

The Argus

Since 1954

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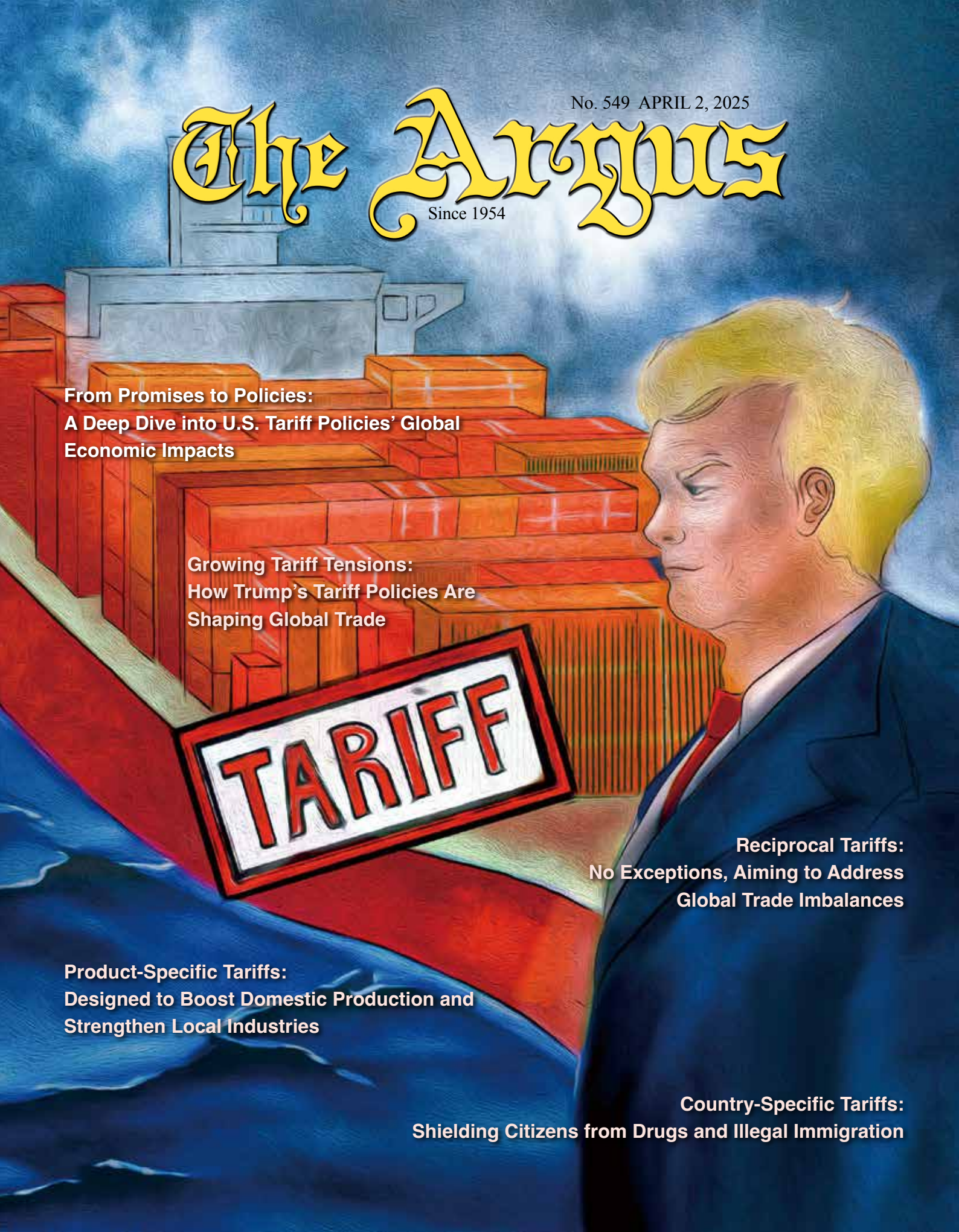
From Promises to Policies:
A Deep Dive into U.S. Tariff Policies' Global
Economic Impacts

Growing Tariff Tensions:
How Trump's Tariff Policies Are
Shaping Global Trade

Reciprocal Tariffs:
No Exceptions, Aiming to Address
Global Trade Imbalances

Product-Specific Tariffs:
Designed to Boost Domestic Production and
Strengthen Local Industries

Country-Specific Tariffs:
Shielding Citizens from Drugs and Illegal Immigration



The Argus

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Editorial

The Paradox of Freedom

Freedom is widely regarded as one of the most fundamental rights in human society. However, the unfettered exercise of freedom often results in the infringement of the liberties of others. Consequently, our society continually confronts the dilemma of balancing individual freedom with public welfare. This challenge manifests in diverse ways across political, economic, and social domains in contemporary society.

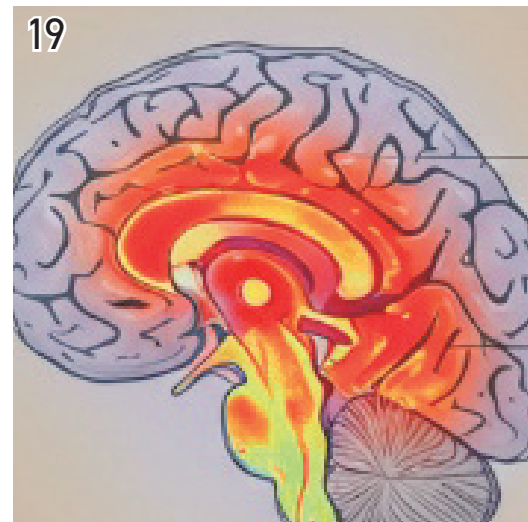
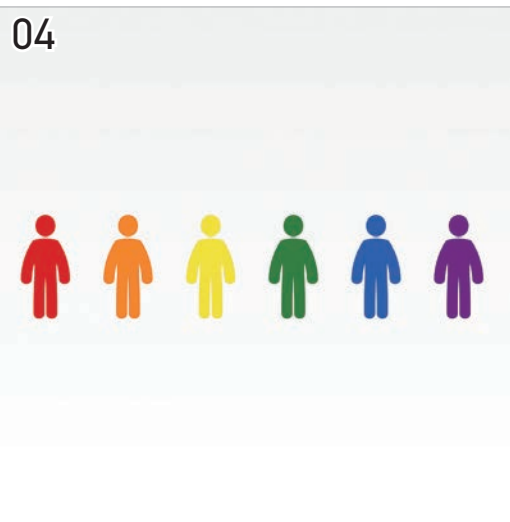
This April issue examines the intricate relationship between freedom and its limitations. President Trump's tariff policies exemplify the balance nations seek between free markets and protectionism. The imposition of high tariffs by the United States, aimed at safeguarding domestic interests, inherently restricts economic freedom. In the realm of international trade, the tension between freedom and regulation is continual, and an overemphasis on either one risks destabilizing the global economic equilibrium. Trump's tariff policies stifle open market competition, exacerbate trade disputes between nations, and ultimately threaten the stability of the world economy. Therefore, nations must endeavor to maximize the benefits of free trade while simultaneously devising appropriate regulatory frameworks to protect domestic industries and ensure fair competition. This delicate balancing act between freedom and regulation is indispensable for achieving sustainable economic growth.

The dilemma between freedom and regulation extends beyond politics and economics into the cultural sphere. The evolving portrayal of sexual minorities in Korean media illustrates this point. While past depictions were scarce or negative, there is a growing recognition and diverse representation of these individuals. However, this expansion of expressive freedom coincides with a tendency to represent sexual minorities within specific frameworks, potentially constituting a new form of regulation rather than genuine liberation. This dilemma also applies to individual behavior. Cognitive control plays a crucial role in human decision making. Despite the perception of free will, our actions are constrained by environmental factors, social norms, and neurologically determined cognitive limitations. We constantly modulate when to act or refrain from acting.

The paradoxical reality exists that even free choice necessitates a degree of regulation. Ultimately, freedom is not an absolute concept that can be granted without limits. Where should freedom be granted, and where should regulation be applied? Freedom is not merely a right, but a concept accompanied by social responsibility. The trajectory of our future society will be determined by how we achieve this equilibrium.

By Park Se-eun
Editor-in-Chief

박세은



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Cover Story

>> On his first day in office, President Donald Trump imposed tariffs on Canada and Mexico, marking the beginning of a controversial trade strategy on which he had campaigned. As experts around the globe express growing concerns about the far-reaching effects of these “Trump tariffs,” the stakes have never been higher. As the Trump administration prepares to implement differential reciprocal tariffs starting April 2, it is essential to delve into the motivations and consequences of these measures. This column offers a comprehensive analysis of the U.S. government’s current tariff strategies and their potential impact on the Korean market. The Argus hopes to assist readers to gain valuable insights into the complexities of global trade and the critical need to understand the shifting economic landscape shaped by these policies.

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Letter to Myself: 10 Years from Now

HUFS SCC Supports International Students with Multilingual Services

HUFS Student Counseling Center (SCC) offers individual counseling, psychological assessments, and group counseling in English and Chinese throughout the year. Students can apply via a QR code, and the available counseling days vary by language.

Individual counseling sessions are conducted in a 1:1 format with a professional counselor once a week for 50 minutes. Sessions cover topics such as personality, emotions, interpersonal relationships, academics, career planning, and school adaptation. Psychological assessments are conducted through the Foreign College Student Psychological Inventory. Group counseling sessions will be announced separately during the semester. English counseling is available on Mondays and Tuesdays, while Chinese counseling is offered on Thursdays and Fridays. Once an application is submitted, a counselor will coordinate the schedule and contact the applicant individually.

Through this counseling program, international students can manage stress caused by cultural differences, language barriers, and feelings of loneliness in a new environment. By speaking with professional counselors, they can regulate their emotions and find psychological stability. Additionally, the program helps students overcome academic challenges and receive guidance on career choices, enabling them to set clearer goals and plan their university life more effectively. Furthermore, psychological assessments allow students to objectively understand their personality and mental state, fostering self-reflection and helping them develop strategies for a better university experience. 📖



©Instagram @hufs_counseling

▲ HUFS SCC offers psychological counseling in English and Chinese on various topics for international students.

By Kwon Yu-jin

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HUFS ROTC Opens Recruitment for Future-Ready Leaders in 2025

The Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) at HUFS is recruiting cadets for the 66th regiment class for sophomores and the 67th regiment class for freshmen classes for the year 2025. Eligible applicants include freshmen, sophomore students, either male or female, freshmen and sophomore enrolled at the Seoul and Global campuses.

The ROTC cadet program will be conducted for the selected cadets. It provides two years of military training, equipping candidates with both academic expertise in their major and military knowledge to develop them into highly competent officers. Applications can be submitted online at acq.armyofficer.mil.kr from March 4 to April 27. Applicants who join ROTC will receive financial support, including a short-term service incentive of 12 million KRW (US\$8,290) and an annual ROTC service grant of 1.8 million KRW (US\$1,242). Additionally, opportunities for overseas training have been expanded, increasing the number of participants from 40 in 2024 to 80 in 2025. Lastly, a new job search leave program has been introduced to support employment opportunities.

The ROTC has stated that its ideal cadet is a “future-ready leader with a global perspective.” They also added, “Students who wish to gain diverse experiences in an ever-changing world can develop leadership skills through the program, enabling them to make an impact both domestically and internationally.” This indicates that the ROTC aims to cultivate individuals with a global perspective and future-oriented leadership, going beyond simple military training. 📖



©Instagram @hufs_19rotc

▲ HUFS ROTC is currently recruiting candidates for its 66th and 67th classes.

By Kwon Yu-jin

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The 59th GSC Bakdong Greets Freshmen

On March 4 and 5, HUFS Seoul Campus hosted the 2025 HUFS Freshman Welcome Party to welcome freshmen as they begin their university journey in the 2025 academic year. The event was led by the 59th General Student Council (GSC), Bakdong, in partnership with the 41st Club Union, CUSTOM, to help freshmen familiarize themselves with the campus and extracurricular activities.

