

**Anti-Americanism in Korea:
Closing Perception Gaps**

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Anti-Americanism in Korea: Closing Perception Gaps

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Foreword

by Ralph A. Cossa

A great deal of attention has been focused since the fall of 2002 on what has been described as a “rising tide of anti-Americanism” among the people, and some would also say the new government, of the Republic of Korea. The lingering image in the mind of many Americans is that of ROK protestors joyously burning American flags as crowds of South Korean demonstrators cheered them on. Many U.S. Korea specialists have warned about this phenomenon and cautioned about its potential threat to the fabric of the U.S.-ROK alliance. Conferences have also been held to discuss what the U.S. can do to improve its image in the ROK and stem this anti-American trend.

What has been largely neglected, however, has been a companion effort to explain to the American people that the vast majority of the South Korean people want the U.S.-ROK alliance to continue and still recognize the important contribution the American security commitment has made, not only to the ROK’s past security, but to the current and future prospects for peace and stability on the Peninsula. Few voices have been raised in the United States to effectively counter the outcry by (largely uninformed) American politicians and the general public who are now asking, “Why should our troops be there if they are not wanted?” Recent comments by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld about U.S. Korea-based forces being seen as “intrusive” and perhaps no longer necessary, while taken somewhat out of context, have nonetheless fed the impression that U.S. forces are no longer welcome on the Peninsula and that their presence may be counterproductive to efforts to improve currently strained relations between Seoul and Washington. This could undermine U.S. public support for an alliance that remains vital to the national security interests of both the Republic of Korea and the United States.

In order to increase public awareness of the broad range of Korean attitudes toward the U.S. and both the current and historical context in which these attitudes have evolved, the Pacific Forum CSIS, with support from The Korea Foundation, held a series of panel discussion sessions in four U.S. cities aimed at better informing the American public about the depth and scope of “anti-Americanism” in the ROK and the role and continued value of Korea-based U.S. military forces on the divided Peninsula. Meetings were held in San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, and Washington DC, as well as in Honolulu, to increase direct American exposure to the views of informed and concerned Korean and American specialists.

The chapters that follow are derived from the remarks presented at these meetings by prominent Korea participants who held diverse, but largely complementary, views as

to the nature and seriousness of the anti-American phenomenon in Korea. All share the Pacific Forum's commitment to promoting better understanding between the peoples of Korea and the United States and a belief that the U.S.-ROK alliance has served and will continue to serve both countries' national security interests.

There are, in my view, two tendencies in the U.S. regarding the subject of anti-Americanism in Korea that need to be addressed. One is the tendency by many in the media and among the general public to overreact to the sound bites and visual images of anti-Americanism. The second is to dismiss the protests as "business as usual," given that periods of anti-Americanism have flared up in Korea in the past and have, in fact, been much worse at times than they are today. I believe that the only thing worse than overreacting to this phenomenon would be to ignore it completely in hopes that it would somehow go away. Given the critical role that public opinion plays in determining national policies within vibrant democracies – which the U.S. and ROK clearly are – we ignore such sentiments only at our peril.

But, to address both legitimate and perceived symptoms and concerns, we must first understand the root causes and underlying factors behind anti-American feelings in Korea, both today and historically. We must also better understand the implications if such factors are not adequately or successfully addressed. The following articles undertake this task.

To this effort, I would add the following observations. First, there are many forms and varieties of "anti-Americanism" prevalent in the Republic of Korea today, some serious and deep-seated and some more fleeting or temporary, driven more by issues or events than ideology or anti-U.S. sentiments *per se*. Ambassador Lee In-Ho describes many of the historic and cultural roots of anti-Americanism in chapter one, while also noting the generational as well as ideological divides that can feed hostile attitudes and distrust.

There is, of course, a small group of individuals that is genuinely and perhaps irrevocably antagonistic toward the U.S. and truly wants U.S. forces to depart the Peninsula, sooner rather than later. There are some who want Seoul to chart a course that is completely independent from that of Washington. Fortunately, this is a small element of the entire population. There are many groups and individuals, however, who want to see fewer U.S. forces and bases – a smaller footprint – and likewise want to see a greater degree of ROK control over its own destiny and the role (and behavior) of U.S. forces on the Peninsula. This is only natural and understandable as the ROK comes more fully of age as a relatively new but rapidly maturing democracy.

Others, as Professor Hahm Chaibong points out in chapter two, may be supportive of America and Americans in general but remain unhappy with the current U.S. administration's foreign policy pronouncements or its perceived "unilateralist" tendencies. Some are also disillusioned that Washington's actions do not always live up to America's stated values and principles. Still others may be neutral or even generally positive about America but still react negatively and emotionally when incidents occur, such as the accidental killing of two schoolgirls by an American military vehicle while on maneuvers (further inflamed by the "not guilty" verdict emanating from the trial of the two sergeants involved in the tragic mishap).

Koreans today are justifiably proud of their accomplishments and the great strides forward their nation has taken both politically and economically. Nationalism can sometimes be mistaken for anti-Americanism or the two can become intertwined with one another when incidents or perceived slights (real or imagined) occur. But our two nations today continue to have more forces unifying each other than pulling each other apart: common values, shared principles, and a mutual commitment to peace and security on the peninsula and throughout East Asia and beyond, along with the mutual realization that democracy and free markets provide the best path forward to achieve mutual goals.

The ROK-U.S. alliance, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, has been aimed, first and foremost, at defending ROK security and territorial integrity, while also providing the positive security environment or "greenhouse" within which ROK democracy has evolved and flourished and the ROK's economy has prospered and grown. The presentations by Ambassadors Kim Kyong-Won and Chung Chong-Wook, in chapters four and five respectively, provide two complementary, insightful perspectives from individuals who were instrumental in nurturing the alliance through earlier equally (or more) troubling times. When one views future ROK security options, both as a currently divided nation and eventually after (hopefully [peaceful] reunification), the logic for a continued close security relationship remains persuasive, as long as the peoples of Korea and the United States continue to share common goals and values and respect one another's roles and accomplishments.

This is why the joint agreement, during President Roh's May 2003 summit meeting with President Bush in Washington, to "work out plans to consolidate U.S. forces around key hubs and to relocate the Yongsan garrison at an early date" represents a breakthrough of sorts, as does the shared view "that the relocation of U.S. bases north of the Han River should be pursued." The relocation should "[take] careful account of the political, economic and security situation on the peninsula and in Northeast Asia,"

however. In other words, Washington and Seoul should start planning to reduce the “intrusive” U.S. military footprint on the Peninsula, but should proceed carefully and deliberately so as not to disturb the delicate strategic balance on the Peninsula or play to the worst fears and suspicions of the Korean people.

This addresses the concern – in my view unfounded – in South Korea that the U.S. is somehow planning to immediately move its forces to the south of Seoul in order to move them out of harm’s way. Once this “tripwire” is removed, one theory goes, Washington will then feel more comfortable about attacking North Korea. This ignores the fact that the real tripwire is the tens of billions of dollars of American direct foreign investment in South Korea and the tens of thousands of American businessman and tourists (not to mention military families) who, on any given day, are located within artillery range of North Korea, whose missiles could reach American forces regardless of where they are based in the ROK (or even in Japan, for that matter).

The reality is that the consolidation of U.S. forces in South Korea is long overdue and the plan to move out of Yongsan (in the middle of Seoul’s most choice real estate) has been contemplated (if not demanded) for over a decade. Senior defense officials tell me that what the Pentagon wants is a plan outlining the consolidation approved and in place by the 50th anniversary celebrations in October 2003, a plan that will then be implemented, “taking careful account of the political, economic and security situation on the peninsula,” over the next three to five years. Its aim is not to allow a free shot at North Korea, but to enhance the viability of the alliance – both sides willing – for another fifty years.

I believe all five authors share with me the common belief that anti-American sentiments in the Republic of Korea do not seriously threaten the fabric or foundation of the ROK-U.S. alliance today, but could do so over time if left unattended. Better understanding of this phenomenon is essential to addressing the issues and concerns (both real and perceived) that lie at its base. Hopefully this volume will contribute to this task.

In the meantime, greater effort is required by ROK leaders to explain both the importance of the alliance and the troop presence that underwrites its credibility to the people of South Korea. It is heartening to see President Roh Moo-hyun doing exactly this, especially during and after his successful summit meeting with President Bush in Washington. It is also incumbent on U.S. leaders to demonstrate greater sensitivity toward ROK feelings and perceptions in pursuing and explaining foreign policy decisions to the American people and to its friends and allies around the world.

Chapter 1
Historic and Cultural Roots of
Anti-Americanism in Korea
by Lee In-ho

The goal of the Korea Foundation is to make Korea better known and understood in the world. I am greatly privileged to have this opportunity to present my views on a topic of vital concern to Americans and Koreans alike. Let me, however, mention at the outset that I am addressing you neither as a diplomat nor as a Korea expert, but simply as a Korean of the older generation who is tremendously concerned that our 50 year old alliance may have been placed in jeopardy, not because of any real change in the substantive basis of our relationship but because of an unfortunate perception gap in regards to the significance of the role America has played in shaping the historical fate of the Korean people.

