

**TRUST IN GOVERNMENT AND PROTECTIONISM:
KOREAN PUBLIC OPINION IN THE KOREA-US FREE TRADE
AGREEMENT (KORUS FTA)**

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Introduction: Framing the Puzzle

Public Views on Trade Liberalization: The Dichotomy

Public opinion polls on the subject of trade often reveal two interesting dichotomies. The first is a dichotomy between economists and the general public: while few economic policies command as much consensus among economists as the benefits of trade liberalization, the public in most industrialized countries has been largely sceptical (Caplan 2002, 433-458; Fuller and Geide-Stevenson 2003; Irwin 2005, 369-387). The public is not inherently and consistently sceptical of trade, however, and this creates a second dichotomy: between the views of trade held by the public when the issue is viewed in the abstract versus when there is a particular trade policy to consider. While the public displays generally positive attitudes toward trade in principle, they are largely ambivalent about specific trade policy initiatives (Irwin 2005; Scheve and Slaughter 2001). The quadrennial surveys of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (CCFR) have consistently shown that majorities around the world have a generally positive view of globalization and believe that international trade has a positive impact on national economies (2002, 2004, and 2007). When the public is asked about specific trade policy initiatives, however, public support is considerably lower. These general findings have been fairly consistent across countries, as I will show in detail in the later sections.

This paper aims to identify the sources of this divergence, support for trade in the abstract and scepticism about specific trade policies, bilateral free trade agreements in particular. My basic argument is that a lack of political trust is an important source of the divergence. For new democracies in particular, low levels of trust in government undermine positive opinions of globalization/international trade significantly once it manifests itself as specific trade policy initiatives. Somewhat ironically, a transition to democracy and the resulting increase in civic engagement have decreased political trust in new democracies. Political trust, defined here as public sentiments toward the *responsiveness* of the political process and *effective governance*, is a reflection of how citizens perceive government institutions relative to their expectations (Hetherington 2005). Given the importance of perceptions, it is not surprising that new democracies suffer from a declining level of political trust. On the one hand, citizens' expectations about government are likely to increase with democratization; but on the other hand, increased civic engagement in a newly democratized country likely decreases political trust by exposing the public to the illegitimate and corrupt practices of government institutions on a more regular basis (Espinal, Hartlyn, and Kelly 2006, 200-223).

Little research has been conducted on how political trust affects the formation of public policy preferences. Admittedly, not all types of policy issues require political trust (Hetherington 2005). There are, however, a good number of reasons why trust affects specific trade policy preferences. First of all, trade policies inherently generate redistributive consequences: they create both winners and losers; moreover, as evidenced by the political economy literature, trade liberalization often increases economic insecurity (Anderson and Pontusson 2007, 211-235; Mughan and Lacy 2002, 513-533; Hays, Ehrlich, and Peinhardt 2005, 473). When policies benefit some people more than others, citizens need to at least

believe that the distributional outcomes will be fair – not something that will benefit mostly the privileged in the society, including elected officials. This is even clearer when considering that distrust in government, especially in new democracies, is often viewed as expecting a relatively high level of rent-seeking on the part of elected officials. In addition, when policies require a segment of society to make sacrifices or create economic insecurity, citizens need to trust that they will be protected by their government. In other words, they need to trust that their government's assistance programs will effectively compensate those who are adversely affected by the policies. Given the irreversibility and uncertainty of trade policies, such trust is crucial to securing public support for the policies. Lastly, trust is also consequential because trade policies reinforce the idea to the public that the government works on their behalf. Scholars have pointed out that most democracies are representative in nature, which is why trust matters (Irwin 2005; Hetherington 2005; Gamson 1968; Bianco 1994). The presence of a third party in the policymaking process – as is often the case with bilateral or multilateral trade agreements – likely reinforces the representative relationship between the public and the government, or the public's perception of the government; and in this regard, a low level of trust may limit their representatives' leeway in making policy decisions on the nation's behalf.

This paper demonstrates that it is a lack of political trust that generates growing scepticism of specific trade policy initiatives in new democracies. Unfortunately, however, there is no individual-level data available to directly test the relationship between political trust and individual preferences over specific trade policy initiatives. Instead, I pursue an indirect method: discourse analysis. This paper examines how the progressive news media, often perceived as opposing free trade, set the agenda on free trade during trade negotiations. I hypothesize that in new democracies, trade protectionist arguments during trade negotiations are framed along storylines that increase public suspicions of the government's responsiveness and effectiveness. By testing this hypothesis, I attempt to show the effect of political trust on formation of trade policy preferences.

More specifically, I examine how Korean progressive newspapers, which are known to advocate anti-free trade positions, developed the agenda on KORUS FTA (Korea-US free Trade Agreement) during the negotiation period from January 2006 to April 2007 and on re-importation of U.S. beef from April to June in 2008. The case of Korea is selected for the following reasons. Korea is indeed one of the countries where the dichotomy between a willingness to accept increased international trade, and a hesitation to support integration driven by specific policy initiatives, is most pronounced. As an export-oriented economy, Korea, along with China, has displayed the highest levels of support for globalization and a strong consensus on the positive impact of trade on national economies (CCFR). At the same time, it is also one of the countries where protest against trade liberalization has been most vigorous, as one can see from the country's brouhaha over US beef imports in 2008¹. In addition, Korea is a new democracy that has displayed a low level of political trust; moreover, the level of trust has declined significantly over time since transition to democracy². Indeed, Catterberg and Moreno (2006), in their analysis of the trends in political trust in new and old democracies over the last 20 years, find that a considerable

¹ President Lee Myung Bak's removal of restrictions on U.S. beef has plunged his administration into a crisis that could imperil a free-trade pact with the U.S. (Businessweek June 9, 2008)

number of new democracies have shown a lower level of political trust in recent years than in the past. This is very noticeable among Koreans (Catterberg and Moreno 2006, 31-48). Park (2004) likewise demonstrates that the percentage of Koreans who trust government institutions has dropped 30 percent over the past decade. In short, this paper will show that in new democracies the relationship between levels of political trust and protectionist sentiments is indeed causal by investigating the anti-free trade agenda setting process in Korea.

This paper is organized as follows. In the next section, I define political trust and discuss why support for trade policies requires political trust. Here I review the scholarly discussion on its definitions and its effects on the formation of public policy preferences. In the following section, I track the pattern of erosion of political trust in new democracies, with particular attention to the case of Korea. In the later sections, the data are presented and the hypothesis is tested. I then conclude by discussing the implications of the results.

Political Trust and Protectionism

Political trust is a complex construct. The definition of political trust has numerous variants: it can be diffuse or specific, and instrumental or normative. Easton (1965) defines trust as an evaluative orientation directed toward a political system. He divides a political system into the “regime” and the “authorities,” and distinguishes trust toward the former from trust toward the latter (Easton 1965). Diffuse trust refers to the public’s evaluation of the “regime,” the institutional structures of government, while specific trust is directed toward the “political authorities,” the elected officials of a government. This distinction is important because distrust toward the authorities will be resolved through electoral replacement, but distrust toward the regime likely persists regardless of who is elected, thus calling legitimacy into question (Miller 1974, 951-972; Citrin 1974, 973-988; Hetherington 1998, 791-808; Keele 2005, 873-886). While diffuse and specific trust is a categorization based on the objects towards which trust is directed, political trust can also be categorized in terms of its motivations – whether they are rational/instrumental or normative. Warren (1999) for example conceptualizes it as citizens’ willingness to “accept vulnerability to the potential ill will of others by granting them discretionary power over some good” (Warren 1999). This definition is instrumental, as it assumes convergent interests between citizens and representatives – i.e., by this definition, political representatives are considered trustworthy to the extent that they attend to citizens’ interests (Warren 1999). Classical political theorists, on the other hand, take a normative view of political trust, and define it as an assessment of the moral values associated with political institutions and authorities (Fukuyama 1995, 89-103; Mara 2001, 820-845). In political trust based on normative concerns, citizens expect ethical qualities of their representatives and political institutions.