During the two-day event, new students were introduced to 47 central clubs and organizations, offering hands-on experiences at each interactive booth. Among them, Bakdong's "Wish Workshop" booth allowed freshmen to write down their bucket lists for the new semester and receive small gifts and welcome kits filled with various HUFS merchandise. Additional facilities such as photo booths, food trucks, and fortune-telling booths also welcomed the freshmen. The highlight of the event was the welcome stage, which took place at Lawn Square on March 4 from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. The stage was a major attraction, featuring lively performances by student club groups, and the centerpiece was the appearance of special guest Amy, along with artists YudabinBand and Car, the Garden.

Regarding her experience with the event, Lee Ye-jin, a freshman studying language and diplomacy, shared her enthusiasm, saying, "I look forward to meeting new people and gaining new experiences." Reflecting on the unique atmosphere of the university, she commented, "The environment feels very free, and there is an energetic vibe even late at night. It makes me even more excited for the upcoming university years." The event was well-attended and contributed to a lively and welcoming atmosphere for freshmen as they began their HUFS life. 📸



©Jang Ye-ryn / The Argus

▲ The student band performs on the welcome stage at Lawn Square, with people gathering around to watch.

By Jang Ye-ryn

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HUFS to Administer FLEX Test Starting in 2025

HUFS will take over the administration and certification of the Foreign Language EXamination (FLEX) starting in 2025, following its transfer from the Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The first round of the 2025 FLEX will take place on May 25, with registration open from April 24 to April 30. Applicants must register by 5 p.m. on the final day, and registration may close early depending on test site capacity and subject availability. The test will be available at five locations nationwide, with confirmed test centers at HUFS Seoul Campus and Global Campus. The FLEX test is open to all applicants, with language options including English, Chinese, Japanese, French, German, Russian, and Spanish. However, candidates may only take one language per session. Registration requires signing up on the HUFS FLEX Center website, which will open on April 24. The fees are 45,000 KRW (US\$31.24) for the Listening and Reading test and 75,000 KRW (US\$52.07) each for the Writing and Speaking tests.

FLEX Listening and Reading is a nationally accredited qualification test, while FLEX Speaking and FLEX Writing are registered as private qualification tests. Score reports for tests taken before 2025 will be available through the Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry via the following link: <http://license.korcham.net>. Results for tests taken from 2025 onward will be provided by HUFS. FLEX scores remain valid for two years from the test date. More details can be found on the HUFS FLEX Center website. 📸



©HUFS FLEX Center

▲ Students can register for the test on the website homepage starting April 24.

By Jang Ye-ryn

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From Shadows to Spotlight: Korean Media's Portrayal of LGBTQ+

By Jang Ye-ryn

Staff Reporter of Culture Section

“Let’s take off the mask!” This saying appeared in the first newsletter of Chodonghoe, South Korea’s (hereafter Korea) first LGBTQ+ rights organization, founded in December 1993. It vividly illustrates the social atmosphere at the time, where sexual minorities often felt compelled to hide their identities due to societal pressure. Although advocacy for LGBTQ+ in Korean society began to gain traction in the late 1990s with the rise of the internet, being openly queer remained a social taboo. In such an environment, many LGBTQ+ individuals found it difficult to reveal their identities publicly, and even in popular culture, they were often caricatured or consumed through a lens of prejudice. As of 2025, the media representation of sexual minorities has become significantly more open compared to the past, and discussions surrounding LGBTQ+ issues have become more active. However, social attitudes remain divided. Given this reality, this article seeks to analyze how LGBTQ+ representations in South Korean media have been shaped and consumed from the past to the present, while also examining whether public awareness of these issues has evolved. Additionally, it will reflect on whether recent LGBTQ+ content respects and embraces diverse sexual orientations. The Argus, as April is Celebrate Diversity Month, aims to explore Korean society’s stance on LGBTQ+ rights and discuss steps to build a more inclusive and accepting society.

Sexual Minority

A sexual minority refers to individuals who are socially positioned as a minority due to their sexual identity, gender, physical sexual characteristics, or sexual orientation that deviates from the majority or challenges the traditional binary understanding of gender and sexuality. Sexual minorities are often collectively referred to as the “LGBTQ+” community. The term LGBTQ+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer — an inclusive term that broadly refers to individuals who do not conform to traditional heterosexual or cisgender identities. It also encompasses other sexual orientations and identities, such as asexual, pansexual, and more.



How Were Sexual Minorities Portrayed in Media in the Past?

In Korea, formal discussions about sexual minorities began in the 1980s, focusing primarily on the topic of homosexuality. At that time, public perception of sexual minorities was heavily influenced by the media, which often depicted homosexuals as immoral figures, shaping predominantly negative societal perceptions. Professor Chun Won-keun of Department of Sociology at Jeju National University notes in his paper, “Social Exclusion of Same-Sex-Love and Practices of Gay Men in the 1980s *Sunday Seoul* Magazines” (2015), that the weekly magazine *Sunday Seoul*, since 1986, had fueled public hostility toward homosexuality, particularly following the first confirmation of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection in Korea from foreigners and Koreans returning from the Middle East. Professor Chun states that *Sunday Seoul*, a widely circulated publication from 1968 to 1991, was a representative medium through which one could observe the public’s general views and attitudes towards sex-related issues and events. Under the influence of popular media like *Sunday Seoul*, early discourse surrounding sexual minorities in Korea mostly viewed homosexuals as deviant and dangerous figures spreading HIV and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Media often portrayed male homosexuals as the primary culprits of spreading AIDS, thus reinforcing negative stereotypes and stigma against homosexuality. In contrast to the 1980s, a period marked by strong social and institutional discrimination against homosexuality, the 1990s saw the emergence of Korea’s first LGBTQ+ rights organization, Chodonghoe, which led to the beginning of the gay rights movement. Along with the development of the internet, the call to respect sexual minorities began spreading in Korean society, although their sexual orientations were still seen as taboo.

The 2000s marked a crucial turning point in how Korean society perceived and portrayed sexual minorities in the media, particularly with the appearances of celebrity Hong Seok-cheon and Harisu, two prominent figures in the entertainment industry. After their appearances, there was an increase in mainstream media’s portrayal of sexual minorities, but prevailing social attitudes were still

reflected in the tone and manner of media representation. On September 26, 2000, Hong Seok-cheon became the first Korean celebrity to come out, bringing the concept of “coming out” to the public. However, rather than supporting him, the media criticized and sensationalized his announcement with derogatory headlines like, “I am a homo.” As a result, Hong Seok-cheon had to suspend his television activities for a while. Seven months after Hong Seok-cheon’s coming out, Harisu became the first transgender celebrity to appear in a television commercial in April 2001. Harisu rose to fame due to her beauty, but faced widespread societal debate over her gender identity. According to a May 15, 2012, report by *Sports Chosun*, the commercial controversially zoomed in on Harisu’s Adam’s apple to hint at a transgender identity. Despite having undergone sexual reassignment surgery, society still could not fully accept Harisu as a female, exemplified by the advertisement’s controversial Adam’s apple portrayal. Both Hong Seok-cheon and Harisu revealed their sexual minority status but faced significant prejudice and adversity in Korean society and the entertainment industry, where LGBTQ+ representation was still limited, and public attitudes often remained hostile.

The appearance of sexual minority entertainers in the 2000s led to an increase in “sexual minority codes” in mainstream popular culture, such as dialogues, symbols, and directorial styles that referenced gender identities and sexual orientations. Columnist Yang Sung-hee, who has worked for *JoongAng Ilbo* for 20 years, discussed in her paper, “The Current Status of Homosexual Expression in Popular Culture” (2009), that traditionally in Korean films and popular culture, homosexuality was equated with abnormality and sexual deviance, often portrayed comically through characters like effeminate fashion designers. Columnist Yang emphasizes that by the early 2000s, depictions of homosexuality in popular culture became more natural, though there were still issues with homosexual representations feeling unrealistic. The 2005 film *The King and the Clown*, which attracted over 12 million viewers, received significant attention for incorporating homosexuality into its storyline. As the title suggests, the film focuses on the relationship between Yeonsan-gun, the 10th king of Joseon, his “man,” Gong-gil, and Gong-gil’s friend Jang-saeng. The appearance of

a homosexual relationship on-screen marked a shift in on-screen depictions of same-sex relationships, reflecting gradual changes in societal attitudes. However, the film incorporated same-sex relationships in a way that some critics viewed as sensational rather than nuanced. Han Chae-yoon, a representative of the Korean Sexual-Minority Culture and Rights Center, noted at a 2006 film discussion titled “Emergency Diagnosis - The Queer Wave in Cinemas” that *The King and the Clown* did not focus on homosexuality but rather approached it distantly. In particular, Park Jin-hyung, a film festival programmer*, raised concerns that the LGBTQ+ community did not appreciate the portrayal of the character Gong-gil, played by Lee Joon-gi, as a “pretty man” as it reinforced certain stereotypes that reduced same-sex attraction to aestheticized fantasy.

Following its impact, later films like *A Frozen Flower* (2008) explored similar themes. The film features both homosexual and bisexual elements, presenting the story of a gay king and his long-time gay lover Hong-rim, who later develops romantic and physical attraction to the queen. The kiss scene between the male leads was notable for its rare on-screen portrayal of same-sex affection in a commercial film. However, *A Frozen Flower* garnered 3.7 million viewers nationwide, which some analysts considered lower than anticipated considering its production budget, marketing scale, and public attention. Yang Sung-hee, in the same paper, explained that explicit portrayals of same-sex relationships remained uncommon and controversial in Korean society at that time, with many films using homosexuality as a commercial or sensational element rather than an authentic exploration of same-sex relationships.

*Film Festival Programmer: A professional responsible for setting the direction of a film festival, selecting films to screen, and planning various events, among other duties related to organizing the festival.



LGBTQ+ in Korean Media After the 2010s

Growth from BL to Queer Web Content

Boys’ Love (BL) and Girls’ Love (GL), creative works centered on same-sex romance and relationships, were once considered taboo and viewed as “underground

culture” in Korea due to societal attitudes that historically limited open discussions on homosexuality. Since the 2010s, the presence of BL and GL has gradually grown, particularly in web novels and webtoon platforms, sparking a discourse about whether queer-friendly web content genuinely reflects the LGBTQ+ community. BL originated from Japan’s “Yaoi” culture in the 1970s and became a commercial genre in the publishing market in Korea in the 1990s. Yaoi refers to fan-made works that reinterpret relationships between male characters as gay romance, usually in the form of parody, based on female fan circles. The popularization of BL in Korea began when the traditional publishing model shifted to online distribution, such as web novels and webtoons. A representative platform that led this trend in the domestic market is RIDI. Bae Gi-sik, the CEO who grew RIDI into a company with a 1.5 trillion won (US\$ 688.24 million) capital, stated in an interview in the June 2022 issue of *Forbes Korea* that RIDI’s identity is to provide webcomics based on text IPs (Intellectual Property) such as web novels, offering services both domestically and internationally. RIDI’s success has promoted the availability of BL content on major Korean webtoon platforms, such as KakaoPage and Lezhin Comics, which accounted for 32.3 percent and 13.1 percent of webtoon usage in Korea, respectively, according to the Korea Creative Content Agency’s 2023 *Comic and Webtoon User Survey Report*. As BL content gained popularity, interest in GL web content also grew. The GL webtoon *Her Tale of Sim Chong*, serialized on Justoon from 2017 to 2019, gained attention after winning the “Our Manhwa Award for Today” given by the Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. After the series concluded, it launched on KakaoPage on March 2, 2019, and reached 3rd place in the overall ranking within a week, with more than 330,000 views. The growth of same-sex romance web content in Korea is driven by the digital platform market’s low barriers to creation and distribution. Webtoons and web novels, which focus on storytelling with fictional characters, have relatively flexible censorship regulations, allowing BL and GL content to be freely created and consumed. Since these formats rely on text and illustrations, they often face less societal scrutiny than live-action media. Moreover, web platforms support a wider range of genres compared to traditional media, enabling

greater diversity in LGBTQ+ representation.

