm.or.kr/eng/news/boxOffice_Yearly.jsp?mode=BOXOFFICE_YEAR&selectDt=2023&category=ALL&country=ALL); KOFIC, "Most watched movies in South Korea in 2023 (in millions)." Chart. January 24, 2024. Statista. Accessed February 03, 2024. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/625826/south-korea-most-viewed-movies/>

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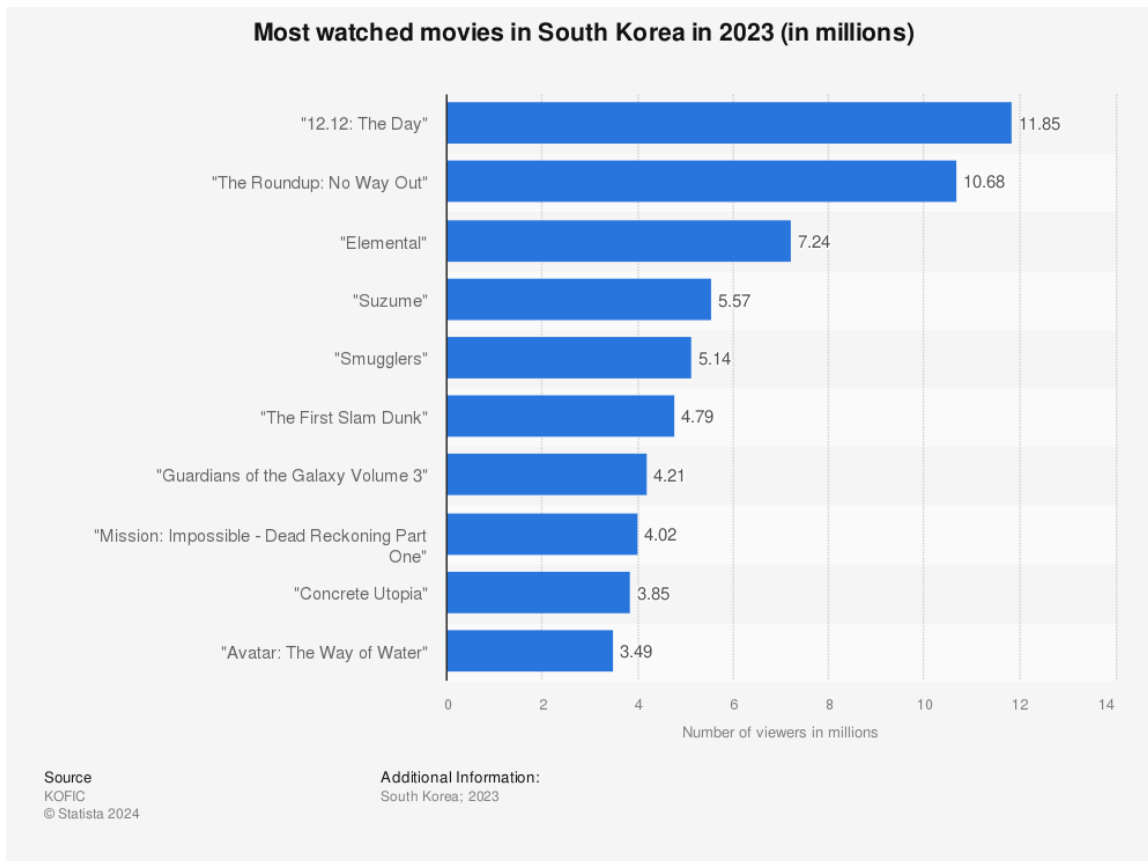


figure 1.1

In addition, as of 2023, KOFIC data show Hollywood movie quota imported by South Korea has been surpassed by Japanese productions by around 400 films, and for an overwhelming majority of domestic films to be showed in South Korean theatres this past year, totaling 1,069 titles released. It is accurate to affirm that the South Korean movie industry has been growing in a more and more independent direction allowing the distribution of domestic titles to finally constitute the majority of consumption among South Korean movie goers, and to be really competitive on the overall market share.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> KOFIC, "Leading number of movies released in South Korea in 2023, by country of origin." Chart. January 24, 2024. Statista. Accessed February 03, 2023. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/625662/south-korea-screened-films-movie-release-country/>

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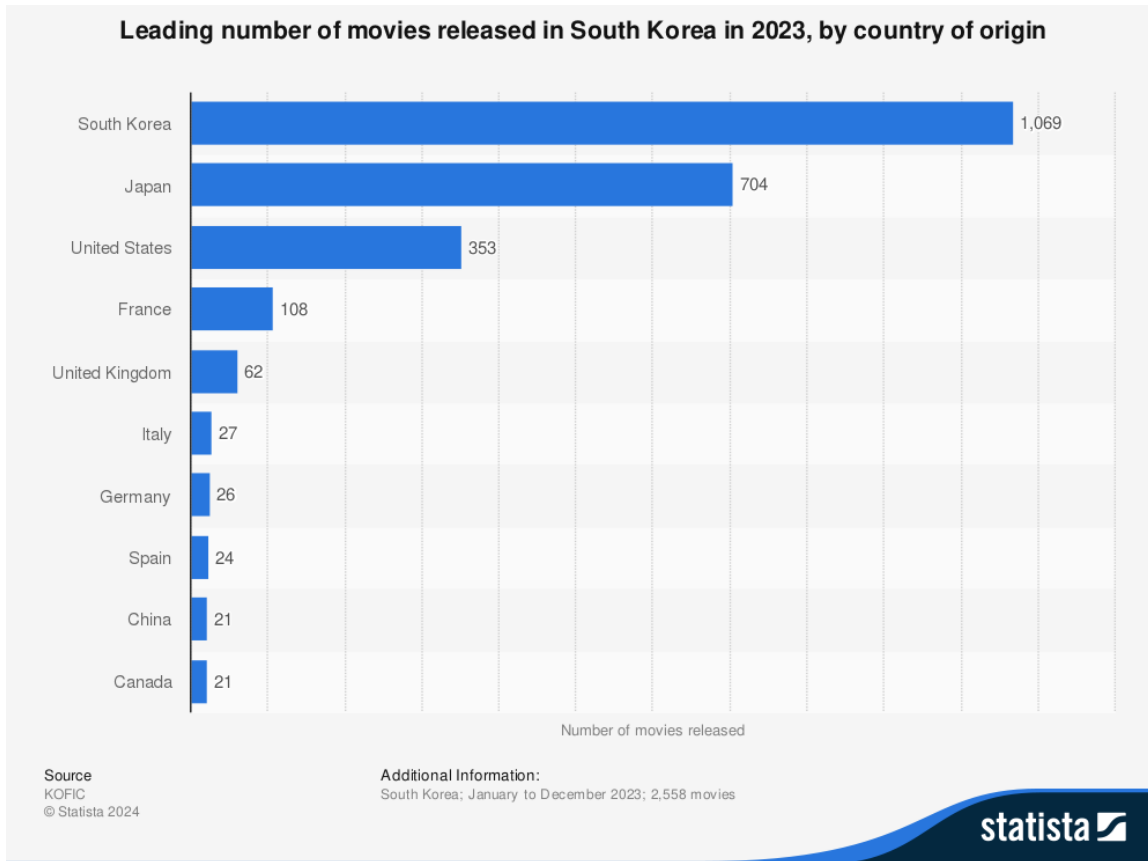


figure 1.2

As professor Jason Ditter claims in his publications, popular culture is responsible for the creation of representative images of national identity, which convey values and standards of a nation.<sup>13</sup>

For years, American pop culture has been the attention grabber of countless young Koreans, sparking a sense of utmost trust in the United States, and for Hollywood characters to become role models, however those are now being replaced by national Korean pop idols and actors, apparently distancing South Korean youth from a strictly American way of life. These models are actually results of internalized modern western values that made their way into Korean culture, though, so making South Korean youngsters to have way more in common with American youth than their parents.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Jihye Gil, "Globalization and the Korean peninsula: effects of globalization on identities and the relationship between North and South Korea". (MA thesis, San Francisco State University, 2015), 1- 69.

<sup>14</sup> Devon Nedoroscik, Peter B. Kwon, "The United States in the eyes of the South Korean people." *AEAK* 497, (2022).

While ideally national models are pulling youth closer to South Korean national identity, bringing back a stronger sense of Koreaness, the process of modernization launched by the U.S. at the dawn of South Korea is now well engrained in those generations that were brought up by media and the internet, and national values have long changed, veering to meet typically American ones in the middle.<sup>15</sup>

### *ii. Beauty standards in South Korea*

The Americanization of South Korea is undeniably a colonization process, and it behaves according to the two ‘flows’ of colonialism: undervaluing the colonized people’s culture and elevating the colonizer’s language above any other. It is against this background that we may understand how Koreans have internalized U.S. values and devalued their uniqueness in terms of physical appearance.<sup>16</sup>

Researchers have discovered ‘ideal’ beauty to be created through social interactions and be transmitted to individuals by friends and family, with the strong aid of mass media; these are often considered responsible for the creation of a ‘collective psyche’ regarding traits of beauty and attractiveness, according to authors Isa and Kramer. In this case, South Korea has been largely filled with Caucasian looking models through advertisements, and consumption of western TV-shows and movies, especially U.S. media, ever since the post-war period.<sup>17</sup>

Said exposure to American media has come into its own thanks to globalization, therefore changing exponentially the perception of beauty in South Korea, making it about resemblance to typically Caucasian physical features, notably facial traits such as big round eyes, double eyelids, prominent nose with a higher bridge, narrow face shape, sleek jaw and cheekbones. This trend has

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<sup>15</sup> *ibidem*.

<sup>16</sup> Seong Won Park, “The Present and Future of Americanization in South Korea.” *Journal of Futures Studies* 14, no. 1 (2009): 51-66. The Hawaii Research Center.

<sup>17</sup> Kim L. Bissell, Jee Young Chung, “Americanized beauty? Predictors of perceived attractiveness from U.S. and South Korean participants based on media exposure, ethnicity, and socio-cultural attitudes toward ideal beauty.” *Asian Journal of Communication* 19, no. 2 (2009): 227-247. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292980902827144>.

kicked off the infamous plastic surgery sector. Korean families invest in surgeries for their children and relatives from a young age; and the implementation of western traits in their appearance has quickly become normalized among South Koreans. But sometimes, the extreme practice of cosmetic surgery has led men and women to end up with unnatural faces, so defeating the purpose of making their appearance symmetrical as Korean beauty standards would demand; these people have therefore been described as “cheap looking” and excessively artificial by their peers, eventually winning the title of “Gangnam beauty”, after the Gangnam district in Seoul, also known as the “special plastic surgery district.” All of this, points out South Koreans’ relentless research for balance between western features and Korean beauty.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, it’s been remarked by South Korean scholar Jung Joo-Won that Korean society instills a belief that success partly depends on physical appearance in its people, and hard work might just not be enough for children to succeed in life, indicating South Korean beauty practices to be considered relevant for social reasons that go well beyond self-esteem or strictly personal necessities.<sup>19</sup>

Generally, women are the most influenced by aesthetic social norms, and the strong link between physical appearance and social recognition unfortunately enables unhealthy behaviors – often leading to development of eating disorders, body image disturbance and body dysmorphia –, enacted to achieve that ‘higher social value’. South Korean women place greater importance on appearance than U.S. women, studies demonstrated, therefore they tend to act more on their desire to change it.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> So Yeon Leem, “Gangnam-Style Plastic Surgery: The Science of Westernized Beauty in South Korea.” *Medical Anthropology* 36, no. 7 (2017): 657-67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01459740.2017.1345904>

<sup>19</sup> Seong Won Park, “The Present and Future of Americanization in South Korea.” *Journal of Futures Studies* 14, no. 1 (2009): 51-66. The Hawaii Research Center.