For the purposes of this paper, I conceptualize political trust as an orientation toward political institutions in general (diffuse trust), rather than as individual political incumbents (specific trust), while incorporating both instrumental and normative aspects into the concept. Scholars have demonstrated that in American politics, specific trust also matters by showing that trust changes in accordance with partisan control of the government (Keele 2005, 873-886). However,, it should be noted that political trust is necessarily broader in a conceptual sense. Political trust is something that transcends partisanship or ideology, exerting an independent influence on the formation of policy preferences (Hetherington

2005). Given that political trust is stable and consistent at the individual level as comparable to one's partisanship and ideology (Jon A. Krosnick 1991, 547-576; Hetherington and Globetti 2002b, 253-275), it should be more important than an evaluation of government performance at a given point in time. In addition, as an independent predictor of support for public policies, diffuse trust necessarily includes both normative and rational expectations of the public. Clearly, support for government policies likely depends on the extent to which the public trusts the government to do the *right* thing, i.e., something that people want it to do and/or they perceive as morally/ethically correct, and to do it *well*. More specifically, taking the above-mentioned variants of the definition of trust into consideration, I define political trust as public evaluations toward the *responsiveness* of the political process and *effective governance*. Do people think that the policymaking process is responsive and transparent enough that they can make their voice heard? Do people think that government institutions are capable, effective, and efficient enough to carry out what they ought to do? This paper focuses on these traits of political institutions in order to measure levels of political trust.

One point that is imperative to understand in this definition is the importance of *perceptions* (Hetherington 2005). The public's evaluations of government are not a direct reflection of the government's actual performance. If the public's expectations are high, political trust will be lower than it should have been otherwise; and/or a negative news media coverage could also result in public misperceptions of government. What matters is that the perceptions are more important than the reality for garnering policy support from the public. This implies that levels of political trust depend on the extent to which the government succeeds in building the impression of being trustworthy among the public, regardless of whether politicians' position-taking in policymaking processes is indeed "democratic responsiveness" motivated by a principled commitment to a delegate model of representation, or whether it is just strategic "pandering" or "simulated responsiveness" (Lippmann 1955; Page and Shapiro 1992; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000). Likewise, it is important for the government to *look* competent; indeed, it is probably more important for a government to appear more competent than it actually is.

While there is little doubt that political distrust influences the public's policy support by breeding conditions in which the government cannot govern effectively (Gamson 1968), little empirical investigation has yet been made into the consequences of political trust/distrust on support for specific government policies. The only exception is Hetherington and Globetti's (2002) research on racial policy. They argue that trust ought not be consequential for all policy issues, but is consequential for policies which "offer no discernible, immediate benefit and which may demand sacrifices," such as racial policy (Hetherington and Globetti 2002b, 253-275). Indeed, Hetherington demonstrates that political trust is associated with support for redistributive spending such as antipoverty and race-targeted programs, but not with support for spending on social security, defense, and crime prevention (Hart and Shaw 2001).

Then what about trade policies? Trade policies indeed fit the types of policies Hetherington categorizes as those in which trust matters: they are distributive in nature, and they generate losers and winners. On top of that, trade policies involve a great deal of uncertainty (regarding the distribution of gains and losses from trade liberalization). Opening markets to free trade leaves people vulnerable to the vagaries of the international

market, and thus puts them more at risk of loss and more uncertain about the policy outcomes (Fernandez and Rodrik 1991, 1146-1155). In his edited volume, *Democracy and Trust*, Warren (1999) indeed connects risk and trust by pointing out that when new policy initiatives are successful in focusing on the uncertainties of their outcomes, the public is less likely to extend the trust necessary for the policy implementation (Warren 1999). This implies that new policy initiatives that inevitably involve uncertainties and risks such as trade policies demand more trust from the public than those whose outcomes are relatively certain. Without such trust, fears of uncertainty are likely to be magnified, thus making the public turn away from the policy initiatives. In the same volume, Offe (1999) also argues that for high-risk policies where there is a tension between opportunity and risk, the tension must be eased by trust (Offe 1999).

Trust matters for trade policies because they are by nature not domestic policies – i.e., a third party is involved in the policy-making process. Bilateral or multilateral trade agreements are indeed conceived as a two-level game, consisting of simultaneous negotiations at both the national (domestic) level and the international level (Putnam 1988, 427). The presence of a third party in the policymaking process often evokes a sense of “common fate”³ among the public – i.e., a sense that one’s fellow citizens are equally affected by the outcomes of trade bargaining (realistic group theory) and have similar concerns about the country’s standing and status relative to its trade partners (social identity theory) – thereby intensifying the perceived representative relationship with their government. This explains why trade policies require trust. Trust is essential to the representative relationship: most democracies are representative in nature; it is trust that gives representatives the leeway to make decisions on the nation’s behalf (Bianco, William T. 1994; Hetherington, Marc J. 2005). In other words, representation demands that citizens trust that their government institutions are working in the country’s best interest. Without such trust, the public would not support the policies, and instead would seek for more direct control over policy decisions. In contrast, to governments, the logic of a two-level game implies that public commitments could reduce the set of possible bargaining outcomes, thus making bargaining failure more likely. That is, governments may perceive that greater the public commitments, the higher the audience costs. Governments committed to free trade would therefore prefer to maintain flexibility in the ongoing negotiations by minimizing the costs incurred by public involvement. In this regard, trade policies require political trust more than any other public policies. When political trust is absent, citizens will want to have direct control over policy decisions, and in contrast, governments will try to hide detailed

³ There are reasons to think that trade negotiations would be framed along the storylines that enhance such group identity. The mass media today exerts an interesting influence on people’s perceptions of mass collectives. According to Mutz, the mass media facilitates the influence of anonymous others by creating portraits of the opinions of large collectives. Research on the effects of the mass media has in fact suggested that its primary impact is on perceptions of policies (or problems) at the collective level, and that people are responding to a “media-constructed pseudo-environment” rather than their immediate personal experiences or self-interests” (Mutz 1998). Also, especially when the public is exposed to information about ongoing trade negotiations, whether or not their country makes a good bargain with its trade partner is likely to be of concern to them. Trade negotiations are in fact often framed along storylines that enhance individual self-perception as an in-group member (the nation) interacting individually or collectively with the out-group (its trade partner); so it is no surprise that collective identity is transcendent in this context.

information from their citizens so as to minimize audience costs, all of which is likely to create a vicious circle promoting both political distrust and protectionism.

