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Clashing Perceptions of 'America' in Trans-Pacific Relations: The Case of Anti-Americanism in South Korea

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INTRODUCTION: GROWING ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT IN THE OLD ALLY

The image of America has experienced a massive turn of tide in the minds of the Korean people. It has in recent years plummeted from a predominantly positive to a somewhat negative or at least ambivalent status—in a speed highly unusual for such a macro-social phenomenon as the public sentiment toward a foreign nation. This rapid and large-scale deterioration in the Korean perception of America is an enigma generating scholarly curiosity.

Historically, South Korea has been perceived to be the last country to harbor anti-American feelings. The Republic of Korea (R.O.K) and the U.S. have maintained close ties since the end of World War II. To Korean people, the U.S. was the savior, first from Japanese colonialism and then from Communist aggression. The Korean War and the resulting U.S.-R.O.K. mutual defense treaty, signed in 1953, along with the huge amounts of U.S. economic aid through the 1950s up to the 1970s firmly consolidated the two countries' partnership and even elevated it into a

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national brotherhood. According to a public poll in 1965, sixty-eight percent of South Korean people chose the U.S. as their favorite country, while less than 1 percent of the respondents said they disliked it.[1] People in the southern half of the Korean peninsula imported from the U.S. a vast array of institutions and values ranging from their educational system to economic practices to political institutions to socio-cultural lifestyles. Even religiously, Koreans warmly accepted American influences: Christianity, especially Protestantism, has widely spread among the public, rivaling the traditional Buddhism in the number of followers.

The recent reality, however, is far from the historical national brotherhood that Korean and American people had once taken for granted. Koreans no longer demonstrate favorable feelings toward the U.S. According to Gallup polls conducted in 2002 and 2003, almost twice as many South Koreans disliked the U.S. than liked it (60% to 34%). Seventy percent of South Koreans thought that U.S. foreign policies had a bad impact on Korea, while only 15% regarded the U.S. influences as good. Excluding Muslim countries, South Korea topped all other countries surveyed by the Pew Research Center in negativity toward the U.S.'s war efforts in Iraq. Fifty-eight percent of the respondents said they were disappointed by the lack of Iraqi military resistance; only 26% expressed a happy feeling about it.[2] And 74% of South Korean respondents agreed that the U.S. did not try hard to avoid civilian casualties in Iraq.[3] When asked in 2002 if the U.S. government considered others' concerns, only 23% answered yes, as opposed to 73% saying no.[4] As to the U.S.-led war on terrorism, favorable responses were a mere 24%, relative to 72% opposing. This negativity in South Korea is by far the highest among non-Muslim countries.[5]

The growing animosity to the U.S. is a rather abrupt and recent phenomenon. When anti-Americanism first came to the fore in South Korea in the 1980s, it was confined to only a small segment of society. Radical college students led anti-American campaigns, blaming the U.S. for perpetually dividing the peninsula and supporting the suppressive regimes of military dictators. But their often violent demonstrations failed to garner much public sympathy, and instead scared ordinary citizens off. Trade conflicts between the two countries occasionally sparked feelings of uneasiness in Korea, but hostility was far from widespread or serious. The benign image of America as a helping neighbor was so deep-rooted in the Korean mind that sporadic tensions did not make a dent in it until the 1980s.

Anti-Americanism had to wait until the 1990's to permeate into the middle class and emerge as a socially salient and controversial issue. Continuing trade conflicts antagonized increasing numbers of farmers, industrial leaders, and workers. A series of crimes by U.S. soldiers stationed in the peninsula and the disputes over the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) angered the general public. Moreover, seemingly small incidents in 2002—namely, the Winter Olympics short-track skating episode and the deaths of two middle-school girls in a traffic accident by a U.S. armored vehicle—fueled an explosive burst in the Anti-American mood. After reaching a peak during the 2002 presidential election, anti-Americanism seems to have somewhat subsided, but still persists among a large number of Korean people. Today anti-Americanism is no longer a radical leftist phenomenon in South Korea.

How was this turn of tide possible? What explains the growth of this unfavorable attitude among Korean people toward their long-time ally? These questions call for a very extensive and in-depth analysis on a wide variety of factors including historical, social, economic, political, and cultural situations in both Korea and the U.S. as well as particular U.S. foreign policies and general psychological tendencies of human beings. It would be, however, impossible to deal with all those factors in a limited space. Pursuing a much more modest goal, therefore, this article will characterize how perceptions of America have recently changed in the minds of Koreans and also will interpret what implications the clashing perceptions of America between South Korea and the U.S. might have with respect to trans-Pacific relations in general.