<sup>20</sup> Kim L. Bissell, Jee Young Chung, “Americanized beauty? Predictors of perceived attractiveness from U.S. and South Korean participants based on media exposure, ethnicity, and socio-cultural attitudes toward ideal beauty.” *Asian Journal of Communication* 19, no. 2 (2009): 227-247. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292980902827144>.

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A study on ‘human beauty values’ published in 2018 found South Korean women consider beauty a key factor in the evaluation of a person’s other qualities, such as personality or ability, and due to this social belief, a beautiful appearance tends to maximize their worth in social competition, to the point where cosmetic surgery beneficial effects on their social status outweigh its risks. The majority of South Korean participants in this research project tended to compare their physical appearance to celebrities, who embody the ideal standard of beauty, in doing so they showed a much negative obsessive perception of their own selves, which explained their preference for riskier methods to achieve quick radical changes in their body image.<sup>21</sup>

An examination on how many college-female-students received plastic surgery by psychiatrist Ryu In-Kyun in 2007 had already showed around 52.5% of the sample had undergone surgery, while 82.1% wanted to. A survey ran by Seoul City Government published in 2008, stated around 41.4% of teenagers in the city wished to have cosmetic surgery. And reports revealed young males were choosing to undergo surgery in the hopes of landing better jobs.<sup>22</sup>

In February 2020, too, surveys ran by Gallup Korea about whether plastic surgery is acceptable to improve chances to land a job or for marriage kept confirming previously set expectations by resulting in an acceptance of cosmetic surgery ratio of 67%, with a majority of women in their 30s and 40s who provided positive answers; besides, more than two thirds of South Korean respondents claimed to be willing to undergo surgery themselves to “improve their lives”, and 10% of interviewed declared they had already had plastic surgery.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Sunwoo Kim, Yuri Lee, “Why do women want to be beautiful? A qualitative study proposing a new “human beauty values” concept.” *PLoS ONE* 13, no.8 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0201347>

<sup>22</sup> Kim L. Bissell, Jee Young Chung, “Americanized beauty? Predictors of perceived attractiveness from U.S. and South Korean participants based on media exposure, ethnicity, and socio-cultural attitudes toward ideal beauty.” *Asian Journal of Communication* 19, no. 2 (2009): 227-247. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292980902827144>.

<sup>23</sup> Gallup Korea, "Opinion on having plastic surgery to improve the chances of getting a job or for marriage in South Korea in 2020." Chart. February 20, 2020. Statista. Accessed February 03, 2024. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1111225/south-korea-acceptance-of-plastic-surgery-for-job-or-marriage/> ; Gallup Korea, "Acceptance of having plastic surgery to improve the chances of getting a job or for marriage in South Korea in 2020, by age and gender." Chart. February 20, 2020. Statista. Accessed February 03, 2024. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1111242/south-korea-acceptance-of-plastic-surgery-for-job-or-marriage-by-age-and-gender/>

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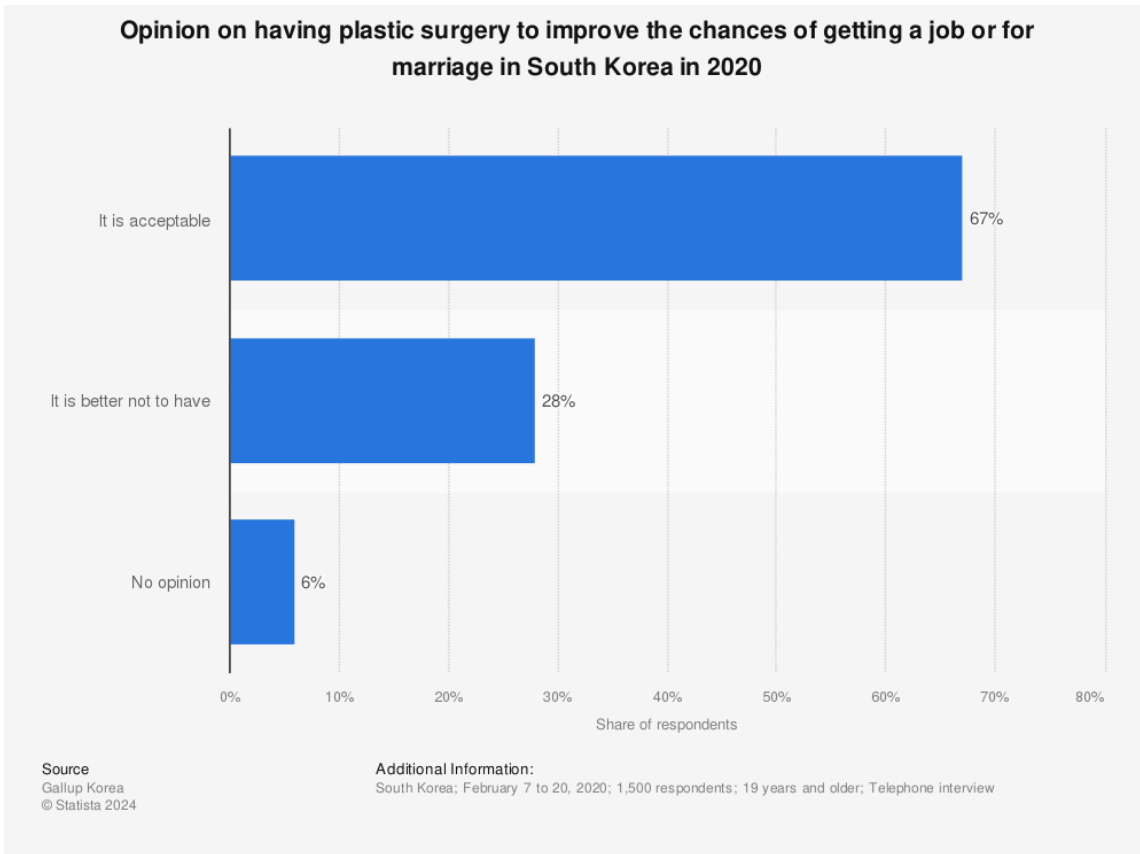


figure 1.3

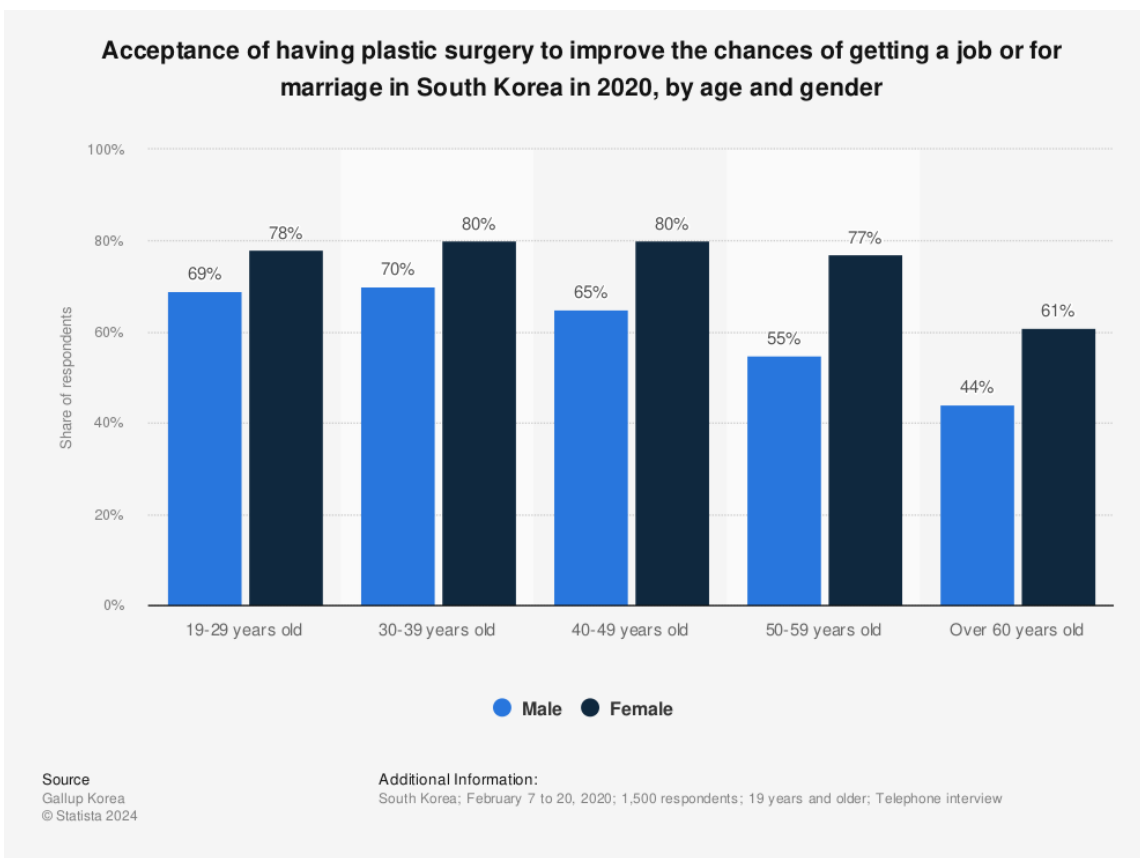


figure 1.4



Having said all that, empirical research by K. L. Bissell and J. Y. Chung on differences in perceived attractiveness among U.S. and South Korean participants found out a certain level of assimilation of U.S. aesthetic values with Korean ones; despite the exposure to foreign media playing a big role in influencing the definition of a good body or a good face, South Koreans' choices tend to look at softer, less sexualized models than U.S. participants still, even if those are also carriers of typically western facial features, thus identifying an image of ideal beauty that is more of a combination of both cultures preferences, rather than the straight annihilation of Korean beauty in favor of 'American traits'.<sup>24</sup> In fact, as much as both worlds consider big doe eyes and a slim face beautiful, westerners get surgery to achieve plumper lips, a thin nose and tanned skin, while Koreans would rather get under the knife for a V-shaped small face, double lids, pointed nose and fair skin.<sup>25</sup>

### *iii. Higher Education*

Education is one fundamental aspect of life for South Koreans. It is peculiar how ROK went from having over 50% of illiterate population in the 1940s to an unprecedented high ratio of degree holders in a matter of 50 years. Despite the fact Koreans always attributed great importance to good education, historically it was something reserved for higher classes as a mean to gain power and enter political institutions. During the Joseon Period (1392-1910) elite families zealously invested in their sons' studies, in order to make their children participate in national examinations for government posts; said exams were exclusively taken by hereditary *yangban* aristocracy (Korean Confucian 'scholarly officials'). The Japanese colonial rule managed to partly modernize Korea's education system, but made it inaccessible to the majority of Koreans, creating a stronger demand for reforms

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<sup>24</sup> Kim L. Bissell, Jee Young Chung, "Americanized beauty? Predictors of perceived attractiveness from U.S. and South Korean participants based on media exposure, ethnicity, and socio-cultural attitudes toward ideal beauty." *Asian Journal of Communication* 19, no. 2 (2009): 227-247. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292980902827144>.

