



Americans Remain Committed to South Korea

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It has been a dizzying year on the Korean Peninsula, with multiple summits between leaders of South Korea, North Korea, and the United States and continuing correspondence between Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un. While President Trump downplayed North Korea's most recent missile launch, he has called into question the value of the US alliance with South Korea.

Despite these swings, American attitudes toward South Korea have changed little. The 2019 Chicago Council Survey finds that support for South Korea as an ally remains high and bipartisan, and Americans believe the US-Korea alliance bolsters US national security. Majorities of Americans also continue to support the use of US troops if North Korea invaded South Korea and favor increasing or maintaining the current level of US forces stationed in South Korea.

South Korea Strengthens US National Security

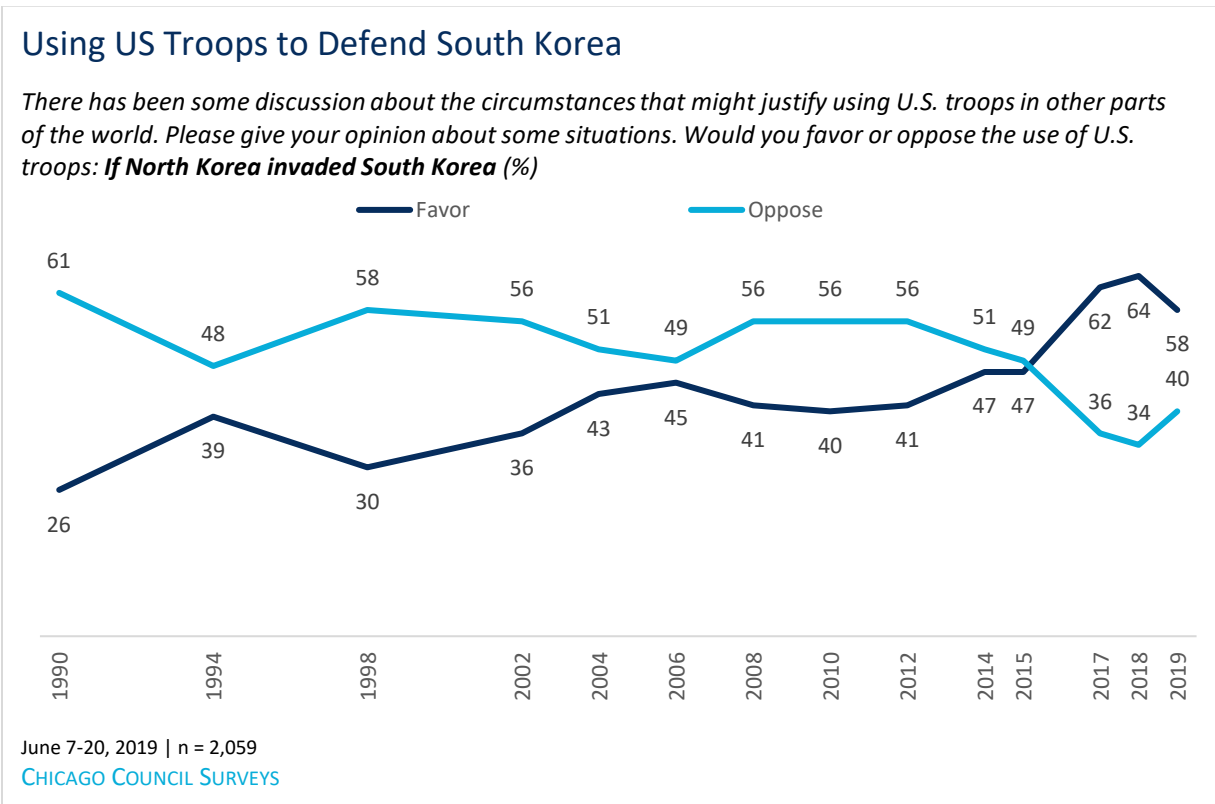
The US-South Korea alliance is well into its sixth decade and has formed an important role in the security for both countries as well as an engine for economic growth in the region. The US public seems to recognize the benefits of the partnership. In 2019, The Chicago Council Survey asked Americans for the first time if the US relationship with South Korea does more to strengthen or weaken US national security. Across the board, Americans say that the relationship with South Korea does more to strengthen US national security—including 70 percent of all Americans, 74 percent of Republicans, 70 percent of Democrats, and 68 percent of Independents.