Specifically, this article first describes a curious characteristic of Korean anti-Americanism: its main target of animosity is increasingly the abstract concept of America as a whole rather than its particular leaders or policies. Then, it contrasts the recent Korean perception of America as a self-centered hegemonic Big Brother with the mainstream American self-image as a 'city upon a hill' spreading noble ideals globally. Exploring the contradictory perceptions of America within the US and in Korea, this article finds that they share a common ideological root of narrow-minded nationalism. Unless people in both societies overcome their nationalistic obsessions, this article concludes, they are bound to overly exaggerate the virtue of their own values and practices and amplify hostility to the other side. If clashing perceptions of America, a natural by-product of nationalistic fervor in Korea and the U.S., persist, they will be a major stumbling block to the broader trans-Pacific relations as well as to the U.S.-Korea relationship in particular.

I. HEGEMONIC BIG BROTHER: CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF AMERICA IN SOUTH KOREA

A puzzling fact is that those Koreans who have unfavorable views of the U.S. for the most part base their opinions on their feelings about the U.S. generally, not about a specific leader such as President Bush. According to a Pew Center poll conducted in 2002, an overwhelming majority (72%) of the South Koreans with unfavorable opinions of the U.S. attributed their negative view of the U.S. to a general problem with America as a whole rather than a particular problem with President Bush or his foreign policies.[6] Only 20% of the "unfavorable" respondents based their views of the U.S. on President Bush. In virtually all other Pew-surveyed countries, by contrast, it was Bush and his policies, not America in general, that aroused anti-American anger. Table 1 below shows the results of the Pew surveys.

Table 2 below, summarizing the results of the Gallup Korea polls conducted in 2002 and 2003, supports the curious finding in Table 1 that the Korean people with a negative view of America take the U.S. in its entirety as the main target of their animosity. Unfavorable sentiment toward the U.S. in general was stronger than that toward U.S. foreign policy in particular: antipathy to an abstract macro-level object (i.e., the U.S. itself) was intense, while a more specific object (i.e., U.S. foreign policy) aroused a relatively mild level of negativity. Regarding the question, "Do you like or dislike the U.S.?," the number of the respondents saying "dislike a lot" was slightly larger than that of those saying "dislike a little." People with a strong animosity outnumbered those with a mild animosity. On the other hand, regarding a different question on a more specific object, "Does the U.S. foreign policy have a good influence on South Korea?," the answers showed a reverse pattern. Clearly more people chose the "somewhat bad" rather than the "very bad" answer.

The two tables below suggest that those Koreans harboring an unfavorable sentiment to the U.S. target their anger at the broader concept of America itself more than at narrower objects such as President Bush or U.S. foreign policies. This suggestion is re-affirmed by the fact that Koreans with an anti-American attitude mostly resent the overall way U.S. foreign polices are implemented; in contrast, specific contents of U.S. policies are not necessarily a major factor brewing animosity. In a public poll, those Koreans with a negative feeling toward the U.S. cited U.S. unilateralism generally as the most important reason for their neg-

Table 1. "What Is the Problem with the U.S.?"
(Opinions of those with an unfavorable attitude to the U.S.)

	Mostly Bush (%)	America in general (%)	Both (%)	Don't know (%)	N
France	74	21	4		301
Germany	74	22	3	1	266
Indonesia	69	20	7	4	798
Italy	67	24	9		190
Morocco	66	14	18	2	660
Pakistan	62	31	2	5	808
Canada	60	32	6	2	175
Nigeria	60	22	18		366
Great Britain	59	31	8	3	153
Brazil	56	36	6	2	608
Australia	53	40	6	1	190
Turkey	52	33	12	3	829
Lebanon	51	32	16	1	710
Spain	50	37	12	2	281
Kuwait	44	42	8	6	159
Russia	43	32	15	10	281
Jordan	42	28	30		988
Israel	37	42	15	6	304
Palestine Auth.	31	32	36	1	784
South Korea	20	72	7	1	262

Source: Pew Center 2003a, 22.

ativity: 58% of the anti-American respondents chose U.S. unilateralism as the number one reason.[7] The stationing of U.S. soldiers on the Korean peninsula drew only 14.3% of the unfavorable responses, and the U.S.'s hard-line policy toward North Korea drew an even smaller proportion, i.e., 4.5%. In fact, Koreans are overall highly favorable regarding close ties with the U.S. For example, 93.1% of the respondents said that a good U.S.-Korean relationship was important to the national interest; 81.7% agreed that the mutual defense treaty contributed to peace; 87.4% concurred that the stationing of U.S. military on the peninsula was important to security; and 82.8% agreed to the need to keep the U.S. military on

Table 2. Koreans' Perception of the U.S. and Its Foreign Policy

(figure: %)