<sup>25</sup> Seoul Cosmetic Surgery, "Korean versus Western Beauty Standards." Article. 2018. <https://seoulcosmeticsurgery.com/korean-versus-western-beauty-standards/> ; Sourcing Lab, "Korean Female Beauty Standards." Article. 2018. <https://sourcing-lab.com/korean-female-beauty-standards/#:~:text=Korean%20beauty%20standards%20prioritize%20having,this%20Korean%20beauty%20standard%20begin%3F>

in Korean people. It was following the partition of the peninsula and the beginning of the U.S. occupation period in 1945 – and after the birth of ROK in 1948 – that the adoption of an American inspired school system resulted in South Koreans massive run to schools.<sup>26</sup>

Confucian values rooted in Korean society mashed with the modernization of the school system, making education the utmost priority for parents to let their children climb the social ladder and improve their family status. Spending tons of resources in education is a phenomenon that stayed alive to this day. In 2018, 98% of young adults had completed high school and 80% of those graduates had enrolled in higher education programs. In that same year, South Korea was one of the best educated countries in the world.<sup>27</sup>

High education levels contributed to ROK's fast paced economic growth, to the point where its expanding job market could not accommodate the number of college graduates; the number of students increased outpacing the economic cycle. Throughout the years, the Ministry of Education has tried to compensate all those lacks in the labor market, and also put in place a system of promotion of STEM study fields in order to achieve "brain gain." Inspired by American university programs South Koreans needed to focus on scientific and technical studies, abandoning traditionally pursued humanities. The expectations of such gradual process are now well met, in fact, in 2019 The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) declared South Korea had one of the highest numbers of students enrolled in STEM majors among developed countries.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, the nation began benefitting from all young Koreans who studied abroad, to turn into a more competitive country. Studying English and owning a U.S.-issued degree holds great value when searching for an occupation in South Korea, especially when applying for high paying positions

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<sup>26</sup> Michael J. Seth, "Educational development, society, and politics in South Korea," in *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary South Korea*, ed. Sojin Lim and Niki J. P. Alford (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2022), 10-39.

<sup>27</sup> Michael J. Seth, "Educational development, society, and politics in South Korea," in *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary South Korea*, ed. Sojin Lim and Niki J. P. Alford (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2022), 10-39.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*.

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at big corporate companies such as Samsung or Hyundai. In promoting learning English in order to obtain better opportunities, South Koreans rely a lot on the *hagwons* system or system of private ‘academies’, where young students spend their time after class to work on all those skills they cannot acquire quite as well at school. But this is a not so recent trend in the Korea education institutions.<sup>29</sup>

Looking back, during modernization, American representatives in South Korea encouraged Korean intellectuals to study about the U.S. modernization theory overseas, directly at its source. Due to this process, American values have been internalized by ROK citizens even before their departure, via national agendas set by American-influenced Korean intellectuals. Of course, as South Korean governments constantly lean on the U.S., they encouraged their students to study abroad, preferring U.S. prestigious institutions over those of any other country.<sup>30</sup> According to Open Doors data, during the academic year 2022/2023, out of 1,057,188 international students enrolled at an American higher education institution, more than 42,000 were South Korean students.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Michael J. Seth, “Educational development, society, and politics in South Korea,” in *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary South Korea*, ed. Sojin Lim and Niki J. P. Alford (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2022), 10-39;

Seong Won Park, “The Present and Future of Americanization in South Korea.” *Journal of Futures Studies* 14, no. 1 (2009): 51-66. The Hawaii Research Center.

<sup>30</sup> Seong Won Park, “The Present and Future of Americanization in South Korea.” *Journal of Futures Studies* 14, no. 1 (2009): 51-66. The Hawaii Research Center.

<sup>31</sup> Open Doors Data, “Number of International Students in 2022/23.” Chart. Accessed February 05, 2024; Open Doors Data. “Leading Places of Origin of International Students, 2022/23.” Chart. Accessed February 05, 2024.

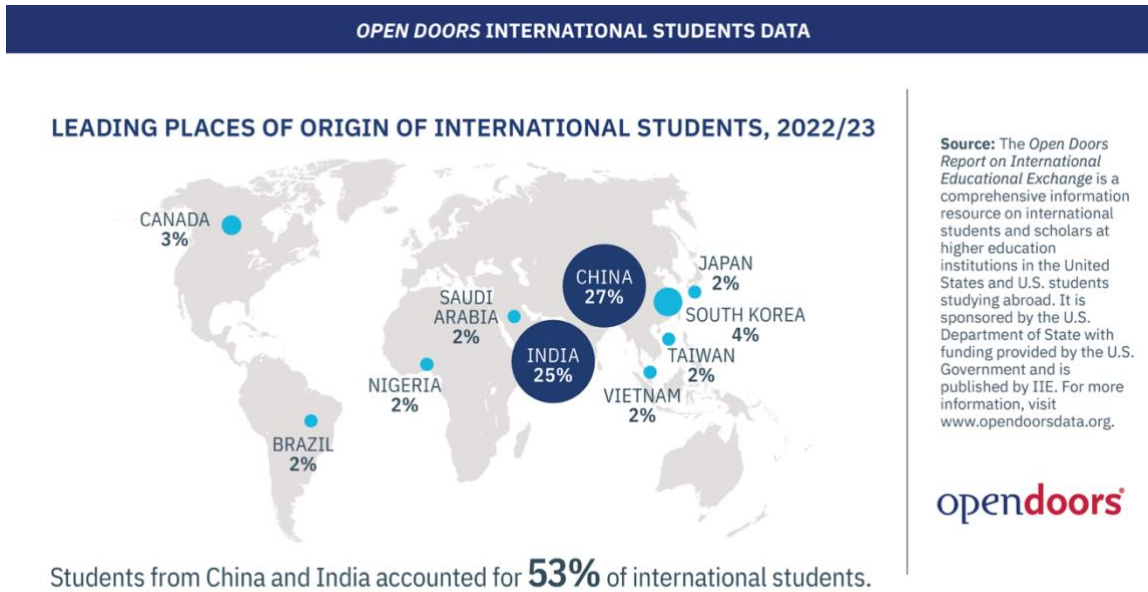


figure 1.5

(Source: Open Doors Data. Accessed February 05, 2024.)

Despite being fairly criticized due to its intensely competitive and expensive system, South Korean education has created a firm footing on which pro-Americanism took its roots into Korean society, influencing its perception of studies, modernization, political processes and the creation of a more democratic ROK; at the same time universities have also been the epicenter of Korean anti-Americanism movements and new ideologies that criticized South Korea’s governments, institutions and values. At this time, it is difficult to foresee any major changes in the education system, however higher education will keep on constituting a catalyst of South Koreans’ thoughts and opinions and thus be root of societal changes.<sup>32</sup>

• **South Korean perception of the U.S.**

The United States have stayed beside South Korea from its very creation. From 1945 on, American troops and representatives took their places on the southern part of the Korean peninsula

<sup>32</sup> Michael J. Seth, “Educational development, society, and politics in South Korea,” in *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary South Korea*, ed. Sojin Lim and Niki J. P. Alsford (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2022), 10-39;

Seong Won Park, “The Present and Future of Americanization in South Korea.” *Journal of Futures Studies* 14, no. 1 (2009): 51-66. The Hawaii Research Center.

and occupied what after 3 years (in 1948) became the Republic of Korea (ROK); as stated in previous paragraphs, the U.S.-UN missions brought western values to South Korea, revolutionizing ROK school system, introducing celebrations such as Christmas as national holidays, taking political matters into their own hands. They helped American-educated intellectuals – such as Syngman Rhee, first president of ROK – to take place into leading roles of the new country, going ahead with the modernization theory.<sup>33</sup>

Older generations of Koreans experienced the U.S. through their hard power strategies first, seeing American soldiers on their land, and as their governments closely collaborated with American presidencies. Younger generations have grown up mainly – but not exclusively – with U.S. soft power, via media, TV shows, movies, which according to studies tended to create a deeper trust in American decisions and collaborations with South Korea.<sup>34</sup>

The next subchapters illustrate how U.S. influence is perceived by ROK's public opinion, distinguishing positive views from negative ones (thus partly focusing on the Korean anti-American movement).

### *a. Positive sentiments*

South Korean public opinion of the United States has generally always been positive, ever since the establishment of U.S.-ROK ties, despite the periodic surge of anti-American sentiments usually paired up with systemic problems or incidents that saw the U.S. involved. American leaders (and their policies) have been preferred by South Koreans as international partners, usually surpassing other countries'.

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<sup>33</sup> Seong Won Park, "The Present and Future of Americanization in South Korea." *Journal of Futures Studies* 14, no. 1 (2009): 51-66. The Hawaii Research Center.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*; Myongsob Kim, Suzanne L. Parker, Jun Young Choi, "Increasing Distrust of the USA in South Korea." *International Political Science Review / Revue Internationale de Science Politique* 27, no. 4 (2006): 427–45. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20445068>.

## The Americanization of South Korea

The latest opinion poll, published by ASAN Institute for Policy studies, clearly shows the majority of South Koreans associates the U.S. with its hard power characteristics, such as military and capitalism, meanwhile soft power aspects – though recognized – continue to stay behind on percentages.

ROK-U.S. bilateral ties also strongly emerge from the consideration of historical events of South Korea. Data demonstrate defensive and economic occasions categorized as positive were the most chosen options, indicating quite a favorable attitude towards the U.S.-ROK relations. Even when collaboration is identified in South Korea's difficult periods, moments connected with negative American involvement (such as the division of the peninsula or the protest against imported U.S. beef in 2008) scored the least number of choices.

However, differences emerged based on participants' age; for instance, all those 60 years or older tended to mention the Korean War as most prominent moment in the history of Korean-American ties, while people in their 30s and 40s tended to talk about the KORUS FTA (U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement) more often than other generations. Lastly South Koreans in their 20s seemed to consider the formation of ROK-U.S. alliance most relevant than other given choices.<sup>35</sup>

The ASAN Institute gathered positive data towards Joe Biden's presidency, as opposed to other power countries' governments in 2022, which had South Koreans trust because it was claimed to assure security in terms of defense, democratic principles, and was described as a preferable value-based alliance.

Additionally, most South Korean respondents perceived U.S. interventions as needed in ROK's territory. Due to the ever-present significant North Korean threat, along with the expansion of conflicts between other nations – see the Russo-Ukrainian conflict – Korean public opinion tended to strategically value ROK-U.S. military ties even more than in previous years.

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<sup>35</sup> J. James Kim, Kang Chungku, Ham Geon Hee, "Asan Report: South Korean Public Opinion on ROK-U.S. Bilateral Ties." *The Asan Institute for Policy Studies*. May 2022.

## The Americanization of South Korea

As of 2022, the U.S. relationship with South Korea saw increasing support overall; anti-American sentiments have subsided in need for military action and recognition of the United States as a strong, trust-worthy ally that Korea must keep close with the aim of safekeeping of ROK's people. Even if citizens in their 30s to 50s turned out to be the most critical about the United States Forces Korea (USFK) presence on South Korean land, the majority of public opinion still considers their work and tactical support necessary for ROK's international politics.

It is important to highlight younger generations believe ROK-U.S. relationship should evolve based on shared values rather than be strictly attached to military resources. This might be happening due to them having grown into a deeply Americanized environment, that allowed them to internalize American principles making them their own. U.S. influenced intellectuals have been running the nation for so long that what once were clearly imported strategies and values are now part of a new sense of 'Koreanness.'<sup>36</sup>

Having said all that, it is possible to conclude both hard-power and soft-power raised generations agree on the U.S. being the best ally for South Korea nowadays, in order to continue their historical collaboration, guarantee of security and wealth; quoting 2022 ASAN Report, "the South Korean public feels very strongly about the bond with the United States and believes that the alliance is critical to keeping peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula."<sup>37</sup>

### ***b. Anti-Americanism***

After the assassination of dictator Park Jung-Hee in 1979, general Chun Doo-Hwan took over as leader of South Korea and in 1980 became responsible for the massacre of Gwanju, where numerous civilians who were protesting against his regime lost their lives.

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<sup>36</sup> Seong Won Park, "The Present and Future of Americanization in South Korea." *Journal of Futures Studies* 14, no. 1 (2009): 51-66. The Hawaii Research Center.