An important part of the US-Korea security relationship is the stationing of US forces in bases in Korea. President Trump has made these bases a bargaining chip as negotiations about burden sharing continue, claiming that South Korea does not pay nearly enough to host US forces. In reality, South Korea pays \$925 million per year—roughly 50 percent—of the total cost of stationing US troops. But Trump's continued questioning of US forces in Korea has not dented support of the American public for maintaining forces in South Korea, which currently number around 28,500 US troops.

Among Americans, there is strong support to maintain or increase US military forces in South Korea. Seven in ten Americans (69%) say US military forces in South Korea should be increased (12%) or maintained (57%). Just 16 percent want to reduce troop levels and only 13 percent favor a withdrawal.

US forces remain in South Korea to deter a wide scale North Korean attack. The possibility of such an attack is taken with varying degrees of seriousness, but cannot be wholly dismissed. North Korea threatens such attacks against South Korea periodically.

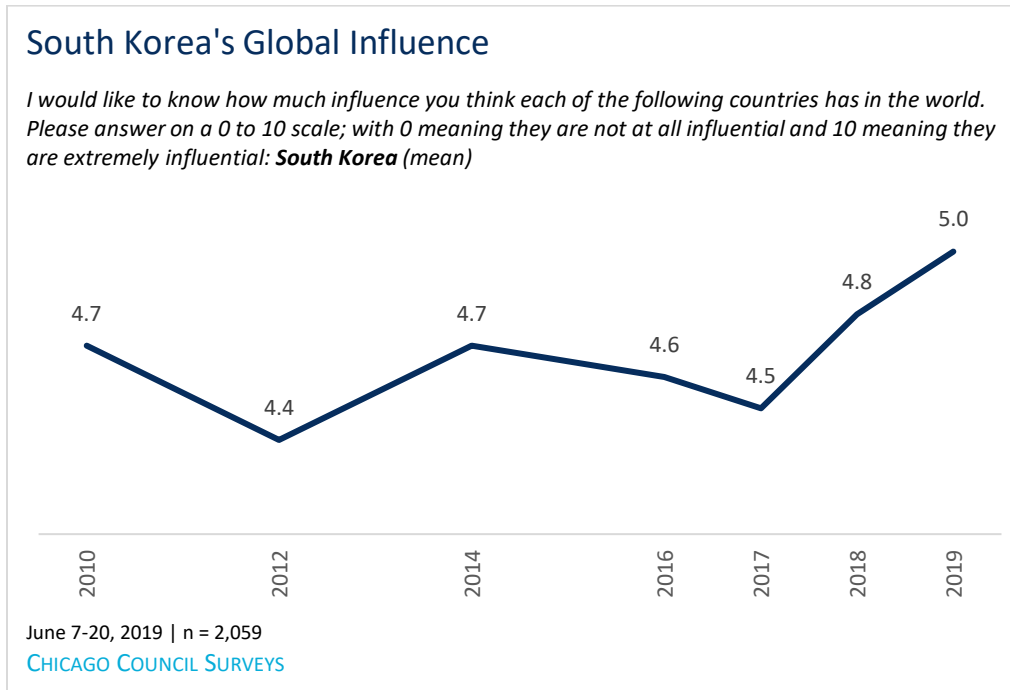
If North Korea were to attack, a majority of Americans (58%) favor using troops to defend South Korea. This support is strongly bipartisan—63 percent of self-described Republicans, 57 percent of Democrats, and 56 percent of Independents.



South Korea’s Influence on the Rise

One by-product of the summity of the past two years—along with the increasing awareness of Korean cultural products such as K-pop in the United States—may be an increased perception of Seoul’s influence. In 2019, the perceived influence of South Korea in the world is at a record high of 5.0 on a 10-point scale. Perceived influence was at new highs among Republicans (4.9), Democrats (5.1), and

Independents (5.0). This put South Korea's perceived influence nearly even with India at 5.2, above Iran (4.7), but well below countries like Japan (6.0) and Russia (6.7).



Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on data from the 2019 Chicago Council Survey of the American public on foreign policy, a project of the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy. The 2019 Chicago Council Survey was conducted June 7-20, 2019 by IPSOS using their large-scale nationwide online research panel, KnowledgePanel, among a weighted national sample of 2,059 adults, 18 years of age or older,

living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is ± 2.3 , including a design effect of 1.1607. The margin of error is higher for partisan subgroups or for partial-sample items.

Partisan identification is based on respondents' answer to a standard partisan self-identification question: "Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?"

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