	"Do you like or dislike the U.S.?" (Gallup Korea Poll 2002/2/26)					"Does the U.S. foreign policy have a good influence on South Korea?" (Gallup Korea Poll 2003/2/8)				
	Like a lot	Like a little	Dislike a little	Dislike a lot	Don't know	Very good	Some-what good	Some-what bad	Very bad	Don't know
Age										
20's	4.8	18.3	28.8	41.4	6.7	0.3	8.9	49.8	32.7	8.4
30's	2.2	19.0	38.4	35.6	4.8	0.9	7.7	48.1	34.1	9.2
40's	11.1	29.8	26.0	29.4	3.7	1.0	12.8	51.8	19.5	14.9
Over 50's	18.6	31.4	22.5	16.9	10.6	6.1	19.6	36.3	10.9	27.1
Education										
Below high school	19.8	32.2	19.5	13.8	14.7	6.4	15.4	33.9	11.2	33.1
High school	8.1	21.3	32.0	32.8	5.9	1.5	14.4	45.4	23.1	15.6
Over college	5.1	23.3	31.2	37.0	3.5	1.2	9.9	51.3	29.7	8.0
Income										
Low	18.6	31.6	22.6	15.6	11.7	7.6	19.2	31.7	9.7	31.8
Middle	6.7	23.1	29.7	33.6	6.9	1.4	12.3	48.7	23.0	14.8
High	6.7	23.3	31.9	34.5	3.5	1.2	10.3	49.5	32.0	7.0
Residence										
Metropolitan	9.5	23.5	32.7	28.9	5.4	2.2	12.6	46.5	24.6	14.2
Small city	8.1	24.0	26.1	34.0	7.8	1.7	12.4	46.4	24.1	15.3
Rural	11.6	29.1	24.1	27.3	7.9	4.7	12.6	42.1	20.4	20.3
Occupation										
Blue collar	7.6	19.5	32.4	36.3	4.1	0.8	11.8	46.7	25.7	15.0
White collar	7.6	20.3	33.1	36.4	2.7	0.5	9.9	51.0	33.0	5.6
Student	4.0	15.9	31.2	43.8	5.1	0.0	8.4	45.7	37.8	8.1
1st industry	22.0	29.9	18.9	17.9	11.3	4.8	10.6	36.5	16.6	31.5
Self-employed	10.8	20.7	31.2	32.4	5.0	3.3	15.0	53.6	17.5	10.7
Housewife	6.9	30.6	26.8	26.5	9.2	3.1	14.0	42.8	18.3	21.7
Unemployed	17.4	30.6	24.7	16.1	11.2	5.5	19.3	42.0	11.9	21.3

the peninsula at least until reunification. While largely supportive of U.S. foreign policies and a close U.S.-R.O.K. relationship, Koreans feel offended by the general way the U.S. government treats them.

The tendency of Koreans to direct their negative feelings to America in general more than to specific aspects of America is actually in line

with a growing global trend. Although the anti-American global publics still think that Bush is a bigger problem than America in general, respondents in most parts of the world are recently more and more attributing their negative views of the U.S. to America itself generally. Table 3 demonstrates this new global tendency of late. When comparing the 2005 survey with that conducted two years earlier, the tendency is undeniable. The number of those who say that America in general, more than Bush, is mostly the problem with the U.S. has considerably increased in most of the surveyed countries.

South Korea led this global trend of totalizing anti-Americanism targeting America generally. As Table 1 above indicates, already in 2002/2003 Koreans attributed their negative opinions of the U.S. mostly to America in its entirety. This was a few years ahead of the global trend. Today, the object of antipathy in the minds of global anti-American people has increasingly turned from specific aspects of America toward the abstract collective entity, i.e., America itself. To totalizing anti-American critics, the U.S. represents the "they" who are collectively an outer-group fundamentally different from "us." Since "they" are collective and abstract, they are not necessarily limited to certain specific vices; rather, "they" could be sweepingly condemned as the fundamental root of all bad things. In Revel's words, "[a]nti-Americanism is at base a totalizing, if not a totalitarian, vision".[8]

When a public enemy is perceived to be something big, broad, and abstract, it tends to generate an especially strong degree of social wrath. When the public enemy is perceived to be a collective whole rather than particular parts, anger is socially justified with relative ease. Reductionist animosity, blaming the public enemy for all the problems, inevitably creeps into people's minds. America had enjoyed a highly positive image as a benevolent big brother for several decades in Korean society, but today, in a massive turn of tide, it is facing a rise of totalizing animosity. In the eyes of those Koreans with unfavorable views of their old ally, America is today an imposing fearsome Big Brother who intervenes in Korean issues and coerces Koreans to do this and do that. Notably, anti-American Koreans do not relate the malevolent image of Big Brother only to Bush or his policies; but they seem to think that the whole American system generally is fundamentally behind all the problems in its relationship with other countries—such as unilateral foreign policies and arrogant interventions in domestic issues.

Table 3. "What Is the Problem with the U.S.?" Comparison of 2005 with 2003
(Opinions of those with an unfavorable attitude to the U.S.)