The developments in Korea since last autumn and the media's projection of the events taking place in South Korea around the time of the presidential campaign had every reason to perplex and anger the American public and policymakers in Washington. It was a consternation and concern shared by a large majority of Koreans as well. Korea had been thought of as the staunchest, if not the strongest, U.S. ally, and a shining example of a success story written with the aid of American sacrifice, assistance, and continuing support. Now, after the horror of September 11, 2001, when Americans were feeling vulnerable and sensitive to criticism as never before, they were suddenly faced with the sight of angry Korean demonstrators shouting anti-American slogans days on end, defacing the American flag, and eventually helping to catapult into the presidency a man who was reputed to harbor anti-American sentiments.

How could this be? Are the Koreans, whether from the North or the South, of the same breed of irrational and cantankerous people? Is it time to wash America's hands of this ungrateful and ungracious erstwhile ally?

It would be foolhardy for anyone to undertake to answer all these highly understandable questions. But one can try to sort out what may be a passing phenomenon blown out of proportion by the very nature of selective media coverage, and what may represent a more enduring development specific to Korea. As President Roh Moo-hyun candidly admitted during his recent visit to the U.S., much of what was taken to be anti-Americanism was only an inverted expression of admiration for America and its values,

and disappointment at not having enough of what this country had to offer. The unfortunate coincidence of the presidential campaign peaking soon after the trial and acquittal of the two American soldiers involved in the accidental death of two young Korean school girls produced a circumstance ideal for exploitation not only by all of the major presidential candidates but, in my opinion, also by a small number of genuine ill-wishers. The lop-sidedness and sensationalism characteristic of international media coverage did not help the situation. Much of what was interpreted as anti-Americanism was little more than a vocal demand for revision of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) or rejection or criticism of a particular line of policy being pursued by the Bush administration in regards to the two Koreas issue.

Yet it would be foolish not to acknowledge that there is a more serious and enduring undercurrent of potential anti-Americanism deeply embedded in Korea's recent history. It is to this aspect of the issue that I would like to address myself.

In order to understand the emotional volatility of the political debate in Korea and the ambivalent feeling a vast majority of Koreans seem to have towards the United States these days, one has to turn the clock back at least a century. The collapse of the Sino-centric universe and the subsequent loss of national independence to Japan in 1910 left Korea in an intellectual vacuum. While the old elite, the literati class, lost political and moral ground to stand upon and went into exile, internally or across the border to China or Russia, the new elite being forged by the Japanese educational system found itself morally tainted. The single most important event to galvanize the energy and imagination of patriotically-minded Koreans was the Russian revolution of 1917. As Lenin espoused the national liberation movement as a cause consonant with anti-feudal class struggle in colonialized countries such as Korea, Soviet Russia became both a refuge and a beacon of light for the nationalistically-minded intelligentsia being forged in Korea.

The more repressive the Japanese rule became, the stronger grew the appeal of Marxism-Leninism. When the Japanese rule in Korea ended in August, 1945 with the arrival of the American forces to the south of the 38th parallel and Soviets to the north of it, there were as many, if not more, pro-Marxist elements in the South as there were anti-Stalinists in the North. When the totally artificial line of demarcation drawn across the peninsula showed signs of freezing into permanent division, the joy and sense of gratitude felt towards the forces of liberation quickly soured to bitterness and resentment. The Korean nation was one in opposing the partition. No matter who came to power in the new governments separately instituted in Seoul and Pyongyang in 1948, that person

was bound to be accused of having sold out the other half of the country for the sake of power.

The young governments both in Pyongyang and Seoul had to embark upon their arduous journey of nation-building with built-in opposition forces which could be crushed or driven underground only with the tacit support of the two protagonists of the escalating Cold War, the U.S. and Soviet Union. (The massive revolts on the island of Cheju and the Yosu-Shoonchon area, and their brutal repression were simply the most dramatic instances of the civil strife which threatened to tear apart the fragile political fabric of the young republic.) Profession of ideological loyalty became a necessity for political, and sometimes even, physical survival. The seeds of the Korean tragedy were thus sown long before the actual outbreak of the Korean War when the nation as a whole was denied not only the freedom of expression but also the freedom of conscience as well.

The moral dimension of the tragedy wrought by the division and the war is a topic which is only beginning to be explored in earnest. For many who had harbored a lingering hope for quick reunification, the war was both a rude awakening and sobering experience. For the first time for South Koreans, anti-Communism became a creed born out of one's own experience, as had been the case earlier only with the refugees from the North. There was an immense outpouring of gratitude and appreciation for the sacrifice made and aid given by the U.N. forces led by America. But there were also countless others who had experienced the war as a national calamity and personal tragedy for which the ROK army and the Americans were perceived as the main authors. By rough estimate, ten million people, or about one-third of the total number of households, were affected by loss of or injury to one or more family members, not to speak of the material damage.

The carnage of the fratricidal conflict and political retributions which followed could have come from either or both sides. In many localities, almost the entire family or clan, often the most prominent ones in the region, were wiped out on the grounds of harboring sympathy for Communism.

The hostilities ended formally with the signing of the armistice in 1953 but restoration of peace is a long and arduous process which has yet to be worked out. Those citizens of the Republic of Korea who had suffered clearly at the hands of the Communists were encouraged to speak out and have their wounds redressed at least politically and psychologically. But countless others who had witnessed their families being torn apart could not even admit that they had members missing for fear they might

be suspected of harboring pro-Communist sympathy. The principle of joint family responsibility in cases of ideological crime had been written into our dreaded national security law. It was only in the late eighties that families felt safe enough to politically mount an open search for the missing members and, in many instances, found that the separated members had been living under the same flag all along. In many cases, grandchildren were not told who their grandfather was, for the sake of their own safety and security. This was in a country where filial piety was the cardinal virtue around which the entire code of ethical behavior was constructed.

For the generation of Koreans now sixty and over, emerging from the ruins of the war, economic survival and defense against possible recursion of aggression from the North were the overriding concerns. An overwhelming majority, including some erstwhile Communist sympathizers, felt enormously grateful for the generous American and U.N. aid for economic reconstruction and for the security reassurance provided by the continued presence of U.S. forces. The American presence was welcomed for a more political reason as well. Those who were as concerned about the ever-present threat of anti-Communist militarism as with threat from the North regarded U.S. tutelage helpful to the cause of liberal democracy in Korea. In a number of instances, the life and personal security of prominent political dissidents were secured thanks to timely intervention from the United States.

The Korean perception of the U.S. role in Korea began to change after the military coup d'état of 1961 ushered in a 33-year period of rule by generals turned presidents. As President Park Chung-Hee tried to supplant the fragile sapling of liberal democracy with his own brand of democracy modeled on the militant nationalism of pre-war Japan, anti-American notes began to creep into Korea's political and intellectual life from two opposite directions. On the one hand, the official ideology of Yu-shin, zealously disseminated through the official school curriculum, encouraged a more critical assessment of the American role and influence in Korea. Great emphasis was placed on the need to take pride in national achievements and to develop a political system consonant with Korea's own cultural tradition. There was an ominous parallel between the notion of Korean-style democracy expounded by President Park Chung-Hee and the Juche ideology propagated by North Korean leader Kim Il-sung.

A far more serious and ideologically oriented anti-Americanism began to be propagated by dissident groups critical both of the anti-democratic and anti-Communist governments run by generals turned presidents and of America's seeming endorsement of such regimes. Through the seventies, however, not even dissident groups extremely critical of the government could openly profess pro-North sympathies. But they began

slowly to raise the issue of national division as the root cause of all of Korea's problems. The repressive political regimes found their *raison d'être* in perpetuating the state of national division and the anti-Communist ideology was both a by-product of the tragic national division and a factor perpetuating it, they argued. In their historical analysis, the role of the United States in shaping the historical destiny of the Korean nation was anything but benign. Korea had fallen victim to America's Cold War politics.

The dissident groups were still somewhat hesitant to adopt an openly anti-American stance as long as they believed that their struggle for democracy had American sympathy and potential support. But the Kwangju uprising of 1980 and its bloody aftermath changed all that. America's reluctance to get involved in what was seen as a domestic situation was interpreted as tacit complicity in the savage suppression of the insurgents who at the time were labeled as rebels but have since been accorded honored status as martyrs for democracy.

The repressed anger and frustration of all those who had suffered and were still suffering the consequences of the political and ideological bifurcation of an extremely homogeneous nation had by now been hardened into a mindset ready to accept any theory which would provide a clear-cut explanation for their hardship and neatly singled out a culprit. Communist literature was still officially banned together with even standard Western accounts of the Soviet system, but Xerox machines were ubiquitous. Korea's universities saw the brightest students turning to Marxism and Leninism in their many variations at a time when Soviet Communism was exhibiting clear signs of crumbling and China was well on its way toward modernization.