In fact, with a few exceptions, most of the existing research on trade policy opinions stays in the domain of (political) economists. By assuming that individuals judge policies based on their beliefs about whether they personally might gain or lose from the policies, economists have focused their efforts almost exclusively on identifying who in society wins and loses when the policies are implemented (Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Mayda and Rodrick 2005, 1393; Baker 2005, 924). Theoretical and empirical models of public opinions about trade policies draw materially from economic trade theories such as the Heckscher-Olin (H-O) and Ricardo-Viner (R-V) models – i.e., trade policy preferences are determined by either the factors individuals hold or the industry in which they work. Political economists' efforts to link the material consequences of trade to individual preferences over trade policies is, however, incomplete in the sense that they are largely apolitical and centred on material-interest. Individuals do not necessarily have enough information to figure out the likely redistributive consequences of trade policies; given costs attached to the procurement and analysis of political information, becoming informed about the details is not even considered rational (Downs 1957). Moreover, gains and losses from trade policies are expected but they are never certain. This all provides room for politics to play a role in the process of opinion formation. It is indeed argued that while feelings of uncertainty and risks about policies such as trade policy promote attention from the public – i.e., making people more likely to reconsider their previously learned routines, to collect more information, and to change their attitudes toward the policies (Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000) – they also make people more suspicious of the attributes of politicians and of the system as a whole⁴. The absence of political trust makes politicians more vulnerable to such suspicions because distrust acts as an anchor for suspicion (McGraw, Milton Lodge, and Jones 2002, 362-383). In short, trust is consequential to trade opinion formation: those who are less trusting should be more prone to suspicion, thereby becoming more susceptible to negative messages of the policy in question; and trade policy is one of those policies that subjects individuals to risky or uncertain outcomes, thereby making trust essential.

Decline in Political Trust in New Democracies

Trust in political institutions has been considered as vital to the consolidation of democracy. Paradoxically, however, distrust prevails and has even been reinforced in many new democracies, which is allegedly the predicted legacy of authoritarian rule and its consequent democratic transition. Larry Diamond (1999) in *Developing Democracy toward Consolidation* suggests three generic tasks that new democracies must handle if they are to become consolidated: (1) democratic deepening, (2) political institutionalization, and (3) regime performance. Ensuring the latter two – political institutionalization and regime performance, which appear to be interconnected – is particularly important for building and reinforcing political trust. Such tasks, however, are challenging for most of the new democracies, because ironically (but not surprisingly) these tasks are hard to perform without political

⁴ McGraw et al. (2002) point out that trust is conceptually distinct from “suspicion” in the sense that suspicion is a “temporary state that is aroused by specific circumstances and then recedes,” while trust is a more “stable and enduring predisposition” (McGraw, Milton Lodge, and Jones 2002, 362-383).

trust. It can be a vicious circle: low levels of political trust inhibit government performance and political institutionalization, which in turn further undermines political trust (Gamson 1968; Miller 1974, 951-972; Citrin 1974, 973-988). This is indeed what is happening in many new democracies.

First, effective government and regime performance is a crucial variable affecting the development of beliefs about regime legitimacy (Diamond 1999). This includes both economic and political performance. Although there is no doubt that positive economic performance will be a considerable benefit to the consolidation of democracy, political performance is not any less important. Furthermore, it should be recognized that the democratic public highly values the responsiveness and accountability of its government. The public in new democracies may value and expect even more from democracy, given that the memories of the authoritarian past likely retain a strong contemporary influence – i.e., for many of them, democracy is not something that they were given but that they fought for. Corruption is also viewed as an important dimension of political performance; but likewise, rampant corruption is a signature characteristic of new democracies with an authoritarian legacy, and it also contributes to a decline of political trust.

Second, and relatedly, political institutionalization is also crucial to the consolidation of democracy. This includes strengthening the formal representative and governmental structures of democracy (Diamond 1999). Weak government performance, however, could make political institutionalization even more challenging. If individuals perceive that the government is not competent in ensuring responsiveness and accountability and is also highly corrupt, they will become more inclined to exercise direct control over the government. It is noteworthy that the personal experiences of the recent democratic transition, especially ones that are initiated from below, could make this inclination even stronger. Many citizens in new democracies did experience participation in street demonstrations against their authoritarian regimes and witnessed their power in removing authoritarian leaders from office and successfully leading the country out of authoritarian rule. When it comes to political institutionalization, however, the experience may not help. When political trust is low, many would prefer to take part in street protests as they did when they fought for democratic transition, rather than to wait for political institutions to work. These attempts will make political institutions even weaker and will make governments scarcely effective. Consequently trust is further undermined.

Indeed, political trust has significantly declined in most new democracies over the past two decades. As shown in Figure 1, while the decline of trust in parliament seems ubiquitous, it is definitely more severe in new democracies. As indicated by Catterberg and Moreno, trust in parliament fell, on average, 26 percentage points in Latin America, 29 points in former Soviet Union, and 13 points in Eastern Europe between 1981 and 2001 (Catterberg and Moreno 2006, 31-48). Korea is one of the most dramatic cases, registering a decrease from 67 percent in 1981 under the authoritarian regime, to 34 percent in 1990 right after the democratic transition in 1987. The level of trust dropped even further amidst the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 to 10 percent in 2000. The East Asia Barometer (EAB) in 2003 reveals largely similar outcomes: only about 15 percent of Koreans express trust in political parties and the parliament, and 27 percent in the national government. (Zhu 2008).

[Figure 1]

My argument thus far is twofold: (1) I suggested that political trust has causal importance in trade policy preferences; and (2) I also showed that political trust has significantly declined in new democracies. In the next sections, by showing how Korean progressive news media engage political distrust to argue against Korea-U.S FTA, I will demonstrate that public opposition to government's trade liberalization initiatives in large part reflects public condemnation of the government responsiveness and effectiveness (capacity). Consequently, this indicates that other things being equal, new democracies likely face stronger opposition to any trade liberalization initiatives than advanced democracies.

Korean public opinion on KORUS FTA: The Hypotheses

The United States and South Korea signed Korea-the United States Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA) on June 30, 2007. It was an outcome of ten months of contentious negotiations, which began on June 5, 2006 and were concluded on April 1, 2007. The KORUS FTA is the U.S.'s largest bilateral trade initiative since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)⁵. For Korea, the FTA with U.S., the world's largest economy, is even more significant, as it is by far the its largest FTA. The FTA's economic impact on Korea is expected to be much greater than its impact on the U.S. economy, since Korean economy is smaller (the world's 11th largest), more protected, and more dependent on trade than is the US economy (Korus report). Indeed, the FTA attracted substantial media/public attention. The debates over the FTA negotiations were splashed on front-page headlines across all local newspapers in Korea, which reflects the widespread and intense public reactions to the FTA negotiations.

Figure 2 presents fluctuations in Korean opinion on the FTA for the ten months of the negotiation (June 2006-April 2007). The fluctuations in part reflect the sensitivity of the issues on the negotiation table at a given time; but in general they display a pattern that the initial high pro-free trade opinion decreases, but the initial low anti-free trade opinion increases, and thereby the two converge as the negotiations proceed. The survey conducted by the Korea International Trade Association (KITA) in December 2004, about a year before the negotiations were announced, reveals that 75% of Koreans supported the FTA, which dropped significantly once the negotiations began – it bounced back and forth in the middle of the negotiation, but never reached the initial level of support⁶. Opposition to the

⁵ Indeed, the United States International Trade Commission (USITC) estimates that the FTA would add \$10 billion to \$12 billion to annual U.S. Gross Domestic Product and around \$10 billion to annual merchandise exports to Korea.