Country	Year/Difference	Mostly Bush (%)	America in general (%)	Both (%)	Don't know (%)
Germany	2003	74	22	3	1
	2005	65	29	5	1
	Difference	−9	+7	+2	0
France	2003	74	21	4	—
	2005	63	32	5	1
	Difference	−11	+11	+1	—
Britain	2003	59	31	8	3
	2005	56	35	8	1
	Difference	−3	+4	0	−2
Canada	2003	60	32	6	2
	2005	54	37	9	0
	Difference	−6	+5	+3	−2
Russia	2003	43	32	15	10
	2005	30	58	9	3
	Difference	−13	+26	−6	−7
Turkey	2003	52	33	12	3
	2005	41	36	17	6
	Difference	−11	+3	+5	+3
Indonesia	2003	69	20	7	4
	2005	43	42	0	15
	Difference	−26	+22	−7	+11
Jordan	2003	42	28	30	—
	2005	22	37	41	1
	Difference	−20	+9	+11	—
Lebanon	2003	51	32	16	1
	2005	47	32	19	1
	Difference	−4	0	+3	0
Spain	2003	50	37	12	2
	2005	76	14	7	3
	Difference	+26	−23	−5	+1
Pakistan	2003	62	31	2	5
	2005	51	29	10	10
	Difference	−11	−2	+8	+5

Source: Pew Center 2005, 16.

II. CITY UPON A HILL: LINGERING MYTHS OF AMERICA IN THE U.S.

The growing totalizing antipathy toward the U.S. as a whole may be no surprise, considering that American citizens themselves are increasingly taking a simple nationalistic "us-versus-them" attitude. Americans tend to draw a clear dividing line between themselves as one nation and other foreigners. Americanism, a synthetic collection of various nationalistic ideas and values, has been further strengthened in American society in recent years.[9] When Americans believe that their nation is uniquely blessed by God and is given the divine duty to spread justice globally, it is natural for them to view global issues from an ethnocentric perspective. Then, it is also natural for foreign people to regard America as a unitary collective actor and, if they are resentful, target their hostility to America in its entirety rather than to narrower objects such as a particular U.S. policy or politician. Anti-Americanism toward a broad abstract object (i.e., America generally) in many corners of the world is a natural concomitant of the recent uniting of Americans under the national flag of Americanism.

Americanism is a loose amalgam of nationalistic patriotism, religious moralism, and historical exceptionalism. Each of these elements, closely related to and overlapping with one another, has increased in its intensity in the past several years. Let me first elaborate on the rise of nationalistic patriotism. Americans' patriotism, already higher than in most other countries, has further risen since 1999 among both Republicans and Democrats.[10] Up to 91% of the American respondents agreed that they were patriotic; especially, the number of those who "completely" agree has continued to rise since the mid-1990's and reached its highest level (56%) in 2003.[11] This growing patriotism entailed an ethnocentric sentiment hostile to foreigners and alien values and cultures. Twenty-four percent of the survey respondents seriously considered boycotting French and German products because they were angry over France's and Germany's opposition to the war with Iraq; 14% said that they actually stopped buying products from those countries.[12] Seventy-seven percent of the respondents agreed that the U.S. should restrict and control foreigners coming into the country to live.[13] The recent political conflicts surrounding immigration policy reflect this ethnocentric patriotism.

Religious moralism, another component of nationalistic Americanism, has recently become even firmer and has further consolidated Americans' ethnocentric self-portrait as a chosen people. According to a Pew Center

survey in 2003, an overwhelming majority of American citizens (81%) said yes to a question asking if praying to God was an important part of their life; this figure is the highest ever since 1987 when the Pew Center first began asking this question.[14] Those who "completely" agreed that praying to God was an important part of their life comprised 51% of all the respondents, a clear increase from 41% in 1987. In the same 2003 Pew survey, 87% agreed that they never doubted the presence of God. Immediately after the 2004 elections, 32% of American voters identified themselves as Christian fundamentalists or evangelicals.[15] Reflecting the resurgence of religious voices, issues such as abortion, homosexuality, stem cell research, and evolutionary theory have stirred intense moral controversies and social conflicts to an extent inconceivable in other Western countries. Typically, those social issues were dominated by religious groups backed by a large Christian population. With respect to the controversy surrounding evolutionary theory, a majority (55%) rejected evolutionary theory and said that God created human beings as we know them today; a mere 13% said that human beings have gone through evolutionary stages, and 27% agreed that human beings experienced evolution under the providence of God.[16]

Americans' ethnocentric patriotism and self-righteous religious moralism have historically formed the unique idea of American exceptionalism. According to this peculiar idea, America is exceptional—in other words, different from other countries—in the sense that it was created and has been maintained on the ideal values of liberty and equality and does not give a priority to realistic interests and power. America is a "city upon a hill" that every nation must look to as the ideal model for civilized and moralized societies. Since the colonial era, American citizens have cherished this self-flattering notion of exceptionalism, thus claiming their moral obligation to spread American ideals globally. America must be a good example for others to imitate, must defend freedom in a country in jeopardy, and must bring freedom to those who have not enjoyed it yet. As long as this kind of exceptionalism drives Americans' self-perception, they continue to believe that U.S. actions on the global stage are not merely for themselves, but for the world generally. They think that U.S. interventions in other countries' issues are indeed well-intended and thus globalist in a positive sense, not unilateralist.