The older Koreans who had personally experienced the Korea War, for all their suffering and suppressed anger, at least acknowledged the fact that the circumstances in and around Korea at the time of the initial division and the open military conflict were far from simple. They felt lucky to have landed in the South, rather than the North. But the post-war generation, living under political and material circumstances far removed from what the earlier generation had had to put up with, and feeding on the revisionist interpretation of Korea's modern history (post-1945) dished out by pro-Marxists circles operating underground, are much more categorical in their judgment and condemnation of those who had been responsible for the division of Korea. The Russians were just as, if not more, responsible for the division and the Korean War as the Americans were. But the Russians were not around to take the blame. The fact that the country had been liberated from the Japanese rule thanks to the American victory in the Pacific War was conveniently neglected as the U.S. contribution in the reconstruction and development of Korea's devastated economy.

Reunification of the country has been a dream and ideal to which no Korean could fail to subscribe. Yet official talks about reunification remained rather hollow even after the beginning of the Red Cross Talks in 1972. As the breakdown of contact and communication between the two parts of Korea remained total for over half a century, South Koreans had little more real knowledge about North Korea than average newspaper readers in the West. Anti-Communism remained South Korea's official ideology even after the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in 1990. In the North Korean nuclear crisis of 1994, it was South Korea which took a harder line than the United States. (Indeed even after the historic meeting of President Kim Dae-jung and Chairman Kim Jong-il, North Korea is still defined as a hostile entity in South Korea's National Security Law.)

Yet underneath the surface, Korean perceptions of the issue of national division and the role of the United States in shaping the destiny of the Korean people were undergoing a fundamental transformation and diversification. While the generation of people who had experienced Communist rule firsthand are dying out together with their strong anti-Communist conviction, the revisionist interpretation of Korea's modern history propagated by the dissident circles in the politically repressive 70's and 80's have had enough time to spread and seep through to the level of high school textbooks. Now, thanks to Korea's success in political democratization, the all-powerful National Teacher's Union (dominated by leftist radicals) can openly indulge in anti-American propaganda in the name of education for peace and national reunification. The tunnel-visioned anti-Communist nationalist ideology which the government tried to inculcate since the 1970's seems to be backfiring in the form of blind pro-Juche nationalism.

Not all of the changes taking place in Korea's perception of Korean-American relations need to be seen in the negative light. The most important single explanation for the changed view Koreans now have in regards to the issue of national reunification and the role of the United States in shaping Korea's destiny has to be found in the enormous success South Korea has achieved in economic development and political democratization. In regards to life in North Korea, the younger generation is not much better informed than its elders. But with a sense of pride and self-confidence characteristic of the post-Cold War college generation, today's young people do not share the older generation's sense of caution and hostility towards the North. North Korea, with its scale of economy 1/50th that of South Korea's, is seen more as an object to be pitied and helped rather than feared and ridiculed. President Kim Dae-jung found a soil receptive to the Sunshine Policy even before he went to Pyongyang. But the euphoria over the South-North summit meeting and five years of the engagement policy helped to deepen the illusion that North Korea no longer represented a threat to South Korea's

security unless provoked by a hard-line American policy. In this connection, President Bush's reference to North Korea as an axis of evil was taken to be a direct challenge to South Korea's determination to find a peaceful accommodation with its less fortunate and erratic neighbor in the North.)

Increasingly frequent incidents of trade friction with the United States and jurisdictional disputes involving American military personnel are also creating an atmosphere critical of American conduct in world affairs. Concern over single-power dominance in world affairs and revulsion at what is viewed as America's arrogance and lack of sensitivity to the right and plight of other nations is not unique to Korea but it is an important factor contributing to the illusion that the threat to Korea's national security no longer comes from the North but from the direction of the United States. There is a remarkable lack of sensitivity towards the changed psychological atmosphere pervading the U.S. since September 11, 2001.

To the older generation of Koreans, like myself, the combination of cocky self-confidence and tunnel vision exhibited by the new, spoiled generation of Koreans appear quite worrisome. To a certain extent, the enormous perception gap which separates the younger from the older generation, and in particular the manifestation of unwarranted anti-American sentiment, is a consequence of the failure of our educational system to provide clear factual knowledge concerning the real situation in North Korea. But on the other hand, the perception gap can be seen as a reflection of the success we have achieved in democratizing our political system and developing enough self-confidence to let out passions and sentiments which had long been repressed.

With the election of a new president representing a new generation and a new mentality, Korea is going through a historic process of political self-cleansing and moral soul-searching in which reexamination of our relationship with the unfortunate neighbor and brother to the north is an intrinsic part. As all forms of repressed energy and grievances, boosted by internet connectivity, gush out to the surface all at once, brilliant ideas and dazzling creativity get mixed up with dangerously wishful thinking. There is not one area in South Korea's national life these days where consensus can be easily obtained. The call for a readjustment in the way in which we interpret our modern history and conduct our international relations is only a natural part of this process which contain aspects of the Cultural Revolution on the one hand and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on the other.

Manifestation of a certain degree of anti- Americanism has to be seen as a part of this essentially positive process of self-examination and should not obscure the fact that the real foundation upon which the friendship and alliance between the ROK and U.S. is built – the strong economic and cultural ties as well as joint security concerns – remain and should remain as solid as ever. The successful first visit of Korea’s new president to Washington in May 2003 was most reassuring. This is a moment in Korea’s history when reaffirmation of shared values and old friendships based upon freshened sensitivity to each other’s concerns and needs is of critical importance in determining the direction in which history may lead us.

Chapter 2

Anti-Americanism, Korean Style

by Hahm Chaibong

Introduction

In recent years, the relationship between the U.S. and South Korea seems to have taken a turn for the worse. The alliance, under-girded by a mutual defense treaty of 50 years' standing, has served as the foundation for security and prosperity in the region. It was an alliance forged in a bitter war fought against a common enemy and one that oversaw the transformation of South Korea from one of the poorest nations in the world to one of its most dynamic economies. It also oversaw South Korea's transition from authoritarian politics to full-fledged democracy. All throughout, the military alliance defended South Korea from the belligerent and erratic neighbor to its north. The alliance stands as a shining example of how much an alliance can contribute to bringing about both economic and political development that serves the interests of all involved. It is no wonder that the alliance is often mentioned by members of the current U.S. administration of what can be achieved in places like Iraq.

However, despite all this success the alliance is currently facing one of the toughest challenges yet. The end of the Cold War, the economic collapse of North Korea, and the economic development and democratization of South Korea, all of which should have been cause for celebrating the success and endurance of the bilateral relationship has instead become the backdrop for the expression of anti-American sentiment among a growing segment of the South Korean public. Why is this the case? How is it that in the wake of such resounding success the alliance that made it all possible seems to be in trouble as never before? Why are South Koreans who seem to have benefited the most from the bilateral relations so critical of the alliance? Are those who express anti-American sentiments simply being ungrateful?

In the following I will elaborate on the short, mid, and long-term causes of the current surge of anti-American sentiment in South Korea. By way of putting things into perspective, however, I start by elaborating factors that can and will serve the alliance in the long run despite recent difficulties. These are long-term forces that have been building over the past decades and have been bringing increasing convergence between the institutions and values of the two countries. Any discussion of anti-Americanism, especially the sensationalist or alarmist kind, must be premised on an understanding of such long-term trends and factors.

American Values and Institutions and South Korea

In 2002, South Korea sent 49,046 students to American colleges and universities.¹ There were only two other countries that sent more, India and China, which sent 66,836 and 63,211 students, respectively.² Given the size of South Korea's population (45 million) relative to that of India (1 billion) and China (1.3 billion), this is an astonishing figure. Japan, which ranked fourth with 46,810, has a population three times that of South Korea. Koreans coming to the U.S. to study are not restricted to college and university students. According to South Korea's Ministry of Education and Human Resources, 5,925 elementary, middle, and high school students came to the U.S. to study in 2001.³ This was an increase of 100% from the year before.⁴ Indeed, since 1998, there has been a two-fold increase in the number of elementary and middle school aged children abandoning the local school system to come to the U.S. Although figures are scarce, it is no secret that boarding schools in the U.S. are being inundated with applicants from South Korea in recent years.

Interestingly enough, South Korea's Ministry of Education says that more than 90% of the elementary and middle school students are studying in the U.S. "illegally." Because the South Korean law does not allow elementary and middle school children to go abroad to study except those who accompany their parents whose job postings take them to foreign countries, many who send their children anyway are in effect breaking the law (as of 2001, it has become legal for high school students to go abroad to study.) An ever-increasing number of South Korean parents are breaking the law to have their children receive American education.