<sup>37</sup> J. James Kim, Kang Chungku, Ham Geon Hee, "Asan Report: South Korean Public Opinion on ROK-U.S. Bilateral Ties." *The Asan Institute for Policy Studies*. May 2022.

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When the South Korean public got to know about the events in Gwanju, it really started to wonder why the U.S. government had not taken action to defend the innocent civilians from Chun's dictatorship. Raegan's administration actually invited the South Korean President to Washington and promised him economic support. To this manifestation of the U.S. backing of Chun's dictatorship, university students along with other groups raised up together in anti-American movements.<sup>38</sup>

Anti-Americanism is the socio-political reaction to Korea's Americanization process, a phenomenon that has not been circumscribed to South Korea, and that has periodically flared up: in the 1980s, due to the massacre of Gwanju and U.S. pressure on Korea to open its agricultural market, again in the 1990s after American troops invaded Iraq, as well as following formaldehyde dumping in 2000, and in 2002 when a U.S. military truck accidentally killed two South Korean minors, in 2008 protests raised against American imported beef.<sup>39</sup>

Ideological anti-Americanism of the 1980s was built to represent high values of democracy and independence, holding the U.S. accountable for South Koreans sufferings. Originally, anti-Americanism considered American presidencies guilty for the division of the peninsula, the advent of dictatorship in South Korea and its political economical dependency on the U.S., which obstructed development of the country. These ideas were spread by leftist student groups, but soon enough found support in Korean adults.

Nonetheless, anti-Americanism movements are now limited, while their ideology seems to survive especially thanks to cyberspaces. Studies have shown that the rise of protest and negative sentiments towards the U.S. have been very much linked to short-term incidents, like aforementioned ones at the beginning of this section.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Seong Won Park, "The Present and Future of Americanization in South Korea." *Journal of Futures Studies* 14, no. 1 (2009): 51-66. The Hawaii Research Center.

<sup>39</sup> Myongsob Kim, Suzanne L. Parker, Jun Young Choi, "Increasing Distrust of the USA in South Korea." *International Political Science Review / Revue Internationale de Science Politique* 27, no. 4 (2006): 427-45. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20445068>.

<sup>40</sup> Myongsob Kim, Suzanne L. Parker, Jun Young Choi, "Increasing Distrust of the USA in South Korea." *International Political Science Review / Revue Internationale de Science Politique* 27, no. 4 (2006): 427-45. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20445068>.



## The Americanization of South Korea

What keeps ideology constantly alive are long term factors, among which we may consider the impact of the United States Forces Korea (USFK), economic policies and related conflicts, as well as China's growing sphere of influence in East Asia. In fact, especially in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, research revealed an increasing distrust in the U.S., due to South Korean citizens interest and involvement in bilateral ROK-U.S. political choices, which to that point had not always been fairly beneficial to South Korea as much as to the United States. Even the frequent requests to open markets to American products or to abandon quota policies that protected South Korean industries (see 2006 U.S.'s Motion picture Export Association's pressure to reduce Korean movies screen time in theatres<sup>41</sup>), and financial crises – which provoked many to lose their jobs – were fundamental factors leading Koreans to keep their distance from the U.S.

Numerous South Koreans interpreted American leaders' refusal to grant help in times of need as their will to keep South Korea under their control, hindering the country full development.<sup>42</sup>

In addition, rise of national self-esteem brought by South Korea's rapid progress has been a strong impulse in the rise of anti-American sentiments, since it strengthened national want for independence and renegotiations of South Korea-U.S. deals (not always granted), in order to become competitive in global markets.

As for the latest years, negative sentiments for the U.S. influence on South Korean matters have subsided and are a minority, but anti-Americanism as an ideology has not died at all. Asan Institute for Policy Studies' 2022 opinion poll on ROK-U.S. bilateral ties reports the majority of South Koreans consider their country's relationship with the U.S. favorable; yet it is noticeable almost 40% of Koreans either do not want ROK-U.S. joint exercises to increase or want them to be suspended once for all.

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<sup>41</sup> Kyung Hyun Kim, "South Korean Cinema Story in the Digital Age: 21<sup>st</sup>-century success on a 20<sup>th</sup>-century medium?" in *Routledge handbook of Korean Culture and Society*, ed. Youna Kim (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2017), 25-34.

<sup>42</sup> Myongsob Kim, Suzanne L. Parker, Jun Young Choi, "Increasing Distrust of the USA in South Korea." *International Political Science Review / Revue Internationale de Science Politique* 27, no. 4 (2006): 427–45. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20445068>.

## The Americanization of South Korea

The same pattern has been observed when questioning South Koreans about their take on the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system, especially regarding the proposal of President Yoon to let the U.S. deploy additional batteries on South Korean soil, residents of the base town and almost 40% of the public opinion opposed to this decision.<sup>43</sup>

In conclusion, South Korean anti-American sentiments are not as strong as they used to be at certain points of its history, and the 1980s student movement does no longer exist, yet this ideology has not disappeared; part of the Korean people is still very critical of the U.S. interferences on South Korean political and economic decisions.

Surely, South Korea arose among well-developed countries and its slowly taking its space in the international landscape. Even though its ties to the United States stay in place, the strength of a new sense of 'Koreanness' could lead to Korea's emancipation in the future. Noticeably, it is not possible to ignore the process of Americanization it underwent, which made some western values part of its modern 'face' and structure, and that will keep it connected to some extent to the U.S.

Nevertheless, nothing ensures that South Korea's detachment and independence in the international relations framework will not be in the cards, especially should the U.S. international decisions provoke loss of credibility as a country and potential partner.

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<sup>43</sup> J. James Kim, Kang Chungku, Ham Geon Hee, "Asan Report: South Korean Public Opinion on ROK-U.S. Bilateral Ties." *The Asan Institute for Policy Studies*. May 2022.

## Chapter 2: Research

### • Research design

The empirical research of this thesis is conducted with the aim to answer the following research question: “Do South Koreans perceive the U.S. influence to be strong in their daily lives?” against the evidence found throughout literature review.

The previous chapter investigates two main aspects of the American influence on South Korean people, *id est* cultural and political. Concerning the cultural field, it was decided to provide academic resources on film consumption in theatres, beauty standards and higher education among South Koreans, while regarding the political topics, literature about the positive and negative sentiments towards the U.S. and their influence in South Korea was presented.

The empirical research has been oriented towards those topics, in order to get an understanding of South Koreans’ opinions, to find commonalities in their individual views of those aspects of life, which has after been compared with results from other studies supplied throughout the literature overview.

In order to answer the research questions, the poll results have been read looking for either a majority of typically positive connotations towards the U.S. influences on different situations, or a majority of usually negative qualities associated to those same fields.

#### *a. Operationalization process*

The survey used to run this research project is based on a questionnaire of 54 questions touching on the literature topics reviewed in chapter 1, conceived to answer the research question, “Do South Koreans perceive the U.S. influence to be strong in their daily lives?”

During the literature study on the Americanization of South Korea, movie consumption, beauty standards and higher education are three macro areas that stood out, due to the role they played into the overall phenomenon. U.S. factors and values have in fact brought deep changes in those three

## The Americanization of South Korea

areas. That's why when pondering what variables should have been observed to analyze Americanization, I have decided to focus on those three main aspects of cultural and social life. Therefore, signs of U.S. influence on those three fields reported on papers used as reference for this thesis have been inserted in the queries (see Appendix I) submitted to our sample of South Korean citizens.

Meanwhile, the last and fourth part of the questionnaire has been based on pro and anti-American sentiments, *id est* South Koreans answers to Americanization. I chose to look into this part as well, to find additional reasons and more political opinions on the investigated phenomenon, since publications on Americanization often refer to its social answers, too, either positive or negative.

It is fundamental noticing how qualitative methodology and the theme at hand allows flexibility and interpretation to aid in the analysis of collected information.

To inquire into the movie industry framework, I decided to divide my variables into four main groups: amount of consumption of Hollywood productions; number of advertisements for Hollywood movies; South Koreans preference for Hollywood films; mention of American elements in South Koreans description of the domestic movie industry and moviegoers' behavior. The high number of said patterns would indicate strong perceived Americanization in the movie industry sector by the interviewees, as those are the main factors that emerged from our literature study on the theme.

With the aim of investigating on beauty standards, the main indicators of Americanization, as identified in publications, that I searched for are: mention of typically western aesthetic features; correlated practices seeking to reproduce them; main influences and representatives of Korean beauty standards, specifically any references to western media.

Concerning higher education in South Korea, after closely analyzing the literature on topic, I recognized the following elements to be most indicative of Americanization: the amount of English-as-a-foreign-language learners; the number of people who studied at a U.S. institution; how many consider U.S. universities their first choice to study abroad; U.S. degrees importance on the South Korean job market; influence of U.S. based education of Korean policy makers on national decisions.

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Lastly, in order to touch on ROK-U.S. relations and general American influence on daily life practices, variables I looked mostly into are: the percentage of support for the United States actions on South Korea (including those that literature reports to be cause of resentment towards American presidencies); characteristics associated to the U.S.; aspects of life/habits that are considered to have been influenced by Americanization; most important national holydays in Korea (and potential mention of U.S. introduced festivities, such as Christmas, Halloween).

Illustrated elements have been kept in mind during the creation of the survey used for this project. It is evident how many of them do not take quantities as references, but the repetition of words and concepts identified in collected answers have allowed me to paint an image of the level and kind of perception South Koreans have of Americanization in their country nowadays.

### *b. Data collection*

Data for this project have been collected via survey, remotely submitted through Google Forms. The questionnaire is made of 54 queries of mixed nature – meaning multiple choice, dropdown, checkboxes, and open-ended answers – in order to obtain both objective and more subjective views on the topics at hand, giving participants the possibility to justify their choices as much as possible.

The interviewees have been picked among South Koreans of at least 16 years of age; this decision was taken in order to have a representative sample that could be actually aware of its country socio-political environment. Participants include South Koreans who lived abroad for more than 6 months, in order to identify any differences in thoughts and perspectives linked to that variable.

The sample was finally composed by 12 South Korean people, in their 30s, 40s, and 50s, with a majority of male participants. Collected information may be found in the next chapter.

All answers have been collected anonymously; no participant has made direct contact with the researcher, nor contextualization has been provided to the sample, except for general information about the research project, in order to avoid creation of biases in the interviewees.

## The Americanization of South Korea

Questions have been divided into topic-based sections, starting with some personal information that has been selected as relevant, since it could affect and explain other choices made throughout the duration of the survey.

A second part focuses on participants habits in consumption of movies along with their thoughts on South Korean movie industry.

Follows the beauty standards section of the questionnaire, where participants have been asked what they consider beautiful in a person's appearance and their opinions on beauty practices and standards in South Korea as a whole.

A third part of the form enquires on foreign higher education and the importance of English (generally) in South Korean society and in regard to interviewees' individual experiences.

Lastly, participants have been asked about their perception of American influence on their country in a cultural and political framework: national identity, their image of the United States, and their thoughts on ROK-U.S. collaboration.

### *c. Methodology*

Collected data are analyzed through a qualitative approach, even though the survey comprehends quantitative questions and partly targets percentages to be compared with broader studies results.

The qualitative analysis aims at providing a satisfying description of phenomena through researcher's observation. Data are therefore contextualized and interpreted, against background information presented in the literature review.

This methodology is the best indicated to answer the thesis' research question, which looks at a sociological phenomenon: personal perceptions of South Korean people towards the U.S. influence in daily life frameworks; the close consideration of sentiments towards the topic at hand makes the need for contextualization and interpretation of gathered data imperative to provide a final answer.

## The Americanization of South Korea

Despite research limitations, such as creating a broad and representative enough sample, as well as a lack of access to databases providing recent raw data, the qualitative approach constitutes the best methodology to fairly elaborate results that could answer our research question.