The exceptionalist belief in the virtue of American values and in the infallibility of American practices declined somewhat in the 1970's as a result of internal conflicts surrounding the Vietnam War, the civil rights

movement, and stagflation. But it has resurged in recent years, especially in the aftermath of the 9.11 tragedy. The rise of American exceptionalism culminated in the emergence of neo-conservatives as the dominant actors in American politics and foreign policymaking. Neo-conservatives are hawkish idealists: they believe that America as a chosen noble nation must spread its ideal values of freedom and democracy to every corner of the world and can do so only through a strong exercise of power. Neo-conservatives certainly do not receive unanimous support from American citizens; critics from liberal and moderate camps never hesitate to charge neo-cons with being "extreme" in their policy prescriptions. While neo-conservative foreign policies provoke some thorny criticisms, however, the exceptionalist self-portrait of Americans as the blessed people living in a "city upon a hill" that neo-conservatives re-popularized is today widely accepted by Americans.

As patriotism, religious morals, and exceptionalist beliefs grow more and more, Americans are looking at themselves through a self-centered prism of nationalistic Americanism. About a half century ago, Louis Hartz warned of the dogmatic attitude of Americans believing in the absolute virtue of their liberal tradition and being intolerant of alternative ideas and foreign values.[17] Americans' dogmatism, Hartz argued, stemmed from an excessively high degree of social homogeneity. To be sure, the homogeneous society that Hartz had talked of became a myth in the 1960's and 1970's through a series of serious internal conflicts. Social homogeneity has not been restored in America; rather, political pundits today point out an ever-widening polarization of American society. But, importantly, Americans—Democrats and Republicans alike—are today more nationalistic than, say, ten years ago. Even Democrats, much less patriotic and less religious than Republicans, seem to take global issues from a binary "us-versus-them" point of view. A strong sense of threat by external forces, maximized by the 9.11 terror, must have made American people think and behave more in a collective manner.

III. NATIONALISTIC ROOTS OF ANTI-AMERICANISM IN SOUTH KOREA

The previous two sections show both a fundamental difference and a close similarity between the perceptions of America in South Korea and in the U.S. On one hand, Americans have a very positive perception of

their country, while Koreans' perception of America has turned from highly positive to somewhat negative or at most ambivalent. On the other hand, however, both countries' people increasingly think of America as if it were a unitary entity. South Koreans with an unfavorable sentiment to the U.S. tend to target their animosity toward America as an abstract whole rather than toward specific policies or leaders, and U.S. citizens increasingly cherish the idea that their country in its entirety was blessed by God. Totalizing anti-Americanism in South Korea today bears a close parallel to a similarly sweeping (pro-)Americanism in the U.S.

The public perceptions in the two countries, though contradictory, share the same nationalistic roots. National sentiment toward a foreign country is formed in relative terms, depending on situations in the country. Therefore, it is reasonable to suspect that Koreans' comprehensive negative feeling toward America as a whole has been at least partly driven by growing nationalistic values and attitudes on the side of Americans. It is natural for anti-American people to vent their sweeping anger at America generally, when Americans themselves approach global issues from a simplistic "us-and-them" perspective. Figuring out which came first would be impossible, but nationalistic minds reinforce each other. Intensification of nationalistic Americanism motivates global publics, including Koreans, to regard America as a unitary entity and, if resentful, take a nationalist attitude by criticizing America in its entirety. Totalizing anti-Americanism based on nationalistic values on the part of global publics antagonizes nationalistic Americans who in turn come to ignore all global condemnations, even valid ones, and go it alone. This unilateral attitude of the U.S. further fuels a sweeping unfavorable feeling to the U.S. Nationalistic hostilities between the U.S. and other countries are trapped in a vicious circle.

Certainly, anti-Americanism in Korea has been provoked by many other factors besides nationalistic impulses. There is a long list of short-term and long-term factors that are at least partially responsible for the recent spread of comprehensive uneasy feelings toward America. For one, domestic politics in Korea must have played a role of triggering a torrent of unfavorable sentiment. President Kim Dae Jung pursued an appeasing "sunshine" policy toward North Korea despite the U.S. government's reluctance; he often publicly criticized the U.S. officials' hard-line stance and rhetorically appealed to the Korean public. Then, in the 2002 presidential election, the anti-status quo candidate Roh Moo-Hyun played the (anti-)American card; being anti-American was a vote-getter

in the election in the aftermath of the death of two middle school girls hit by a U.S. armored vehicle. And left-leaning media and citizen groups, in their efforts to shift the society in their direction, relentlessly attacked established politicians and elites for their pro-American orientation. For a while, in 2002 and 2003, the anti-status quo rhetoric by the new President Roh and his supporters sounded almost identical to anti-American slogans. This kind of Korean domestic politics must have contributed to spreading suspicion and anger regarding the U.S. in many parts of Korean society.

