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“Editorial”

James I. Matray

Editor-in-Chief

jmatray@csuchico.edu

Measuring American public opinion on issues in U.S. foreign relations always has been imprecise. However, popular attitudes towards individual nations have been easily recognizable as extremely positive or negative during certain time periods. Views of specific countries also have changed over time. Take for example France, the first ally of the United States. During the Revolutionary War, most Americans loved the French for their assistance, both economic and military, in achieving victory over Britain. They also cheered when France appeared to follow the American example in staging the French Revolution in 1789. But then “The Terror” and the actions of Ambassador Edmond Genet in attempting to undermine U.S. neutrality after the onset of war in Europe in 1792 ignited intense public hostility toward France. Americans welcomed the fall of the restored French monarchy and the election of Louis Napoleon as president in 1848, until four years later, when he proclaimed himself emperor. But what created public abhorrence of Napoleon in the United States was not only his support for the Confederacy, but his deployment during the American Civil War of French troops in Mexico in 1861 that three years later would install Austrian Archduke Maximilian as emperor. Naturally, Americans were pleased when the Franco-Prussian War forced Napoleon into exile, leading to a revival of positive views toward France following its wartime humiliation. France won favor among Americans when it allied with Britain to block Germany’s challenge to the balance of power in the early 20th Century. Of course, Americans fought to defend France in World War I and liberate it in World War II. Since 1945, American public attitudes toward the French occasionally have shifted from essential indifference to animosity, such as in response to Premier Charles de Gaulle’s sharp criticism of U.S. policies in the 1960s and the renaming of French fries as “Freedom Fries” when France opposed the U.S. war against Iraq in 2003.

No nation in East Asia has matched France as a target of frequent shifts in American public sentiment between enmity and admiration. For a century

and a half before 1949, China, for example, occupied a favorable place in the American worldview because of the naïve belief that its people wanted to emulate the U.S. social, political, and economic model. But since the Communists seized power, only the intensity has varied in the U.S. popular disapproval of the People's Republic of China (PRC). By contrast, American attitudes about Japan have oscillated since Commodore Matthew C. Perry ended its self-imposed isolation in 1954. Racist hostility to Japan grew in the late 19th Century in response to increasing Japanese immigration. However, aggressive policies to dominate China economically and politically after 1895 turned Americans fully against the nation. Hatred of Japan then peaked after it attacked Pearl Harbor in December 1941, but then the U.S. citizenry embraced it as a Cold War ally. Japan's emergence as a global economic power ultimately inspired intense resentment among the American people in the 1980s when it led to a huge U.S. trade imbalance and Japanese purchases of prominent U.S. businesses. While the U.S. public attitude toward Japan in the 21st Century has been apathetic, Christine M. E. Guth in the first article of this issue titled "'The Japanese stand today as teachers of the whole world': American Food Reform and the Russo-Japanese War" describes how during the late 19th Century, many Americans deeply admired the Japanese. Encouraging a positive opinion was the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876, where "Japanese displays of arts and crafts had captivated millions of visitors . . ." American women soon were decorating "their homes with Japanese curios, ranging from lacquer wares and screens to fans, woodblock prints, and paper lanterns, [and] held Japanese-themed parties where guests wore kimonos . . ." Its victory in the Russo-Japanese War, Guth explains, would persuade many Americans of Japan's superiority.

Guth provides a fascinating description of how Japan's surprising defeat of Russia in 1905 initiated a discussion among Americans on how the Japanese diet and health care could be a model for food and hygiene reform in the United States. "Military doctors, home economists, dietitians, businesses, vegetarians, and physical fitness fans joined this discourse," she explains, providing detailed coverage of the writings and advocacy of each group. Dr. Louis L. Seaman incited public interest in Japanese eating practices with two books touting how Japan's rice and fish-based diet built strength and stamina in its soldiers that "had the unintended consequence of calling into question the wisdom of American meat-eating habits." Other writers described how another key to Japan's victory was applying modern medical science in achieving rapid recovery of its wounded. Japan naturally welcomed this praise, but, as Guth writes, "more striking [was] the fact that until very recently Western observers had considered the country to be uncivilized." Elevating admiration among