One of the consequences of the increasing number of school aged children coming to the U.S. is the "lonely goose husband/wife" phenomenon. This term refers to those Korean fathers/mothers who work and live alone in South Korea while having sent their wives/husbands and children to the U.S. for the sake of children's education. This has become a major social issue, arousing debates on everything from educational reform to the meaning and role of family and parenthood. The financial consequences have been dire as well. According to the Bank of Korea, South Koreans sent over U.S. \$635 million overseas in the first half of 2002 alone, most of it to the U.S., to pay for tuition and related expenses.⁵

¹ Institute of International Education, <http://www.opendoors.iienetwork.org/>

² *Ibid.*

³ *Chosun Ilbo* (Chosun Daily), September 12, 2002.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

Another aspect of the South Korean society with important implications for the future of the South Korea-U.S. relationship is the rise of Christianity. More than 35% of South Koreans who profess to have a religion are Protestant Christians while another 7% are Roman Catholics. Given that Christianity was only introduced a century ago, the growth of the Church in Korea is astonishing. In terms of political and economic influence, Christianity far outweighs Buddhism and Confucianism, religions that have been around for a millennium and half-a-millennium, respectively. Leading universities such as Yonsei with the oldest western-style medical school in Korea, as well as Ewha Women's University, the largest women's university in the world with some 40,000 students, were both founded by Christian missionaries. There are innumerable other colleges, high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools that were either founded by missionaries or were founded by Korean Christians with the explicit purpose of providing "Christian education."

The vast majority of the Christian missionaries were Americans and the link between Korean and American Christian churches and organizations are innumerable. Indeed, the very success of Christianity in South Korea in stark contrast to its fate in other East Asian countries has been due, at least in part, to its close association with the United States. The first Koreans to convert to Christianity such as Yoon Chi-ho, Yi Sangjae, Suh Jaepil (Phillip Jaehison), and Rhee Syngman, did so because they thought of it as an "American" religion.⁶ That many American missionaries worked and sacrificed for the cause of Korean independence during Japanese occupation also left a lasting impression in the Koreans' mind. It is no accident that "pro-American" rallies staged in Seoul in recent months in opposition to the "anti-American" ones are being organized by Christians and church related groups. The close association between Christianity and America in the minds of Koreans continues to this day.

In terms of political and economic institutions and the values that support them, South Korea and the U.S. are growing closer than ever before. South Korea made a successful transition to democracy in 1987. Since then, its democracy has been consolidated through numerous reforms and three consecutive open, fair, and hotly contested presidential elections. 1992, the first civilian in thirty years was elected President while in 1997, the opposition candidate, in the person of Mr. Kim Dae-jung, won the election. In 2000, President Kim won the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his struggle for human rights and democracy during the long years of authoritarian rule in South Korea. He has championed "universal values" or human rights and democracy in

⁶ For an excellent account of the history and role of Protestant Christianity in Korea, see Kenneth M. Wells, *New God, New Nation: Protestants and Self-Reconstruction Nationalism in Korea, 1896-1937* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991.)

debates against other Asian leaders such as Lee Kuan-yew of Singapore and Mahathir of Malaysia who argued for “Asian Values.” In late 2002, Mr. Roh Mu-hyun, who became his party’s presidential candidate through the first ever American-style primaries, was elected president of the Republic. Today, South Korea has one of the most vibrant and consolidated democracies in the world, let alone East Asia. It has come the farthest and the quickest in terms of accepting and transplanting American-style liberal democracy than almost anyone else, outside the mature democracies of the West.

In recent years, South Korea’s economic system has also been undergoing reforms to better resemble the free-market economy of the U.S. Until 1997, South Korean economy was the best example of the “East Asian Economic Model.” However, after the Asian Financial Crisis hit, South Korea undertook a quick and fundamental reform of its economy along free-market principles. As a result, now South Korean economy is one of the most “open” economies in East Asia, surpassing Japan and Taiwan in terms of the thoroughness of its pro-market reforms. Succeeding democratically elected governments have undertaken drastic measures against the conglomerates, or the *chaebols*, who grew and prospered under the old system that guaranteed them privileged access to credit and government protection. The governments have also been battling the powerful labor unions to guarantee a more flexible labor market. Despite the different political interests, there seems to be a national consensus on reforming the economy along more free-market lines.

All these facts underscore the extent to which South Koreans and Americans share fundamental values, institutions, and outlook, and increasingly so. South Koreans think that the American style education is the best there is. There is a vast pool of goodwill towards Protestant Christianity, the “American Religion,” the fastest growing religion in South Korea. If one were to ask the average South Korean about the ideal political values and institutions, more often than not, he or she will say “human rights” and “liberal democracy,” recognizably American ones. There is a clear consensus on the part of the government and the public that in order for it to continue to grow South Korea’s economy has to be reformed to conform more closely to the American-style free-market economy. Why then, are we currently witnessing an alarming rise in “anti-American” sentiment in South Korea? What are the factors that lead South Koreans to become anti-American despite the overwhelmingly “pro-American” direction in which their society seems to be heading?

Short-Term Causes of Anti-Americanism

In 1995, South Korea's per capita income topped US \$10,000. It was a moment for celebration. Given that only 30 years ago South Korea was one of the poorest nations on earth with a per capita GNP of US \$81 (1964), there was just cause for celebration. Indeed, South Korea had beaten the odds. Before achieving such prosperity, it had to overcome the legacies of colonialism, a devastating war with North Korea, two coup d'états, and dictatorship in addition to fundamental shifts in the international political and economic order such as the Cold War, Oil Crisis, the end of the Cold War, and Globalization. However, the celebration was short-lived. Scarcely two years into the vaunted "*manbul shidae*" ("Era of 10,000 dollars"), South Korea was hit with a financial crisis that brought the nation to the brink of bankruptcy. When foreign investors, alarmed by the economic crisis which first hit Thailand which then swept through Malaysia and Indonesia in quick succession lost confidence in the South Korean economy and decided to pull their investments, South Korea suddenly came to face the very real possibility of default. Humiliated, South Korea turned to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for emergency bridge loan that came with a steep price tag, "IMF conditionality." South Koreans called this the "Day of National Humiliation," a reference to the day back in 1910 when Korea lost its independence to Imperial Japan. Indeed, for the next three years, South Korea lost its economic independence as its' economic policy had to be approved by the IMF.

However, true to form, South Koreans rallied behind President Kim Dae-jung, who assumed office in 1998, at the depth of the economic crisis, to rebuild the economy in an astonishingly short time. In 1999, South Korean economy grew at 11%. By 2002, South Korea had the fourth largest foreign reserves in the world and had paid back the IMF loan years ahead of schedule. By the time World Cup 2002, co-hosted by South Korea and Japan began in June 2002, South Koreans were once again celebrating. When the national team reached the quarterfinals, after having beaten the "great powers" in the world of soccer, Portugal, Spain, and Italy, in succession, the improbable success provided the occasion for an outburst of national pride and solidarity never before witnessed. It was the first time in anyone's memory that Koreans came together, not to oppose someone or something, be it a dictator, the communists, or insensitive remarks made by right wing Japanese politicians, but to simply celebrate Korea and being Korean. That the rallying cry for the festive occasions was "Tae-han-minkuk," the official name of the country, otherwise known as South Korea, was something new and exhilarating.

The youths who jammed all the major plazas and thoroughfares of all the major cities in the country to root for the national team seemed uninhibited by the memory of subjugation by foreign powers, authoritarianism, poverty, and war, which weighed down so heavy on their parents' and grandparents' shoulders. These rambunctious, carefree, and loud young men and women had grown-up amidst increasing affluence, were well traveled, internet-savvy, and proud. How long has it been, in recent memory, that a Korean felt so proud of his/her identity without effort, intellectual or emotional? In the so-called "Red-Devils," the hoards of cheering fans all wearing identical red shirts, South Korea had finally come of age. Or so it seemed in the Summer of 2002.

Even at the height of the soccer festivities, however, news began to trickle out that two fourteen year old middle school girls were killed when an American armored personnel carrier on exercise ran over them as they were coming home from school. In fact, the accident occurred on the very day of South Korean soccer team's greatest triumph, the day it beat Italy. It was also quickly reported that under what was called the "Status of Forces Agreement" (SOFA) between the United States Forces Korea (USFK) and South Korea, the Korean prosecutor's office and the police had no jurisdiction whatsoever over the soldiers or any facet of the case.

When the U.S. Military Tribunal acquitted the soldiers of all charges, the Korean public was outraged. The same crowd that came out to celebrate being Korean now came out to express anger and frustration that came from a sense of utter helplessness. It turned out that being Korean really did not amount to much, after all. When two innocent young girls lose their lives and no one takes responsibility for it, the reason being that the Korean justice system has no say over the conduct of American soldiers stationed in Korea, it brought back to everyone, including those of the new generation, the old sense of futility and helplessness that Koreans had become so used to, but thought to have overcome recently. That many, including both Koreans and Americans, tried to explain the fine points of American legal system which emphasized the "intent," rather than the result, or that South Korean troops serving in Afghanistan and Tajikistan as part of peace-keeping operations serve under SOFA agreements very similar to the one signed between South Korea and the U.S. did not help much. That President Bush took a while to "apologize" for the incident, first saying that it was not customary for U.S. presidents to make public apologies when, in fact, no crime was committed by Americans, and then to convey his apologies only indirectly through the U.S. ambassador to Korea, did not help matters either. When the apology did finally come, it was already too late to make much difference.