Bush's unilateral hawkish foreign policy, marking a contrast to Clinton's softer engagement policy, also must have played a role in spreading unfavorable feelings toward the U.S. His allegedly arrogant unilateralism reminds Koreans of the unequal, U.S.-dominant nature of the bilateral relationship between the two allies. Moreover, in the eyes of his critics, his self-righteous moral stance highlights the hypocrisy or double standard of U.S. policy. Specifically, critics charge, Bush's aggressive posture toward North Korea (e.g., National Missile Defense plan, the Axis of Evil address, preemptive strike policy, disapproval of "sunshine policy") increases a sense of insecurity (both strategic and economic) in the minds of South Koreans who feel Bush does not consider South Korean interests and puts South Korea's security at risk.

Effective as they are to an extent, such short-term factors as domestic politics in Korea or Bush's policies alone could have not aroused such a strong totalizing antipathy among Korean people. American officials may find it politically convenient to attribute the growing anti-Americanism in Korea to calculated political maneuverings by Korean partisan leaders. Similarly, anti-American Koreans may want to make Bush's foreign policies a convenient scapegoat to justify all their angry and uneasy feelings. But, without nationalistic ideology fanning antipathy to a hegemonic Big Brother, domestic politics or U.S. foreign policies would not have been able to trigger a large-scale burst of animosity. Explaining a totalizing hostility to the U.S. generally calls for more fundamental ideological factors.

In an effort to find a fundamental factor for anti-Americanism in South Korea, some may argue that a political distrust thesis is supported. A growing public distrust of government and politics is likely to lead to a similar level of distrust of a dominant foreign country that, as a partner of the incumbent government, symbolizes a primary absolute power and authority. According to a Pew Center survey, there has indeed been a

rapid deterioration in the Korean public trust in government and politics. Eighty-one percent of the South Korean respondents said that the government was usually inefficient and wasteful.[18] Among the 41 countries surveyed on this issue, Korea was the third worst, after only Brazil (84%) and Italy (82%). To quote a Pew Center report, "South Koreans also disapprove of the political changes that have taken place over the last five years, a period marked by corruption scandals, economic problems and rising tensions with North Korea. Fewer than four-in-ten South Koreans (37%) approve of recent political changes, while a majority (56%) disapproves".[19]

There seems to be a correlation between this distrust/dissatisfaction and anti-American sentiment. Political distrust/dissatisfaction is stronger among those who are younger, more highly educated, liberal, urban residents with higher income and those who belong to organized groups (blue collar, white collar, and students). These are the very people who harbor a greater degree of anti-Americanism, too, as Table 2 above shows. Anti-political feelings might have been transformed into anti-Americanism, since many arguably believe that the Korean establishment (government officials and politicians) is close to and even controlled by the U.S. Anti-political feelings may beget general hostility toward any authority in control of large parts of social life, and this general anti-establishment and anti-authority sentiment may promote a comprehensive negativity toward the U.S. with its dominating influences on Korean society.

The political distrust thesis, however, only partially explains the recent rise in Korea of unfavorable sentiment toward the U.S. Few would deem the current ruling regime as a close friend of the U.S.: President Roh was elected largely thanks to his anti-status quo and anti-U.S. promises, and his administration's policies have repeatedly irritated Washington officials. His supporters—ruling party members and liberal groups—even more explicitly express their reservations about the close historical brotherhood between the two countries. Considering this uneasy, tense and sometimes even tumultuous relationship between the current Korean government and the U.S., it would be difficult to reason that Korean people's distrust of their own government and politics naturally generated their unfavorable attitudes toward the U.S. as a main sponsor of the government and real power holder.

All in all, nationalist movements and a nationalistic public mood seem to provide the most fundamental driving force for the recent anti-Americanism in Korea. Without nationalist influences, other short-term

situations would have not been able to turn the Korean mindset in such a rapid and massive fashion. In fact, Korean society in the 2000's was ready for nationalistic impulses to revive; several conditions have been sufficiently met. For one, Koreans have a time-honored tradition of anti-foreign sentiment as a result of humiliating historical experiences. They were under Chinese hegemonic control for several hundred years, and then Korea became a helpless arena for fierce imperialistic competitions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War effectively ended the long Korean history of monarchical rule and put the Korean peninsula under Japanese colonialism (1910–1945). The post-WWII Korea then has been divided and dominantly influenced by the U.S. and the Soviet Union, with the southern half of the peninsula as a peripheral state in the U.S. bloc and the northern counterpart as a satellite state in the Communist bloc.

