

Threats to the Liberal International Order: Attitudes towards Democracy among the Youth in South Korea

By Hannah June Kim

The liberal international order has been defended by democracies for decades, yet it has continuously been challenged throughout that time. Some scholars argue that, despite these challenges, the liberal order survives by continuously overcoming these trials.¹ Some believe that the current world order will soon be replaced by a new one.² Others suggest that the liberal order will not collapse but may transform into one that is less hegemonic, less American-shaped, and less liberal.³ All the recent studies examining the liberal international order, despite their differences, have one thing in common: they all acknowledge that the liberal international order is facing more challenges than ever before.

Some of these challenges include increasing discontent from both external and internal actors as well as imminent threats,⁴ including threats related to populism, the rise of new nationalism, declining multilateralism, rise in protectionism, and intensified competition among major powers.⁵ In particular, the rise of authoritarian countries has been at the forefront of this challenge. China continues to contest the existing order and attempts to take advantage of the current system to increase its influence⁶ while deteriorating relations between Russia and the West have shown serious cracks in the maintenance of the international liberal order. Russia's sudden and aggressive invasion of Ukraine was not only a direct attempt to challenge Ukraine's independence and deny Ukrainian statehood, but also to attack the democratic-ness of the order.⁷ In this way, the Ukraine War has become the first direct and explicit attack on democracy after decades of subtle and implicit attempts, and citizens worldwide are reacting to how this has shaken up the stability of the world.

This paper examines how people perceive the liberal international order and whether these perceptions have changed since the start of the Ukraine War. Specifically, it observes perceptions of the liberal international order through support for autocracy and examines the case of South Korea (hereafter Korea) in the post-Cold War era. This study describes Korea's recent troubles

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with democracy and growing apathy towards liberalism and how this has increased during the post-Cold War era. It contends that support for authoritarianism increased right after the start of the Ukraine War, particularly among the youth, due to both external and internal factors including declining satisfaction with the current liberal order, disappointment with their institutions, and anxieties about their own future. It also explains how these attitudes may have changed throughout the course of the year and how these attitudes may influence not only the future of democratic progress within the country but also the stability of the liberal international order in the region.

This study is important for several reasons. First, Korea is a middle power that has both contributed greatly to the stability of the current order and has been significantly influenced by it, and as such, the country is highly influenced by the stagnation and decline of the Great Powers.⁸ This is especially the case since the country “plays a significant role in a wide range of important global issue arenas and supports liberal international order with its leadership diplomacy.”⁹ Second, support for the current order and its main pillars, e.g. democratic governance, is critical in Korea since the country resides in a region that continually struggles with democratic consolidation. Korea is only one of three fully consolidated democracies in the region, and as such, the country’s democratic status can greatly influence its neighboring countries and the overall region.¹⁰ Third, the youth have always played a critical role in Korea’s democratic progress, and as such, the youth’s attitudes towards the current order will have significant implications in both the country and the region’s future. Fourth, support for the international liberal order is especially important to observe in 2022 since the order was challenged on multiple fronts, with the largest explicit challenge coming from the Ukraine War. Support, or lack thereof, may have significant repercussions on democracy and the stability of the world. This study fills in some gaps in the existing literature on perceptions of the liberal international order but also on how recent events related to it may unfold in consolidated democracies in East Asia.

Below, I provide background information on definitions and perceptions of the liberal international order as well as a description of how Korea has viewed the order during the post-Cold War era and how these views might have changed this past year. Then, I describe why these views have changed during the year 2022 and the role of the youth, supporting my argument with original data. I conclude with a discussion as to how perceptions of the current order may change in Korea in the years to come.

South Korea, the Liberal International Order, and Democracy

The liberal international order has been defined in various ways. It can be defined as a system that was developed after World War II and managed by the United States to promote “democracy through building alliances and multilateral institutions.”¹¹ In this line of thought, powerful countries within the liberal international order must be democratic and should increase the number of democracies worldwide.¹² This is because democracies are bound to work together, cooperate, and develop a set of common rules. Through this, “an order will be largely free of war and will generate prosperity for all of its member states.”¹³

The main pillars of the current order include democratic governance¹⁴ as well as an ideology that focuses on democratic principles; international cooperation through multilateral institutions; and a collective effort to prioritize liberal norms and institutions.¹⁵ While the number of pillars may vary, the common theme focuses on democracy: democratic values, democratic governance, and democratic principles.