⁶ The pattern is in fact not new. The pattern of Canadian opinion on Canada-US FTA in 1988 was very similar. Although the pro-free trade majority was never reversed in Canada, the initial gap between support and opposition narrowed significantly by the time the negotiations were completed (Johnston 1992). As Johnston (1992) shows, almost 80 percent of Canadians supported the FTA in April 1984, which weakened significantly upon the beginning of the negotiations in November 1985, and dropped by almost 30 percent by the time the agreement was reached in October 1987. This pattern might be ubiquitous, but my argument is that if trust is

resumption of the U.S. beef imports in 2008 was even more intense. Although beef issue was not actually part of the formal FTA negotiations, it was discussed in parallel with the negotiations (CRS report) because resuming importation of the U.S. beef was one of the alleged preliminaries⁷ demanded by the U.S. as prerequisites for the opening of FTA negotiations. In 2008, the newly elected Korean President Lee Myung-Bak during the U.S.-Korea summit signed an agreement to lift the ban on U.S. beef imports in the hope that that it would remove the obstacle to ratifying the KORUS FTA in the U.S. Congress. This agreement however triggered what became known as the “beef-protest” in Korea, which engulfed the Lee administration in a crisis that threatened the FTA. Hundreds of thousands of people took part in mass protests; and amid the protests, President Lee’s approval rating plummeted to under 20% just five months after his landslide election victory in December 2007.

[Figure 2]

Then what explains Korea’s protectionist sentiment, which became more widespread as the negotiations proceeded and eventually peaked at the beef crisis? That is, why are Koreans, who have displayed a strong consensus around international trade’s positive impact on the national economy⁸, ambivalent about the FTA? Before I present my hypothesis, I discuss three alternative explanations: (1) “identity bias” {{263 Krueger, Anne 1989}}; (2) nationalism (and/or anti-American sentiment); and (3) anti-globalization (anti-neoliberalism).

Trade policy is always contentious; it can therefore be argued that the divergence between support for trade in the abstract and scepticism about trade policy in the particular gets to the root of the controversy over substance in FTAs. The controversy often revolves around “losers” – i.e., domestic industries/sectors who are likely to lose from the FTA. As the negotiation proceeds, losers are identified – this implies that it is not only those negatively affected by the FTA that become protectionist, as often assumed by economists⁹. In other words, it is not only economic factors – i.e., actual costs or benefits that the FTA is likely to generate – but also psychological factors that may play a significant role in forming public attitudes toward protectionism. Conover and Feldman (1986) once wrote,

Political scientists picture the (American) public as one populated by individuals who deal with economic information in a sterile manner devoid of feelings. Yet the accuracy of this description is belied daily by those people we encounter both in our won personal lives and through the media:

low, then the divergence in opinions between an abstract idea and a concrete policy (and between before and after the negotiation process starts so that the policy is more specified and concrete) is larger.

⁷The preliminaries publicly disclosed include (1) “suspending regulation on pharmaceutical product prices”; (2) “easing government regulation of gas emissions from imported US cars”; (3) “resuming importation of US beef”; and (4) “reducing the compulsory quota which requires South Korean cinemas to screen South Korean films from 146 days per year to 73 days” (For the details, see the website of Korean Alliance against Korea-US FTA at <http://www.bilaterals.org/spip.php?rubrique140>)

⁸ Among the 14 countries that were asked whether international trade was good or bad for their economy, Korea was one of the countries that expressed the highest levels of approval (79%), along with China (88%), Israel (88%), and Thailand (79%) (CCFR, April 2007).

⁹ Numerous studies on public opinion have found that self-interest (narrowly defined) often plays little or no role in determining policy preferences. For example, self-interest fails to influence mass preferences in such policy issues as bussing, health insurance, unemployment programs, the Vietnam War, and affirmative action (reference).

people who are depressed over unemployment, worried about being laid off, angry over inflation...
(Pamela Johnston Conover and Feldman 1986, 50-78).

Indeed, the mass media today exerts a large amount of influence on people's perceptions of mass collectives (Mutz 1998)¹⁰. Given that reality, it is not hard to imagine that as trade negotiations attract public attention, people's attitudes toward the FTA are influenced by their perceptions of others' attitudes or experiences portrayed by the media. For instance, as the debate over FTA's substance becomes more intense, people become more informed about the losers' identities. The knowledge about the losers' identities likely evokes a more sympathetic response from the public toward their plight than it would if their identities are unknown. This is what Ann Krueger (1989) phrases "identity bias" (Krueger 1989): by drawing on Schelling's distinction (1984) between statistical and individual specific information, Krueger argues that such identity biases may account for why the political process is often biased towards protection despite the well-known gains from trade liberalization.

For Korea, there were clear victims of the FTA, namely farmers. Agriculture was high on the U.S. agenda and as expected, negotiations pertaining to access to Korea's domestic markets of agricultural products including rice, beef, and citrus products were among the most contentious (For details, see the CRS report for Congress on KORUS FTA (2007)). As the largest trade-flow impact of the KORUS FTA on U.S. was expected to occur in the agricultural sector, the U.S. pressed for complete liberalization in agricultural products. Korea, however, wanted a number of products to be excluded from the negotiations, because agriculture is the country's most sensitive and most protected sector. The CRS report states that although agriculture accounts for only 3 % of Korean Gross Domestic Production (GDP) and 7.2% of employment, Koreans' strong cultural ties to rural areas still makes the agriculture sector a formidable political force (p.13, CRS). More importantly, the income level of farmers' households is only about 78.2% of the average income of an urban household, and about 87.1% of the average income overall.¹¹ Given that public opinion is likely to be shaped by the feelings that it holds toward the social groups they see as the principle victims of the policy (Kinder 1998; Nelson and Kinder 1996, 1055-1078; Conover 1988, 51), the strong/intense opposition to the FTA might be a reflection of public sympathy for the plight of farmers. This formulates the first alternative hypothesis.

The next hypothesis relates to nationalism. There is plenty of empirical evidence that nationalism correlates positively with protectionist sentiment (Mayda and Rodrik 2005, 1393-1430; O'Rourke et al. 2001, 157-206; Scheve and Slaughter 2001, 267-292). Mayda and Rodrik (2005) found that among non-economic determinants in the form of values, identities, and attachments, high degrees of neighbourhood attachment and nationalism/patriotism are associated with protectionist sentiment (Mayda and Rodrik 2005,

¹⁰ For example, Jacobs and Shapiro (1994) found that there is an interesting disjuncture between the public's overall contentment concerning their personal healthcare and the public's dissatisfaction with the quality of healthcare available to others. While a stable 84-89% of Americans report being personally satisfied with the quality of healthcare received from doctors, only half as many agreed that other patients enjoyed high quality treatment (Jacobs and Shapiro 1994, 9-17). This shows the importance of what Mutz (1998) called "impersonal influence": the large amount of support for healthcare reform does not come from Americans who are not adequately covered by health insurance; rather this support for reform is related to individuals' perception of anonymous mass collectives, which is overwhelmingly negative (Mutz 1998; Jacobs and Shapiro 1994, 9-17).

¹¹ For details, see <http://www.agnet.org/situationer/korea.html>.

1393-1430). Likewise, O'Rourke and Sinnott (2001) by showing that protectionist attitudes are strongly related to both patriotism and chauvinism, concluded that "nationalist attitudes exercise some autonomous influence and are a significant factor in the genesis of protectionist policy preferences" (O'Rourke et al. 2001, 157-206).