Americans for Japanese food and health care were reports of U.S. soldiers suffering from preventable diseases during the Spanish-American War (1898) and the postwar “Embalmed Beef Scandal” that exposed how “bad canning and beef adulterated with chemicals to disguise poor refrigeration” had caused rampant dysentery and food poisoning. Japan offered an alternative diet that attracted interest from an increasing number of American women who led a patriotic national crusade for food reform that stressed eating smaller meals with consumption of more vegetables and less meat. This coincided with a growing vegetarian movement and a rising “national preoccupation with physical fitness.” “Although the discourse on Japanese diet was a politics of the moment and quickly waned,” Guth insightfully concludes, “it gave Japan a favorable culinary identity because it provoked the first sustained discussions of its cuisine’s healthful properties, qualities that most Americans take for granted today.”

Japan, as Guth explains, worked to elevate its world image during the Russo-Japanese War, arranging for U.S. journalists to visit its hospitals to observe its use “of modern equipment, such as aseptic steel surgical instruments, enameled furniture, and ceramic tiled walls to ensure the highest standards of hygiene.” Admirers of Japan included journalist George Kennan, cousin of his namesake author of the U.S. containment policy in 1947, who believed that incorporating Korea into the Japanese empire would promote the economic, social, and cultural development of that country. President Theodore Roosevelt also accepted Japanese colonial rule in Korea in the Taft-Katsura memorandum of 1905, not least because there was nothing he could do to stop it. Koreans, however, never forgave him for what they saw as a betrayal. South Koreans later blamed the Truman administration for a second betrayal in August 1945 when it negotiated with the Soviet Union the division of the peninsula at the 38th parallel, leading to the emergence three years later of two separate Korean governments. Then in yet another betrayal, the United States withdrew its troops from South Korea in June 1949, allegedly inviting Communist North Korea to stage an invasion to unite the country in June 1950 that ignited the Korean War. These events had a powerful impact on Syngman Rhee, who in August 1948 became the first president of the Republic of Korea (ROK). His obsession with preventing another U.S. betrayal motivated him to oppose the Korean War Armistice Agreement until the United States agreed to sign a Mutual Security Agreement with the ROK. Rhee also engaged in a vigorous campaign to secure support from members of Congress and prominent political figures to lobby for ongoing economic and military assistance for South Korea. This campaign included as well Rhee’s reliance on “soft power,” as Hye-jung Park explains in this issue’s second article titled “Negotiating an

Unequal Partnership: The Korean Children's Choir 1954 U.S. Tour and Syngman Rhee's Diplomacy."

Park examines the Korean Children's Choir (KCC) tour of the United States from April to July 1954, showing how "Republic of Korea (ROK) President Syngman Rhee used this high-profile cultural event" to increase financial assistance from U.S. donors and rebuild his political support inside South Korea. President Dwight D. Eisenhower endorsed the visit to reduce the amount of aid the U.S. government had to provide, including the choir in the "Help Korea Train Campaign." Park briefly describes Rhee's long relationship with United States and stresses how, after he became ROK president, he "continued to develop public information strategies for both domestic and international affairs and emphasize the importance of cultural propaganda." Rhee, for example, embraced the KCC after An Pyŏng-wŏn founded it in 1947 and it "quickly became a fixture of public and private performances at the presidential residence," as well as performing during the Korean War under the ROK Navy's protection. The Truman administration rejected Rhee's proposal for a U.S. tour in 1951, but it coincided perfectly with Eisenhower's desire to practice indirect diplomacy. During the 1954 tour, 25 choristers, aged seven to twelve, visited all 48 states, staging performances featuring popular Korean and American children's and folk songs, meeting with U.S. dignitaries, and collecting "\$22 million—nearly the same amount the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency allocated for Korean post-war reconstruction." Americans warmly received the KCC because the media portrayed the choristers as war orphans who were "miserable victims of Communist brutality," when in reality they came from "wealthy and powerful families" and had experienced no wartime suffering. Since the tour occurred at the same time as the Geneva Conference, "Rhee counted on the KCC to galvanize U.S. attention and build sympathy for his position on Korean issues." Park skillfully demonstrates how the KCC tour was in fact an exercise in "cultural diplomacy not as soft power, but as survival strategy."