However, due to the nature of the web content market, one of the ongoing issues raised about LGBTQ+ content — how LGBTQ+ people are represented — has drawn increased scrutiny as same-sex content became more mainstream. RIDI now offers independent BL and GL categories, with webtoons in the top 10 of each category often being rated for adults. This has raised concerns that LGBTQ+ characters are often portrayed as sensationalized or provocative rather than as fully developed individuals. In particular, the BL genre has been criticized for presenting portrayals of gay men that some argue are inaccurate or stereotypical. In his article, “[Comics | Special Feature - Why BL?] Queer Interpretation of BL: Perspectives on How Gay Male Readers Can Interpret BL Autonomously” (2024), Professor Kim Seong-jin at the Graduate School of Cultural Studies at SungKongHoe University discussed the issue with BL works that are portrayed through a heterosexual perspective. These issues include the binary depiction of male and female roles in the structure of “active-passive” roles, altering or downplaying the sexual identity of male homosexual characters to serve narrative interests, and the portrayal of homophobic views. Professor Kim pointed out that heterosexual creators of BL tend to depict gay individuals based on their own understanding, which can reinforce stereotypes or frame LGBTQ+ narratives in ways that prioritize entertainment over authentic representation.

Recently, social media-based queer webtoons have emerged, aiming to address the limitations of BL and GL content. Leveraging Instagram’s features, webtoon artists create content and serialize their works with influencer-like follower-driven businesses. According to the Korea Creative Content Agency’s *2023 Comic and Webtoon User Survey*, Instagram ranked 5th with 13.6 percent of the user share, following major platforms such as Naver Webtoon and KakaoPage. This indicates a shift in the once-popular “daily webtoon” genre from major portals to social media-based services. Accordingly, queer webtoons that capture LGBTQ+ people’s everyday lives are appearing on Instagram.

One such artist, Dokongal, who creates queer-themed content, has been posting stories like “Queer Parade Review” alongside more relatable everyday themes, such

as “Perfect Preparation for the Monsoon” and “ENFP Partner Traits.” In an interview with *Mobile Hankyung* in April 2023, Dokongal shared, “Queers are just ordinary people, and maybe that’s the kind of ordinary story I wanted to tell.” This example suggests that queer web content has the potential to act as a medium for changing societal perceptions of LGBTQ+ people, moving beyond mere fantasy and depicting their lives in a way that anyone can relate to. Queer web content depicts LGBTQ+ individuals in a broader range of everyday experiences.



▲ Dokongal posts her Instatoon, a cartoon serialized on Instagram, covering various day-to-day topics to connect with her readers.

Queer Culture in Korean Visual Media

With the rising popularity of queer webtoons and web novels, an increasing number of visual media adaptations based on the aforementioned web-based contents are being produced, exposing not only existing consumers but also the general public to such narratives. This has expanded accessibility and diversity in visual media portraying LGBTQ+ stories. In the past, terrestrial and cable TV networks in Korea rarely explored LGBTQ+ narratives due to prevailing societal attitudes, opposition from conservative viewers, and internal broadcasting regulations. While Korea’s current broadcasting laws and regulations set by the Korea Communications Commission do not explicitly prohibit the production and airing of LGBTQ+ content, in reality, programs featuring LGBTQ+ themes still face internal restrictions and external social backlash. For example, *Candid Men and Women*, a gender talk show on EBS, was originally scheduled to air until February 19, 2018, but was canceled five days early. According to a report by *KyungHyang Shinmun* on February 19, 2018, the program faced backlash after broadcasting a special episode featuring LGBTQ+ individuals. Ever since the episode preview was released on December 23, 2017, the show’s official viewer board received more than 300 posts demanding its cancellation. Protesters not only requested the program be taken off the air but also occupied the

lobby of EBS headquarters and staged demonstrations in front of the broadcasting station. One of the program's panelists, Eun Ha-sun, revealed that the show's producer received dozens of protest calls and messages daily. This incident highlights the ongoing challenges LGBTQ+ content faces in Korean media, where societal opposition continues to influence broadcasting decisions.

The diffusion of Over-The-Top (OTT) streaming platforms, particularly among younger generations who have moved away from terrestrial and cable TV, has somewhat alleviated these social constraints, allowing for more diverse attempts at LGBTQ+ storytelling. The growth of Korean streaming platforms can be attributed to the arrival of Netflix in Korea in 2016 and the subsequent surge in subscriptions during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, when people spent extended periods at home. Unlike traditional terrestrial TV dramas and films that often depicted LGBTQ+ individuals superficially, streaming platforms have been able to explore queer narratives with greater depth and nuance. Currently, multiple domestic OTT platforms — including TVING, Wavve, and Watcha — are fiercely competing in the market. Among them, Watcha has distinguished itself by focusing on niche, subcultural, and non-mainstream content. According to a paper by Suh Yong-chu, an assistant professor of Film Studies at Konkuk University, and Kim Young-ok, an associate professor at Myongji University, titled “A Study on Watcha’s Diversity Strategy and Original Contents -Focusing on *Semantic Error* and *Join My Table*-” (2023), Watcha has been identified as a platform that prioritizes diverse storytelling. Unlike TVING, which is backed by multiple general program providers like JTBC, tvN, and Mnet, or Wavve, which is a joint venture between Korea’s three major terrestrial broadcasters — KBS, MBC, and SBS — and SK Telecom, Watcha operates independently, allowing it more creative freedom. As a result, Korean audiences can access a broader range of LGBTQ+ content more easily through Watcha. One of Watcha’s most notable contributions to LGBTQ+ media was the web drama *Semantic Error* (2022), its first original drama series. Upon its release, the series topped Watcha’s streaming charts for seven consecutive weeks, marking a remarkable success. One key factor behind the show’s popularity was its candid portrayal of same-sex romance and affection,

focusing more on the relationship itself rather than homosexuality as a concept. The drama follows two university students, Chu Sang-woo and Jang Jae-young, who start as rivals before developing a romantic relationship.

Their conflicts revolve around common university struggles, such as group project disputes and Jang Jae-young’s impending overseas job opportunity, rather than being centered on their sexual orientation. This approach presented same-sex relationships as a natural part of the storyline rather than a sensationalized element. Another drama that gained popularity through an OTT platform is *Love in the Big City*, which premiered on TVING in October 2024. The show follows aspiring writer Go Young as he navigates life and love through relationships with multiple men. The drama includes everyday relationship dynamics, such as arguments over punctuality or food preferences, as well as efforts to overcome relationship fatigue — experiences common in many romantic relationships. Additionally, the series addresses hardships that some LGBTQ+ individuals encounter in Korean society. In one scene, Go Young’s mother, after witnessing him kiss a male friend, forcibly commits him to a psychiatric hospital, reflecting the harsh realities some LGBTQ+ individuals endure. Currently, *Love in the Big City* holds a 3.7-star rating on Watcha’s content review platform, Watcha Pedia, with positive viewer feedback. Comments include: “Watching Go Young and Gyu-ho’s story gave me confidence in my own love,” and “In the big city, we all experience different but equally beautiful and remarkable loves.” Unlike LGBTQ+ representations in older Korean films and dramas from about 20 years ago, which at times used queer characters as dramatic elements rather than fully developed protagonists, *Love in the Big City* presents same-sex relationships as



▲ *Semantic Error*, a Watcha original drama series released on January 16, 2022, tells the love story of Jang Jae-young (L) and Chu Sang-woo (R).



▲ Episodes five and six of *Love in the Big City* primarily focus on the love and breakup story of Go Young (L) and his boyfriend, Sim Gyu-ho (R).

central to its narrative. The growing presence of LGBTQ+ content on OTT platforms has contributed to increased visibility and discussions of diverse sexual orientations in Korean media.

YouTube: A New Space for LGBTQ+ Representation

Like OTT platforms, YouTube is leading trends in video media and significantly impacting the broadcasting industry. As the primary platform for video content consumption, YouTube has become a major part of daily media consumption in Korea. According to WiseApp Retail Goods, an app retail analysis service, YouTube was the most-used mobile app by Koreans as of August 2024, with a total monthly usage time of 117.4 billion minutes across users in their 20s to 50s. This popularity stems from its high accessibility — most people can access YouTube anytime via their mobile devices. Since YouTube is a U.S.-based platform operated by Google, it allows for global content creation and consumption, ensuring diversity in its offerings. Unlike domestic terrestrial broadcasting, which is subject to various regulations, YouTube provides a platform with fewer content restrictions. As a result, YouTube has become a significant media force in Korea, often shaping public discourse in ways that differ from traditional media.

This characteristic of YouTube has provided a foundation for LGBTQ+ content to increase public exposure and audience engagement. In the past, Hong Seok-cheon was one of the few openly LGBTQ+ public figures in Korea. However, with the rise of YouTube, LGBTQ+ creators like Kim Ddolddol and Poongja have gained significant popularity. One example is *Hong Seok-cheon's Jewel Box*, a YouTube web entertainment show hosted by Hong Seok-cheon and Kim Ddolddol. In April 2024, an episode titled “RIIZE① completed top gay impossible” topped YouTube’s trending videos list, demonstrating the show’s strong audience engagement. With 260,000 subscribers and three successful seasons, the online show



▲ This is the thumbnail for episode nine, “RIIZE① completed top gay impossible,” which currently has over 2.5 million views and features K-pop boy band RIIZE interacting with hosts Hong Seok-cheon (bottom L) and Kim Ddolddol (bottom R).

features two openly gay hosts interviewing a range of male guests, from rookies to rising stars and boy group members. The dynamic between Hong Seok-cheon and Kim Ddolddol, who playfully challenge each other while hosting, has resonated with audiences. Through this show, Kim Ddolddol has gained increasing recognition, and his personal YouTube channel, “Kim Ddolddol DDOLDDOL,” now has 350,000 subscribers. Meanwhile, Poongja, a transgender creator, is gaining traction with another popular web entertainment show, *Ddoganzip*, produced by Studio SUZE since April



▲ The most-viewed episode of *Ddoganzip* is episode 8, which has over six million views. In this episode, Poongja travels to Daegu, one of Korea’s six metropolitan cities, located about 240 kilometers from Seoul, visiting only food spots recommended by local people.

2022. This program features visits to popular restaurants that people frequently revisit. Despite its simple concept, all 71 uploaded episodes have surpassed one million views, with an average of around three million views per episode. This success is attributed to Poongja’s engaging hosting style and humor. Rather than focusing solely on their LGBTQ+ identities, audiences are drawn to the engaging content and the charm of these creators.

The increasing appearance of LGBTQ+ creators on YouTube is closely linked to the platform’s interactive nature. Kim Kyong-dal, CEO of The Core, a Korean economic media platform, emphasized in his report, *The Rise of YouTube: Beyond TV, a New Broadcasting Platform* (2024), that YouTube is not a one-way medium like traditional broadcasting. Instead, it fosters interactivity through comments and live streaming, making it more user-friendly. Unlike conventional media, where audience interaction is limited, YouTube enables more direct engagement between creators and viewers. Viewers not only consume Kim Ddolddol and Poongja’s content but also interact with them via comments and live broadcasts, naturally encountering LGBTQ+ perspectives in the process. This exposure has the potential to challenge stereotypes and increase awareness of diverse sexual identities. By enabling voluntary engagement, YouTube provides a place where diverse perspectives, including LGBTQ+ experiences, can be shared and discussed.



Future Outlook

Although the growing popularity of LGBTQ+ content in mainstream culture faces occasional backlash and negative reactions, these obstacles are unlikely to halt the broader trend of increasing acceptance. The success of LGBTQ+ representation on independent platforms like OTTs and YouTube may be contributing to discussions about regulations on public broadcasting. Kim Ddolddol's appearance on the prominent TV talk show *Radio Star* and Poongja winning a Rookie Award at the 2023 MBC Entertainment Awards reflect changing dynamics in Korea's television industry. Associate Professor Lee Jeong-ki of Tongmyong University's Advertising and Public Relations Department noted, "LGBTQ+ representation has become more visible through YouTube, and documentaries on LGBTQ+ topics are now more accessible on various OTT platforms." Regarding the future of terrestrial broadcasting, he stated, "Since public broadcasters remain constrained by broadcasting laws and audience expectations, they struggle to compete with OTT platforms in terms of creative content. To survive, they may eventually have to expand their creative freedom." He added, "As LGBTQ+ content from the U.S., Europe, Taiwan, and Japan becomes more widely consumed in Korea, societal awareness of minority rights is increasing. Additionally, as younger producers gain influence

in broadcasting, there may be increased openness to LGBTQ+ representation."