The liberal international order experienced an increasing number of democratic after the Cold War between 1990 and 2004.¹⁶ It was presumed that the order would become a single dominant one built on equality and freedom,¹⁷ yet serious cracks started to appear in 2005 and steadily grew as liberal democracy began to lose its appeal and existing democratic systems began to struggle.¹⁸ The number of liberal democracies began to decline, and scholars began to worry about the future of democracy as “soft authoritarianism” gained momentum as an attractive alternative, with some political leaders seemingly extolling the virtues of illiberal democracy.¹⁹

South Korea in the post-Cold War era

The supposed attractiveness of “soft authoritarianism” and illiberal leadership began to appear in Korea as well, despite the fact that the country was an exemplary case of democratic success in East Asia and one that represented the “most important and instructive” case of democracy just a few decades ago in the post-Cold War era.²⁰ Indeed, after experiencing nearly thirty years of authoritarianism from 1961 to 1987, a regime shift towards democratization occurred in 1987 through people power movements among those living in urban areas, middle class citizens, white-collar workers, student activists, journalists, and academics. This led Korea to transform into an electoral democracy in 1987 under President Chun Doo-hwan, who ended up accepting

general elections through enormous popular demand.²¹ Pressure from the people and this bottom-up approach to democratization indicated increasing political interest among the citizenry, with interest in politics increasing from 47.5 in 1982 to 72.8% in 1990.²²

The late 1980s into the 1990s were prime time for democratic vitality and stability in Korea. The public sphere grew through a rise of civil society groups and a diffusion of democratic political culture. As a successful new middle power, moreover, Korea remained uniquely situated geographically, economically, and politically: geographically located between China, Japan, and North Korea; economically growing rapidly with many large conglomerates, an educated workforce, and growing per capita income; and politically through successful democratization during the Third Wave. It was vital for Korea to remain stable and continue to make contributions to the liberal international order both as a role model and a promoter of democracy in the East Asian region.

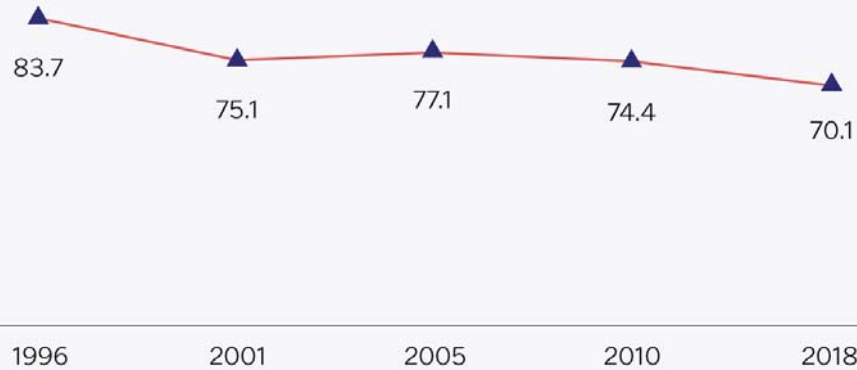
South Korea in recent years

Yet democratic stability and support began to decline soon after democratization in the late 1990s. According to the 3rd wave (1995-98) of the World Values Survey, 83.7% of the Korean respondents stated that it is “fairly good” or “very good” to have a democratic political system. Five waves from 1996 to 2018 of the survey show that there has been a general decline of favorability of democracy, decreasing proportions of respondents believe that it is good to have a democratic political system. While 83.7 percent of respondents viewed having a democratic political system to be good in 1996, the most recent wave shows that only 70 percent of respondents viewed a democratic political system to be good as of 2018.

The success of the liberal international order relies on democracy, since the international order is often described as a battle between authoritarianism and democracy. According to Mearsheimer, “the most important requirement for building a liberal international order is to spread liberal democracy far and wide.”²³ As such, democratic support is particularly important among countries within regions that continue to struggle with democratic consolidation, since this can create a snowball effect. This includes support from countries like Korea, a prime example of a middle power in East Asia that gained recognition in the post-Cold War era and worked to support, build, and preserve the liberal international order.²⁴

Figure 1. Declining Support for Democracy 1996 - 2018.

HAVING A DEMOGRAPHIC POLITICAL SYSTEM



South Korea's International and Domestic Democratic Decline

Declining support for democracy is not strikingly unusual to Korea. Many consolidated democracies have recently followed the trend towards democratic decay, with support for democracy declining through withdrawal from democratic institutions and rising support for authoritarian alternatives.²⁵ Yet Korea's democratic decay is unique because the country has been struggling with democracy both internationally and domestically.