Seen from this long historical perspective, anti-Americanism may be just a part or extension of a broader anti-foreign sentiment. According to Chaibong Hahm, "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".[20] Some form of antipathy to the most dominating foreign power of the day—whether it is the U.S. or China or Japan—has been and will always be present. Anti-foreign sentiment may be an inseparable part of the Korean national psyche that ceaselessly calls for the presence of a certain wicked "them" to mirror and unite the innocent "us" of the Korean people.

But Korean nationalism is not merely a reflection of time-honored anti-foreign sentiment. It is also a product of more recent trends. Without some recent factors, it would be impossible to explain why an overwhelming pro-American sentiment so rapidly and massively deteriorated and why so much hostility erupts today, but did not, say, in the early 1980's, when many South Koreans believed the U.S. government was a crucial accomplice in Presidents Park's and Chun's authoritarian rules. Some recent events or social trends other than a historical anti-foreign psyche inherited from the distant past must have awakened and fueled the previously dormant anti-American sentiment.

One such social trend underlying the recent antipathy to America is the coming of the post-Cold War era. During the Cold War, South Koreans had to seriously worry about military aggressions from the North and had a strong incentive to maintain friendly ties with their powerful

defense ally (the U.S.). Fear of Communist threats had naturally generated a firm pro-American mood. But the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of North Korea in economic as well as military capabilities significantly reduced a sense of security threat in the minds of South Koreans. Especially since the 2000 North-South Summit, North Korea has been seen as a poor relative begging for help from a richer South Korea. These changed situations alleviated the half-century-old anti-Communist hostility and consequently ushered in nationalism as a new ideology filling the vacuum and uniting the society: "the discourse of nationalism, hitherto relegated to a secondary status, began to resurface."[21] Anti-American sentiment is a natural component of this newly rising nationalism.

Closely related to the post-Cold War situation is a substantial progress in democratization since 1987. A relatively freer social atmosphere now allowed a long-forbidden nationalistic revisionist reinterpretation of Korean history to go public, fueling resentment toward the many historical roles the U.S. played in regard to Korea. A long list of U.S. government actions—especially those in relation to the Katsura-Taft agreement (1905), the division of Korea along the 38 degree latitude (1945), the military rule of the southern half of the Korean peninsula (1945–48), the Korean War (1950–53), and tacit support for the past repressive regimes—became vulnerable to revisionist accusations and nationalist anger. Some may say that anti-Americanism was an inevitable outgrowth of democratic advancement in a country where only an official beautified image of the U.S. had been allowed previously.

The respectable economic success of South Korea in the 1980's and 1990's was another social trend that helped nationalistic anti-American feelings to grow. It boosted a sense of confidence and national pride among South Koreans and lessened a once-dominant motivation to rely on the U.S. for economic assistance. As the South Korean economy soared, the U.S. began to be often seen as a competitor, not a benevolent sponsor as it used to be. The increased trade conflicts between the U.S. and a rising Korean economy bolstered many newly-proud Koreans' antipathy toward U.S. trade policy in particular and America's hegemonic status in general.

The nationalistic mood was not merely a product of economic success; ironically, it was also fueled by terrible economic failures. While making considerable economic achievements through the 1990's, South

Korea also suffered through some tough adaptation problems in its transition from a state-led economy to a globalized free-market system. This transition, far from smooth, amplified a sense of irritation and often confusion among a large number of ordinary Korean citizens. The eventual financial debacle and the IMF bailout in 1997 and 1998 were seen as a national shame, spreading a sense of humiliation and helplessness across the society. South Koreans, now suddenly in bankruptcy, felt resentful toward the IMF and its leading nation, the U.S., for globalization-inflicted problems and their encroaching on the economic independence of South Korea in return for the IMF bailout. Regardless of whether this national resentment of the IMF and the U.S. was justifiable or not, globalization and its concomitant negative consequences helped arouse nationalistic sentiment in South Korea and thereby provided a favorable condition for animosity to the U.S. to grow.

A combination of the above social trends—the coming of the post-Cold War, democratization, economic success, globalization and its adaptation crisis—have promoted a strong nationalist atmosphere in South Korea since the 1990's. Today nationalism has surged as the dominant ideology leading the Korean public psyche. Among the Pew-surveyed Asian countries, South Korea was near the top, only slightly behind Indonesia, in the percentage of respondents agreeing that their way of life needed to be protected against foreign influences: Indonesia 87%, South Korea 82%, Philippines 81%, Bangladesh 77%, India 76%, Pakistan 71%, China 64%, and Japan 63%.[22] A historic change of the Korean national mood from a highly pro-American to somewhat ambivalent to negative status was possible only with this backdrop of strong nationalist values: "A rise in anti-Americanism might be a component in the natural path of South Korea's graduation from a client state to a dynamic and vibrant member of the international community".[23] The U.S., the single global superpower and the long-time dominant patron of South Korea that has prevailed in most aspects of the U.S.-R.O.K. relations, becomes a natural target for nationalistic resentment. Moreover, the recent re-strengthening of nationalistic Americanism on the side of Americans furthers the anti-American sentiment of global publics and especially instigates a totalizing animosity targeting the U.S. as a whole, as the South Korean case exemplifies.