Although public awareness of LGBTQ+ rights in Korea has improved, media portrayals continue to reflect varying perspectives on LGBTQ+ issues. According to the 2024 *Sexual Minority Awareness Survey* by Hankook Research, 45 percent of respondents agreed that queer content helps foster understanding and empathy for individuals with diverse sexual orientations. However, 58 percent felt that such content disrupts traditional values, indicating that negative perceptions persist. Various factors influence these perceptions. Assistant Professor Choi Yu-sook at Chung-ang University's College of General Education observed, "Korean society has difficulty accepting differences. If we can develop a more open attitude toward diversity, there should be no reason to reject LGBTQ+ content." She emphasized the importance of "contact" in shaping attitudes. The same Hankook Research survey found that people with LGBTQ+ acquaintances were twice as likely to accept someone coming out compared to those without such acquaintances. Professor Choi concluded, "If media can portray LGBTQ+ individuals without prejudice and depict them well, it will serve as a powerful tool for change. For content that fails to do so, continued criticism and discussions are necessary." She suggested that media can serve as a space for indirect interaction with LGBTQ+ individuals, which she argued will ultimately foster greater social acceptance.

The diversification and expansion of LGBTQ+ representation in media and everyday life reflect ongoing societal shifts. As LGBTQ+ individuals appear more frequently in media and their stories are explored more broadly, discussions on how they are perceived in society continue to evolve. Discussions about inclusivity involve not only the role of media but also how audiences engage with such content. Social attitudes toward differences continue to be a topic of discussion. Media creators and consumers play a role in shaping portrayals of LGBTQ+ individuals, influencing how they are represented in public discourse. 

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GLOBAL TARIFF FRONT: WHO SMILES, WHO CRIES?



By Kim Si-yon

Associate Editor of Social Section

“**T**o me, the most beautiful word in the dictionary is tariff.” As evidenced by this concise statement he made at the Chicago Economic Club on October 15, 2024, President Donald Trump has consistently employed tariffs as a primary instrument in his trade policy. A key tenet of Trump’s 2024 presidential campaign was the imposition of tariffs, and as the 47th President of the United States, one of his initial policy implementations was the imposition of such duties. The International Monetary Fund projected that the imposition of tariffs by the Trump administration would result in a 0.8 percent contraction of the global economy in 2025 and a 1.3 percent reduction in 2026. The Bank of Korea also predicts that Trump administration’s tariff policies could precipitate a decline in South Korea’s (hereafter Korea) Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by as much as 1.4 percent. Amidst these concerns, the Trump administration initiated the implementation of reciprocal tariffs on April 2, mandating that nations engaged in trade agreements apply equivalent or commensurate tariff rates. The Argus seeks to clarify the objectives and ramifications of tariff impositions, and to conduct an in-depth examination of the tariff policies currently being pursued by the U.S. government and their potential repercussions on the Korean market.



What Is a Tariff?

1) The Central Aim of Tariffs: Protecting National Commerce

Tariffs are taxes imposed by a nation on goods either imported or exported, serving primarily as policy instruments for the protection of domestic industries, the generation of national revenue, and the execution of trade policies. Tariffs are fundamentally categorized based on the object

of taxation: import tariffs and export tariffs. Import tariffs are designed to safeguard domestic industries and stimulate national economic growth through the imposition of duties on imports. The application of import tariffs enhances the price competitiveness of domestic products and makes a trade surplus possible. A trade surplus is achieved when the value of exports surpasses that of imports. The enforcement of import tariffs elevates the price of imported goods, discouraging consumption and reducing import volumes. Export tariffs, conversely, are levied on goods exiting a country for foreign

destinations, implemented to restrict the outflow of specific commodities. Additionally, they may be utilized to prioritize domestic consumption when the availability of essential goods is insufficient to meet national demand. For instance, China imposes export tariffs ranging from a minimum of 2 percent to a maximum of 40 percent on resources such as minerals to mitigate excessive extraction by domestic enterprises driven by export profits, thereby addressing environmental concerns. However, nations generally favoring export promotion tend to eschew the imposition of export tariffs, as these duties may deter domestic firms from engaging in overseas sales.

Tariffs are further classified based on the method of tax assessment, namely ad valorem tax and specific tax. Ad valorem tax is calculated as a fixed percentage of the value of the taxed goods. This tends to stimulate the importation of lower-priced goods due to the reduced tax burden associated with lower valuations. Specific tax, in contrast, is levied based on the quantity or weight of the goods, irrespective of their value. This approach enables the enactment of equivalent tariffs on both low-cost and high-value imports of the same category, thereby protecting domestic industries by discouraging the importation of inexpensive goods. The efficacy of tariffs in safeguarding domestic industries varies depending on the basis of taxation. A pertinent illustration is the 2019 revision of Korea's liquor tax system. In response to domestic brewers' assertions of a price disadvantage to them because of imported beers, the Korean government transitioned the beer excise tax from an ad valorem tax to a specific tax structure in 2019. While ad valorem taxes impose higher duties on more expensive imported beers, they impose relatively lower duties on cheaper imports. The adoption of specific taxes, however, increased the tax burden on bulk imports of low-cost beer, thereby enabling domestic brewers to achieve a competitive advantage in price. This exemplifies the potential of tariffs as an effective instrument for enhancing domestic industrial competitiveness.

2) Tariffs, a Double-Edged Sword

A critical consideration in the introduction of tariffs is the potential burden they place on domestic consumers. Tariffs can precipitate an increase in the price of imported goods, thereby dissuading consumers from purchasing them. While a portion of the price escalation resulting from tariffs levied on imported goods as they pass through customs may be

absorbed by producers or vendors, the majority is invariably passed on to consumers. If essential goods predominantly consumed by the public are imported, consumers may be compelled to endure elevated prices due to the absence of domestically produced substitutes. Industries heavily reliant on imported raw materials subject to tariffs may witness a rise in product prices commensurate with the increased cost of raw materials, thereby exerting upward pressure on overall domestic price levels. During President Trump's first term, Whirlpool, a prominent U.S. home appliance manufacturer, sought intervention from the White House, citing a loss of market share to Korean competitors LG Electronics and Samsung Electronics. Consequently, the administration raised the tariff on Korean washing machines from 20 percent to 50 percent. This caused the prices of washing machines in the U.S. to surge by 34 percent from February 2018 to February 2023. This illustrates how tariffs, while serving as a shield for domestic industries, can simultaneously act as a blade against consumers.

Moreover, in today's era of multilateral trade agreements, the enactment of tariffs by a single nation can immensely impact not only its domestic economy but also the global economic landscape. The U.S., as the world's largest importer and a nation engaged in trade relations with over 200 countries, regions, and territories, possesses particularly significant influence. The volatility of global markets in response to the successive tariff policies of Trump administration's second term underscores the U.S.'s pivotal role in the global economy. The yield on U.S. Treasury bonds, a benchmark for investment performance and portfolio allocation, has experienced a consistent decline since Trump's initial tariff announcement in 2025. On March 4, it breached the psychological resistance level* of 4.5 percent, falling to the 4.1 percent range. The levying of tariffs by the Trump administration triggered a sharp decline in major Asian stock indices. Japan's Nikkei 225, a leading stock index, reached its lowest point in approximately five months. Concerns that the Trump administration's tariff policies could adversely affect oil demand contributed to West Texas Intermediate, a global benchmark, reaching a low of \$68.37 per barrel, its lowest level since January. Thus, while tariffs serve to pressure competitors in the global market, they can also pose a threat to the global economy.

*Psychological resistance level: A subjective reluctance to accept a certain price or figure



Aimed at Protection: Trump's Tariff Policies and the Defense of American Industry

Throughout American history, successive administrations, spanning both Republican and Democratic parties, have implemented a variety of protectionist trade measures. In 1971, President Nixon imposed tariffs to mitigate high inflation and unemployment; in 2002, President Bush imposed tariffs to provide relief to the steel industry and its workers; and in 2009, President Obama imposed tariffs to safeguard domestic tire manufacturers. What, then, are the underlying motivations behind Trump's tariff policies? The principal objective is the revitalization of American manufacturing. President Trump decided to pursue robust protectionist trade policies to ensure that manufacturers, who had suffered losses under free trade, would reap benefits. Prior to the Trump administration, the prevailing argument in the U.S. was that free trade, characterized by minimal government intervention in the exchange of goods and services, contributed more significantly to overall national interests. However, in certain American states with a manufacturing-centric economy, there was strong concern that free trade would harm their industries. Indeed, unease among manufacturing workers materialized in several regions. As free trade became more prevalent, major American technology and industrial corporations established factories overseas, where labor costs were comparatively lower, to reduce production expenses and maximize profits. However, as the number of corporate factories in the U.S. dwindled, workers faced diminishing job opportunities or stagnant wages, leading to increasing impoverishment. While consumers benefited from the availability of mass-produced, low-cost consumer goods, producers and laborers faced challenging circumstances. Trump opted to abandon free trade policies to revitalize American manufacturing and protect workers' jobs.

1) Country-Specific Tariffs: Canada and Mexico Under Scrutiny

The inaugural targets of the Trump administration's tariffs were Canada and Mexico. Following his victory in the U.S. presidential election last November, President Trump, among his initial executive orders, signed directives to impose a 25 percent tariff on goods from Canada and Mexico, effective



▲ Trump announces tariffs on Canada and Mexico while signing executive orders on January 21, 2025, his first day back in the White House.

February 1, 2025. This action was predicated on the basis of an influx of fentanyl, a synthetic opioid, from these nations, along with illegal immigration, emerging as national emergencies posing a threat to the lives of Americans. Trump's executive order was grounded in the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, which authorizes the President to prohibit transactions and seize assets of foreign nationals and entities in the event of a substantial threat to U.S. security, foreign policy, or economy. Fentanyl served as a primary justification for the tariff imposition, underscoring the escalating mortality rate attributed to fentanyl. The distribution network of fentanyl originates in China, transits through Canada and Mexico, and culminates in the United States, with the majority of fentanyl entering the U.S. via Mexico. Data from U.S. Customs and Border Protection indicates that of the approximately 2,040 kilograms of fentanyl seized in the U.S. since last September, 98 percent entered at the southwestern border with Mexico. The second rationale for the tariffs is illegal immigration. According to U.S. Customs and Border Protection, a number of 23,721 apprehensions were made at the Canadian border between October 2023 and September 2024, more than double the 10,021 apprehensions during the same period in the preceding year. Following the executive order to impose tariffs on both nations, Canada and Mexico pledged to reinforce their border security. Subsequently, Trump granted a one-month reprieve, temporarily suspending the imposition of tariffs. However, the implementation of tariffs on the two countries commenced on March 4, then paused again on March 5, exacerbating the prevailing uncertainty.

The economic ramifications for Canada and Mexico are projected to be substantial. Canada's economy is heavily reliant on the U.S., with 75 percent of its total exports destined for

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the U.S. Notably, 97 percent of Canada's crude oil exports, its primary export commodity, are shipped to the U.S., rendering Canada's economy particularly vulnerable to tariffs on crude oil. The U.S. has maintained duty-free trade on Canadian crude oil since the North American Free Trade Agreement and the subsequent U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement. This has enabled American consumers to benefit from lower oil prices. However, the imposition of tariffs is projected to increase consumer prices in Midwestern U.S., a region where there are heavy imports of Canadian crude oil, by approximately 10 percent. Ultimately, the burden of tariffs will fall on American consumers. Mexico, having exported goods valued at \$475.6 billion to the U.S. last year, has emerged as the U.S.'s largest trading partner. Eighty percent of automobiles manufactured in Mexico annually are exported to the U.S., and in 2023, the top three automotive companies with manufacturing facilities in Mexico were all American brands. This is attributable to Mexico's lower average wages and its comparatively lower land costs. The U.S. Inflation Reduction Act* also provided incentives for companies establishing electric vehicle factories in Mexico, including duty-free trade with the U.S. Given these advantages, numerous American companies have established manufacturing operations in Mexico. Consequently, tariffs on Mexican automobiles would primarily burden American manufacturers. Unless adequate measures are taken to mitigate the adverse effects on domestic industries and consumers, Trump's objective of protecting domestic industries through tariffs may prove elusive.