Internationally, there are constantly growing threats to Korea's democracy from neighboring autocracies, with China and North Korea as prime examples. As one of the largest and most powerful autocracies in the world, China continues to attack democracy promotion²⁶ and has the potential to change the existing international order through its alliance with other strong authoritarian countries, the growing salience of authoritarianism, and the possible retreat of liberal democracy all over the world.

The Ukraine War this past year has, in many ways, "set off a geopolitical storm that portends seismic shifts in the international order."²⁷ It has increased concerns about the implications the invasion may have on China, since the Sino-Russian partnership has continued to improve during the last decade²⁸ and the Ukraine War has suggested that Russia and China will strengthen their alliance through a struggle between authoritarianism and democracy.²⁹ China

recently objected to the invasion being described as a “war,”³⁰ and this support and alliance has led to concerns as to whether Russia’s invasion of Ukraine would influence China’s increasingly forceful attempt to absorb Taiwan³¹ and influence neighboring countries.

While countries worldwide focused on providing support for Ukraine, Korea seemingly showed more apathy and indifference.³² Indeed, even though China continues to be the closest credible threat to Korea, the latter country continues to remain lukewarm towards China and its threats. Part of this may be because Russia’s invasion of Ukraine does not feel urgent or tangible,³³ yet attitudes towards authoritarianism and China remain somewhat ambivalent as well. A 2021 Pew study revealed that anti-Chinese sentiments in Korea were relatively high, with 77 percent of Koreans viewing China unfavorably.³⁴ An original survey further showed that favorability towards China averaged only 26.5 on a scale of 0 to 100, indicating that views of China have sunk “to their lowest since diplomatic normalization between the two countries.”³⁵ However, these sentiments seem separate from Russia’s attacks and seem to stem from feelings of cultural imperialism rather than fears of authoritarian influence and changes in the international order.³⁶

As another credible authoritarian threat, North Korea also continues to fire missiles towards Korea even amidst the Ukraine War.³⁷ Yet even with the constant threat from both neighboring autocracies, Korea remained relatively lukewarm towards these threats during the past few years. The previous administration was criticized by international organizations and democracies alike for not properly providing protection to North Korean defectors and remaining silent on North Korean violations.³⁸ Conversely, President Yoon, who took office in May 2022 has been much more confrontational with North Korea and recently raised the possibility of developing nuclear weapons and developing Seoul’s defense.³⁹ While this is a first, it is still too early to observe whether Korea will actively consider nuclear armament or is instead planning to do more as a deterrent if North Korea continues to act out.⁴⁰

Domestically, while Korea has been considered an exemplary case of third wave democratization, the country is struggling with the erosion of democratic norms, increasing polarization, and a focus on what seems to be a form of populist nationalism.⁴¹ According to Shin, this democratic decay may potentially “hit South Korea’s young democracy with unbearable costs.”⁴² In addition, Korea continues to struggle from within through declining democratic values⁴³ as well as divisions stemming from gender,⁴⁴ generational divides, income and class, regional divisions, migration, and anti-foreign sentiment.⁴⁵

These tensions manifest in two ways – the erosion of civil society and the illiberal youth – which can possibly dismantle democracy from within. For one, while Korea’s democracy blossomed through civil society groups, there is now declining citizen engagement with democracy. While established democracies often show high engagement of democratic norms,⁴⁶ there is a growing erosion of political support for democracy in Korea like in many other democracies. As Foa and Mounk state, “even as democracy has come to be the only form of government widely viewed as legitimate, it has lost the trust of many citizens who no longer believe that democracy can deliver on their most pressing needs and preferences.”⁴⁷

The other domestic threat to democracy, and the fundamental reason as to why preferences for the liberal international order are decreasing in Korea stems from grievances among Korean citizens. There is increasingly less support for democracy among South Koreans, and particularly, among the youth due to growing disaffection with democracy and increasing preferences for strongman leadership, which may influence not only Korea’s democratic future but also the liberal international order. To a certain extent, the two domestic tensions complement one another, since young people are often the powerhouse of civil activism.

Growing Disaffection with Democracy among the Youth

Support for democracy among the youth remains crucial for democratic consolidation,⁴⁸ especially since the group functioned as swing voters in the previous presidential elections and by-elections in Korea.⁴⁹ Yet growing grievances among a vulnerable youth and their increasing dissatisfaction with the government may have changed perceptions of both democratic systems and authoritarian alternatives.