Mid-term Causes

South Korea is a country originally founded upon the twin ideologies of nationalism and anti-communism. Having suffered 35 years of harsh colonial rule at the hands of the Japanese, nationalism became almost second nature to Koreans. At the same time the national division that immediately followed liberation and the ensuing ideological standoff between the two Koreas instilled in South Koreans a strong sense of anti-communism. While nationalism was an ideology deeply suspicious of any foreign intervention in Korean affairs, anti-communism pulled South Korea in a very different direction. Anti-communism was an ideology that necessitated and justified South Korea's close relationship with and heavy reliance on the U.S. To put it another way, the only ideology that could justify such dependence on a foreign power in the face of strong and prevalent nationalist sentiment was anti-communism. The Cold War international regime rapidly being constructed worldwide with the Korean Peninsula as one of its "hotspots" provided the international context and dynamic to the ideological division between the two Koreas. The Korean War cemented South Korea's anti-communist ideology as it showed the brutality of the North Korean communist regime that would not hesitate to wage a bloody war against fellow Koreans in the name of ideology.

The anti-communist ideology made South Korea and the U.S. natural allies. However, it came into clash with nationalism. First, in the immediate aftermath of independence, there was widespread call for the punishment of Koreans who collaborated with the Japanese and prospered under the colonial rule. However, as was the case in post-war Germany, the American occupying forces and the conservative right-wing government that was established in 1948, employed the services of many of the pro-Japanese collaborators in the fight against communist and leftist elements within South Korea. Hence, to the chagrin and dismay of many, many of those who were trained by and enlisted in the Japanese police and army were rehabilitated, drafted, as they were, in the war against communism. The failure to punish the "pro-Japanese collaborators" has haunted the South Korean political and historical conscience ever since.

The anti-communist ideology also justified the normalization of relations between South Korea and Japan, much sooner than most Koreans had hoped and anticipated. The Cold War gave South Koreans a new and more threatening enemy in North Korean communists while Japan, its former colonial master became a major partner in its struggle against communism. Under the U.S. umbrella, both nuclear and ideological, Korean and Japan together became the bulwark against communism in East Asia. In this new situation, South Korea was quickly forced to make amends with Japan. With the pressure from the U.S. and pressed by the urgent need for economic aid President Park Chung-hee

restored full diplomatic relationship with Japan in 1965, only twenty years after Korea was freed from Japan's colonial yoke. There were massive demonstrations protesting the normalization of relations on the part of those who regarded it as a sell-out and a national humiliation. Even though the forces of pragmatism and realism won the day, this was another episode in the history of the young republic that would continue to haunt its historical conscience.

Under this arrangement however, South Korea prospered. Even while devoting up to quarter of the national budget for national defense South Korea was able to achieve stunning economic growth. It also made a successful transition to democracy. All this would have been scarcely imaginable in the absence of the security arrangements and economic cooperation with the U.S. and Japan. To be sure, South Korea never signed an alliance treaty with Japan, reflecting its unease with the seemingly unrepentant former colonial master. However, the threat of communism and its "proxy", North Korea, bound South Korea and Japan in a most unlikely "virtual alliance" while justifying the close South Korea-U.S. alliance, including the presence of American forces on Korean soil.

However, with the end of the Cold War, things began to change rapidly. With the fall of the Soviet Union and the "Eastern Bloc" and the overwhelming economic and political success of the South, anti-communism that used to provide the rationale for a close alliance with the U.S. and Japan, on the one hand, and continued vigilance against the north, on the other, began to lose its force. In its stead, the discourse of nationalism, hitherto relegated to a secondary status, began to resurface. With the transition to democracy, views heretofore branded as "pro-communist" or "pro-North" and banned as threatening of national security came to be debated and discussed publicly. These included ultra-nationalistic interpretations of Korea's modern history that cast South Korea's path to political and economic development as well as its close relationships with the U.S. and Japan in a very negative light. According to such ultra-nationalistic viewpoints North Korea is no longer the sworn enemy against whom the South needs to defend itself but a "brother" country with which the South must forge a common bond and destiny. In fact, when it came to nationalist credentials, the North may even win over the South, so some argued.

What is the logic behind views seemingly so out of joint with reality? According to this line of argument, the Korean people of both South and North have been victims of superpower confrontation. Korea suffered national division because of superpowers who used them as pawns in their strategic games with little or no consideration for the interests of the Korean people. The Korean War was not a war between communists and those who tried to defend freedom. Rather, it was a nationalistic war to rid the nation of

foreign influence, namely the U.S., and a puppet regime in the South supported by it. Kim Il-sung, the North Korean dictator, was not a war criminal who started a fratricidal war at the beckoning of the Soviet Union and with the help of Communist China, but a leader of the Korean people who tried to liberate his southern brethren from the imperialists. The reunification of the peninsula was thwarted by the intervention of American imperialists who saw Korea as the lynchpin in their strategy to dominate the Asia-Pacific region.

If one follows this argument North Korea, not the South, comes out the winner. As North Koreans and ultra-Nationalists in the South argue, the North does not have foreign troops on its soil like the South. The North did not capitulate to the Japanese by hurriedly normalizing relations with the former colonial aggressors, the way the South did back in 1965. Despite poverty, North has been able to maintain its sense of national pride and independence while the South sold its soul to capitalism and American imperialists, even though it came to enjoy a modicum of economic prosperity by doing so. And once nationalism becomes the sole criterion by which to measure political legitimacy in Korea, the close security alliance forged between Korea, U.S. and Japan also suddenly takes on a rather sinister tone. Is the U.S. military presence in South Korea a trip wire to deter communist aggression or a barrier to reunification? Is not the close economic tie between South Korea and Japan another perpetuate Korea's dependence on Japan, at least in the economic sphere?

Such arguments originally found acceptance among radical students and leftist intellectuals of the South in the 1980s. In their opposition to military backed regimes who, they thought, were in turn backed by the U.S. they began to turn to a virulent form of nationalism to attack both dictatorship and U.S. influence. It was also during this time that works by "revisionists" such as Carter Eckert and Bruce Cumings found a wide audience among students and intellectuals in South Korea.⁷ Eckert argued that capitalism in South Korea had its beginnings during the Japanese occupation and the current economic elites in South Korea are direct descendents of those who collaborated and prospered under the Japanese rule. Cumings argued that the right-wing leaders of the post-independence period in South Korea including Rhee Syngman, the renowned independence fighter and the first president, had little grass-roots support from the people and that the only reason they were able to consolidate their power was with the backing of the U.S. military government who employed the Korean remnants of the Japanese colonial regime to fight the communists.

⁷ Carter Eckert, *Offspring of Empire: The Koch'Ang Kims and the Colonial Origins of Korean Capitalism, 1876-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), Bruce Cummings, *The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation & the Emergence of Separate Regimes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

Such arguments are finding increasing acceptance among a wider public in post-democratization, post-Cold War South Korea. Part of it is more people becoming fascinated with “revisionist” arguments that were taboo during the authoritarian years. Another reason for the popularity of such views is that they go hand in hand with efforts on the part of many to call the past military-backed governments to account. There is a pent-up demand for bringing to justice the worst perpetrators of human rights violations during the authoritarian years. The revisionist and ultra-nationalist arguments show that the leaders of the now discredited regimes relied on foreign powers, namely the U.S. and Japan, to maintain their hold on power. The U.S. was an active participant in this reactionary military-industrial complex that installed and backed dictators while perpetuating national division.

Democratization also played a more direct role in encouraging such revisionist and ultra-nationalist discourses. The election of President Kim Young Sam in 1992 was a major step towards the consolidation of democracy in South Korea. The election brought to power a man who had staked all his political fortune and fate on the struggle against authoritarian regimes. He took his victory in the election as a mandate to dismantle the military-security apparatus that oppressed the people for so long and delayed democracy in his country. Although he retained the “pro-American” stance of his predecessors, the floodgates had been opened in terms of reinterpreting South Korea’s recent history and the role of the U.S. in it.

The election of President Kim Dae Jung, another champion of the struggle for democracy in 1997 even more emphatically shifted the basis of political legitimacy in South Korea to democratization and away from economic development and national security. Having been elected in the wake of the 1997 financial crisis, he sought to dismantle the now-discredited “developmental state” built by his authoritarian predecessors. Now it was not only the political, but also the economic past of South Korea that was to be put to critical scrutiny. Moreover, President Kim let it be known from early on his desire to bring about a reconciliation of the two Koreas. The policy of rapprochement towards North Korea, or the “Sunshine policy,” was an effort to put into practice the revisionist and ultra-nationalist goals of national reconciliation.

With the election of President Roh Muhyun in 2002 the current situation is unlikely to change anytime soon. During the campaign Mr. Roh promised that, if elected, he would bring the South Korea-U.S. bilateral relations onto a more equal footing. Such remarks played on the sentiment that South Korea has been the subservient party, a junior partner at best, in the long-standing alliance. When he proudly announced that he had never been to the U.S. in his life, and that he does not see the need to do so, his remarks

hit the nationalist nerve in many Koreans. Whether such remarks in themselves can be construed as “anti-American” may be subject to interpretation but there is no doubt that it strongly appealed to his revisionist and ultra-nationalist constituencies. It is true that he dispelled much of the worry regarding his alleged “anti-American” stance during his recent visit to the U.S. However, his “pro-American” actions and words during the visit prompted angry responses from his core constituencies back home. How much he has changed his views on the U.S. and how much of it will be reflected in his policies is difficult to guess as of yet.