*U.S. Inflation Reduction Act: A legislative act aimed at curbing inflation through reducing the federal deficit and lowering prescription drug costs

2) Commodity-Specific Tariffs: The Widening Net of Tariff Policies



▲ Trump shows the signed executive order imposing a 25 percent tariff on all aluminum and steel goods imported into the U.S.

President Trump's second tariff initiative targeted specific commodities. On February 10, 2025, Trump announced a 25 percent tariff on all steel and aluminum imports, effective March 12. This measure was enacted under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act, which empowers the president to restrict import volumes or impose high tariffs. The imposition of tariffs under Section 232 necessitates a Section 232 investigation by the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) to determine whether the commodities in question are critical to national security or whether increased imports have eroded the U.S.'s domestic production capacity. During its first term, the Trump administration conducted a Section 232 investigation on steel and aluminum, spanning from April 2017 to March 2018, when the tariffs were implemented. Based on this investigation, Trump concluded that the steel and aluminum industries were integral to the U.S. economy but had suffered from dumping, whereby other nations had exported goods to the U.S. at prices below their domestic market values. He also highlighted the high import dependency and the significant disparity between domestic production and imports from other nations. Trump's perspective from his first term remains unchanged in his current term. He has overtly indicated his willingness to engage in a trade war with major exporters of aluminum and steel to the U.S. to protect domestic industries.

Furthermore, Trump's commodity-specific tariffs are expanding. On February 25, 2025, Trump initiated Section 232 investigations into all products made from foreign copper and wood, signaling the commencement of tariff enactment procedures. A senior White House official stated during a briefing on February 25 that "copper is the second most widely used material in U.S. weapons systems." Experts suggest that the U.S.'s copper import dependency has risen from 10 percent in 1995 to approximately 50 percent recently and is projected to reach 66 percent by 2035. In the case of wood, the U.S. has identified Canada, Germany, Brazil, and South Korea as countries dumping wood products to the U.S., asserting that these practices have led to the loss of domestic manufacturing capabilities. Additionally, Trump has announced his intention to impose tariffs of 25 percent or more on automobile parts, citing the findings of his previous Section 232 Investigation, which concluded that increased imports of automobile parts have weakened domestic production capacities.

In fact, Trump's aggressive protectionist trade policies have indeed had a positive impact on U.S. industries. According

to *The New York Times*, since the imposition of tariffs on global steel and aluminum products by the Trump and Biden administrations, U.S. steel production has increased by approximately 20 percent over the past six years. The American Iron and Steel Institute reported that the U.S. steel mill capacity utilization rate was 74.4 percent as of the last week of January 2025. However, the potential adverse effects of tariffs must also be considered. According to Bloomberg, U.S. steel prices had risen to over \$900 per ton as of March 1, 2025, prior to the official tariff implementation, representing an increase of approximately 25 percent since the beginning of the year. This increase is attributed to U.S. steel companies preemptively raising prices in anticipation of the tariffs. With the expansion of tariff targets to include copper, wood, and automobiles, concerns about inflation in the U.S. are mounting, as the increased cost of raw material imports could lead to higher consumer prices. In light of these developments, there is growing concern as to whether Trump's tariff policies will benefit the U.S. or harm both the U.S. and the global economy.

3) Reciprocal Tariffs: Targeting All Global Industries

The Trump administration has expanded the frontlines of the trade war through reciprocal tariffs, following the earlier implementation of tariffs by country and product. During his presidential campaign, Trump has pledged to impose a universal tariff ranging from 10 to 25 percent on all countries instead of reciprocal tariffs. Kim Young-gui, a senior research fellow at the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy, explains this change as “imposing universal tariffs on all imported items could exacerbate inflationary pressures in the U.S. which the Republican Party has promised to end it. In contrast, reciprocal tariffs that target specific countries or items are likely to exert less inflationary pressure.” Reciprocal tariffs are measures that establish tariff rates in proportion to those imposed by the counterpart country. However, President Trump officially announced, on February 13, 2025, that the U.S. would impose reciprocal tariffs on countries worldwide, taking into account all tariffs and non-tariff barriers. A critical aspect of the U.S. imposition of reciprocal tariffs is how the U.S. will quantify non-tariff barriers. Non-tariff barriers refer to all trade restrictions excluding tariffs. The U.S. government had previously indicated that it would impose differential reciprocal tariffs by country, basing its assessments on whether



▲ Trump signs an executive order on the imposition of reciprocal tariffs on February 13, 2025.

each country's trade policies undermine the fairness of current trade practices. According to the U.S. DOC, the trade deficit in 2024 reached a record high of \$918.4 billion. Trump argues that the U.S. trade deficit stems from the economic policies of its trade partners that can disadvantage American industries. He intends to use reciprocal tariffs as a tool to challenge the economic policies of other countries that threaten the competitiveness of U.S. industries in the global market.

A senior official from the U.S. administration has stated that five key factors will be considered when determining country-specific reciprocal tariffs, the first being tariffs imposed on U.S. products. The second criterion includes unfair or discriminatory taxes, including Value-Added Taxes (VAT), which are levied on the “value added” during the production of a final product, whereas the U.S. only imposes a sales tax on the final product. Unlike sales tax, VAT is included in the price of goods and services. Furthermore, VAT in countries like Korea and those in Europe is applied uniformly nationwide while sales taxes vary by states in the U.S. Trump claims that when exporting American products to Europe or Korea, U.S. companies must pay VAT, which is not applicable in the U.S. so that it functions similarly to tariffs. The third factor is the costs imposed on U.S. companies, workers, and consumers, including subsidies or regulatory burdens. For example, the Korean government provides subsidies for kitchen cabinets, which Trump views as allowing companies to reduce production costs and subsequently dump excess goods into the U.S. market. Fourth is the exchange rate policies of the respective countries, as an increase in the exchange rate effectively lowers the international price of a country's exports, potentially boosting exports. Trump has previously warned that additional tariffs could be imposed on countries

that devalue their currencies against the U.S. dollar. Finally, factors deemed by the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) to cause unfair restrictions will be taken into account. This refers to foreign government policies and practices that are considered unjust and discriminatory under U.S. Trade Law Section 301, which restrict or burden U.S. trade. If the USTR determines that a specific country's trade or industrial policies compromise trade fairness, the U.S. is likely to impose tariffs to counteract those policies.



U.S.-China Trade Dispute: A Recurrence on the Horizon?



▲ Trump signs an executive order to investigate China's unfair practices including intellectual property infringement and forced technology transfer on August 14, 2017 during his first term of presidency.

The global trade market, observing the Trump administration's current tariff policies, is concerned about the potential resurgence of a U.S.-China trade war. During the Trump administration's first term, from 2017 to 2019, the U.S. and China engaged in reciprocal tariff impositions, adversely affecting the global economy. The catalyst for this conflict was the rivalry between the two nations over global market dominance. At that time, Chinese telecommunications companies, including Huawei, were challenging the position of those in the U.S. telecommunications industry by expanding into advanced and emerging markets. To counter this, Trump, in his first year as president, directed the USTR on August 14, 2017, to investigate China's policy of compelling intellectual property concessions for market access. The USTR's *Report on China's Acts, Policies, and Practices Related to Technology Transfer, Intellectual Property, and Innovation*, released on

April 27, 2018, identified three primary methods of China's coercive technology transfer: first, through foreign ownership restrictions, such as requiring joint ventures or partnerships with minority stakes as a condition for market entry; second, through complex administrative approval processes and licensing requirements; and third, through data localization, whereby China requires the storage of foreign companies' data and information within its borders, even if those companies refuse to share such data and information externally.

Perceiving these practices as detrimental to the U.S. and the global trade market, Trump imposed a 25 percent tariff on 818 Chinese products valued at \$34 billion on July 8, 2018, igniting a trade war between the two nations. In response, China immediately imposed tariffs on 545 U.S. products, including agricultural goods and automobiles, also valued at \$34 billion. Subsequently, on July 10, the U.S. levied retaliatory tariffs of 10 percent on an additional \$200 billion worth of Chinese imports. In August, both nations imposed additional tariffs on \$16 billion worth of each other's goods. The trade war subsequently escalated to include key industries in both nations. On May 15, 2019, the U.S. issued an order prohibiting the use of Huawei's information and communications technology and placed Huawei and 68 of its affiliates on a blacklist, requiring these companies to obtain prior U.S. government approval for transactions with U.S. companies. In response, China restricted the export of rare earth minerals, 17 scarce minerals used in advanced industries such as electric vehicles and batteries. Senior Research Fellow Kim explained, "These U.S.-China conflicts have led to the proliferation of nationalism and protectionism globally, adversely affecting the global economy and undermining international cooperation."



▲ Trump (L) imposes additional 10 percent tariff on all China goods on February 1, 2025, and Xi Jinping (R) hits back by announcing 10 to 15 percent tariff on U.S. agricultural goods on March 10, 2025.

The contraction of technological and personnel exchanges and the increase in trade uncertainty between the two nations resulted in a \$585 billion reduction in global GDP.

The U.S.-China trade conflict, which had reached a nadir, entered a temporary truce following high-level trade negotiations in Washington on October 11, 2019. However, with Trump's return to the White House, the simmering U.S.-China trade war has really hotbed up. Effective March 4, 2025, Trump announced an additional 10 percent tariff on Chinese goods, supplementing the 10 percent tariff imposed in February. The Trump administration's current tariff policies toward China differ from those of his first term. Senior Research Fellow Kim said, "Internally, there is an assessment that the first-term Trump administration's tariff policies, which imposed excessively high tariffs on China, failed to prevent China's circumvention of trade routes. Consequently, the original objectives of the tariffs, namely restoring the trade deficit and curbing China's trade growth, were not achieved. Therefore, unlike the previous term, which focused on country-specific tariffs on China, the current administration is also imposing tariffs on other nations, such as Canada and Mexico, which could serve as alternative export routes for China." In response to the U.S.'s additional tariffs, China has imposed tariffs ranging from 10 to 15 percent on U.S. agricultural products and implemented export control measures on certain companies. China is the largest importer of U.S. agricultural products, which are indispensable to its market. Conversely, China can source goods from nations other than the U.S. Given that U.S. agricultural exports to China, which plummeted during the previous trade war, are still in the process of recovery, China's tariffs could prove to be more detrimental. Amidst the escalating tensions between the two nations, the world is closely monitoring whether the nightmare of a trade war will recur.



The Path Forward: Korea's Strategic Approach to U.S. Tariff Policies

"We provide South Korea with substantial military and various other forms of support. However, Korea imposes tariffs that are, on average, four times higher than those of the United States." On March 4, 2025, U.S. local time, President



▲ President Trump delivers his first joint address to the House and Senate since taking office in Washington, DC on March 4, 2025.

Trump publicly criticized Korea for engaging in unfair trade practices during his first joint address to the U.S. Congress. Consequently, the Trump administration is expected to exert considerable pressure on the Korean economy and security to rectify this situation. On March 15, 2012, the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which aimed to reduce regulations and eliminate tariffs, officially took effect. Korea, which had previously entered into FTAs with other nations using a positive list system, entered into its first FTA with the U.S. using a negative list system. Unlike the positive list system, which specifies the items for which free trade is permitted, the negative list system specifies the items for which imports are prohibited or restricted, allowing free trade for all other items. This FTA was amended once in 2019, with the U.S. agreeing to phase out tariffs on all goods imported from Korea by 2041, and Korea agreeing to phase out tariffs on 99.8 percent of goods imported from the U.S., excluding some agricultural products, by 2031. Therefore, all U.S. goods imported by Korea are currently duty-free, and the U.S. is in a similar reciprocal situation. However, given Trump's assertion that the U.S. is at a disadvantage in its trade with Korea and that he will consider non-tariff barriers in imposing reciprocal tariffs, Korea may no longer be immune to Trump's tariff policies.