The idealization of democracy and the liberal order began to decline through harsh realities among the youth for several reasons. For one, the youth are frustrated with political and corporate elitism. Many young Koreans have been discouraged with the recent administrations and their alleged abuse of power,⁵⁰ leading to increasing grievances towards politicians and growing distrust of the government, regardless of party. In addition, young Koreans are frustrated with income inequality and the lack of employment opportunities and feel as though the government is not doing much to resolve these issues. In fact, these grievances and heightened anxieties based on economic insecurities have led young men to lash out on younger women who they feel are taking away their opportunities through gender quotas⁵¹ and instead support politicians who display anti-feminist rhetoric.⁵² Grievances and frustrations among the youth are understandable, as housing prices continue to soar, youth unemployment

continues to increase, and stories about political scandals continue to increase distrust.⁵³ In various ways, the youth continue to be the country's most vulnerable generation, with their needs not being met and their voices unheard,⁵⁴ partly due to lack of representation for the youth in politics.

Increasing Support for Strongman Leadership among the Youth

The youth seem to be at the forefront of the democratic backsliding process, with many more likely to support authoritarian alternatives. Support for strongman leaders increased dramatically since 2000 and became “a central feature of global politics,” not only within authoritarian systems but among elected officials in democratic countries as well.⁵⁵ Support for strongman style leadership can be found in both nondemocracies, such as Vladimir Putin in Russia, and Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey,⁵⁶ and Viktor Orban in Hungary. Yet it can also be seen in democracies, through Jaroslaw Kaczynski in Poland, Boris Johnson in Great Britain, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, Andrews Manuel Lopez Obrador in Mexico, Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, and even more recently, Donald Trump in the United States. In the Asian region, moreover, China and India have also “both fallen prey to strongman politics” with Xi Jinping and Narendra Modi in power indefinitely.⁵⁷

Among the youth in Korea, strongman leaders may, to a certain extent, embolden this generation that has continuously felt the lack of representation in administration. While other forms of leadership seem less likely to directly handle their anxieties and concerns, strongman leadership may give off the impression that they are willing to help these younger generations and to get things done right away. The recent presidential election in Korea also showed how young voters took strongman leadership into account, with many preferring Yoon Suk-yeol's assertive approach over Lee Jae-myung's seemingly softer stance. Even Lee Jun-seok, the former chairman of the People Power Party, built his platform by showing this type of leadership and making taboo statements about gender and catering to groups of misogynistic young men by blaming feminism for their problems.

This is not new, as a rise of the alt-right movement, or “K-Trumpism,” has increased support for strongman leadership during the past few years. Even prior to the Ukraine War, Koreans were less likely to view Putin unfavorably relative to other countries. In a 2020 study according to Pew Research Center, respondents in Korea held more positive views of Russia relative to other countries, with 39 percent showing favorable attitudes while only 19 percent in the United States and 18 percent in Japan showed favorable attitudes.⁵⁸ As a result, in the initial stages of the Ukraine War, attitudes towards Putin may not have been significantly unfavorable due to this favorable view of strongman leadership. And while views

towards Putin may have changed throughout the past year through the struggle and challenges visible during the war, initial impressions of Putin's strongman leadership may not have been as negative relative to other countries, where people were much quicker to condemn Russia's attacks, since younger citizens may have initially seen some merit to strongman leadership.

To that end, this study contends that perceptions of the liberal international order are changing rapidly in Korea. Specifically, this study argues that Koreans have become, to a certain extent, less liberal in their views and less likely to explicitly support the liberal international order, due to recently declining preferences for democracy. This is exacerbated by eroding democratic norms from within, and declining citizen engagement, along with growing authoritarian powers nearby. In addition, this study posits that this change is, in part, being led by younger generations who are less democratic and less liberal than those of the older generations. This study argues that younger Koreans have become more supportive of authoritarian properties such as strongman leadership due to disappointment with existing administrations, and the belief that strongman leaders stand up "for the common man."⁵⁹ This study focuses on the youth because support for strongman leadership among younger Koreans differs from support from older Koreans, where support may stem from authoritarian nostalgia. It is also different from support among those living in authoritarian countries who directly experience authoritarianism in everyday life. It is a new type of support that stems from those who seem less invested in democratic politics and instead for authoritarian-type leaders, which may have lasting effects on democratic deconsolidation and the current order within the region in the years to come.

However, this study also leaves open the possibility that this may have changed over the course of the Ukraine War, particularly in the latter part of 2022 where many young Koreans saw the disadvantages of strongman leadership and by seeing Putin struggle during the war. With Putin recently unable to uphold his strongman leader image, it is possible that attitudes among the youth towards this may have changed recently as well.