Long-term Causes: National Identity v. Civilization

The past century has been a period of major and multiple “civilizational transitions” for Koreans. Until the late 19th century, Koreans were part of a stable and largely peaceful world order of which it was happy to be a part. Choson dynasty, established in 1392, voluntarily and enthusiastically became a part of the regional order with Ming China at its center. By actively learning and absorbing the Neo-Confucian civilization emanating from China Choson became a stable and prosperous kingdom, proud of its intellectual and cultural achievements. However, with the advent of the West, Choson was forced to come to terms with a civilization very different from the one it had adopted for the past 600 years. After a failed effort to defend the “orthodoxy,” Koreans changed their minds and tried to adopt the western way in all things. However, their efforts proved to be futile as Japan, its neighbor who was quicker to adopt the ways of the West, annexed Korea as part of its growing empire.

Under the Japanese colonial rule, Koreans were forced to adapt to a modern civilization as interpreted by the Japanese. From 1910-1945, Koreans were forced to live under Japanese political, economic, social, educational, and cultural institutions. All Koreans had to learn Japanese while its brightest students went to Japanese universities to receive higher education. Shintoism, the Japanese state religion was forced upon Koreans. Seoul became a miniature copy of Tokyo. Starting in the late 1930s, the teaching of Korean language and history was banned while Koreans were forced to change their names to Japanese. It looked as if Korea was going to be fully absorbed into the Japanese empire without a trace.

Then, with the defeat of Japan in the Second World War, yet another civilization was imposed on Koreans. The North became a Soviet “satellite”, adopting Soviet-style communist system. The South, for its part, came under U.S. Military government rule from 1945-48. The next half-a-century saw the two Koreas trying their best to adopt and adapt to the political, economic, social, educational, and cultural institutions and values

of their respective “senior partners.” The North’s effort to emulate the Soviet model failed utterly for both internal and external reasons. The fall of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc removed whatever sources of external support that North Korea enjoyed for its own doomed communist system. The failure to adopt reform measures to overhaul its decrepit system has resulted in a state failure of disastrous proportions. In stark contrast, the South succeeded despite fits and starts in its efforts to adopt liberal democracy and capitalist economy. Today, South Koreans continue to pursue avidly the values and institutions democracy and the free-market economy.

However, success did not come easily while the process of such fundamental and total civilizational transitions left a deep psychological scar in the collective psyche of the Koreans. The most difficult thing, of course, was to try to hold on to a sense of “Koreaness” as the nation moved from the Chinese to Japanese to American sphere-of-influence. Such an effort has resulted in a time-honored tradition of anti-foreign sentiment. The advent of the West at the end of the 19th century produced “anti-West” reaction that lasted much longer in Korea than in either China or Japan. The modernizers of this period, for their part, expressed a virulent form of anti-Chinese and anti-Confucian sentiment as they regarded China and Confucianism, so long a part of their identity, as the major obstacles to modernization. When the Japanese intention of annexing Korea became obvious, a powerful anti-Japanese movement and sentiment was mobilized. During the Japanese occupation, even while absorbing and in some cases even prospering under the modern civilization that was imposed on them by the Japanese, Koreans continuously stoked the fire of anti-Japanese nationalism.

Given the enormity of the challenges it must be said that, on the whole, Koreans succeeded admirably in adapting themselves to shifting “global standards,” be they Chinese, Japanese, or American. However, during each and every period of civilizational transition, there were those who tried to uphold the “tradition” or the “orthodoxy” against the encroachment of an alien civilization, inevitably regarded as “barbaric” and “heterodox.” Even though Koreans had to ultimately give up their “tradition” in the face of the more powerful new civilization, it took much adjusting, psychological and intellectual as well as physical to adapt to the new realities and even identities.

In this sense, anti-Americanism is an expression of a deep-seated sense of anxiety regarding Korean identity. It is a reaction to yet another chapter in their history where Koreans are forced to adapt to a new civilization. In that sense, it is not so much America per se, that is the object of nationalist sentiment. It is just that America happens to be the hegemon of the time and the possessor of the “global standard” that Koreans are forced, to adopt. Nationalism needs imperialist aggressors. Japan, the former colonial master

who continues to be an overwhelming economic presence and the U.S. who maintains ground troops on the South Korean soil are the imperialists of choice.

Conclusion: Back to the Future

In the short run, anti-American sentiment in South Korea was born of a confluence of factors: the euphoric mood in South Korea created as a result of successful economic recovery and World Cup success suddenly soured by the news of accidental deaths of school girls killed by American military vehicle on exercise. The mid term cause that exacerbated what could conceivably have been a passing incident was the revisionist and ultra-nationalist discourse that began to receive public articulation and attention in the aftermath of the Cold War and democratic transition. The two major achievements of the South Korea-U.S. alliance, namely, victory in the Cold War and democratization of South Korea, ushered in an era of revisionist thinking and ultra-nationalism in South Korea. These viewpoints born of the success of the alliance have now become its most severe critics and enemies.

From a longer-term perspective, the current surge of anti-American sentiment in South Korea should be seen as part of an effort to articulate a sense of national and cultural identity on the part of Koreans who have for so long been the subjects and victims of major civilizational shifts during the past century. Anti-Americanism as currently expressed in South Korea, seen from a long-term perspective is part of the process of more fully accepting the “global standard” and an effort to find the right balance between being “Korean” and being “global.”

Of course, what may be the most important are the short and mid-term causes because, as Keynes famously quipped, “in the long-run we are all dead.” However, even in short and medium terms, there are more reasons for hope rather than despair for the future of South Korea-U.S. relationship. As we turn back to the future, we see more and more South Koreans flocking to the U.S. to receive education, imbibing American values and learning about American institutions, the knowledge of which they plan to take back to their homeland to put into practice. The already closely conforming political and economic institutions of the two countries are getting closer still while the network of personal connections established in the elementary, middle, high schools and colleges and universities between Koreans and Americans will prove to be a powerful reservoir of good will and mutual understanding and appreciation that will serve the bilateral relationships well into the future.

As South Korea continues to pursue its dream of building a prosperous nation with strong democratic institutions, the U.S. will continue to provide the standard as well as the example. At the same time, that South Koreans will insist on articulating and retaining their sense of cultural identity while absorbing the global/American standard should come as no surprise. In this process, there will be times when they will see the need to bring in more universal standards and values while at other times they will emphasize their difference and particularities. The important thing will be to strike the right balance each time so that xenophobic nationalism does not hold sway so as to undermine what has been one of the most fruitful and successful bilateral relationships in history.

Chapter 3
**The Future Role and Value of the U.S.-ROK
Alliance**
by Kim Kyung-won

If we think back to the situation that pertained in 1953 when the ROK-U.S. alliance was established, the circumstances were actually very inauspicious. Our two countries could not have been more disparate – one was poor and divided, the other rich and powerful – and the U.S. used the incentive of the mutual defense treaty to convince South Korea to agree to the armistice with North Korea. Although there are more reasons why it should have failed that prevailed, the alliance has been a tremendous success. The ensuing peace and stability allowed South Korea not only economic success but also allowed it to develop a vibrant, active democracy.

Yet instead of celebrating the success of our 50 year alliance with the U.S., Koreans are debating the future. There is no one Korean view; Koreans are divided amongst themselves, and this division also reflects how they view the roles and values of the U.S.-ROK alliance. As you might imagine, there is a positive and negative view toward the United States, and both have security and economic dimensions.

The positive view is that the United States serves as a deterrent to North Korea and also plays an important balancing role in the region, helping to moderate the natural competition among Korea, China, and Japan. This view argues that South Korea needs to keep the U.S. engaged on the Peninsula and in the region; without the U.S. connection, Korea would become vulnerable to pressures from neighboring big powers. Moreover, the U.S. is a source of technology, open markets, ideas, and management skills – it simply plays a global economic role that no other country is willing to play. The U.S. culture also plays a role in the world – it is a fast changing country, full of contradictions, but these are exciting contradictions. Without the U.S. alliance, South Korea risks withering away; the alliance is a necessary condition for Korea's political independence and security.

The negative view posits that the United States is an empire, its markets and businesses are only out to exploit cheap labor, and its cultural influence destroys Korean national identity. Unless Korea moves out of the “U.S. orbit,” it cannot be a truly independent country. To become a mature nation, Korea must learn how to do things on its own without asking our American ally what it thinks of our actions and initiatives. As

long as the U.S.-ROK alliance remains, regional integration within and among Northeast Asian nations will not be likely, according to this view.

In part, this kind of anti-Americanism is rooted in youth culture (which, oddly to me, still enjoys sporting blue jeans) while the positive view is mostly shared by the older generation. There is a new term to describe this generational divide, the “20/30” and “50/60” divide, meaning the youth in their 20s and 30s – who are considered progressive, new, fresh, and nationalist – and those in their 50s and 60s – who are considered old, privileged, conservative, and internationalist.