Indeed, nationalism is the way the overseas media understand the public opposition to the FTA and to the related resumption of U.S. beef imports to Korea, which was very intense at times. The Washington Post editorial¹² about Korean protests of US beef describes the Korean reaction as irrational, compounded by nationalism (Editorial, Washington Post, June 14, 2008). The New York Times¹³ likewise writes that the beef dispute is the "test of whether their leaders can resist pressure from superpowers like the United States, even if that pressure is legitimate as is the case in the beef dispute" (Choe Sang-Hun, New York Times, June 11, 2008). Some academics also hold the similar view: Gi-Wook Shin (2010) argues that the protests over US beef reflects an anti-American sentiment originated from what he calls "(national) identity politics" (Shin 2010). By comparing the beef protest to the sweeping anti-American reaction to the school girl incident in 2002¹⁴, Shin traces it to (ethnic) nationalism and anti-American sentiment, which developed at critical moments of Korean history, including the Kwangju massacre in 1980¹⁵. Given the empirical findings that nationalism in general is associated with protectionist sentiment and the presence of strong nationalism in Korea, it might be nationalism and related anti-American sentiment that accounts for the protectionism¹⁶.

Lastly, it can also be argued that the intense Korean protectionism reflects the underlying anti-globalization/anti-neoliberalism as one can see in any country. While the definition of globalization is highly controversial, I use the term to refer to a process that is restricted to the economic area, because economic issues such as fear of job displacement,

¹² For the details, see the editorial from Washington Post, June 14, 2008: "Seoul's Beef Beef: The Bush administration and Congress must rescue free trade with South Korea." Accessible online at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/06/13/AR2008061303223.html>.

¹³ For the details, see the article by Choe Sang-Hoon from the New York Times, June 11, 2008: "Protests in Seoul more about nationalism than U.S. beef." Also accessible online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/11/world/asia/11iht-seoul.1.13635643.html>.

¹⁴ The incident was one in which two teenage Korean schoolgirls were killed after being run over by a US army armoured vehicle on an off-base training mission. The incident provoked anti-American sentiment in Korea because the soldiers involved were found not guilty and released by a US military court. This prompted hundreds of thousands of Koreans to protest against the US-ROK Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), which stipulates that US military personnel fall under the jurisdiction of US military courts. The street protest (candlelight vigil) was recorded as the biggest anti-American protests in Korean history (BBC News, December 10, 2002: "US official met by Korean anger").

¹⁵ On May 17, 1980, the military leadership led by Major General Chun Doo-hwan declared martial law and sent paratroopers to Kwangju to quell a growing democratization movement. The crackdown killed at least 144 civilians (this is an official figure, but the exact number of casualties is estimated much higher). The United States was often blamed for the massacre, because given its operational control over the Korean forces, it is believed that the United States could and should have stopped the junta from dispatching the paratroopers (Shin 2010).

¹⁶ The CRS report writes that it is the United States that sets the agenda of the FTA negotiations, and that South Korean officials simply react to U.S. demands. Given that that was the way the negotiations proceed – though it was mainly because the U.S. has lower and fewer tariffs than Korea, and Korea is more dependent economically on the US than vice versa – it might have given the Korean public an impression that the Korean government was being dragged into U.S. court, which might have strengthened nationalism and anti-American sentiment.

threats to the country's social programs, risk of worsening poverty and income inequality, all comprise the key elements of anti-globalization rhetoric. It might be that most Korean citizens had not formed a specific attitude toward the FTA before the negotiations commenced; but as the debate over the FTA intensified, they absorbed the messages of relevant partisan elites and formed their preferences accordingly (Zaller 1992). If that is the case, one could argue that protectionism is a reflection of anti-globalization/neoliberalism ideology held by many of the Korean left-wing party (Democratic Party) members.

This paper does not deny that the three factors above – identity bias, nationalism, and anti-globalization – may play a role in forming public attitudes toward protectionism. I argue, however, that political distrust is a dominant factor accounting for Korean protectionism among all of these factors. I will demonstrate it in the next section, by examining media discourse of the FTA issues. Specifically, I hypothesize that Korean opposition to the KORUS FTA can be largely explained by the public's distrust of the political system's (and the politicians') *capacity* to effectively deal with its trading partner and their ability to provide adequate compensation for potential losers, as well as distrust of the *responsiveness* of the policy-making process – *i.e.*, transparency of the process and the government's effort to communicate with the public through listening and persuasion. As a newly democratized country, Korea lacks such political trust; and this in large part accounts for the intense public opposition to the FTA in 2006-7 and U.S. beef importation in 2008.

Data and Method

This paper examines the sources of Korean protectionism through the prism of the news media. Admittedly, survey data would be ideal for testing the relevance of the suggested factors in explaining policy preferences at the individual level; and indeed, most existing studies on policy preferences have relied on public opinion polls. However, survey data that include relevant variables are not always available, especially when the variables are relatively new, such as political trust. In other words, given that survey questionnaires are usually designed based on existing theories put to test, survey analysis is often more relevant for theory testing rather than for theory building. Indeed, the relevance of political trust as an independent variable has largely been underestimated (Hetherington and Globetti 2002a, 253-275); and no empirical investigation has yet been made into the consequences of political trust/distrust on support for specific trade policy initiatives. In this regard, this research resembles a theory-building process. In addition, and more importantly, the snapshot nature of survey data makes it difficult to grasp changes in collective public opinion on matters of policy. The key argument of this paper is that political trust and protectionist sentiment in the aggregate are in a causal relationship. However, to demonstrate that the relationship is causal, data need to be placed in a context in which policy is framed, debated, and then re-framed. Media data provide such context.

This paper utilizes the Korean news media in examining protectionist sentiment related to specific trade policy initiatives, the KORUS FTA and the re-importation of U.S. beef. The media matter for two different reasons: the media not only *reflect* but also *shape* public opinion. Content analysis of news media coverage thus inevitably raises an endogeneity question. The causal importance of trust, if seen in the media discourse, could be a reflection of public opinion; but it could also be the result of media framing. This study

is based on the premise that the mass media mirror public opinion; however, it does not rule out the possibility of the media exploiting political distrust among the public to strengthen protectionist sentiment through framing and/or priming. Even if it is the result of the media's agenda setting, the relevance of political trust as a source of protectionism will not be any less significant. It is probably more important that the media engage citizens' distrust not anything else to argue against the government's trade policy initiatives.

To examine how the trade issues were portrayed in the mass media, two newspapers – *Hangyoreh Shinmun* and *Kyungbyang Shinmun* – were chosen for analysis. Newspaper articles were selected because newspaper accounts of policy issues are usually more comprehensive than television news programs, radio or Internet media; moreover, Korean newspapers in general have a high readership, are national in scope,¹⁷ and are known to be highly influential in the policy-making processes. The particular newspapers chosen, *Hangyoreh* and *Kyungbyang*, were selected for their representativeness of anti-FTA views. Korean news media are sharply divided over many policies issues – *i.e.*, one particular new media often reflects only one side of a given issue – and FTA is no doubt one such issue. *Hangyoreh* and *Kyungbyang* are largely considered the most influential progressive newspapers (especially *Hangyoreh*) in Korea, and are also known to advocate anti-FTA positions. As this paper investigates protectionist arguments, pro-FTA newspapers were excluded from analysis.