Data and Methods

Data

I conducted two surveys in Korea this year using Lucid Marketplace, once before the Ukraine War in January 2022 and once after the start of the war in May 2022. In both surveys, I asked respondents about their attitudes towards

autocracy to see if support for autocratic properties and political preferences may have changed after the start of the Ukraine War. There were approximately one thousand respondents for each survey, and all of the survey questions were written in Korean for the respondents and then translated into English for the analysis.

Autocratic attitudes can measure preferences for the liberal international order in multiple ways. For one, the Ukraine War led to concerns about the growing salience of authoritarianism and the retreat of liberal democracy worldwide. As a result, measuring autocratic attitudes as the main dependent variable can show whether the growing salience of authoritarianism may become a true threat to the liberal order. Second, measuring certain characteristics of autocracy can show how respondents viewed Russia's invasion of Ukraine. For example, Putin's strongman leadership measures preferences for autocratic leadership and, by default, autocratic preferences.

In the survey conducted in January, the survey included the item: "We should get rid of parliament and elections and have a strong leader decide things." Response options included strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, and a neutral option. The survey conducted in May included a similar question: "A strong leader can disregard parliament and elections and decide things." Response options included very important, somewhat important, not very important, not at all important, and a neutral option. All the responses were reverse-coded and coded on a 0 to 1 scale.

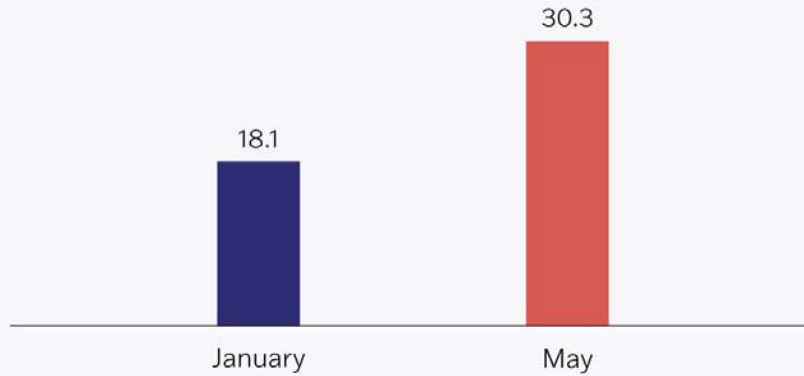
The independent and control variables include age, education, gender, income, employment, marital status, and party affiliation. The age variable is grouped into tens (below 30, 30 to 40, 40 to 50, 50 to 60, and over 60 years of age). All the variables were coded on a 0 to 1 scale to examine descriptive statistics, difference of means, and multiple regression analyses.

Methods

The figure below shows the percentage of respondents overall who showed support for strongman leadership prior to, and after, the start of the Ukraine War. Right before the Ukraine War, in January 2022, 18.1% stated that "we should get rid of parliament and elections and have a strong leader decide things." After the start of the Ukraine War, in May 2022, 30.3% of the respondents stated that it was very or somewhat important to have a strong leader who can disregard parliament and elections and decide things, indicating a substantial increase in support for strongman leadership.