Although it is hard to say which group, on balance, is more numerous, it might well be that there are more nationalists because there are more young people. But there is a natural solution to this problem: the young will grow older. The older generation is deeply and permanently grateful to the U.S. for all of the opportunities that our country has had during our lifetimes, and I believe the youth will come to share these feelings. We shouldn't consider this too serious an issue, but need to address it with a sense of humor, clarity, confidence, and imagination.

The United States also has played a role in the anti-American or nationalist sentiments. The actions and statements from Washington DC in regards to North Korea have a deep impact on a very sensitive younger generation of Koreans who interpret such statements as U.S. opposition to unification, only for the sake of preserving its own status-quo. This sensitivity, along with increasing global criticism of American unilateralism in the world, created the opportunity for younger Koreans to join the trend of anti-Americanism.

This brings us to differing generational views toward North Korea, in addition to different views toward the United States. First we must acknowledge that the Korean War is a decisive dividing factor between the old and young generations. For the younger generation, the Korean War is something they read in history textbooks – they have neither vivid war memories nor personal stories. For many of the 20/30s, the significant personal experiences are rooted in South Korea's military and authoritarian rule, and the 1987 Kwangju uprising was their defining moment. The trauma of that period still lingers on.

This generational difference has translated into the way North Korea is portrayed in South Korea in recent years as a failed, economic basket-case, which has created the illusion that North Korea is not a threat. North Korea is seen as an object of sympathy rather than a potential aggressor to be deterred. The Sunshine Policy – based on the assumption that if one accumulates kind gestures long enough, then the North Koreans

will change by themselves without any pressure from the South – has done much to create this impression among the young generation. This new image of North Korea, combined with American pronouncements opposing Pyongyang is creating the impression that the U.S. is trying to perpetuate the division between South and North, and block the process of unification. In my view, this is the most dangerous development that has taken place.

The U.S. tends to view North Korea primarily through the prism of military hardware. Yet essentially, the North Korea question is a political problem, not a technical one. It is the question of whether the North or South comes out of this struggle with a public perception of justified legitimacy as being “in the right.” If the South Korean people decide that North Korea has as much of a right as the U.S. to own nuclear weapons, no amount of threats, sanctions, or pressures will effectively dissuade nor convince the North Korean leadership. Yet we should be able to educate our public that getting North Korea to abide by the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) regime is far preferable to nuclear anarchy – where a non-nuclear South Korea, confronting a nuclear North Korea, will ultimately be faced with demise or nuclearization on its own.

Finally, I would like statesmen in Washington, DC to give thoughtful consideration to the impact they have, through words and actions, whether toward North or South Korea, on the younger Korean generation. When the U.S. sends a public message to North Korea, it needs to remember that South Koreans are also listening – Washington has multiple audiences to pay attention to, and needs to craft ideas and messages that don’t give mistaken impressions. After all, the struggle over the Korean Peninsula is the struggle over the hearts and minds of the Korean people.

Chapter 4
**Adapting the U.S.-ROK Alliance to New
Realities**
by Chung Chong-wook

In the last five years, the U.S.-ROK alliance has been at its worst. It almost disintegrated. In the fifty year history of the alliance, of course, there were other times when the relationship experienced latent tension and manifest conflicts which occasionally erupted into the open, doing damage to the relationship. One can think of many examples.

For example, in the early 1950s, the U.S. was so displeased with ROK president Syngman Rhee that a contingency plan to get rid of him was drawn up. The plan, codenamed operation ever-ready, was fortunately never implemented.

Second, in the early and mid 1970s, the U.S. decision to reduce its military presence in South Korea forced the latter to seriously pursue a nuclear option and engage in illegal influence – peddling activities. As a result, the alliance suffered a major setback, but only temporarily.

But these examples never touched on the very foundation of the alliance's existence. On the contrary, they were intended to consolidate and strengthen the alliance, albeit through unfriendly and illegal means.

An alliance presupposes a common threat to its security. In our case, it was the constant threat emanating from North Korea. In fact, as we all know, it was the Korean War, started by North Korea in 1950, that led to the conclusion of the mutual defense treaty between the U.S. and ROK in October 1953. For half a century, that treaty has recorded remarkable success in serving the goal stated in the treaty; that is, defending freedom and democracy in the ROK. It was no small achievement given the belligerency of its rather unusual adversary.

But serious cracks in the alliance began to appear as South Korea pursued an approach toward North Korea called the Sunshine Policy. In essence, the Sunshine Policy no longer regarded North Korea as an enemy. Instead, it was a partner to be engaged at all costs. The engagement continued even when North Korea vigorously pursued its nuclear ambition.

The cracks grew rapidly with two developments. One was the arrival of the Bush administration and the war on terror in the U.S. The other was the widespread anti-American demonstrations in South Korea. American flags were burned on the streets of Seoul and other cities. All of a sudden, Americans were not friends, much less allies. While the Bush administration called North Korea an “axis of evil,” South Koreans on the streets declared the U.S. “the evil empire.”

What was happening on the streets quickly elevated to the political level. It was a political season in the midst of a fiercely fought presidential campaign and the candidates made political pronouncements based on what was happening on the streets. The candidate for the government party, Mr. Roh Moo-Hyun, was particularly outspoken.

In public, he stated that he did not regard the U.S.-ROK relationship as fair and balanced, and pledged that if elected he would seek major readjustments in the alliance structure. He also stated that he would pursue the Sunshine Policy of his predecessor with some minor modifications. He was opposed to the use of military force against North Korea in any form and under any circumstances. It was in stark contrast to the known position of the Bush administration that no options should be excluded, despite its commitment to seek a peaceful, diplomatic solution if possible.

It was in this context that President Roh’s visit to the U.S. drew intense interest both in the U.S. and in Korea. The visit would bring the moment of truth. In March 2003, given the anti-U.S. sentiments in Korea (as outlined elsewhere in this volume) and the pronounced positions of President Roh, many feared that the nightmare of the summit meeting of March 2001 between President Kim Dae-jung and President Bush might be repeated. The Kim-Bush summit was the worst of its kind. Since that summit, the U.S.-ROK alliance for all practical purposes had ceased to function effectively.

I had the privilege of sitting in a summit meeting which some regarded as not a great success. It was in November 1993 and the joint strategy to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue was the priority item on the agenda. There were disagreements, but they were not on who the enemy was and what should be done. Rather, they were on how to do it – the means, not the ends. President Kim Young-Sam was suspicious of the value of what was known as a package deal. He pointed out that North Korea in the past agreed on a package deal but when it came to implementation, it selected only those in its self-interest. The message President Kim tried to convey to President Clinton was “you may trust but you also must verify.”

I believe the summit between Presidents Roh and Bush succeeded on two accounts. One is that the meeting succeeded in establishing mutual trust and personal rapport between the two presidents. As President Bush said, he could trust and do business with the new Korean President. After the summit meeting, Bush had a familiar smile on his face that we are accustomed to seeing when he feels comfortable and relaxed.

The other aspect of success has to do with the substance of the agreements reached at the summit meeting. The most important of the agreements to me were the ROK assurance of the linkage between inter-Korean economic cooperation and the North Korean nuclear issue, and ROK acceptance of the necessity of taking 'further steps' if diplomacy fails and the nuclear crisis continues to deteriorate.

In short, with the two presidents now agreeing on common postures and strategies to deal with the North Korean nuclear program, the alliance has now been saved, at least temporarily, from the brink of total collapse. Admittedly, this is no small achievement.

But I am not sure if the alliance has now been placed on a solid new foundation. While the summit meeting saved some military aspects of the U.S.-ROK alliance, it is not clear to me if it did the same with respect to its political aspects. It is important to understand that the anti-American demonstrations that took place last year were only a reflection of more fundamental changes that have been taking place within the deep layers of Korean society over a long period of time. Demonstrations may come and go, but the changes at this societal level remain.

These changes are different from nationalism in its simplest manifestation. They certainly have elements of wounded pride, self-consciousness, and new assertiveness. But more importantly they are rooted in the values of liberalism, human dignity, and equality of sovereign states in the community of nations. They are the values Woodrow Wilson preached: peace, freedom, market economy, and self-determination. The Koreans who stand at the heart of these changes see contradictions in the unilateralism and the preemptive strikes the Bush administration advocates.

This year marks the centennial anniversary of Korean immigration to the U.S. Now there are almost 2 million Koreans living in this country either as citizens or permanent residents. Cooperation with the U.S., always crucial for South Korea's economic growth, will continue to grow in the future. And most importantly, the political and social values extensively shared by the two peoples will continue to cement the alliance structure at its very foundation.

In this regard, it is timely and fortunate that the two presidents agreed to set up a forum of experts from both countries to study the future of the U.S.-ROK alliance. I hope all of us – you in the audience in particular – feel a moral and intellectual responsibility to make strong inputs in this study. For history has shown that the U.S.-ROK alliance is indeed a most worthy one. The difficult times we have just experienced once again confirmed this point.