The news articles were obtained from Korean Integrated Newspaper Database System (KINDS), the most extensive newspaper archiving database in Korea. The principle data for this study are full text articles on KORUS FTA and U.S. beef: all articles that mentioned “FTA” from January 2006 to April 2007 and “U.S. beef (*Miguksan Soigogi*)” from April 2008 to June 2008 were examined¹⁸. The two keywords seem sufficient to cover all the relevant articles. With “FTA” as a keyword, 2301 articles, and with “US beef” 2021 articles were obtained. Among the articles collected, the main focus of analysis was placed on editorials (99 editorials for FTA, and 95 for US beef) because they are evaluative in nature – *i.e.*, very suitable for measuring a newspaper's interpretation and assessment of factual information.

For the purpose of this study, editorials obtained were categorized based on the four hypotheses suggested above: (1) political trust; (2) identity bias; (3) nationalism (and/or anti-American sentiment); and (4) anti-globalization. *Table 1* presents the details. As defined, the category for political trust contains articles arguing about the government responsiveness and effectiveness. For responsiveness, articles in this category include those criticizing the government for not publicizing or whitewashing details on negotiations (transparency) and/or for not making an enough effort to communicate with the public through listening and persuasion (communication). For effectiveness, articles include those that cast suspicion on the government's resources and capacity to work in the country's best interest and/or to successfully provide adequate policy measures to minimize potential negative effects of the

¹⁷ For instance, the New York Times has a weekday circulation of only about 1 million, while Chosun Ilbo has a daily circulation of more than 2 million. Given the population of Korea (47 million), 2 million is a significant portion (Shin 2010).

¹⁸ The particular time periods were selected because the first round of the FTA negotiation took place in June 2006 and the negotiation was completed in April 2007, and the beef issue emerged during President Lee's visit to the U.S. in April, 2008 and the mass protest against the beef peaked in June the same year.

trade policy initiatives. The category of identity bias includes articles that mainly touch on potential victims of the new policy, *e.g.*, the plight of farmers likely to get worse under the new trade policy, consumers exposed to food-safety risks, or the domestic film industry. Articles that discuss substance in the FTA are included in this category because the newspapers that hold a negative view on FTA are expected to focus more on losers rather than winners from FTA. While the category of identity bias covers issues related to domestic social groups (in-groups) implicated in public disputes over the FTA, the category of nationalism (anti-American sentiment) includes articles generating out-group anxiety - anxiety against the U.S. in this case - by addressing the unfairness of the FTA. Specifically, articles indicating that global asymmetries of power inevitably lead to unfair negotiation outcomes fall into this category. Lastly, articles addressing the negative impacts of neoliberalism in general, as a way of criticizing the FTA, are included in the category of anti-globalization. More specifically, articles that raise general concerns about widening income disparities, job losses, privatization, and weakening social programs fall into this category.

[Table 1]

Explaining Trade Policy Preferences

Figure 3 presents percentages of editorials that belong to each category. The majority of editorials on the FTA (60.6%) are in the category of political trust – that is, as hypothesized, the FTA issues were framed in large part along the storylines that raise public suspicion of government responsiveness (39.4%) and government effectiveness (21.2%). In the case of the U.S. beef issue, the category of political trust comprises an even higher percentage (73.7%) of editorials with 44.2% for responsiveness and 28.4% for effectiveness, by dominating all the other issues of the other categories – identity bias, nationalism, and anti-globalization. At the beginning of the debates on the FTA (when the FTA first attracted media attention), I found a number of editorials revolving around concerns about the opening of agriculture, the loosening of the screen quotas, and/or neoliberal concerns in general, such as income inequality; but once the negotiations commenced, these concerns were almost muted by criticisms directed at the government for its lack of transparency and responsiveness, and its incompetence. Likewise, the immediate editorial reaction to the beef deal focused on food safety concerns for consumers and concerns about its impact on Korean livestock industry; but as the debates proceeded, these issues entirely disappeared. Since two weeks after President Lee Myung-bak signed the deal, no single editorial raising concerns about domestic livestock industry or consumer food safety has been found.

[Figure 3]

More specifically, analysis of the editorials on the KORUS FTA reveals that anti-FTA arguments during the negotiations revolved around the following criticisms directed at the government:

- The government (Roh administration) had done little preparatory work needed to get the best deal for the country out of the negotiation¹⁹;

¹⁹ In fact, the official launch of negotiations for KORUS FTA came as a surprise to many Koreans. As shown in the term “left-wing neoliberalism,” in President Roh’s words, the government’s drive for the FTA was viewed as a puzzling and abrupt move (Lim, 2006).

- (Immediately after the first round of the negotiation concluded) The government refused to release documents that may have revealed controversial details on the agreement with the US – without any checks and balances, the public's future is completely at the mercy of the negotiators;
- While the government stakes everything on the completion of the FTA within a given time period (as if conclusion of the FTA is by itself an objective), it is rushing to sign the FTA without consulting the National Assembly or holding public hearings.
- That trade negotiations proceed without the National Assembly (the legislative body of the government²⁰) being fully informed, which is not in accordance with the principle of democracy;
- The government deliberately misled the public – although the government denied it, it turned out that there were a number of issues agreed to under the table – e.g., the US-Korea Understanding on Agricultural Biotechnology was negotiated on the sidelines of the FTA;
- The government blocking protests against the FTA is no different from Korean returning to dictatorship of the 1980s.

Interestingly, the editorials on the U.S. beef issue show almost the same pattern. While criticisms of the government regarding the beef issue were more intense than those regarding the FTA, as one can see from the number of editorials at a given period of time, arguments against re-importation of U.S. beef are also centered on scepticism and suspicions of the government dealing with the issue and evolved into an argument about a crisis of representative democracy. The main arguments can be summarized as follows:

- The government rushed to end the beef deal with the U.S. in consideration of the planned summit talks at Camp David;
- The government (and the ruling party as well) failed to provide the public with any kind of persuasive information and materials concerned. It is irresponsible for the government to open up the market to U.S. beef (including beef from cattle over 30 months of age and older which is generally not sold for food consumption in the U.S. and elsewhere)⁵ while just saying to people, “if you don't like it, don't buy it” (President Lee's speech delivered to the public on April 22, 2008)
- The government is not competent to deal with the problem of enforcing the beef labelling regulations, which is required to secure consumers' rights to choose products (May 6, 2008, *Kyungghyang*);
- The government provided an explanation to the public that the decision to re-open the market to the U.S. beef was made in accordance with the recent U.S. introduction of measures to tighten regulations on animal feed, which, however turned out to be groundless. The US government in fact did not tighten these regulations, but actually loosened them. Thus, either the government made a serious mistake during the negotiations, or it is telling a lie. “It is very hard to trust the government assertion that Americans and Koreans will be eating the same beef” (May 15, 2008, *Hangyoreh*);

²⁰ Unlike in the US, the Korean National Assembly, the legislative body of the Government, does not have authority for trade negotiations and, therefore, is not directly involved in FTA negotiations (Cheong and Cho, 2009).

- While the president apologizes for not having made adequate effort to communicate with the public on one hand, the government is indiscriminately arresting citizens attending protests on the other hand. The public does not feel that any communication is happening; the president's sincerity is questionable. (May 23, 2008, *Hangyoreh*);
- This is a crisis of representative democracy. The government has to listen to the public, as "the republic of Korea is a democratic republic and the sovereignty of the republic of Korea resides in the people and all state authority emanates from the people" (Article One of the Constitution). If the president goes against the will of the people, the direct democracy – i.e., politics in the street – will continue (June 10, 2008, *Hangyoreh*).

