

LETTER

FROM THE EDITOR

The year of elections and protests. From Africa to Europe and from Asia to the Americas, no region is spared from the spotlight. While elections are always significant, the post-Brexit world and the Trump effect have forced elections to shape not only a country's future but also signal trends in international dynamics. The year began with Gambia's political crisis when neighboring countries' troops intervened to remove President Yahya Jammeh, who refused to accept his loss to the newly elected Adama Barrow. Illustrating the power of protest and the peaceful transition of power, South Korea removed President Park Geun-hye after the Constitutional Court unanimously upheld the impeachment. The protest momentum continued with the election of the Democratic Party's Moon Jae-in, ending the almost decade-long conservative rule. At the upcoming Nineteenth Party Congress, President Xi Jinping will look to consolidate his power, and the replacement of several top officials will portend China's political and economic challenges and the country's global status.

Moving to Europe, the increasing visibility of far-right parties in mainstream politics has fostered concerns about the future of both the European Union and democracy. Yet, the losses of the Party for Freedom's Geert Wilders in the Netherlands and the National Front's Marine Le Pen in France communicated a different message. Meanwhile in the UK, Prime Minister Theresa May's plan to secure more seats for her party backfired during the June snap elections. Whether the surge in nationalism is abating depends on Germany's elections in September. In a historic referendum, Turkey adopted the presidential system of government. While Western analysts cast this as a dangerous expansion of the president's power, others

point to the success of Turkey's democracy in allowing decisions to be made by the people rather than a military coup. The huge turnout in Iran's elections served to validate President Hassan Rouhani's policies of opening the country and restarting its economy. Finally, the protests sweeping South America expose the people's frustration with stagnant economies, rampant corruption, and disappearing rights. With this backdrop, the dynamics of culture, values, and identity in shaping policies, institutions, and histories form the theme, "Politics & Culture," of this Spring/Summer 2017 issue of the Yonsei Journal of International Studies (Papers, Essays, and Reviews).

In the "Papers" section, the first piece leads the issue's politics theme and ties timely with the government corruption debates. Felicia Istad's "Presidential Pardons in South Korea: Analysis of Quantitative and Qualitative Trends" reassesses the dominant narrative on presidential abuses of power and finds data proving otherwise. Dr. Stephen Magu's "The (Ir)responsibility to Protect: Are Small-Arms Suppliers Complicit in Africa's Genocides" evaluates the role of values in determining policies. The author explores potential correlations between the international altruistic concept of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and arms exporters' complicity in Africa's conflicts. The next piece, "Why North Korean Foreign Policy Is Rational: An Application of Rationality Theories" by Sarah Lohschelder adds to the growing rationality approach to the North Korean leadership's behavior through an extensive application of multiple rationality theories to the Agreed Framework of 1994 and the Sunshine Policy. The final piece returns to China's pre-imperial era in Dr. Jie Gao's "China's Encounter with the West: Sino-French Relations before the Arrow War." It reviews the evolution of Sino-French relations before France's ultimate turn towards imperialist expansion like other Western powers.

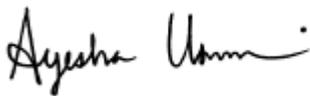
Moving on to the "Essays" section, the first piece encompasses the issue's theme of culture influencing institutions. In "Profile and Characteristics of Arab Think Tanks," Yi Li provides a detailed overview of Gulf, Sham, and North African regional think tanks and examines cultural, historical, and political factors in influencing the think tanks' capabilities and research focus. Eileen Chong Pei Shan brings attention to a forgotten crisis in "The Role of Non-Domestic Factors in the Perpetuation of the Rohingya Crisis." The author explores three concerning aspects: an unorganized Rohingya resistance, an inactive ASEAN, and a relatively silent international community. The next piece shows how culture can be used as tool to favor domestic businesses. In "Cultural Nationalism in South Korean Business: The Case of Haansoft Software Products,"

Nigel Callinan argues that Haansoft relied on the historical importance of Hangul as a leverage against a takeover by a multinational company. Finally, “Politicization of Culture: China’s Attempt at Reclaiming Cultural Legitimacy after Mao’s Cultural Revolution” by Nur Zafirah Binte Zainal Abidin compares the government’s relationship with and manipulation of Chinese heritage and traditions during the Mao and post-Mao periods.

The final section incorporates an interview and book review, which both focus on island and mainland relations. Our staff editor, Gene Kim, interviewed Harry Harding, University Professor and Professor of Public Policy at the University of Virginia, and Shirley Lin, a founding faculty member of the master’s program in global political economy at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. The discussion centered on the narratives of Taiwanese and Chinese identities and their evolution as well as Taiwan’s range of policy options in cross-strait relations. In reviewing Donald Kirk’s *Okinawa and Jeju: Bases of Discontent*, Scott Kardas presents a thematic analysis of the book along with a balanced critique. He reiterates the book’s comparison of the two islands’ similar historical grievances, military base effects, and protest movements.

Most importantly, I sincerely thank the members of the YJIS editing team who worked tirelessly, provided critical assessments, and created an enjoyable working environment. Their commitment and dedication made this issue possible. Furthermore, we express our gratitude to our contributors for sharing their analyses, insights, and opinions with the academic community. As my first and last time as Editor in Chief, I am deeply grateful for this rewarding and educational opportunity. Despite being demanding at times, the irreplaceable experience exposed me to new research dimensions and to the publishing process. As I finish my graduate school career, I will forever look fondly upon the memories shared with the YJIS team and the Yonsei GSIS community. I look forward to the new directions and voice that the next Editor in Chief will bring to the Journal. We hope that our readers and contributors enjoy this issue and continue to support the YJIS in the future.

Sincerely,



Ayesha Usmani
Editor in Chief