Chapter 5
Political and Economic Dynamics in Korea:
A Post-Summit Outlook
by Hyun Hong-choo

Change of Mood

When President Roh Moo-Hyun returned from his first-ever trip to the United States on May 17, 2003 after meetings with President George W. Bush, sighs of relief were almost audible throughout South Korea. For many Koreans who had feared another disastrous meeting between the two leaders, it was indeed a pleasant surprise to see the beaming smile on the president as he returned, a president who insisted that Korea should be different from the U.S. in dealing with North Korea and who was elected by riding on the tide of rising anti-American sentiments during the presidential election in December of last year. The agreement announced at the Washington meeting seemed to address many of the key issues such as North Korea's nuclear weapons and the relocation of U.S. troops in South Korea, while broadly outlining the future of the alliance.

During meetings with American business leaders, President Roh unabashedly vouched for the "global standards" of Korea's business and economy, and enthusiastically promised to make Korea the most foreign investment-friendly destination. The market in Seoul and around the world did not immediately produce any significant positive reactions, but the reaction would undoubtedly have been quite negative had the meetings ended on unhappy notes.

There is no recent survey of public opinion that explains this remarkable change of mood from late last year, when 54% of South Koreans said they disliked America (The *Chosun Ilbo*-Korea Gallup) and only 10% of South Koreans supported the war against Iraq (Pew Research Center), the lowest among non-Muslim countries. A sense of goodwill towards the U.S. appears to be returning after the earlier gloom.

Twin Uncertainties

When President Roh was inaugurated on February 25, 2003 of this year, the South Korean economy faced two large uncertainties, in addition to uncertainties in the world economy such as the situation in the Middle East with the upcoming war against Iraq, and the uncertain prospects for the recovery of the U.S. economy.

The first was the looming crisis on the Korean Peninsula, as North Korea broke from the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and inched towards the “red line,” which made many foreign investors second guess their stake in Korea. Many of the country managers of multinational companies in Seoul were busy dusting off or updating their contingency plans at the instruction of their head offices, understandably worried about the safety of their employees and their families in South Korea. The Korea Composite Stock Price Index began to veer downwards as the outflow of capital affected the liquidity of the Korean market.

The other source of uncertainty was the fact that the new government was to be led by a former labor and human rights lawyer. With slogans such as “welfare-oriented system,” “equitable society,” “reform of *chaebols*,” or “social integration” continuously heard from reform-minded scholars and politicians in and around the new government, the business community sensed that the new administration would be run by a new breed of planners who entertained different views for the direction of the South Korean economy. The suspicion seemed to be justified when a labor dispute at a major manufacturing plant was resolved through strong intervention by a government that was perceived to be more sympathetic to the union. While the appointments of experienced bureaucrats to key positions in the cabinet and the Blue House secretariat somewhat eased the concern, doubts remained. Foreign investors maintained their wait-and-see stance even after repeated efforts by the government to calm down the jittery mood.

When the rating agency Moody’s Investors issued a warning of a possible downgrade of Korea’s country risk rating and underlined as the reason for its negative forecast a lack of a common strategy agreed upon between the United States and South Korea on North Korean nuclear issues, the ROK government probably realized that the root causes of the “twin uncertainties” was the perceived differences between the two allies that needed to be quickly resolved before further damage was inflicted on Korea’s security and economic interests. The government probably also realized that these two uncertainties were nothing but two sides of the same coin, and that at the core of the problem was the perceived anti-American sentiment that amplified whatever differences existed between the two nations.

These twin uncertainties must have been very much on the mind of President Roh when he decided to send South Korean troops to Iraq in April, and as he embarked on his visit to the United States on May 11.

Successes and Challenges

Has President Roh successfully addressed these uncertainties? Critics point out that differences were glossed over and tough issues were side-stepped in the joint statement issued after the meeting of two presidents at the White House on May 14.

While many of the details for the future course were left for further discussion between the officials of the two governments in the coming months, both presidents appear to be winners as President Bush gave assurances for a “peaceful solution” to the North Korean nuclear weapons crisis and President Roh agreed to take a more hard-line stance in dealing with North Korea, including the consideration of “further steps” in the event that threats to Korean national security were to increase.

However, even detractors agree that the lack of details was more than sufficiently augmented by the happy photo-op at the Rose Garden where the two presidents expressed their mutual sentiments of goodwill and friendship. It is said that no head of state can afford a failed summit meeting, and that any meeting between two leaders is designed to be a success even before the meeting takes place. Setting such cynicism aside, the Roh-Bush meeting is generally regarded to have been a successful step in the right direction. Ironically, President Roh’s success in addressing his perceived anti-American inclination can be measured by the reactions from his supporters who expressed their dismay and sense of betrayal as they listened to their hero expressing warm feelings toward America and taking a critical stance against North Korea.

As soon as President Roh disembarked from the airplane from the U.S., he faced many challenging problems awaiting urgent solutions. The recent truckers’ strike that paralyzed Korea’s largest port in Busan for more than a week ended while the President was in the U.S. However, the settlement that reopened the port set a dangerous precedent for other industries because the agreement between the government and truckers’ union amounted to a total abandonment of principles the government had professed to uphold. Unlawful actions taken by truckers who were not wage laborers but independent truck owners/operators were left unpunished. The government negotiators agreed to make up for their low profits by lowering fuel tax rates at the expense of the general taxpayers. During the strike, the government showed a woeful lack of determination and know-how for crisis management. As bus drivers and maritime transportation operators begin their own grumbles and demands for more benefits, the government will find it an uphill task to meet their demands while at the same time responding to calls for “global standards” in labor-management and government relations by the business community. During the

trip, the President has got an earful about the need for flexibility in the labor market and other reforms in labor practices in South Korea.

The recent accounting scandal at an SK Group company and the subsequent arrest of its chairman vividly illustrated the acute need for continued corporate reform towards better governance. The challenge is to more finely tune the role of the government in law enforcement and regulatory supervision and to find the right balance with private sector efforts.

The financial sector, which went through painful restructuring during the International Monetary Fund (IMF) crisis of 1997-1998, is far from robust as banks are hit with poor earnings and bad consumer loans weaken the credit card companies and their creditors.

As the sense of urgency receded with the economic recovery, and as labor unions became emboldened by their newly gained strength under the new administration, restructuring of corporate and financial institutions seems to be running into resistance that is even stiffer than before.

The drive to develop South Korea as the East Asian hub requires a major upgrade of not only the physical infrastructure but, more importantly, of the overall system and mindset of the ROK government and the people.

Economists contend that the overall performance of the economy is still healthy. However, weakening consumption and investment and a rising balance of payment deficit will likely keep the growth level at around 2 to 4% this year, which will pose a great challenge to the Roh government's goal of creating 2.5 million new jobs in 5 years.

Success Ahead?

President Roh also faces continuing challenges in domestic politics. His party is still a minority in the legislature. The Millennium Democratic Party (MDP) is in a turmoil as the reformist faction, composed mostly of President Roh's loyal supporters, pushes for disbanding the party and forming a new reform party that will better reflect the recent changes in Korea's political landscape. The opposition Grand National Party (GNP) is not in good shape either. After their defeat in the presidential election in December 2002, the party has been drifting without a clear leader emerging to assert leadership. Political observers note that the reformist faction within the GNP, a minority within the party, could bolt out to join the new reformist party movement.

It is still too early to tell whether President Roh will be able to solidify his power base through this reform party drive and secure the majority in the National Assembly election in April next year. However, according to *The JoongAng Ilbo*, there seems to be considerable public support for a reform party as voters favor forming a new party based on ideological differences, and the younger generation in their 20s and 30s are showing strong support (64% and 64% respectively).

A very serious challenge to President Roh's leadership is expected should North Korea choose to react negatively to U.S. and South Korea and take on a confrontational stance, maintaining its goal of becoming a nuclear-armed state. The question is whether in that scenario he will indeed be able to take the "further steps" that has been agreed with the U.S.? Will he be able to persuade the unwilling public to support stronger measures for dealing with North Korea's nuclear blackmail and ensure that South Korea "will not play in the way the North intends"? Will he be able to stick to the commitment that he has made during his Washington summit even when the going gets tough?

The initial reaction to the Bush-Roh summit from North Korea is not promising. On May 20, a North Korean official threatened that the South will experience "unspeakable disasters" if South Korea is going to take "further steps" as has been agreed at the meeting in Washington. It may be still too early to know, however, whether this statement indicates the policy choice made by the regime in the North.

None of these challenges is easy. In dealing with a reluctant public and recalcitrant adversaries, President Roh's reformist zeal will need to be tempered, and his well-known pragmatism will be pushed to the limit.

If one is to make a prediction based on the President's performance during the summit meeting with President Bush, and his meetings with business leaders in New York and Silicon Valley, there may be a certain amount of justification for cautious optimism ahead. In this regard, it may be useful to remember that Mr. Roh was not only a labor and human rights lawyer but also a successful tax lawyer.

More than anything else, audiences both in the U.S. and South Korea will watch closely whether President Roh will maintain the course he professed during his Washington visit – his principled stance in dealing with North Korea, his commitment to market and global standards, his reaffirmation of the strong alliance between our two nations, and his belief in liberty and democracy as the foundation of the country he will lead for the next five years – by resisting the pressures from a difficult neighbor and by taming a discontented public, including his own supporters.

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