Given that the FTA and the beef deal were signed under the two different political leaderships – the left-wing leadership and the right-wing leadership, respectively – it is interesting that the arguments against the FTA differ little from the arguments against the US beef. Scepticism and suspicions of government institutions lie at the core of the arguments against the two specific trade initiatives. The fact that the pattern of arguments did not respond to changes in partisan control of the government suggests that political distrust in Korea is not a mere reflection of political leaders, and rather, it results from negative evaluations of government institutions in general.

Conclusion

Political trust has causal significance in forming trade policy preferences. The results above demonstrate that public opposition to a government's trade liberalization initiatives in large part reflects the public condemnation of responsiveness and effectiveness of government institutions. This further confirms the assertion that new policy initiatives that inevitably involve uncertainties and risks, such as trade policies, require political trust, since fears of uncertainties and risks can only be eased by trust.

Low levels of political trust are a common characteristic of many new democracies. In this regard, the results above are suggestive of the need for further study. The causal significance of political trust in trade policy preferences is likely to be generalizable to most new democracies that are characterized by weak political institutions and ineffective regime performance. It is noteworthy that the majority of the criticisms of the two trade initiatives in Korea were directed at the government (the President and the negotiators), and that the protectionist arguments evolved into arguments about a crisis of representative democracy. Apparently, under the Korean Constitution, the National Assembly – the legislative body of the government of Korea – does not have authority for trade negotiations. As the legislative body is not allowed to be directly involved in FTA negotiations, the mediating political institutions that translate the public preferences into trade deals were largely absent. If the public feels that the policymaking process is not responsive and transparent enough to make their voices heard, and that government institutions in charge are too incapable, ineffective, and inefficient to carry out their responsibilities, just as the Korean cases illustrated, then the public should distrust and reject its policies, especially those which involve a great deal of uncertainty and risk. In short, political distrust is a powerful cause of protectionism in

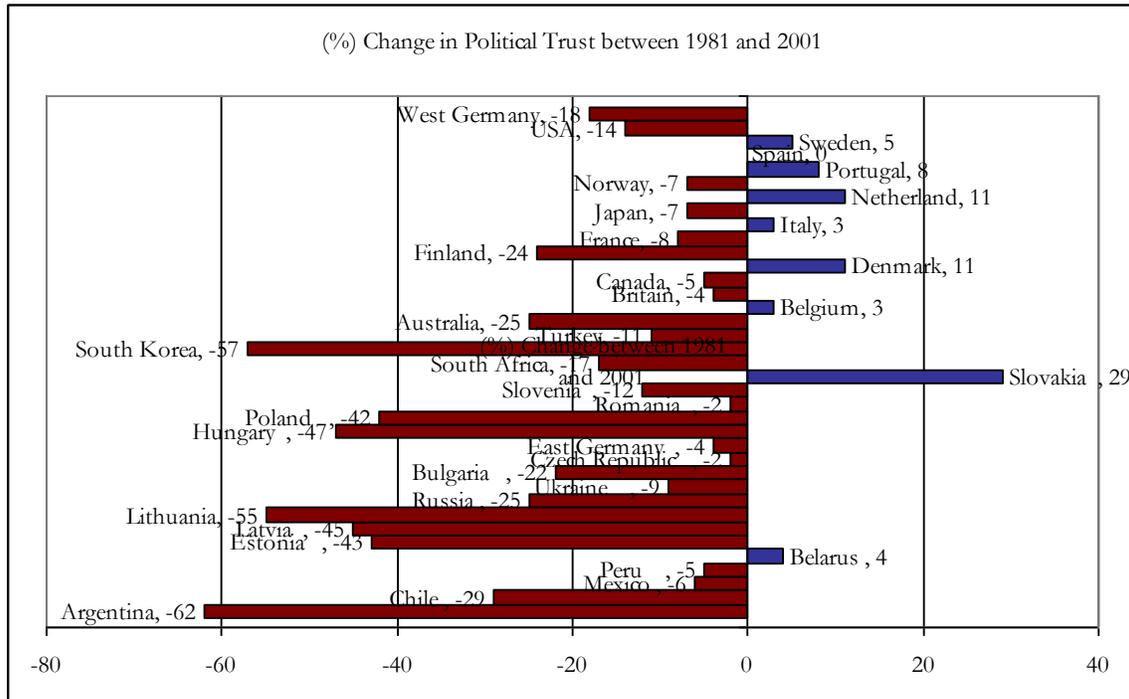
Hyunji Lee
27/05/2010

Korea; and the casual relevance of political trust in trade policy preferences in other new democracies invites further research.

Table 1 Arguments against KORUS FTA and the U.S. beef (The Coding Scheme)

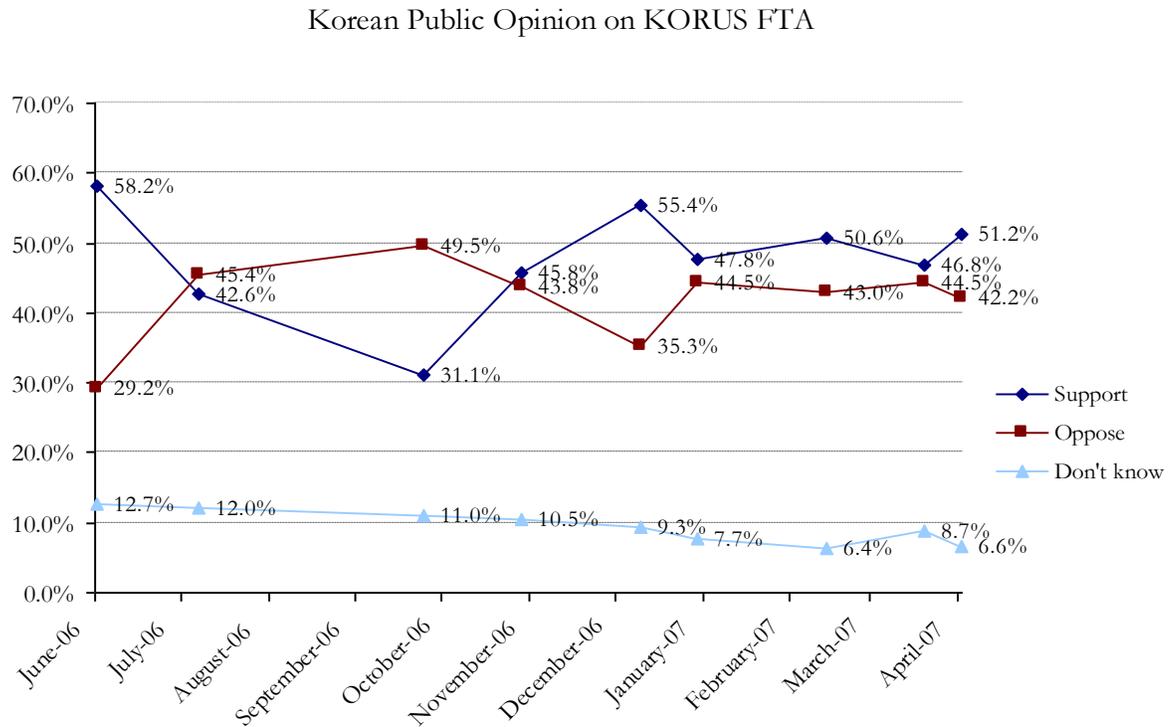
Arguments	Trust	Identity Bias (Substance in FTA)	Nationalism (Anti-Americanism)	Anti-Globalization
Subtopics	<p>Responsiveness: Transparency; Communication; Unilateral decision-making; Democracy</p> <p>Effectiveness: Competence as negotiators; Rule enforcement; Proper compensation for victims</p>	<p>Agriculture: Farmers' plight</p> <p>Consumer: Food safety issue; Screen quota; Genetically modified organisms</p>	<p>Unfair trade: Asymmetry of power</p> <p>Sovereignty: Anti-Americanization</p>	<p>Anti-Neoliberalism: Concerns about widening income disparity; Concerns about job loss; Concerns about privatization; Concerns about social programs (especially, about healthcare)</p>
Key words (Italics Korean)	<p><i>Unpye</i> conceal the fact</p> <p><i>Sotong</i> communicate with the public</p> <p><i>Milshillyeopsang</i> closed door negotiation</p> <p><i>Ilbangjeok</i> Unilateral</p> <p><i>Minjjuumi</i> Democracy</p> <p><i>Jolsok</i> Rushed</p>	<p><i>Nongmin</i> farmers</p> <p><i>Anjeonsung</i> Safety</p> <p><i>Screen quota</i></p> <p><i>GMOs</i></p>	<p><i>Banmi</i> Anti-Americanism</p> <p><i>Bulgongjung hyeopsang</i> unfair negotiation</p> <p><i>Apbak</i> put pressure (on the Korean government)</p> <p><i>Jukwon</i> sovereignty</p>	<p><i>Yangkuekhwa</i> income polarization</p> <p><i>Shinjayujumi</i> neoliberalism</p> <p><i>Minyeonghwa</i> privatization</p>