Figure 2. Percent of Those who Support Strongman Leadership

% OVERALL WHO SUPPORT STRONGMEN LEADERSHIP



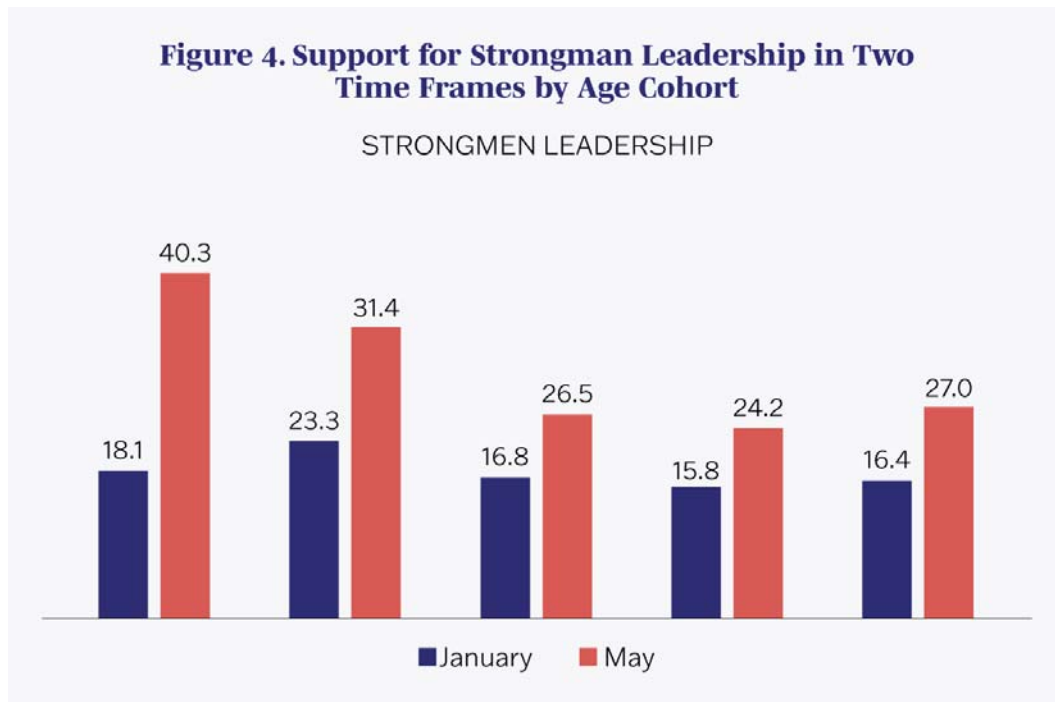
Moreover, a difference of means between the two time frames shows that support increased significantly over time, from 26.7 percent in January to 43.3 percent in May, showing a 16.6 percentage difference. This further indicates that support for strongman leadership has substantially and significantly increased during the start of the Ukraine War.

Figure 3. Difference of Means: Support for Strongman Leadership

DIFFERENCE OF MEANS: STRONGMEN LEADERSHIP

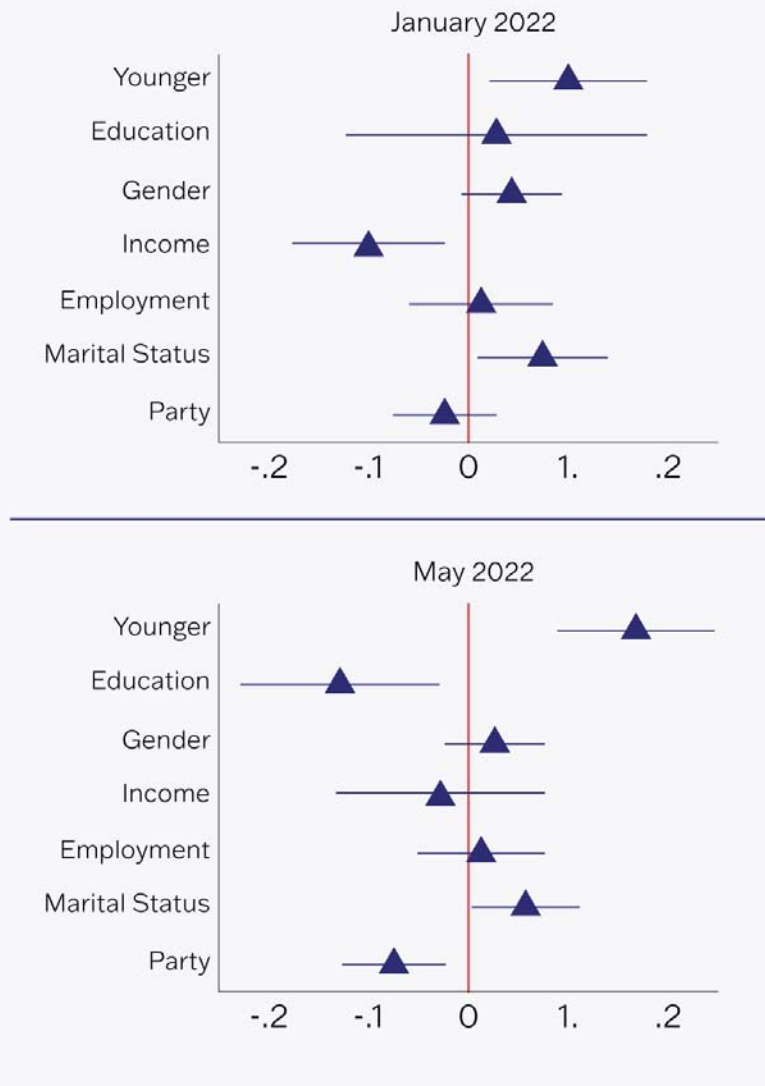


The figure below shows the proportion of respondents, by age cohort, who agreed with the statement that a strong leader should disregard parliament and elections and decide things, As the figure shows, younger Koreans were much more likely to support strongman leadership prior to, and after the start of, the Ukraine War. However, a larger proportion of younger Koreans were more likely to support strongman leadership after the start of the Ukraine War, with 18.9 percent prior to the Ukraine War, and 40.3 percent afterwards among those below 30 years old. The second largest amount of support comes from the second youngest cohort, with 23.3 percent showing support prior to, and 31.4 percent showing support after, the Ukraine War.