### Chapter 3: Results

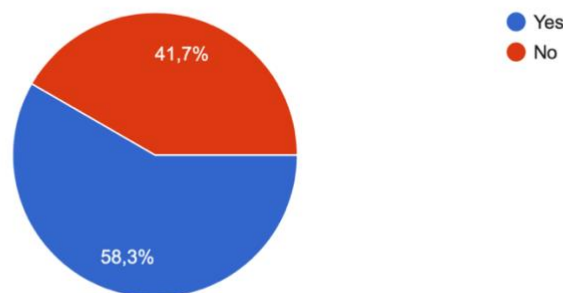
#### • Analysis

Throughout this qualitative analysis, gathered data have been observed with the goal of identifying repeated words and topics in participants' answers, while also keeping the majority of affirmative or negative replies to certain questions in check, as indicated in the operationalization section of this thesis.

All 12 interviewees are South Korean citizens with no other ethnic background, with a majority of 66.7% of males. In general participants are adults, 33.3% of them is in their 30s (specifically ages 28 to 36), 33.3% is in their 40s and the remaining 33.4% are people in their 50s.

66.7% of respondents currently lives in South Korea, and 58.3% of them has lived abroad for over six months, while 41.7% never did, meaning 5 people out of 12 have never lived outside of Korea, a factor that could affect their perception of their own country or values and overall expectations.

Have you ever lived abroad more than 6 months?  
12 risposte



*figure 3.1*

Data also show, the majority of those living abroad stayed in Europe, closely followed by the U.S. and Canada, which are countries of the western part of the world with similar ways of life and principles – for instance individualism, capitalism, similar kinds of democratic constitutions, clothing, entertainment style, etc.).



## The Americanization of South Korea

Where?

7 risposte

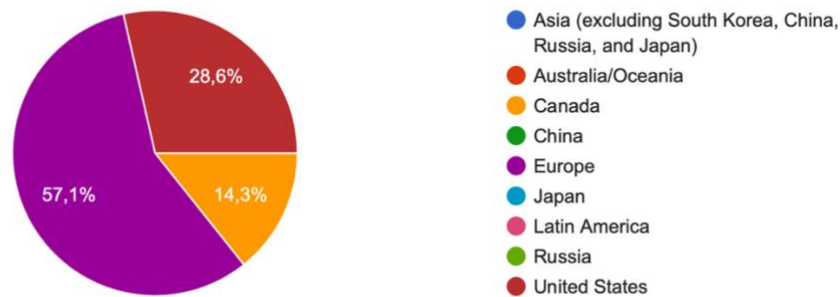


figure 3.2

Keeping in mind personal characteristics, follows the analysis on the second section about motion pictures consumption: 9 out of 12 people enjoy going to the movies and the majority of the sample has been to the cinema within the past 3 months, therefore can provide us with a recent impression of movie theatres and film distribution in South Korea.

Concerning their consumption, 66.7% of interviewees watched a South Korean production last time it went to the cinema, opposed to a 25% who saw Hollywood productions, and 8.3% European productions.

Where was the last film you saw at the cinema from?

12 risposte

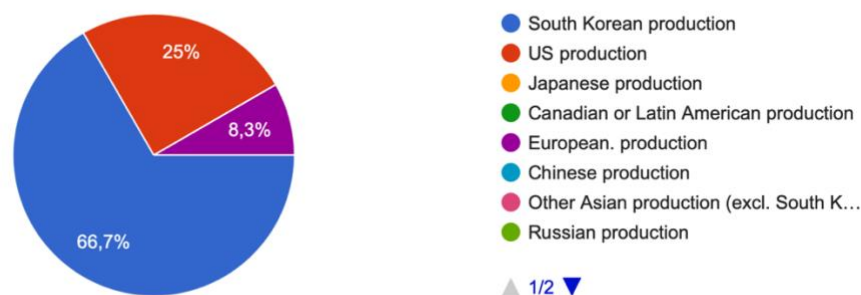


figure 3.3

50% also claims to actually prefer domestic motion pictures over foreign ones, while the other 50% of participants states the contrary. Regardless, South Korean movie productions are preferred to other kinds, according to respondents, who voted the majority of films they like to be: 50% from ROK, 41.7% from the U.S., followed by an 8.3% of European movies. Said results satisfy

## The Americanization of South Korea

expectations formed throughout our literature review on the framework, since they respect the trend of Korean films being the number one choice for South Koreans over American and other foreign movies.

Do you prefer watching South Korean movies over foreign productions?

12 risposte

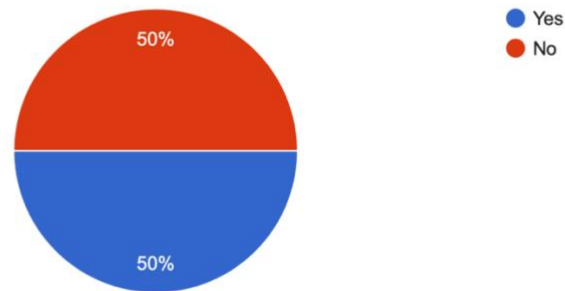


figure 3.4

Where's the majority of films you like from?

12 risposte

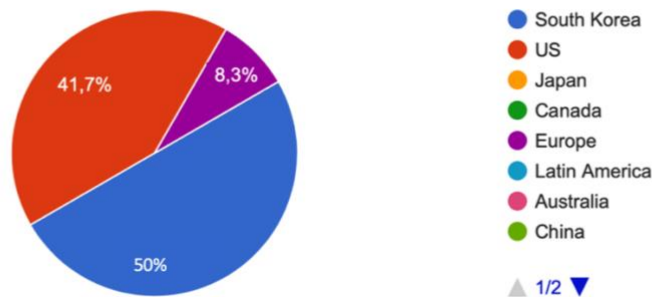


figure 3.5

When asked to describe the South Korean movie industry, South Koreans definitely agree on its major growth in the past 20 years (12/12 answers), the 2<sup>nd</sup> most chosen option is “Domestic films well represent South Korean society” (75%), immediately followed by “It is currently in/It is getting to its Golden Age” (58.3%) and “It is well spoken of/loved among South Koreans” (50%); other answers have commented on the industry target audience (describing it either rather wide or more narrow), and the number of released productions, as well as the notion of domestic productions being preferred over foreign ones by South Korean audiences. It is important to notice none of the options

## The Americanization of South Korea

chosen referred to westernization of life in domestic movies, the preference of foreign productions over national ones, nor to negative possible traits of South Korean film industry products; thus, Korean movies seem to be the mirror of national taste and identity.

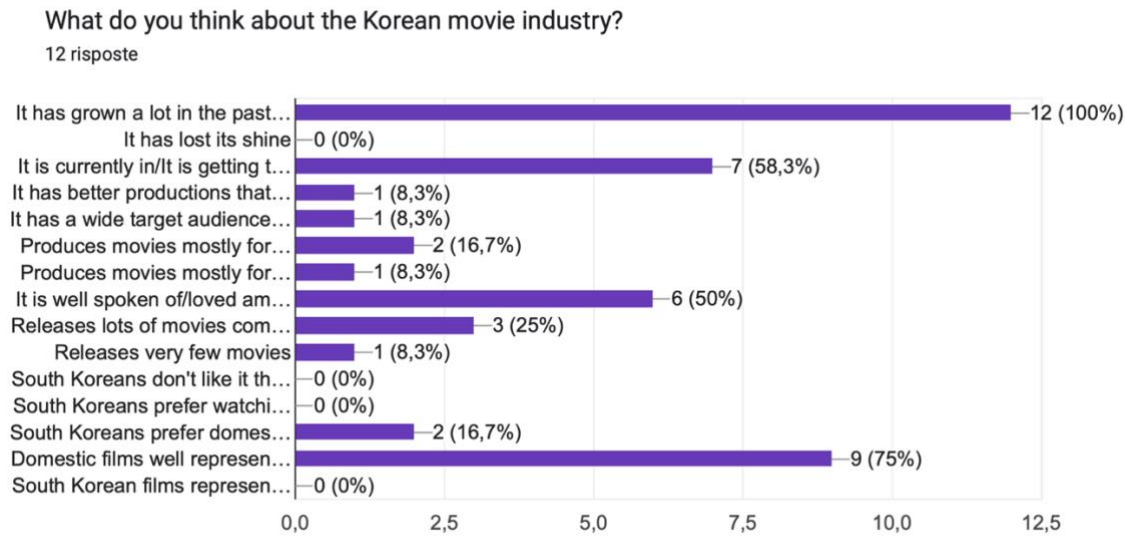


figure 3.6

50% of the group has recently seen a majority of domestic movies' advertisements in South Korea, 41.7% saw ads for Hollywood films, and 8.3% for European films, data that easily confirm other research numbers demonstrating Hollywood productions detain 50% of South Korean movie industry quota, especially thanks to marketing strategies.

What movies were most of film-advertisements you've seen recently in South Korea for?

12 risposte



figure 3.7

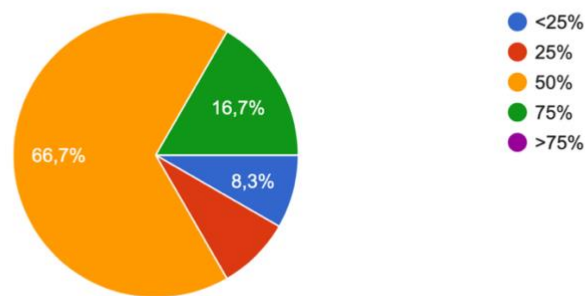
## The Americanization of South Korea

Participants are quite aware of this distribution of market quota, in fact 66.7% of them claims U.S. productions cover 50% of South Korean film market quota, while 16.7% feels Hollywood detains so much as 75% of market quota, only 16.6% believes it to have 25% or less.

Nonetheless, the majority of our sample would want the number of South Korean movies to increase in the future, as opposed to a 41.7% that considers it just fine as it is.

What percentage of the South Korean film market quota do you feel Hollywood productions cover?

12 risposte



*figure 3.8*

When it comes to the influence motion pictures may have on South Koreans values, habits or behaviors, many interviewees agree some people tend to imitate what they see in films (as much as in media, social networks (SNS), and online content), others claim they have been influenced to try new activities themselves; furthermore answers state the power films have to highlight certain aspects of life makes viewers more aware, eventually changing the way they perceive and react to events.

To that first section follow beauty standards queries. The 12 participants were asked what physical traits make someone beautiful in their eyes, to which most repeated attributes were “body line,” “a healthy body/look,” “fair skin,” “attitude combined with individual characteristics.” When asked if they thought other South Koreans would agree with them, the majority was indecisive. Analyzing these data against literature evidence, all answers tend to be normal considering South Korean beauty standards – especially traits like fair skin and a ‘good body line’ – however, there is less consideration towards specific attributes such as ‘big eyes’ or ‘small face/V shape,’ that are highlighted in the entertainment and plastic surgery businesses. The most unexpected answers have

been those on the importance of attitude and individual features, that tend to go against the most common beauty standards promoted by South Korean media, *id est* a specific combination of certain features being epitome of Korean beauty that leaves little to no space for individuality.

However, if asked what they would change of their own physical appearance, respondents either wanted to change their facial features or lose weight and enhance their physique. The majority expressed their will to change something if they could, with the ratio of women participants who wanted to alter their appearance was slightly higher than men's (as expected). A trend that seems to be confirmed in replies to the question "Among South Koreans, what category do you believe is more mindful of its physical appearance?", that saw "young females in their 20s" as most voted category, "Women over 30 years old" in second place, "Female teenagers" in 3<sup>rd</sup> place, and "young men in their 20s" last with 41.7% of votes.

Among South Koreans, what category do you believe is more mindful of its physical appearance?