However, Korea cannot afford to despair. Korea must now focus on developing countermeasures to Trump's tariffs. Experts advise that Korea should not only focus on Trump's tariff policies but also comprehensively examine his other policies. Hur Joon-young, an associate professor in the Department of Economics of Sogang University, states, "Tariffs are policies that are intricately linked to various factors, including the economy, diplomacy, and security. Korea must connect U.S. tariff policies with various aspects of the

U.S. political and economic landscape, thereby developing a multifaceted perspective.” First, behind Trump’s aggressive tariff policies lies his tax cut policy, which he emphasized as a key campaign promise. Trump pledged to reduce the federal corporate tax rate from the current 21 percent to 20 percent and to provide an additional reduction of up to 15 percent for U.S. manufacturing companies. This policy aims to protect domestic manufacturing, with tariffs serving as a new source of revenue to offset tax cuts. Additionally, unlike Korea, the U.S. holds midterm elections two years into the president’s four-year term. If U.S. citizens are satisfied with the first two years of the administration, they will elect the incumbent party to the House and Senate; otherwise, they will elect the opposition party. Therefore, Trump will seek to demonstrate the benefits of his tariff policies to the U.S. to maintain the Republican Party’s current dominance. Thus, Korea should emphasize how economic cooperation with Korea can contribute to Trump’s objectives rather than focusing on the adverse effects of tariffs.

When Korea engages in negotiations with the U.S., arguing that the current U.S. tariff policies are detrimental to the U.S. would be counterproductive for Korea. Professor Hur states, “The Trump administration has consistently prioritized the benefits of maintaining friendly relations with other nations in its foreign policy.” Kang Hyun-ju, a senior research fellow at the Korea Capital Market Institute, adds, “The Trump administration prioritizes transactions over alliances.” To address this, Korea should consider increasing its imports

from the U.S. Currently, the U.S. has pointed out that while it faces a trade deficit, other nations are experiencing trade surpluses. In response, Researcher Kang suggests, “To reduce Korea’s trade surplus with the U.S., Korea should consider replacing imports of military supplies, crude oil, and food with U.S. products, thereby mitigating the risk of tariffs on its key export items.” Furthermore, unlike the Biden administration, which pursued multilateral diplomacy by forging alliances with various nations to achieve common goals, Trump pursues bilateral diplomacy through direct negotiations between two nations. In this regard, Professor Hur states, “During the Biden administration, it was crucial to collaborate with like-minded countries that shared common values. However, it is now essential to strengthen public-private partnerships with like-positioned countries facing similar domestic and international challenges, thereby demonstrating that securing Korea’s cooperation is equivalent to securing the cooperation of all such nations.” Furthermore, Korea should leverage the U.S. policy-making process, which involves lobbying, to reflect the voices of workers and producers. In this way, Korea can utilize its existing partnerships and contracts with U.S. workers to convey its perspectives to the U.S. government. Discussions on how to protect Korean industries in the context of U.S. relations should continue.



Tariffs have the power to reshape the flow of international trade, redefine corporate survival strategies, and influence the global political landscape. Currently, the Trump administration’s tariff policies are not merely economic measures but potent variables that are affecting the global economic order. Therefore, governments must closely monitor these changes and seek realistic and sustainable solutions to protect their domestic industries. Failure to comprehend the evolving dynamics of the tariff war could place the Korean economy at a disadvantage. Now, it is imperative to move beyond simple responses and cultivate the wisdom to seize opportunities amidst unprecedented change. ^A

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How Does Cognitive Control Regulate Behavior?

By Kwon Yu-jin

Staff Reporter of Theory & Critique Section

Achieving all academic goals by strictly following a study plan is an aspiration for many students. From April 21 to 25, during the HUFS midterm exam period, students will set their own goals and strive to accomplish them. However, many will struggle to follow through with their plans due to distractions and impulsive decisions, ultimately failing to achieve their desired outcomes.

Human behavior is not driven by sheer willpower alone. So, when and how do we take action? The brain, which governs human behavior, orchestrates various cognitive processes to sustain goal-directed actions. It interprets external stimuli and internal motivations, prioritizes tasks, and employs sophisticated regulatory mechanisms to suppress or adjust actions as needed. The aim is to explore the mechanisms of cognitive control, delving into how the brain regulates our behavior in terms of goal setting and execution, impulse control, and multitasking. The Argus seeks to uncover effective learning strategies that can enhance academic performance, by examining these processes.

[Before Reading] On Task: How Our Brain Gets Things Done (2022)

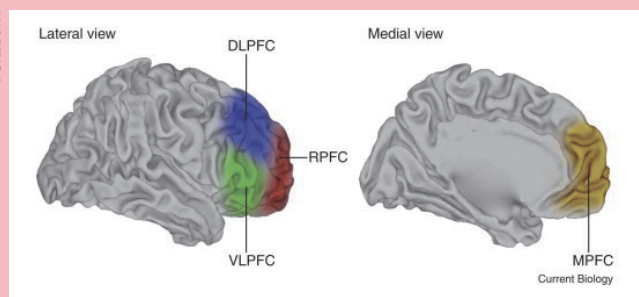
On Task: How Our Brain Gets Things Done (2022) is a book by David Badre, a professor of cognitive science, linguistics, and psychology at Brown University and a researcher at the Carney Institute for Brain Science. The book explores the neuroscience of cognitive control—the brain's ability to set and achieve goals. It delves into the intricate mechanisms that enable goal-directed behavior and highlights their relevance to everyday activities such as learning, problem-solving, and decision-making. Furthermore, it explains cognitive control mechanisms based on the latest neuroscience research, presenting cognitive control mechanisms in a way that is accessible to readers interested in cognitive control theory. Through his book, Badre seeks to answer the question, "When do humans take action?", arguing that human behavior is guided by a continuous cognitive control process that involves goal setting, motivation, execution, and adjustment.



1 Cognitive Control

1-1 What is Cognitive Control?

In his book *On Task: How Our Brain Gets Things Done*, David Badre defines cognitive control as the brain's intrinsic neural mechanism that formulates plans and continuously monitors them to align goals with precise actions. He emphasizes that cognitive control is an independent function, distinct from mere knowledge or behavior. But which part of the brain is responsible for cognitive control?



▲ The left image shows the DLPFC and the OFC from the lateral view of the brain, while the right image depicts the MPFC and the OFC from the medial view of the brain.

The prefrontal cortex (PFC), located at the front of the frontal lobe, is the key brain region governing higher cognitive functions, including cognitive control. These functions encompass goal setting, decision-making, problem-solving, and attention regulation, all of which are essential for handling complex tasks and adapting to changing environments. The PFC collaborates and interacts with several subregions, including the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC), the orbitofrontal cortex (OFC), and the medial prefrontal cortex (MPFC) to carry out cognitive control. According to the research paper “Development of Self-Regulation in Infants and Young Children from a Neuroscientific Perspective” (2017) by Ok-Seung Yang, a professor of Department of early childhood education at Duksung Women’s University, Lecturer Jeong-Lim Kim, Department of early childhood education, Korea National Open University, and Doctoral Candidate Yu-Jin Yang, Department of early childhood education, Graduate School, Duksung Women’s University, the DLPFC plays a critical role in temporarily storing and retrieving information necessary for planning and task preparation. It integrates information related to sensory input, movement, and long-term

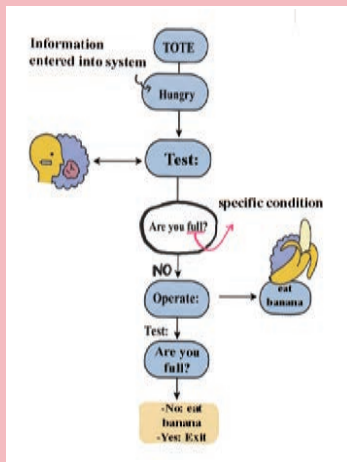
memory, allowing individuals to maintain sensory information and cognitively regulate which actions to take first and which to delay. This ability facilitates goal-directed behavior.

Meanwhile, the OFC is crucial for cognitive reasoning, influencing how individuals plan and regulate their actions. It plays a central role in emotional decision-making, information processing, reward and punishment evaluation, and social behavior regulation. This region assesses stimuli in terms of desire and motivation, determining their significance. Additionally, according to the paper “Cognitive Processing and Emotional Regulation in Depression and Anxiety Disorders: A Neurocognitive Network Perspective” (2021) by Choong-Myung Kim, a professor of speech-language pathology at Gwangju University, the MPFC specializes in self-reflection, autobiographical memory, and self-awareness of emotions. It evaluates and interprets past experiences and emotions, supplementing cognitive control functions. Thus, the PFC integrates and regulates various cognitive functions through the complex interactions of these three subregions, enabling humans to adapt to intricate environments.

1-2 How Cognitive Control Operates

The functioning of cognitive control can be explained using an analogy to computer programs and their control structures. According to the book *On Task: How Our Brain Gets Things Done* (2022), American cognitive psychologists George Miller, Eugene Galanter, and Karl Pribram proposed using the Test-Operate-Test-Exit (TOTE) model to examine the process through which human behavior is controlled and to understand the principles and characteristics of cognitive control systems. The TOTE model consists of four stages: Test, Operate, Test, and Exit. This looped structure applies to human behavior, where actions do not occur just once but cycle back to the starting point after completing each phase.

The first stage, “Test,” compares input information to a predefined condition. If the condition is not met, meaning a discrepancy exists between the desired condition and the input information, the second stage, “Operate,” is activated. After completing the operation, the system re-enters the “Test” stage to verify whether the condition has been met. If a discrepancy still exists, the process loops back to the “Operate” stage. If the input information matches the condition, the final stage, “Exit,” is executed. Let’s apply the TOTE model to the example of



▲ The TOTE structure applies to the example of eating a banana.

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eating a banana. The process begins in the “Test” stage, where the system evaluates the initial state — being hungry — against the desired condition — being full. Since hunger and fullness do not match, the system moves to the “Operate” stage, where one banana is eaten. The process then returns to the “Test” stage to check if the

person is still hungry. If the discrepancy remains, the “Operate” stage repeats, leading to the consumption of another banana. However, if the initial input — hunger — has changed to fullness after eating one banana, meaning it now matches the predefined condition, the “Exit” stage is triggered, and the person stops eating. This forms a simple control structure that determines when and for how long to eat bananas.

Through this TOTE structure, several key elements of cognitive control systems can be explained. First, the TOTE model demonstrates that merely thinking about an action is insufficient; concrete and executable plans are necessary. This means individuals must assess the conditions required to achieve a goal, determine the sequence of actions based on these conditions, and either repeat the action until the goal is achieved or switch to an alternative approach. Second, TOTE highlights how combining condition testing with feedback enables dynamic control of processes. Condition testing continuously assesses how closely the current state aligns with the goal, as seen in checking whether hunger has been satisfied in the banana eating example. Based on the test results, feedback is used to adjust actions — if hunger persists, the system continues the eating process; if not, it stops. By iteratively performing condition testing and feedback, individuals flexibly adjust their behavior in response to changing circumstances. Furthermore, TOTE selects operators based on the “conditions of the world.” In this context, an operator refers to the agent responsible for analyzing the world’s conditions and choosing the most appropriate action

to achieve a goal. “Conditions of the world” encompass various environmental factors, such as the degree of hunger, the number and taste of available bananas, and the setting in which the banana is eaten. The TOTE model identifies external factors by considering these world conditions when planning and executing goal-directed actions. This includes not only the physical environment but also internal states like hunger and social contexts such as the presence of others.