CONCLUSION

This article reveals a curious characteristic of anti-American sentiment in South Korea: the abstract object of America in general rather than its specific aspects is a main target of unfavorable feelings. Nationalism, rising as a dominant ideology in Korea as a result of several social trends, domestic politics, and unilateral U.S. foreign policy, is driving a sweeping negativity toward America as a hegemonic Big Brother. And the re-surging nationalistic Americanism among Americans sanctifying themselves as a chosen people living in a 'city upon a hill' is further fanning a totalizing animosity toward the U.S. Firm nationalist impulses in both Korea and the U.S. underlie the surprising anti-Americanism and comprehensive hostility toward America in its entirety in South Korea, once undoubtedly the closest ally of the U.S.

Unless people in both societies overcome their nationalistic obsession, the future of the U.S.-R.O.K. relationship is not likely to be very bright. Koreans and Americans are bound to overly exaggerate the virtue of their own values and practices and intensify unfavorable attitudes toward the other side. Nationalistically-driven people have a distorted negative perception of others and keep a rosy mythical perception of themselves. Perverted perceptions reinforce each other. Anti-Americanism in South Korea in turn reverberates back through anti-Koreanism among Americans who might feel betrayed about being disliked for their arguably benign policies. Negative feelings escalate in a vicious cycle. Unless the clashing perceptions of America, a natural by-product of nationalistic fervors in Korea and the U.S., disappear, they would pose a real threat to the U.S.-Korea relationship in particular as well as to the broader trans-Pacific relations.

Whom and what to blame? It is not easy to pinpoint a cause of the growing anti-American sentiment globally. Efforts to narrow down on a particular cause could easily fizzle down to a blame game. Some sweepingly attribute the escalating hostility between Americans and anti-American global publics to problems on the side of the U.S.—its hegemonic influences and power, ethnocentric moralist values, and unilateral actions.[24] Others find a root cause of the global clash of contradictory perceptions and antipathies on the side of complaining non-U.S. countries—their economic distress, social instability, political upheaval, identity crisis, partisan demagogy, extreme tribalism, and even pure jealousy.[25] The two camps seem trapped in a stalemate continuing their

blame game with no real conversation, let alone a conclusion. This article finds an implication from the South Korean case: ethnocentric nationalist ideologies tend to blind the people in their perception of other countries. Only overcoming extreme nationalistic feelings would allow us—Koreans, Americans, and other global publics alike—to approach international relations in a rational and balanced manner.

NOTES

[1] *Korea Times*, 9 May 2003.
[2] Pew Research Center, *Views of a Changing World*, June 2003, 4.
[3] Ibid., 24.
[4] Pew Research Center, *What the World Thinks in 2002*, November 2002, 60.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Pew Research Center, 2003a, 22.
[7] *Joongang Daily*, 22 September 2003, A4.
[8] Jean-Francois Revel, *Anti-Americanism* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2002), 143.
[9] Stanley A. Renshon, ed., *One America? Political Leadership, National Identity, and the Dilemmas of Diversity* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2001); Michael Lind, *The Next American Nation: the New Nationalism and the Fourth of American Revolution* (N.Y.: Free Press, 1995).
[10] Pew Research Center, *Evenly Divided and Increasingly Polarized: 2004 Political Landscape*, November, 2003, 33.
[11] Ibid., 28.
[12] Pew, *Views*, 22–23.
[13] Pew, *Evenly*, 28.
[14] Ibid., 65.
[15] NYT/CBS Poll Paper Release 2004/11/18–21, 32.
[16] NYT/CBS Poll Paper Release 2004/11/18–21, 28.
[17] Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1995).
[18] Pew, *Views*, 109.
[19] Ibid., 65.
[20] Chaibong Hahm, "Anti-Americanism, Korean Style," in *Anti-Americanism in Korea: Closing Perception Gaps, Issues & Insights*, Pacific Forum CSIS, Vol. 3, No 5, July 2003, 20.
[21] Ibid., 16.
[22] Pew, *Views*, 94.
[23] Seung-Hwan Kim, "Anti-Americanism in Korea," *Washington Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (Winter 2002), 115.
[24] Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance* (N.Y.: Metropolitical Books, 2003); Tami Davis and Sean Lynn-Jones, "City upon a Hill," *Foreign Policy*, 66 (Spring, 1987); James Morone, "In God's Name," *American Prospect*, May 2003; Fareed Zakaria, "The Arrogant Empire," *Newsweek*, 24 March 2003.
[25] Fouad Ajami, "The Falseness of Anti-Americanism," *Foreign Policy*, 1 September 2003.; Russell Berman, *Anti-Americanism in Europe: A Cultural Problem* (Hoover

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