12 risposte

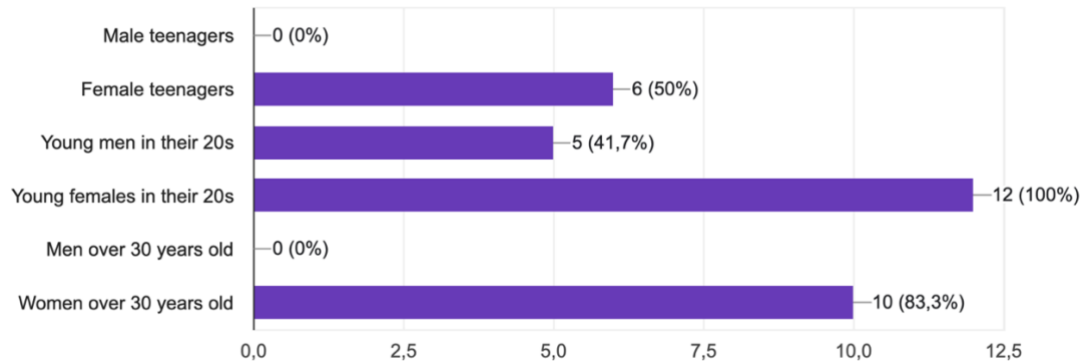


figure 3.9

Answers have been justified with the mention of SNS and media influence on those groups, standards and aesthetic values being targeted and "imbalanced" in the Korean society, as well as the important youth factor that makes those categories' perception of physical appearance greater than it is for other social groups.

Despite the desire to improve their aesthetic, none of the participants have undergone cosmetic surgery to modify their traits and they affirm to be satisfied with their overall looks. This does not imply they do *not* know people who did get plastic surgery, as a matter of fact 58.3% of the sample

## The Americanization of South Korea

knows “lots of people” who underwent the practice.

Do you know anyone in your social circle that had cosmetic surgery?

12 risposte

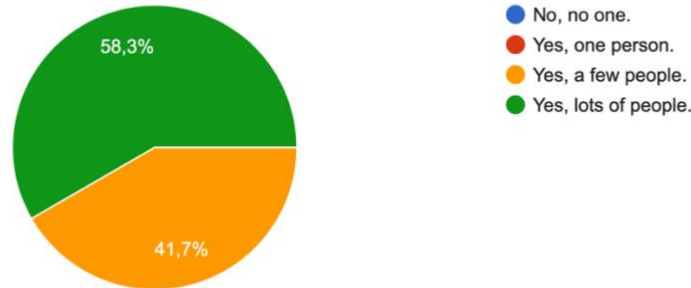


figure 3.10

Generally speaking, K-pop idols along with national actors and celebrities score the highest as ‘aesthetic models’ for South Koreans; meanwhile, the consideration of western celebrities, though mentioned (especially western actors, who 25% of the sample considers models in terms of beauty), seems to be less relevant among participants.

Who do you think South Koreans consider as their models in terms of physical appearance the most?

12 risposte

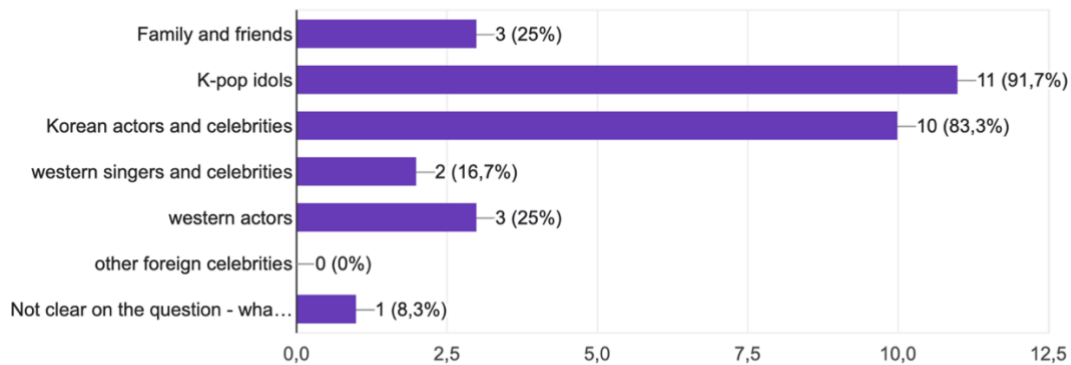


figure 3.11

Interviewees’ opinions focus on media release, films, and pop culture as strongest influencing factors on Korean society. It is peculiar how when asked whether western media has been transforming beauty standards, as much as the majority claims for aesthetic values to be affected and to have become “more westernized,” South Koreans tend to pinpoint how those western factors have been well mixing with Korean preferences and characteristics, and for the Korean entertainment

## The Americanization of South Korea

industry to keep being the most influential field as beauty trend setter in Korea. K-pop idols and actors have been giving rise to a new South Korean “unique style.”

Moving onto the education sections of our survey, the entirety of participants has at least studied English, many also speak other European languages, as well as Japanese and Chinese. All of them believe studying English to be important, because of the opportunities it offers in a globalized world, and affirm the English language to be very present in South Korea.

When asked about pursuing studies abroad, only 4 out of 12 people do not think it is important to one’s professional career, because other factors have to be considered, such as the kind of job one wants to land or the quality of studies, rather than the mere place one studies at. The rest of our sample agrees studying abroad can broaden one’s mind and working environment, it changes one’s perspective on things, it can help promote businesses, and “it’s advantageous in the competition to get a job.”

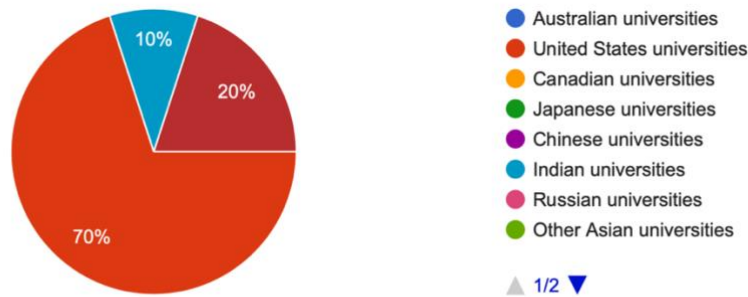
It is relevant observing how 50% of respondents has studied at a foreign higher education institution, as opposed to the other half of the sample that has never pursued a career at a foreign university, with no relevant age groups distinctions.

In any case, when thinking of institutions outside of ROK, 70% of the group would choose U.S. universities as their first choice, followed by 20% who would select European institutions, and a 10% who would go for Indian ones. The comparison of these empirical data with published literature, confirms South Koreans would still rather pursue a university career in the United States rather than in other countries, as of 2024.

## The Americanization of South Korea

What foreign higher education institutions are your top number 1 choice?

10 risposte

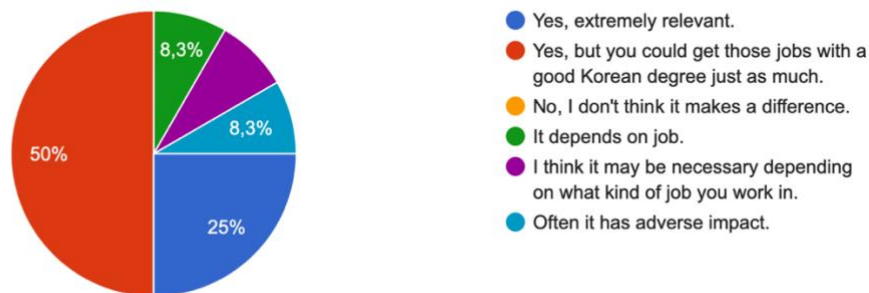


*fig. 3.12*

However, it seems the intrinsic relevance held by U.S.-issued degrees is slowly vanishing, collected data show only 25% of the sample considers U.S. titles to be key in getting a job in corporate, public institutions or politics in South Korea, while 50% of interviewees argue a good Korean degree does the trick just as much. 16.6% says it definitely depends on the job, and 8.3% thinks often holding American degrees might even have an adverse impact on the job market.

Do you think US-issued degrees are relevant to get a job in corporate/public institutions/politics in South Korea?

12 risposte



*fig. 3.13*

Certainly, 10/12 people declared studying abroad changes the way one perceives the outside world and South Korea, that it can improve the impression of one's home country, the way one thinks about social norms is different, the experience expands mindset and broadens perspectives.

Seeing how many South Korean policy makers have studied in American institutions, participants have been asked, "Do you believe South Korean policy makers are influenced by what



## The Americanization of South Korea

they learned in the U.S. when making decisions for your country?”, to what the majority answered there to be influence to some extent, but the specific national situation is still clearly taken into consideration, meaning they do not notice distinctively American influenced decisions in their governments policies.

Do you believe South Korean policy makers are influenced by what they learned in the US when making decisions for your country?

12 risposte

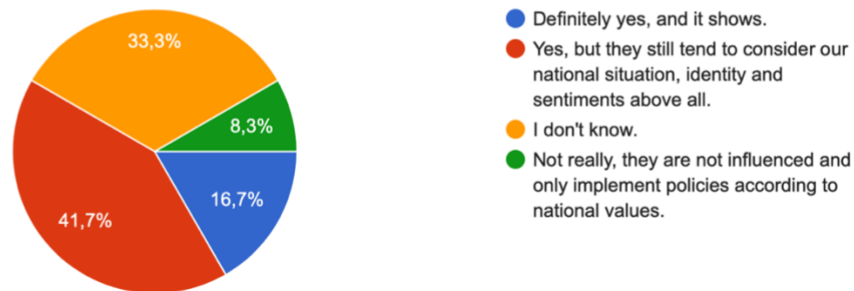


fig. 3.14

Finally, South Korean national identity is overall strong and well represented according to respondents. Younger generations are perceived to be very interested in tradition and culture, as they try balancing modern and historic practices nowadays, in the eyes of our sample.

Korean identity is transforming, but not necessarily disappearing. The trend is reflected by answers regarding national holidays in South Korea: when asked about the most important national festivities, almost everyone mentioned Lunar New Year (*Seollal* or *Gujeong*) and Korean Thanksgiving (*Chuseok*), same replies reported to the most specific query, “What are the most relevant traditional celebrations for South Koreans?”

When questioned about imported celebrations or holidays, the majority of participants mentioned Christmas, a fact that can be interpreted as the awareness of western influence brought after the Korean War, that has not been internalized to the point where festivities like Christmas became second skin to Koreans and are considered undoubtably part of their own culture.

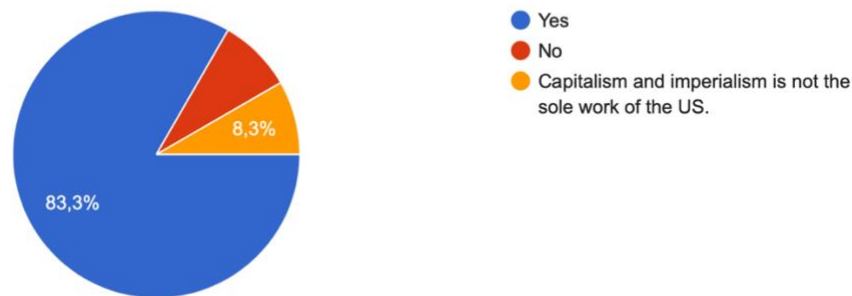
Moreover, globalization has been described as a positive trend among respondents, under the premise of not annihilating tradition.

## The Americanization of South Korea

When inquiring about ROK-U.S. relationship specifically, 83.3% of the sample admits South Korea has become westernized ever since its contacts with the U.S., but someone wanted to make clear “capitalism and imperialism is not the sole work of the U.S.,” highlighting it is not American influence exclusively the cause of South Korean westernization.

Would you say Korea has become westernised ever since its contact with the US?