At first, Rhee was successful in building popular support in the United States. A major reason was the status of the ROK as a staunch anti-Communist U.S. ally in the Cold War. But as the 1950s progressed, many Americans found repugnant Rhee's tyrannical behavior and political repression. This shift in public opinion toward viewing South Korea unfavorably escalated after Pak Chŏng-hŭi imposed a brutal dictatorship on the nation after 1961. Significantly, this shift in American attitudes from love to hate was not unique, but a common pattern in postwar East Asia. For example, Jiang Jieshi's anti-Communist regime on Taiwan received broad U.S. support, but favorable sentiment waned in response to his authoritarianism. President Ferdinand Marcos led an anti-Communist

regime in the Philippines from 1965 to 1986 that was the target of increasing U.S. public criticism as his rule became more oppressive. Similarly, most Americans initially held the Republic of Vietnam under President Ngo Dinh Diem in high regard, until his ruthless suppression of dissent stirred mounting opposition climaxing in the self-immolation of protesting Buddhist monks. Of course, the Cold War made it easy for Americans to detest the Communist nations in East Asia, notably the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Memories of the Korean War ensured an antagonistic U.S. public attitude toward North Korea, but Americans soon considered Kim Il Sung especially despicable because he based his despotism on a cult of personality, replete with huge statutes of himself and the requirement for his citizens to wear lapel pins bearing his visage. Interestingly, however, this did not prevent the U.S. government from dealing with the DPRK to resolve issues of common concern, as Liu Zhaokun explains in this issue's final article titled "Icebreaking Cooperation: Resuming the Repatriation of U.S. Servicemen's Remains from North Korea, 1985–1990."

Liu discusses the DPRK's return of the remains of American soldiers who died in the Korean War directly to the U.S. government on 28 May 1990 for the first time since 1954. He explains that North Korea's insistence on delivering these five caskets to Congressman Gillespie V. Montgomery "rather than the Korean War Military Armistice Commission [MAC] was an attempt to force the United States to acknowledge its legitimacy." After 1954, North Korea periodically had transferred U.S. soldier remains to United Nations Command (UNC) personnel at the MAC, instead of in a formal, diplomatic manner to a U.S. government representative, thus granting "the United States a venue to engage North Korea without recognizing it." President Ronald Reagan's claim in 1981 that North Korea and Vietnam were holding American prisoners ironically caused P'yongyang to recognize that returning dead Americans was a bargaining chip. In October 1985, it declared that it would recover and return remains only if the U.S. government made a formal direct request, but Washington insisted that prior agreements required working through the UNC and the MAC. When the DPRK announced in 1989 that it had discovered new remains, Montgomery proposed his acceptance of them in P'yongyang, but the State Department objected until he agreed that the transfer would occur at the MAC. Montgomery worked out the details for the exchange with North Korea in January 1990, but P'yongyang gave final approval only after the PRC persuaded it to do so. The DPRK scored minor victories when Montgomery accepted the remains on the North Korean side of the demilitarized zone and the receipt made no reference to the MAC, but it cancelled his planned visit to P'yongyang, thereby "minimizing domestic attention to its failure . . ." "The 1990 remains

repatriation revealed the possibility of cooperation between the two countries,” Liu optimistically concludes, as well as providing a model for “similar cooperation [to] deescalate the continuing Cold War in Northeast Asia.”

North Korea continued to return the remains of U.S. soldiers after May 1990. During his meeting with President Donald J. Trump in June 2018 in Singapore, DPRK leader Kim Jong Un agreed to transfer the remains of 200 U.S. soldiers that North Korea already had discovered. At that time, the U.S. government still had not been able to retrieve more than 5,000 U.S. troops lost in North Korea. The DPRK’s actions on this issue won praise, but they certainly did not cause many Americans to like North Korea. In recent years, however, uncertainty has emerged among the general public regarding who exactly are the enemies or allies of the United States. President Trump identified as friends such authoritarian leaders Russia’s Vladimir Putin, the Philippines’ Rodrigo Duterte, and Turkey’s Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Simultaneously, he labeled as foes such leaders of democracies as Canada’s Justin Treaudeau, Germany’s Angela Merkel, and France’s Emmanuel Macron. Alliance partners Mun Jae-in of South Korea and Abe Shinzo of Japan for Trump became the leaders of nations who benefited from U.S. military protection on the cheap, while exploiting the United States in trade relations. Americans lack more certainty today than ever before in arriving at a positive or negative opinion about nations around the world.