Figure 1 Change in Political Trust (Confidence in Parliament)



Source: Adopted from data in Table 1 Confidence in parliament: Development over time in new and established democracies, which is based on 1981 to 2001 World Value Surveys. Percentages show those saying they have ‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a lot of’ confidence in parliament (Catterberg and Moreno 2006, 31-48).

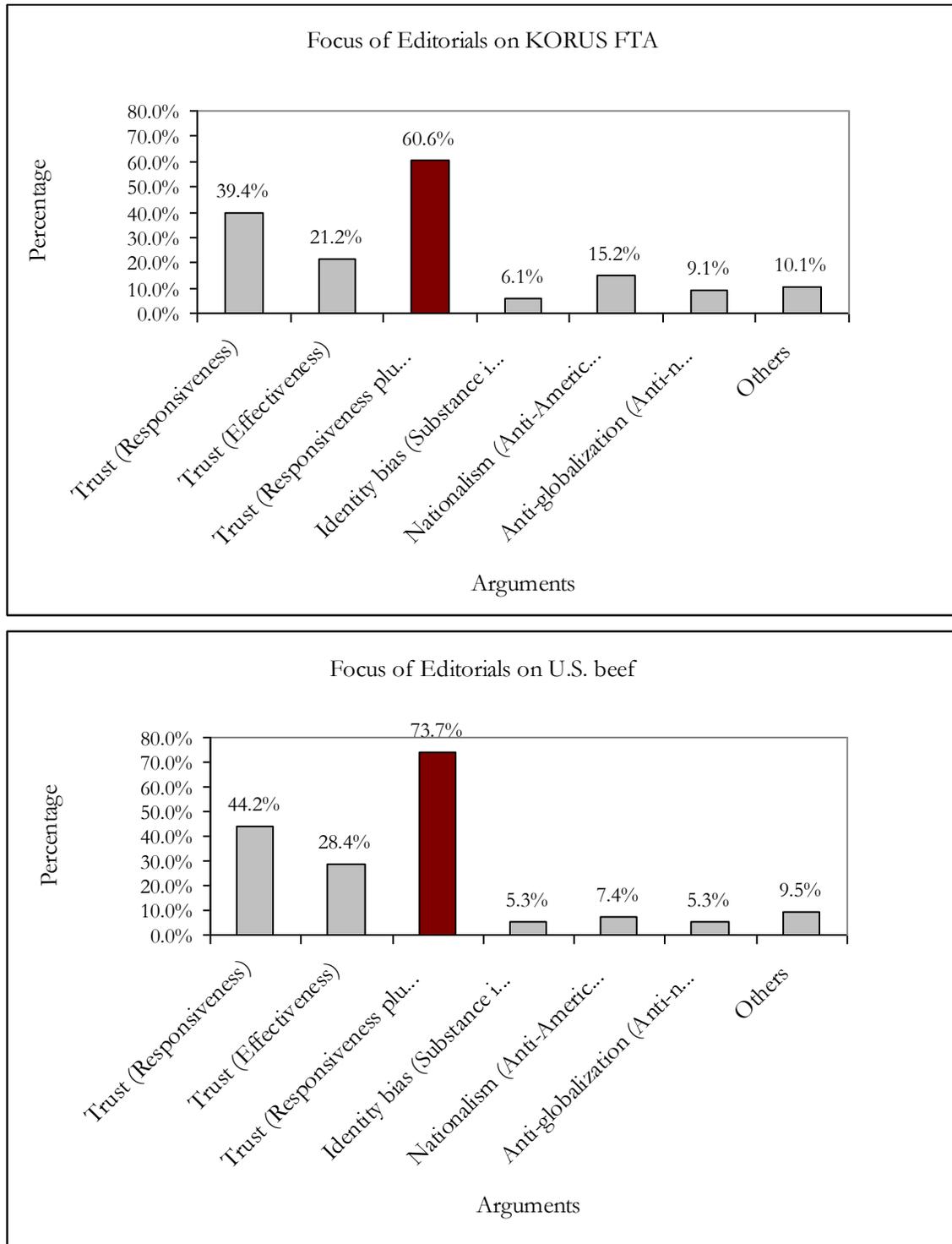
Figure 2 Changes in Korean Public Opinion on KORUS FTA during the negotiation (June 2006 – April 2007)



Note: The polls were conducted during the period from June 2006, when the first round of the negotiation (out of total eight rounds of the negotiations plus one final trade minister level talk) was taking place, to April 2007, which was right after the FTA was concluded.

Source: Each poll was conducted by a different public opinion research institute. The Media Research with a sponsorship of *Hankook Ilbo* conducted the poll in June 3rd, 2006 (N = 1,000); the Korea Research with *Munhwa* Broadcasting Service (MBC) in July 9th, 2006 (N = 1,000); the *Hankook* Research with the Ministry of Finance and Economics in September 26th 2006 (N = 1,000); the Korea Times in October 31st in 2006; the Gallup Korea with the FTA Industry Alliance in December 12th in 2006 (N = 1,000); the Media Research with *Hankook Ilbo* in January 1st, 2006 (N = 1,000); the *Hankook* Research with Seoul Broadcasting Service (SBS) and *Joongang Ilbo* in February 15th, 2007 (N = 10,000); and The Media Research with Korea Broadcasting Service (KBS) in April 4th, 2007 (N = 1,000)

Figure 3 Arguments against the FTA and the U.S. Beef Import



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