Third, TOTE emphasizes the importance of stopping rules, which determine when to execute the final stage, “Exit,” and transition into a new TOTE loop. Recognizing the appropriate moment to stop an action and shift to a new behavior is crucial for cognitive control. While engaging in an activity, the brain must recognize when a goal has been achieved. It evaluates the current state and detects signals indicating that the action should cease. This ability to suppress behavior or transition to a new task is a fundamental aspect of cognitive control. In the banana-eating example, failing to stop eating despite being full means the control process has malfunctioned. Even if eating bananas is highly enjoyable, the ability to stop once full is an essential executive function. Fourth, TOTE can be embedded within other TOTE structures, forming a hierarchical framework. Breaking down the “Operate” stage of eating a banana reveals subprocesses such as biting, chewing, and swallowing. These lower-level actions ultimately serve the higher-level goal of reaching a full state. To successfully complete the higher-level goal of satisfying hunger, each of these subprocesses must be executed properly. This hierarchical structure enables a more refined and detailed control process, as each operation can contain its own sub-TOTE loops.

This hierarchical nature of TOTE aligns with the structure of human behavior. Rather than being simple reflexive responses, human actions are guided by organized goals and sub-goals that dynamically adjust behavior. The way humans set, modify, and achieve goals mirrors the feedback loops described in the TOTE model. To illustrate this, consider applying the TOTE model to studying for a midterm exam in Spanish as a General Education Language Course at HUFS. If the instructor informs students that the exam questions will be similar to the practice exercises in the textbook, students will focus on studying those exercises. Using the TOTE model, the highest-level goal would be to solve all the textbook practice problems without difficulty. To plan an efficient study strategy, the first step

would be the “Test” stage, where students attempt the exercises to assess their current proficiency. If they encounter difficulties with certain questions, the system moves to the “Operate” stage, where they focus on reinforcing weak areas, such as the past perfect tense and conditional sentences in Spanish. To master these topics, separate sub-TOTE loops would be initiated — one for fully understanding the past perfect tense and another for comprehending conditional sentences. These sub-TOTE structures function as lower-level processes within the overarching goal. Once these sub-goals are achieved, the highest-level objective — solving all textbook exercises without difficulty — can be accomplished.



2 Can Impulses Be Controlled?

2-1 The Causes of Impulses

As exam periods approach, many students strive to focus on their studies, but unexpected distractions constantly arise. A prime example is smartphone notifications. The sound of a message alert while immersed in studying naturally triggers the urge to check the phone. The problem is that checking the message can easily lead to succumbing to various temptations like YouTube and other forms of social media. According to the paper “Impulsivity and Compulsivity: Concepts, Relationships, and Clinical Implications” (2012), by Choi Hye-ra, a Professor at Seoul Cyber University’s Department of Counseling Psychology and Lee Hoon-jin, a Professor at Seoul National University’s Department of Psychology, impulsivity is defined as “behavior that is often unplanned, excessively risky, or inappropriate to the situation, leading to undesirable outcomes in most cases, or a tendency to react quickly and without planning to internal or external stimuli without considering the negative consequences for oneself or others.” To rephrase, it refers to a state where there is a lack of ability to think carefully and make decisions, and to delay immediate gratification for greater satisfaction later. So, what are the causes of these impulses? This paper suggests that impulsive choices are made when focusing solely on current rewards and underestimating future rewards. In other words, because the future is an abstract mental state psychologically constructed by humans, there is a tendency to prioritize the satisfaction gained from immediate actions. Therefore, people

who make impulsive choices lack the ability to form and visualize future goals and focus on short-term gains rather than having faith and expectations for future outcomes. When the instinctive tendency to seek immediate rewards collides with the regulatory mechanism to maintain long-term goals, and cognitive control does not function sufficiently, humans make impulsive choices. The human brain has a system for predicting and evaluating rewards, with the mesolimbic dopamine system playing a key role. This area shows strong activation when receiving rewards, as dopamine is released, activating neural circuits responsible for pleasure and motivation. In other words, strong neural responses occur in the brain when expecting immediate rewards, leading to prioritizing current pleasures.

On the other hand, future rewards do not trigger immediate responses from the dopamine system, and rewards with temporal distance tend to be valued lower. This explains why it is difficult for humans to suppress impulsive behavior with willpower alone in the process of setting and executing long-term goals. In regards to the brain mechanisms involved in delaying immediate gratification, Professor David Badre stated, “While the concept of delayed discounting is widely recognized, there is ongoing debate in the academic community regarding the mechanisms that drive it. Some researchers focus on the inhibition process, which suppresses impulses for immediate rewards, while others emphasize the way the brain computes the value of rewards, taking into account factors such as time and uncertainty.” To elaborate, the first perspective suggests that if the brain fails to inhibit impulses for immediate rewards, it becomes difficult to choose long-term goals. The second perspective implies that achieving long-term goals is challenging because, as time passes, it becomes harder to assign high value to future rewards.

2-2 Methods to Control Impulses

The reason for these disruptions in the learning flow is that the human brain has automatically learned to associate the act of looking at a phone and the resulting social rewards. Social rewards here refer to the psychological satisfaction gained from using a phone, that is, positive stimuli from relationships with others. Social rewards are activated when immediately connected with others through messages or when receiving reactions from acquaintances through social media. So, how can we control this instinctive impulse and concentrate on studying?

In his book *On Task: How Our Brain Gets Things Done* (2022), David Badre suggests the Continuous Distributed Memory model, applied to the Stroop task, as a way to overcome the urge to look at a phone and maintain study flow. The Stroop task is a task that involves naming the color of a printed word, and it is difficult to name the color if it does not match the color indicated by the word. However, if you read the word itself regardless of the color, a response is derived immediately without difficulty. For example, suppose the word “blue” is printed in red ink on paper. If asked, “What color is the word written on the paper?” the response of “red” appears slower than the request to “read the word written on the paper.” The reason for this difference is that reading words is more automatic because there are more experiences of reading words than naming the color of the letters written. For this reason, people experience a strong urge to read the word even

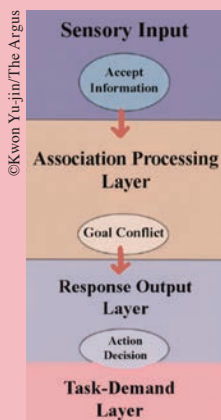
though they are aware that they must name the color of the letters written. To generalize, in the Stroop task, the word reading task forms an automatic and strong response pathway due to repeated experiences, while the color naming requires intentional control by suppressing automatic responses. This is similar to the situation where the impulse to unconsciously check phone notifications conflicts with the goal of suppressing it and continuing to study when a notification rings during exam preparation.

In this regard, John Cohen, Kevin Dunbar, and Jay McClelland, prominent scholars in cognitive science and

and a task demand layer. Each layer cooperates to control goal-oriented behavior.

First, the sensory input layer accepts information from the external environment. In the Stroop task, it processes word and color information, and during study, it processes sensory stimuli such as phone notification sounds or screen light. Next, the association processing layer interprets the input information and connects meanings. Just as word meaning and color information compete, during study, the impulse to “check the phone” and the goal to “continue studying” interact and conflict. The response output layer is the stage that ultimately decides what action to take. In the Stroop task, the action of naming the color is output, and in the study situation, the action of ignoring the phone and continuing to study can be selected. At this time, if the automatic response is strong, there is a high possibility of impulsively reading the word or checking the phone. The key factor that controls this is the task demand layer. This layer reflects the current goal to be performed and controls the neural pathways in the association processing layer. Just as it strengthens the color name response pathway and suppresses the word reading pathway in the Stroop task, in the study situation, it can control impulsive behavior by activating the “continue studying” signal and suppressing the “check phone” pathway. Therefore, the Continuous Distributed Memory model helps explain how goal-oriented behavior is controlled and maintained despite interference from automatic responses.

Lee Ji-yeon, a professor of counseling psychology at the Graduate School of Education at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, said from a counseling psychology perspective, “To effectively control impulses during exam preparation, one can systematically utilize self-regulation and cognitive-behavioral strategies.” Self-regulation is the ability to set goals and control behavior to achieve desired outcomes, and controlling the environment can be one way. For example, keeping the smartphone away or blocking apps that interfere with concentration can help minimize distractions. Additionally, a reward system can be used to strengthen motivation for exam preparation. After studying for a certain period, taking a short break or providing a reward when a goal is achieved can reinforce positive study habits. Self-monitoring is also important to continuously learn by checking one’s study progress and evaluating whether goals are achieved.



▲ In this structure, the task-demand layer is positioned opposite to the input layer and regulates the neural pathways of the middle layer.

neuroscience, proposed the Continuous Distributed Memory model, a neural network model, in their paper, “On the Control of Automatic Processing: A Parallel Distributed Processing Account of the Stroop Effect” (1990), as a way to perform the Stroop task to overcome impulses. The Continuous Distributed Memory model represents the human neural network model in the form of a computer program and deals with the conflict between automatic responses and intentional control. The Continuous Distributed Memory model consists of an input layer, an association processing layer, a response output layer,

On the other hand, cognitive-behavioral strategies are methods to effectively control impulses by adjusting thoughts and behaviors. Cognitive restructuring is a technique to change negative thoughts into more realistic and rational thinking. For example, when you think, “This midterm is hopeless even if I study,” changing to a more positive thought such as, “Which unit should I study to achieve results?” is a form of cognitive restructuring. Additionally, behavioral modification strategies can be used. This is a method to practice alternative behaviors to reduce impulses. Instead of looking at a smartphone when concentration is distracted during study, one could alternatively stretch or take a short walk. These strategies can help control impulses and improve study habits through systematic methods, rather than relying on simple willpower.



3 Cognitive Control and Multitasking

3-1 What is Multitasking?

In modern society, with the increased use of various electronic devices such as smartphones and computers, people frequently engage in multitasking, often without realizing it. In the daily lives of university students, this multitasking can be seen in actions such as exchanging messages while attending lectures, watching video streams while studying for exams, or checking social media feeds while writing reports. Thus, multitasking generally refers to performing multiple tasks simultaneously, but in reality, the human brain cannot perform simultaneous tasks. To explain this intuitively, Niels Taatgen, a Dutch psychologist and computer scientist, compares the brain’s multitasking problem to a scenario of a chef cooking in a kitchen, in his paper “Adaptive Control of Thought-Rational: The Role of Declarative Knowledge” (2001). The chef can perform some tasks in parallel, such as preheating the oven while slicing carrots, but cannot do two things at the same time, such as slicing carrots and sautéing onions. In other words, the human brain does not process tasks simultaneously but works by quickly switching from one task to another. In 2016, researchers at the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium measured brain waves while asking experimental participants to perform visual and verbal tasks simultaneously. They found that when participants performed one task, the frontal lobe was strongly activated, but when a second task was added, the

neural activity of the first task decreased sharply. This means that as two tasks collide, one task is prioritized or performed quickly and alternately. Therefore, this experiment shows that the human brain does not process two tasks simultaneously but works by quickly switching from one task to another.

3-2 Is Multitasking Really an Effective Method?



▲ Multitasking negatively affects the brain, including reducing gray matter density.

Modern people live in an era of digital information overload and are accustomed to unconsciously multitasking, surrounded by numerous electronic devices. However, they often do not properly recognize the negative effects of this habit on the brain.

According to the paper “Media Multitasking is Associated with Structural Differences in the Brain” (2014) by Kep Kee Loh and Ryota Kanai, researchers from the School of Psychology at the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom, multitasking has negative effects on the brain. The research team measured multitasking frequency and changes in brain gray matter density in 75 men and women who used multiple electronic devices simultaneously. The results showed that people who multitask frequently and for long periods tended to have decreased gray matter density. Gray matter is an area in the brain where information-processing neurons are densely packed, and a decrease in gray matter density can impair information processing ability. In particular, these changes are prominent in brain areas that play an important role in concentration, empathy, and emotional regulation. Therefore, multitasking reduces concentration and memory, increases stress and anxiety due to the pressure to process multiple tasks simultaneously, and can lead to overall cognitive function decline in the long term, including decision-making and problem-solving abilities.