In addition to descriptive statistics and t-tests, I also ran multiple regression analyses to analyze whether age can predict support for strongman leadership. The coefficient plots below show the regression analyses of young age and support for strongman leadership in both January and May 2022. The results show that younger respondents are more likely to support autocratic leadership. In the survey conducted before the Ukraine War, younger age predicted a 7.8 percentage point increase in support for autocratic leadership. After the start of the Ukraine War, the analyses show that younger people were more likely to show support, relative to older, for strongman leadership, with 14.6 percentage points. Both results were statistically significant (see Appendix for full regression table).

**Figure 5. Coefficient Plots of Multiple Regression Analyses:
January 2022 and May 2022**



In addition, t-tests for both time frames by two age groups, younger and older (below 40 and 40 and above), all were statistically significant and show that, prior to the start of the Ukraine War, 30 percent of younger Koreans supported strongman leadership while 24.6 percent of older Koreans did. After the start of the war, 47.8 percent of younger Koreans supported strongman leadership while 39.6 percent of older Koreans did. Not only did support increase after the Ukraine war, but again, proportionally more young Koreans increased support for autocratic leadership (see Appendix for tables).

Discussion on Measuring Support among Conservatives and Progressives in South Korea

The results of this study suggest that, despite Russia's attack on Ukraine, autocratic preferences initially increased at the start of the war. Through two surveys, one conducted before the start of the Ukraine War in January 2022 and one afterwards in May 2022, results suggest that support for strongman leadership was higher among all age groups, but particularly among the youth. This increases concerns regarding the spread of authoritarianism and an illiberal international order. In the book *Ill Winds*, Larry Diamond warns "the future of democracy will be bleak if liberal democracies, including the United States, do not defend against China and Russia's sharp power."⁶⁰ Yet democratic deconsolidation seems to be increasing worldwide.⁶¹ In the case of South Korea, grievances among the youth seemed to be directed towards democracy, despite the current liberal order relying on democracy for stability.

Support for democracy can be measured in various ways, and support for the current order has traditionally been measured through support for the US and opposition to North Korea, China, and Russia. In the case of Korea, moreover, there has historically been a clear difference between conservatives and progressives in their support for, and opposition against, these countries, with conservatives often much more pro-US and more opposed to North Korea and China. Yet the connection between support for the United States, and opposition towards China in regards to the current order is not always clear. In fact, many Koreans showed anti-American attitudes even during democratization.⁶²

More recently, while support for democracy declined, anti-Chinese sentiment simultaneously increased,⁶³ with little difference between conservatives and progressives. Thus, perceptions of the current order during the Ukraine War are difficult to define through attitudes towards these countries. Indeed, while the United States has made its stance clear, China seems supportive of Russia but also remains very cautious in its support, especially on sanctions. China continues to monitor events in Ukraine to determine their own likelihood to directly intervene in Taiwan,⁶⁴ and as such, support for the order in the case of Korea is difficult to define in terms of support for, and support against, other countries and the gap between conservatives and progressives regarding this aspect is not as significant as it used to be. Rather, perceptions of the liberal international order can be more clearly extrapolated through support for democracy among civilians, regardless of party affiliation and ideology. And the past few years indicate that, while generally both liberals and progressives indicate favorable attitudes towards the United States, they paradoxically also

show more support for authoritarian characteristics more so now than in the past. When generally asked about the United States on a feeling thermometer, for example, many are willing to rate the country highly. Yet when it comes to preference for democracy over autocratic traits, the results significantly decline, suggesting that support for the United States does not indicate support for the existing order.

Conclusion

Mearsheimer once stated that no international order lasts forever.⁶⁵ Recent events suggest many challenges to the existing liberal international order, with much more democratic backsliding than democratic progress; a growing number of illiberal leaders relative to liberal ones; increasing isolation among countries rather than cooperation; and even the pandemic challenging the current order. Amidst this long succession of tribulations, however, the liberal international order continues to hold its anchor. Despite these challenges, liberal democracies and the international order based on democratic prominence continues to endure.