12 risposte



*fig. 3.15*

Nevertheless, interviewees recognize the U.S. influence on ROK to be strong, involving every aspect of life (answers vary but tend to cover every single aspect of daily life, from politics to economics, to food, clothing, and ‘consumerism culture’). To some extent this ubiquitous influence affected South Koreans’ habits and practices according to our sample, many claim values such as individualism, over-consumption, and preferences in food chains style, lifestyle and modern buildings are the most evident signs of Americanism in South Korea.

Regarding how South Koreans view the U.S. as a country and partner for ROK, even though from their previous answers we can infer American soft-power to be perceived rather strongly, hard-power characteristics are what commonly comes to Koreans’ minds when thinking of the U.S. (factually, “capitalism,” “innovative companies,” “defense,” “strong military” were the most chosen options by our sample).

## The Americanization of South Korea

Choose up to 3 words that better describe the US for you

12 risposte

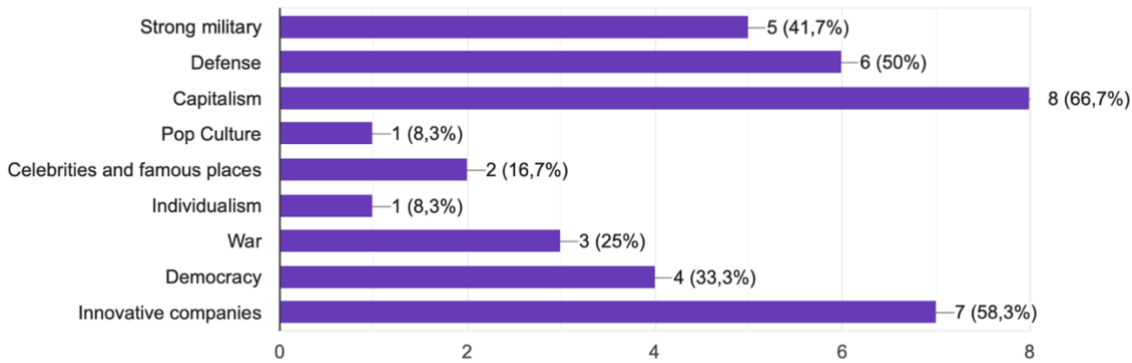


fig. 3.16

The U.S. are considered the best partner for ROK so far, yet leaving space for some afterthoughts. 63.6% of respondents approves of the U.S.-ROK military exercise in South Korea.

However, we have conflicting opinions when it comes to the amount of involvement the U.S. should have on Korean national matters, around 50% of the sample desires it to diminish or to end completely, followed by a 41.7% willing to keep the current level of involvement (no more, no less), and an 8.3% which supports it as long as it stays “involvement, not influence.”

Do you think the US should be involved in South Korean matters (political, social, education wise)

12 risposte

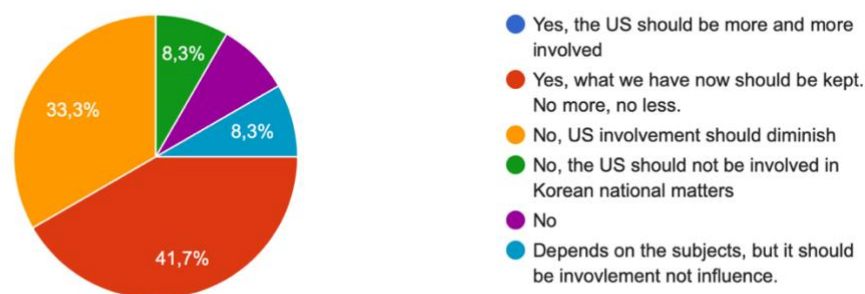


fig. 3.17

Last but not least, 50% of interviewed South Koreans still wants ROK-U.S. relationship to get stronger in the future, as opposed to 41.7% who does not know or care, and a mere 8.3% that disagrees altogether.

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Data from this last section will serve as evidence of the need of U.S. military and economic relationship South Koreans feel, but also shows us too much involvement on domestic matters and the U.S. extreme influence is recognized and not appreciated by most of the participants, leaving them with a full-fledged trade-off about South Korea's partnership with the U.S.

### • Results

The previous qualitative analysis of collected data provided us with insights on South Koreans' opinions on American influence in their country, which help us answer our research question: "Do South Koreans perceive the U.S. influence to be strong in their daily lives?"

The quick answer is yes, but on different levels and based on different circumstances, it is felt differently.

For what concerns American presence in the South Korean movie industry, movie consumption and distribution, we may fairly affirm Hollywood productions are liked and watched by many. Koreans are aware Hollywood detains half of their movie market quota. And yet, South Korean films always tend to be the most appreciated by ROK's citizens, especially because they are not considered influenced by foreign movies, but are praised for well representing Korea in all its qualities and lacks. The South Korean movie industry is acclaimed by its viewers, and most of Koreans recognize its good value.

Surely our sample believes movie consumption can lead to changes in perspective and habits of viewers, that are somewhat influenced by what they see, even though they cannot recognize any obvious patterns in South Korean moviegoers. Literature highlighted how certain policies implemented to control the South Korean movie industry had provoked the raise of anti-American sentiments, but if present those sentiments may now be rising for different reasons: due to growing national pride for example, thanks to South Korean movies' good quality and international recognition. Where Hollywood was once dominant in affecting moviegoers and showing them the world, it is now the time for South Korean productions to change Koreans' opinions and stances, as

## The Americanization of South Korea

well as inspiring other filmmakers. This ‘golden age’ of the South Korean movie industry plays into a sense of diffused national self-esteem, which creates a good soil for the growth of mistrust and need of change in international relationships with historic partners, so to keep their influence under control, and get more benefits out of old deals.

Moving onto beauty standards, American or typically western influences were acknowledged to a certain point in this field, as well. Analyzed impressions confirm current beauty standards in South Korea are the result of the introduction and implementation of western traits into Korean beauty practices. This does not mean Koreans consider Americans or westerners their models when it comes to physical appearance, though. In fact, as a result to our research, we can confidently state if Americanization of beauty was an obvious phenomenon for older generations in the 70s, 80s, and 90s, those aesthetic features have now been completely internalized by South Koreans. The sample agreed multiple times on Korean actors, celebrities and K-pop idols being models of Korean beauty, as opposed to what we read on papers published in the early 2000s, that explain how up to the 90s American pop-culture celebrities served as models to South Korean youth and adults.

From the answers provided, the effects of globalization have also been recognized: the advent of SNS has heightened individuality, self-expression, currently pressuring Korean beauty standards to become a bit more inclusive of different aesthetic traits, a new mentality that seems to arrive from overseas.

Nonetheless, our interviewees pinpointed national media and celebrities to be the most influential on South Koreans’ perceptions of beauty, and for women – especially in their 20s and 30s – to be significantly more mindful of their physical appearance, confirming the already set trend of women being more targeted by beauty expectations and being more willing to alter their features explained in the literature review.

Beauty is considered an important factor when it comes to success in social frameworks in South Korea, since appearance makes a difference in how others perceive you; respondents believe it does help in getting a job or being respected in social occasions. It is clear South Korean society

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tends to consider appearance important, thanks to another piece of information: the fact that everyone in our sample knows someone who underwent plastic surgery indicates there is pressure to respect fixed beauty standards in South Korean society, and literature backs this up by affirming the most common procedures in Korea are practices that blend western traits into South Korean ones; therefore, even if our research group does not directly perceive the Americanization beauty has faced in years, as it is now common and internalized, it still managed to confirm lots of South Koreans go out of their way to make those traits part of their appearance.

As of now, we may confidently affirm South Koreans have undergone the Americanization process and so far, what before was clearly foreign has now melded with Korean traditional culture, creating a new national identity that Korean idols and celebrities perfectly represent. Nowadays, we are witnessing the evolution of modern ‘Koreanness’.

The U.S. influence is also felt when discussing English and higher education, of course. The English language is very present in South Korea and is considered necessary due to globalization and for the international occasions it may offer.

Scientific publications have revealed how important studying at foreign higher education institutions has always been in South Korean society. Our data confirmed it, since half of our sample attended university abroad and considers it a good way to learn how to look more objectively at their home country, besides it being quite helpful at the moment of searching for a job in South Korea.

However, what also emerged from our research is that the shine of studying abroad might be fading for some: quite a few answers highlighted a good Korean degree can serve just as much as a foreign one in getting a job. In addition, interviewees believe South Korean policy makers that studied abroad – specifically in the United States – show external influences in their actions, but not excessively, *i.e.* they keep in mind ROK’s national characteristics and its people when making decisions. This partly differs from literature that argues South Korean leaders’ studies in the U.S. have greatly shaped their policies. Thus, it is possible that due to the assimilation of once American values

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in South Koreans, they do not recognize any extremely apparent signs of Americanization in their leaders' policies anymore.

In any case, U.S. universities continue to hold the leading position among foreign higher education institutions, which demonstrates American influence on the overall education field has been pretty consistent.

The last section of gathered data about ROK-U.S. relationship and South Koreans' impression of the U.S. is the most outward part of this empirical research, and so it addresses our research question more directly. National identity is considered solid and to have good enough examples for the younger generations, in spite of being different than older models of 'Koreanness'; youngsters demonstrate interest in tradition and try hard to allow modern and traditional Korea to coexist. This element of national self-esteem (previously mentioned in the movie industry part) is – according to literature – motive of increased criticism towards other countries interferences. Criticism and intolerance towards ROK's greatest ally are revealed by 50% of our sample not wanting the U.S. to be involved in Korean national matters anymore (see figure 3.17).

The survey showed South Koreans agree that their country has been westernized ever since its contact with the United States. They claim every aspect of life has been affected by Americanization: clothing, buildings, social life, the economy and politics of their country have changed, due to American and western influences. They still consider historically Korean celebrations traditional and distinguish them from imported festivities (such as Christmas, or Halloween). This information may lead us to conclude soft power elements are very entrenched in South Korean society – which nonetheless remains very conscious of them – and may be deemed most relevant when South Koreans think of the U.S.

However, when the sample was asked to choose adjectives they would associate with the U.S., hard-power characteristics were the most mentioned. Objectively speaking, interviewees tend to think of the U.S. as Korea's military and defense partner first of all, while they have now interiorized and accepted the changes said partnership has slowly provoked in the society they live in. Besides,

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gathered answers on ROK-U.S. joint exercises and the future of ROK-U.S. relations (usually themes related to anti-Americanism) make it clear that South Koreans consider ROK-U.S. relationship necessary and want it to be maintained on a strategic level, that sees partnership on defense tactics, trade, economic deals; but at the same time, a strong desire to diminish the imbalanced involvement of American presidencies in Korean domestic matters and their influence on South Korean society is increasing among Koreans.

Having said all that, South Koreans perceive the U.S. influence to be strong in their daily lives, at all levels, both cultural and political. When it comes to social and cultural aspects, even if they clearly know where practices, preferences, and new habits come from, they tend not to consider their foreign influences anymore, because those have long been combined with domestic uses, so to create new modern Korean customs.

‘Modern’ Korea is a vibrant mix of tradition and innovation, of American influences long nestled in Korean culture, thus giving life to a renovated sense of national identity that makes South Korean people proud to be Korean, and making Korea an international rising power.

When it comes to politics, ROK’s citizens have a clear image of the U.S. tactical collaboration with their governments, they recognize a hard-power common strategy must be kept, but due to rising national self-esteem are now less tolerant about external interferences into South Korea’s national matters. It is possible that in the future ROK-U.S. relations will evolve to become more balanced, and that Korea’s soft-power strategy will start to counter affect the United States, just like it has been affected all these years.

In any case, broader research studies are advised in order to investigate aforementioned aspects and their further evolution in time.