Multitasking not only causes structural changes in the brain but also causes functional changes, increasing task switching costs and reducing overall work efficiency. According to the

paper, “Mental Set and Shift of Attitude” (1927) by Arthur Jersild, a psychology professor at Teachers College, Columbia University, in the early 20th century, multitasking, that is, rapid task switching, causes a shift of attitude and the resulting task-switching cost. Here, the shift of attitude is the process of changing the way of thinking from one task to another, and the switching cost is the increase in time or the increase in the possibility of errors when moving from one task to another. According to Jersild’s research, humans set a mental set, a state of preparing a task in their minds, to perform an individual task. But when multitasking, the reaction speed slows down and the error rate increases each time a task is switched. Also, additional cognitive resources are consumed in the process of releasing the mental set for the existing task and setting the mental set for the new task, and attention is temporarily distracted in the transition process, lengthening the reaction time. Multitasking may seem efficient, but in reality,, it is likely to reduce the performance speed and accuracy of individual tasks, as the probability of making mistakes in the switching process increases.

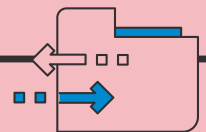
Jersild’s research further shows that task switching costs are not the same and vary depending on specific conditions. That is, the switching cost is low across similar tasks but high across heterogeneous tasks. For example, the switching cost is low when reading and summarizing sentences in the same language, but the switching cost increases when calculating numbers and then suddenly summarizing sentences. Also, automated tasks have low switching costs, while cognitively complex tasks have high switching costs. Therefore, to multitask efficiently, tasks with low switching costs should be combined. Additionally, it should be noted that, according to the paper “Cognitive Control And Flexibility: Human Prefrontal

Cortex Function And Networks” (2001) by Earl K. Miller, a professor at The Picower Institute for Learning and Memory at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Jonathan D. Cohen, a professor at the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience Institute at Princeton University, the frontal lobe, which is in charge of the cognitive control system, controls task switching. The frontal lobe adjusts each task, but if a new task is started before completely finishing one task, cognitive interference occurs. Multitasking divides attention into multiple tasks, making it impossible to fully concentrate on one task, and continuous task switching increases brain fatigue and can lead to decreased concentration and memory in the long term.

Through the previously mentioned research, we can infer what strategies can effectively improve productivity and manage attention in modern society. To reduce switching costs, it is important to recognize the importance of single-tasking and focus on one task at a time to increase efficiency. To practice this, you can use the “Pomodoro Technique.” Pomodoro means tomato in Italian, and it is a method of concentrating on one task for 25 minutes and taking a 5-minute break using a tomato-shaped timer. Alternating work and rest in this manner helps to maintain concentration and increase efficiency. Additionally, using task batching, which groups similar types of tasks together, can reduce switching costs. In an interview for the newspaper article “Multitasking Ruins the Brain... IQ Drops to 8-Year-Old Level” written by Kim Cheol-joong, a medical journalist for *The Chosun Daily* in November 2023, Choi Ho-jin, a professor of neurology at Hanyang University College of Medicine, advised that meditating or spacing out for 5 to 10 minutes from time to time or taking a break when attention is distracted are ways to use the brain more efficiently.

Achieving learning goals is not accomplished by willpower alone. Our brain coordinates external stimuli and internal motivations through cognitive control, suppresses impulses, and modifies behaviors when necessary. Therefore, to successfully achieve goals, it is necessary to understand one’s cognitive control ability and apply it to a plan for achieving the goal. By systematically utilizing impulse control and concentration strategies, better results can be achieved not only in learning but also in various life challenges. 

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The Classroom as a Bridge

By ALICE PRIGL D'ONDEL

Guest Reporter

Last Wednesday, at the Air Force Hotel in Seoul, I attended the annual gathering for the Descendants of the United Nations (UN) Korean War Veterans Scholarship Program. Among students from 22 countries, I felt imposter syndrome. As we enjoyed a lavish meal, I wondered: What have I done to deserve such generosity from Korea?

For us, this scholarship is more than financial aid; it is a bridge to a past we never lived through yet still shapes our lives. My grandfather, a French Korean War veteran, rarely spoke of his time in Korea, like many others who remained silent about the horrors they endured. Now, nearly 75 years later, we study in a thriving Korea built on their sacrifices. This program reminds us that history lives through us, and if we fail to learn from it, history risks repeating itself.

Growing up in peaceful France, war felt like a distant concept, but for many, it remains a daily reality. As I sat among my peers, I reflected on those who lack access to education, a privilege I once took for granted. Education is more than an opportunity; it is a tool for recovery and change.

I did not learn about the Korean War until I received a letter from the Korean embassy. History classes in France never mentioned this bloody conflict, which caused 2 to 3 million casualties, despite France's UN involvement. No wonder this war is often referred to as the "Forgotten War." These scholarships exemplify soft power, preserving historical alliances and ensuring past sacrifices are remembered, transforming diplomacy from formal agreements into personal experiences.

History shows that ignorance fuels conflict. Limited exposure fosters fear of those who think or live differently. Economic crises further reinforce these biases, as people seek scapegoats. According to the paper "The Relationship Between Ethnic Threat and Economic Insecurity in Times of Economic Crisis: Analysis of European Social Survey Data" (2014) by Jack



©Mark Peterson / New York Magazine

▲ Protesters in Staten Island, New York, rally against migrants amid rising xenophobia and backlash to Mayor Eric Adams's shelter policies.

Billiet, Bart Meuleman, and Hans De Witte, researchers of Centre for Sociological Research, economic insecurity amplifies ethnic threats, fueling nationalism and exclusionary behaviors. This mindset leads to isolationism, rejection of international aid, and weakened global cooperation.

However, education can break this cycle. According to the paper "Revisiting the Role of Education in Attitudes Toward Immigration in Different Contexts in Europe" (2025) by Karen Umansky, Daniela Weber, and Wolfgang Lutz, researchers of International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, higher education correlates with more positive attitudes toward immigration. This suggests that exposure to diverse perspectives fosters inclusivity, reducing xenophobia and fostering global cooperation. Education does not just expand

knowledge; it shapes societal values, challenges stereotypes, and fosters acceptance.

The report on the *Key Findings from Analyses on the Relationship Between Education and Peace* (2024) conducted by the Global Partnership for Education and the Institute for Economics & Peace links education to stability. Countries with high peace levels have a 99 percent secondary school completion rate, while conflict-ridden nations average just 52 percent. Namibia, one of Africa's most peaceful nations, ranks sixth globally in education investment, proving that prioritizing education strengthens governance and prevents internal conflict, fostering long-term peace.

Beyond prevention, education plays a crucial role in rebuilding war-torn societies. Conflict disrupts education, yet restoring it is key to recovery. Schools provide normalcy and equip students with skills for reconciliation and peacebuilding. The World Economic Forum stresses that global cooperation in education is essential for long-term peace, not just short-term outcomes. Investing in education is not just a moral obligation but a strategic necessity for global security.



▲ South Sudanese children attend school in a refugee camp for displaced communities.

©Florence Bos / UNICEF

This is why international scholarships and aid programs, like those run by UNICEF and The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), are so essential. They provide education to refugee children and those displaced by war, offering hope and stability in regions torn apart by conflict. For example, the UNHCR Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative program has been essential in enabling thousands of refugees to access higher education, helping them build better futures and contribute to their communities since its creation 32 years ago. However, all of these collaborative efforts are increasingly under threat, not only from war but also from rising nationalist movements seeking to cut international aid. Indeed, political moves, such as the Trump administration's incoming plan to shutter the U.S. Department of Education, as widely reported by various serious U.S. media outlets, though key details remain unclear, and its attempt to freeze 90 percent of foreign aid in February 2025, have sent a strong message: some governments, even the world's sole superpower, view education and international aid as vulnerabilities rather than strengths.

At a time of rising global tensions, the need for educational diplomacy has never been greater. Cutting funding for international education programs isolates nations and deepens divisions. The best way to combat polarization is not through military force but through education, where person-to-person connections dismantle barriers. Cross-cultural understanding fosters cooperation, breaks ignorance and fear, and equips future leaders with critical thinking, cultural empathy, and global awareness, all of which are essential tools for peacebuilding. Scholarships, exchange programs, and international education initiatives build understanding between people from different backgrounds. They provide opportunities for dialogue instead of division. If we fail to uphold these educational bridges, we risk not only forgetting the past but also ignoring the suffering of those facing conflict today, ultimately repeating the mistakes that led to past wars.

As I sat in the banquet hall, surrounded by the other few lucky students like me, I was reminded of why we were there. Despite each of us carrying a different story, we are all connected by the same legacy of war and resilience, and our presence symbolized education's power as a bridge between past and future.

Education is more than a privilege; it is a responsibility, so if you think your voice does not matter, please reconsider. It does. Every vote and every political action influences how we fund and support education, how we build diplomatic ties, and how we prevent future conflicts. In a world increasingly divided, we have the power to build bridges, not barriers, and there is no stronger bridge than education. 🌉

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Letter to Myself

10 Years from Now

To. Park Se-eun



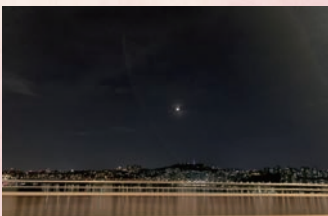
10 years is a long time, long enough for many things to change. Even so, in 10 years I hope I have not lost who I currently am. Over the years, I want my future self to look back on this message and once again recall the younger version of myself because the specific worries, resolutions, excitement, and even anxieties of the present are precious in that they can only be felt in my early twenties. No matter how tough things get, I hope to regard challenges as experiences rather than regrets and use them as motivation to move forward. Will I have grown stronger in 10 years? I hope that no matter how much time passes, I continue to hold on to my values and believe in myself.

To. Kim Si-yon



If I could ask my future self one question, it would be whether I have overcome my anxiety. One of the greatest challenges I face every day is how to manage my present anxiety. In the midst of the unchangeable past and the unknowable future, I constantly live with regret and anticipation, with anxiety as my companion. This anxiety, my long-standing adversary and friend, sometimes gnaws at me, but also propels me forward. Therefore, I would like to ask my future self if I am still managing to live well with this precarious anxiety.

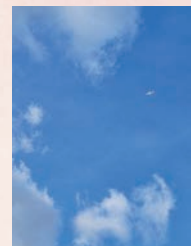
To. Kwon Yu-jin



What kind of career will I have in 10 years, what kind of work will I be doing, and how will I be spending my days? I hope I can find my work interesting and enjoyable. I also want to work with good colleagues to complete projects together, and in the process, fulfill my roles and responsibilities. I sincerely hope that I, Kwon Yu-jin, will become more capable so that I don't cause trouble to other team members due to my laziness or shortcomings, like I did during The Argus activities. I must strive to become a charismatic and capable person whom my team members want to work with.

To. Jang Ye-ryn

In 10 years, I believe I will be more mature, more responsible, and hopefully, more at peace with myself. I am curious if I will have found my stride in my career and whether I will be doing something that is truly meaningful to me. I wonder if I will have stayed true to my values and maintained the relationships that matter most. Wherever I am, I hope I can be proud of the person I have become, but even if I have not achieved something great or have not done everything I wished so far, I sincerely hope that I am happy.



To. Kim Yi-eun

I think I would ask my future self if I have found what I truly want to do and if I have confidence in both my career and myself. The next 10 years may feel vaguely long yet also short, and I feel both nervous and excited to find my path and see how much I can grow along the way. I also wonder if I will have grown into a more mature person, feeling less anxious about an uncertain future or having fewer regrets about the past. I would want to tell my future self to live life to the fullest, doing my best, so that my future self can look back on her 30s the way I now look back on my teenage years, and the way myself in the future will look back on my 20s. At the same time, I would remind myself to enjoy life and strive to live happily.



To. Kim Su-yeon

A year feels too short to change much, but for some reason, I arrogantly think I will be a much better person in 10 years. Then again, perhaps I will be the same old me. I am currently chasing all the usual things from career goals to financial success, but I want my future self, 10 years from now, to know that even if I do not quite measure up to these expectations, I will still love myself.



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