While this study focused on examining support for strongman leadership right before and after the start of the Ukraine War, in January 2022 and in May 2022, it is also important to examine whether support has changed since then. This study incorporates public opinion data in early May, prior to Yoon taking office, and support for strongmen leadership was measured during a time of significant changes. Initially, both public opinion and the administration seemed ambiguous and noncommittal towards the Ukraine War.⁶⁶ The previous administration did not impose independent sanctions on Russia,⁶⁷ and some even faulted Zelensky's inexperience for starting the war.⁶⁸ There was also a lot of uncertainty and confusion among the public in terms of the war.

Yet soon after Yoon took office in May 10, his administration began to lead a significantly more hawkish stance on the war by focusing on values-based foreign policy and emphasizing rule-based order. Having a conservative party in power further suggests that the administration will keep Russia at a distance and work to protect the liberal international order by leading by example, agenda setting, and mediating.⁶⁹ Yoon's meetings with President Joe Biden and Yoon's new Indo-Pacific strategy, while tempering anti-China rhetoric, indicated that the administration was planning to work with the United States.

A lot has changed during the past year and since the second survey in early May, and recent polls suggest that support for authoritarian leaders have declined. According to a recent study by Pew, confidence in Putin has declined in Korea, with 69 percent indicating no confidence.⁷⁰ This may in part be because Putin is facing numerous challenges in the Ukraine War, and through this, his strongman

leadership capabilities are also being questioned. Seeing Putin struggle may further decrease support for this type of autocratic leadership over time. As such, it is possible that, since the time of the second survey, favorability for this type of leadership may have changed among the youth and, in a roundabout way, Putin's failures may help democratic progress in Korea.

The Ukraine War is not just a tragedy taking place in another country. It is influencing perceptions of the liberal international order worldwide. Korea's democratic progress continues to be influenced by both internal and external factors, and the Ukraine War has affected attitudes towards democracy as well. If Korea can overcome increasing illiberalism and support for authoritarianism, particularly among a young group of Koreans who have no strong recollection of Korea's historical democratic success, the challenges besetting the liberal international order may be overcome in Korea, the region, and beyond.

Appendix

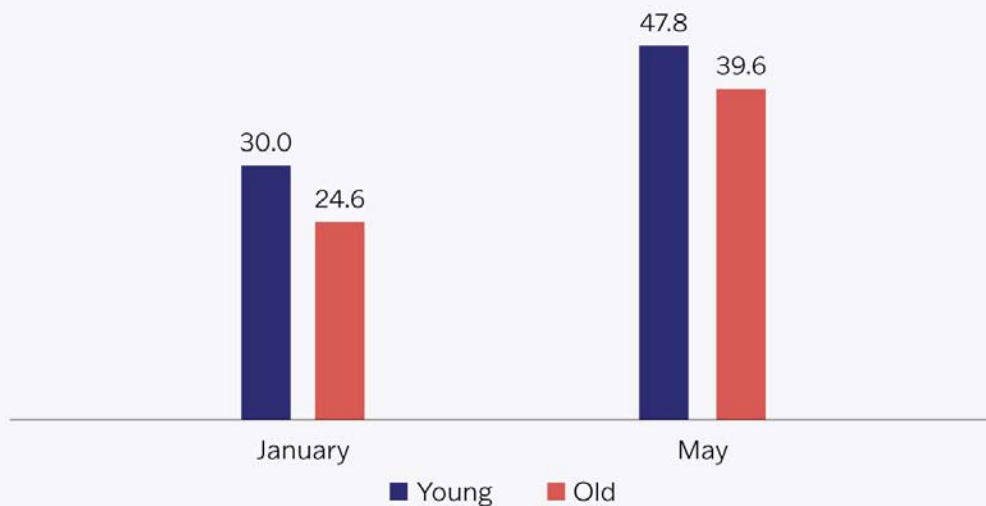
Appendix A. Regression Results for Coefficient Plots.

	January 2022	May 2022
Younger	0.0078* 0.037	0.146*** 0.037
Education	0.021 0.064	-0.115* 0.047
Gender	0.029 0.022	0.029 0.021
Income	-0.086* 0.035	-0.025 0.049
Employment	0.011 0.028	0.012 0.028
Married	0.059* 0.027	0.048+ 0.027
Party	-0.022 0.021	-0.062** 0.022
Constant	0.215*** 0.047	0.408*** 0.047
N	957	989
R ²	0.014	0.035

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Appendix B. T-Test Results for Younger and Older Koreans in January 2022 and May 2022.

SUPPORT FOR STRONGMEN LEADERSHIP



Endnotes

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