## Conclusion

The research in this thesis concludes that South Korean adults indeed perceive American influence in their everyday life to be prominent.

American values are definitely engrained in modern Korean culture: the way business, entertainment, beauty, and politics are conceived shows many similarities to western patterns. At the moment however, said American traits have been internalized by South Koreans, and became part of their lifestyle so much they do not tend to explicitly point them out. In fact, American people who once served as models for South Koreans have now been substituted by national celebrities. Domestic films, K-pop idols and ROK's personalities are now mirrors of a new national identity, born from a mix of American influences into Korean practices.

From motion pictures to beauty standards, to clothes and social life activities, everything cultural is now different from older Korean generations', but it is 'typically South Korean', nonetheless. Therefore, the current South Korean way of life is a 'Korean watermark' generated from the fusion of South Korean habits with those American influences that have affected ROK's society, ever since its creation.

The U.S. are recognized as Korea's greatest partner, but South Koreans associate them primarily with their military strength, defensive strategy and help on an economic and political level, rather than to their soft-power policy on ROK. Political opinions among South Koreans are indicating their growing will to demand less interferences on domestic matters from their historic American partner, less influence on their people. Meanwhile they still want to maintain U.S.-ROK bilateral ties based on common values, in order to establish a balanced relationship that would better serve both countries.

An interesting fact to consider with a view to future studies is that numerous South Koreans are now convinced it is South Korean soft power – with Korean tv shows, music, food, and beauty products – to be influencing the United States. Something that is not hard to notice when looking at

## The Americanization of South Korea

the amount of South Korean products that is easy to find in American and European cities, these days. Because of this change in power balance and South Koreans' requests to change ROK's international relationship with their number one partner, I would expect indisputable innovation in the global context in the next few years.

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# The Americanization of South Korea

## Appendix I: KOFIC tables

2023

Rank	Title	Country	Release Date	Yearly Gross	Admissions	Number of Screens	Revenue Share
1	<a href="#">12.12: THE DAY</a>	South Korea	Nov 22, 2023	\$86,664,716	11,854,791	2,463	9.14%
2	<a href="#">THE ROUNDUP : NO WAY OUT</a>	South Korea	May 31, 2023	\$78,653,447	10,682,813	2,582	8.29%
3	Elemental	U.S.	Jun 14, 2023	\$53,433,884	7,238,453	1,664	5.63%
4	Suzume	Japan	Mar 08, 2023	\$42,904,982	5,574,358	1,572	4.52%
5	<a href="#">Smugglers</a>	South Korea	Jul 26, 2023	\$37,329,083	5,143,219	1,932	3.93%
6	The First Slam Dunk	Japan	Jan 04, 2023	\$37,608,670	4,786,406	1,06	3.96%
7	Guardians of the Galaxy Volume 3	U.S.	May 03, 2023	\$33,326,188	4,209,118	1,819	3.51%
8	Mission: Impossible - Dead Reckoning Part	U.S.	Jul 12, 2023	\$30,374,747	4,022,072	2,437	3.2%
9	<a href="#">Concrete Utopia</a>	South Korea	Aug 09, 2023	\$28,108,792	3,849,242	1,731	2.96%
10	Avatar: The Way of Water	U.S.	Dec 14, 2022	\$35,575,405	3,491,916	2,047	3.75%
11	<a href="#">Noryang: Deadly Sea</a>	South Korea	Dec 20, 2023	\$25,567,602	3,437,826	2,196	2.69%
12	Oppenheimer	U.S.	Aug 15, 2023	\$25,826,798	3,232,774	1,636	2.72%
13	The Super Mario Bros. Movie	U.S.	Apr 26, 2023	\$17,700,102	2,395,519	1,576	1.86%
14	<a href="#">Love Reset</a>	South Korea	Oct 03, 2023	\$15,970,610	2,165,358	1,226	1.68%
15	The Boy and the Heron	Japan	Oct 25, 2023	\$14,680,892	2,009,398	1,733	1.54%
16	John Wick: Chapter 4	U.S.	Apr 12, 2023	\$14,993,728	1,924,768	1,535	1.58%
17	<a href="#">Dr. Cheon And The Lost Talisman</a>	South Korea	Sep 27, 2023	\$14,001,121	1,916,429	1,511	1.47%
18	<a href="#">Hero</a>	South Korea	Dec 21, 2022	\$13,349,817	1,787,536	1,099	1.4%
19	Fast X	U.S.	May 17, 2023	\$13,879,939	1,773,424	1,731	1.46%
20	<a href="#">The Point Men</a>	South Korea	Jan 18, 2023	\$13,118,639	1,721,100	1,289	1.38%
21	Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania	U.S.	Feb 15, 2023	\$12,281,547	1,551,129	2,09	1.29%
22	<a href="#">Sleep</a>	South Korea	Sep 06, 2023	\$10,438,962	1,470,359	1,231	1.1%
23	<a href="#">HONEYSWEEP</a>	South Korea	Aug 15, 2023	\$10,101,818	1,388,309	1,032	1.06%
24	Dream	South Korea	Apr 26, 2023	\$8,130,011	1,128,375	1,285	0.85%
25	<a href="#">Ransomed</a>	South Korea	Aug 02, 2023	\$7,658,032	1,058,745	1,151	0.8%
26	<a href="#">Road to Boston</a>	South Korea	Sep 27, 2023	\$7,110,567	1,026,882	1,282	0.75%
27	Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse	U.S.	Jun 21, 2023	\$7,131,791	920,169	1,103	0.75%
28	Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny	U.S.	Jun 28, 2023	\$6,389,370	860,47	1,268	0.67%
29	Puss in Boots: The Last Wish	U.S.	Jan 04, 2023	\$5,914,534	831,209	924	0.62%
30	Detective Conan The Movie: Black Iron	Japan	Jul 20, 2023	\$5,789,120	801,511	1,03	0.61%
31	Transformers: Rise of the Beasts	U.S.	Jun 06, 2023	\$5,850,419	769,993	1,123	0.61%
32	<a href="#">The Devil's Deal</a>	South Korea	Mar 01, 2023	\$5,611,855	756,355	1,157	0.59%
33	Crayon Shin-chan: Mononoke Ninja	Japan	May 04, 2023	\$5,456,498	732,188	844	0.57%
34	Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom	U.S.	Dec 20, 2023	\$5,604,463	722,976	965	0.59%
35	Five Nights at Freddy's	U.S.	Nov 15, 2023	\$5,228,928	712,241	1,041	0.55%
36	<a href="#">Rebound</a>	South Korea	Apr 05, 2023	\$5,035,652	699,243	1,154	0.53%
37	The Marvels	U.S.	Nov 08, 2023	\$5,139,862	690,814	1,532	0.54%
38	<a href="#">The Childe</a>	South Korea	Jun 21, 2023	\$5,036,973	682,856	966	0.53%
39	<a href="#">Phantom</a>	South Korea	Jan 18, 2023	\$5,079,463	664,146	1,099	0.53%
40	The Little Mermaid	U.S.	May 24, 2023	\$5,010,228	647,706	1,364	0.52%
41	The Flash	U.S.	Jun 14, 2023	\$5,060,674	635,269	1,258	0.53%
42	Barbie	U.S.	Jul 19, 2023	\$4,321,718	585,502	780	0.45%
43	New Dimension! Crayon Shinchan the Movie:	Japan	Dec 22, 2023	\$4,136,912	568,257	883	0.43%
44	Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba -To the	Japan	Mar 02, 2023	\$4,948,575	535,969	410	0.52%
45	<a href="#">The Moon</a>	South Korea	Aug 02, 2023	\$3,912,632	516,556	1,187	0.41%
46	Even If This Love Disappears from the World	Japan	Nov 30, 2022	\$3,905,398	514,915	402	0.41%
47	<a href="#">Our Season</a>	South Korea	Dec 06, 2023	\$3,632,651	514,539	863	0.38%
48	<a href="#">The Boys</a>	South Korea	Nov 01, 2023	\$3,358,695	471,425	1,042	0.35%
49	Titanic	U.S.	Feb 20, 1998	\$4,905,306	454,336	447	0.51%
50	<a href="#">Don't Buy the Seller</a>	South Korea	Aug 30, 2023	\$3,007,832	424,916	986	0.31%

Top 50 most watched motion pictures in South Korean cinemas, 2023. Source: KOFIC

## Appendix II: Survey questionnaire

### *About you*

1. Are you South Korean?
2. Indicate here if you have any other nationality/ethnic background you want to specify. (No answers provided)
3. Gender
4. How old are you? What year were you born in?
5. Do you currently live in South Korea?
6. Have you ever lived abroad more than 6 months?
7. Where?

### *Film industry*

8. Do you like going to the cinema?
9. When was the last time you went to the movie theatre?
10. Where was the last film you saw at the cinema from?
11. Do you prefer watching South Korean movies over foreign productions?
12. Where is the majority of films you like from?
13. What do you think about the Korean movie industry?
14. What movies were most of film advertisement you have seen recently in South Korea for?
15. What percentage of the South Korean film market quota do you feel Hollywood productions cover?
16. In the future, would you like to see more South Korean films being distributed in cinemas?
17. Do you believe movies influence people's behaviors?
18. Have you noticed significant changes in South Korean values or habits possibly inspired by movies/media consumption?

### *Beauty standards*

19. What physical traits make someone beautiful and attractive?
20. Do you think most South Koreans would agree with your previous answer?
21. Is beauty an important factor to succeed in life? How?
22. If you could change any part of your physical appearance, what would you change?
23. Have you ever desired to undergo plastic surgery? Why?
24. Do you know anyone in your social circle that had cosmetic surgery?

## The Americanization of South Korea

25. Among South Koreans, what category do you believe is more mindful of its physical appearance?
26. Why do you think that is?
27. Who do you think South Koreans consider as their models in terms of physical appearance the most?
28. What influences perception of beauty/beauty standards the most in your opinion?
29. Do you think Korean beauty standards have been changing due to the increase in western media and people in South Korea? How?

### *Higher education*

30. What languages can you speak/have you studied?
31. Do you think English to be very present as a foreign language in South Korea?
32. Do you consider studying English important?
33. Why?
34. Is studying abroad important to one's professional career? Why?
35. Have you studied at a foreign university?
36. What foreign higher education institutions are your top number 1 choice?
37. Do you think U.S.-issued degrees are relevant to get a job in corporate/public institutions/politics in South Korea?
38. Does studying abroad change the way you perceive South Korea and the way you live? How?
39. Do you believe South Korean policy makers are influenced by what they learned in the U.S. when making decisions for your country?

### *Additional information and ROK-U.S. bilateral ties*

40. Is Korean national identity strong and well represented in your opinion?
41. Do you think younger generations have enough national models to follow that embody Korean identity? Do they tend to take their example?
42. What are the most important national holidays/festivities in South Korea?
43. What are the most relevant traditional celebrations for South Koreans?
44. Are there any imported (from abroad) holidays Koreans now celebrate and consider important?
45. Has globalization had a positive impact on South Korea? Why?
46. Would you say Korea has become westernized ever since its contact with the U.S.?



## The Americanization of South Korea

47. Choose up to 3 words that better describe the U.S. for you. (Given choices: strong military, defense, capitalism, pop culture, celebrities and famous places, individualism, war, democracy, innovative companies).
48. Would you say American (U.S.) influence on South Korea is strong?
49. What aspects of life does that influence involve?
50. Do you believe American habits have slowly become part of South Koreans' lives? If yes, which ones and how?
51. Would you consider the US the safest and best partner for ROK?
52. Do you approve of the U.S.-ROK military exercise in South Korea?
53. Do you think the U.S. should be involved in south Korean matters (political, social, education wise)?
54. In the future, would you want the U.S.-ROK relationship to get stronger?