

**JOINT U.S. – KOREA ACADEMIC STUDIES**

**Volume 14, 2004**

---

**The United States and South Korea:  
Reinvigorating the Partnership**

**Symposium Sponsored by  
The Asia/Pacific Research Center,  
Stanford University  
The Korea Economic Institute, and  
The Korea Institute for International Economic Policy  
October 22–24, 2003**

# CONTENTS

<b>Preface</b> .....	vii
<b>The United States and South Korea: An Alliance under Stress</b>	
Reality and Image of the U.S.-Korea Relationship Choi Jang-jip .....	1
From Collective Defense to Security Co-Management Park Tong-whan .....	13
<b>The United States and North Korea: Containment or Engagement?</b>	
The U.S.-D.P.R.K. Nuclear Standoff Samuel S. Kim .....	41
Coping with the North Korean Quagmire Moon Chung-in .....	65
<b>U.S.-South Korea Economic Relations</b>	
The Strategic Importance of U.S.-Korea Economic Relations Marcus Noland .....	79
Korea-U.S. Economic Relations Bark Tae-ho .....	103
Seoul: Regional Realities and Global Ambitions Eric Heikkila .....	139
<b>Silicon Valley and South Korea: Deepening the High Tech Partnership</b>	
Prospects for Korean Start-up Companies and Cooperation with Silicon Valley Seong So-mi .....	159
<b>Anti-Americanism in Korea: Myth and Reality</b>	
The Roots of Anti-Americanism in Korean Society Lee Sook-jong .....	183
“Anti-Americanism” in the Republic of Korea Bruce Cumings .....	205
Commentary Kim Won-ho .....	230
<b>U.S.-Korea Relations: Where Do We Go from Here?</b>	
George Shultz .....	233
Ahn Choong-yong .....	241
<b>Keynote Speech</b>	
Ahn Choong-yong .....	249

## **ANTI-AMERICANISM IN KOREAN SOCIETY: A SURVEY-BASED ANALYSIS**

*Lee Sook-jong\**

### **CONTENTS**

- I. Introduction: Winter of Discontent
- II. Characteristics of Contemporary Anti-Americanism  
in Korean Society
- III. Sources of Rising Anti-Americanism in Korean Society
- IV. South Korean Attitudes toward the United States
- V. Recommendations for a Sustainable U.S.-Korea Alliance

---

*\* Lee Sook-jong is a Senior Research Fellow at the Sejong Institute in Korea and is a Visiting Fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., from September 2003 until June 2004.*

## I. Introduction: Winter of Discontent

The year 2003 marks the 50th anniversary of the U.S.-Korea alliance, which has been one of the strongest bilateral security alliances in the world. The armed forces of the United Nations, led by the U.S. Army, fought in the Korean War, during which U.S. losses were placed at more than 54,000 dead and 103,000 wounded.<sup>1</sup> With the armistice agreement signed on 27 July 1953, the United States and the Republic of Korea (ROK) concluded their mutual defense treaty, and the United States Forces Korea (USFK) has since played the pivotal role of deterring aggression from North Korea. Under the security blanket provided by the USFK, South Korea has been able to achieve its rapid economic development. The alliance fostered a deep sense of security among Koreans as their national security was strongly linked to that of the United States. From the U.S. perspective, South Korea was a success story that repaid the United States for its commitment and support with, first, an economic miracle and, later, successful democratization.

If one views the anti-U.S. rallies of November and December 2002 in Seoul, dubbed the “candlelight protests,” from this proud history, a sea change has occurred. No doubt many U.S. citizens must have been shocked and angered by the sight of their Stars and Stripes being torn and burned in the streets. Many Koreans themselves were also embarrassed and surprised to witness these unprecedented protests that mobilized many youth and ordinary citizens to downtown streets. Most astonishing, the tide of anti-Americanism did not subside when North Korea reissued its nuclear threats. South Korea’s anti-Americanism also helped the progressive candidate win the Presidential election of 19 December 2002. In the past, security threats from the North would have made Koreans favor a conservative candidate and seek solidarity with the United States. In 2002, however, a pro-U.S. image was a burden in the election.

At the root of the sweeping anti-U.S. rallies was the late November acquittal of two U.S. soldiers responsible for the deaths of two schoolgirls during a training exercise on 13 June 2002.<sup>2</sup> There was a general outcry from the public, and a national coalition focusing on this case was established. A protest rally in front of the military base led by civic organizations grew into a continuous mass rally at Kwang-hwa-mun Plaza in

---

1. The 54,000 may include prisoners and/or nonbattle deaths. Dupuy (1993, 1365–6) states, “U.S. casualties were 33,629 killed and 103,284 wounded.” An accompanying table says 10,218 were prisoners or missing and 20,617 were nonbattle deaths.

2. After separate trials, the driver and the commander of the armored mine-clearing vehicle—both sergeants—were found not guilty on charges of negligent homicide. Following these rulings on 20 and 23 November 2002, mass rallies protesting their acquittals began.

downtown Seoul, where thousands of students, religious groups, and ordinary citizens participated in an ongoing candlelight protest. Neither President George W. Bush's indirect apology through the U.S. ambassador to Korea nor the apologies by other top U.S. government officials could subdue the public outrage. A later apology by President Bush to President Kim Dae-jung during a telephone conversation was regarded as too late to appease the outcry. The protests then focused on the revision of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) to guarantee the mandate that the USFK concede its jurisdiction over crimes committed by U.S. troops while they perform their duties on Korean soil.

By the spring of 2003, anti-Americanism in South Korea was ebbing gradually for several reasons. First, the Roh Moo-hyun government moved to a more conventional pro-U.S. stance by keeping anti-U.S. but loyal Roh supporters at bay. President Roh pushed Korea's National Assembly to pass a bill dispatching Korean noncombat troops to Iraq despite opposition from his own party and the grass roots. President Roh's visit to the United States in mid-May was generally regarded as a success because it restored warm relations between the two countries. Second, but more important, the Pentagon's initiative to relocate and potentially reduce the USFK effectively turned the tide of anti-Americanism.<sup>3</sup> This unexpected debate, first broached officially before the Senate Armed Services Committee on 13 February 2003 by U.S. Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld but circulated much earlier, took the wind out of anti-U.S. rallies. Talks to relocate and reduce the U.S. Army in Korea have been under way since 8 April 2003 under the rubric, "Future of the Alliance's Policy Initiative." Many Koreans believed that this sudden move to realign the USFK reflected U.S. discontent with South Korea's anti-Americanism, but U.S. officials emphasize that the purpose of realignment is to modernize the alliance by enhancing the deterrence capability of the combined defense.

Were the candlelight protests merely another episode of mass rallies in Korea? Like the cheers of jubilant Korean youth and their elders who took to the streets during the June 2002 World Cup, are these frequent anti-U.S. rallies, big and small, simply ephemeral events? The answer is no. Anti-Americanism in South Korea was increasing throughout the 1990s, and the protests of the winter of 2002–03 simply tapped this reservoir of unease and antagonism toward the United States. Because the U.S.-

---

3. The first phase of the realignment of forces proposed by the Bush administration in mid-2003 includes base consolidation and relocation. The number of bases will decrease from 40 to 25. Of bases near the demilitarized zone (DMZ), 15 bases will be decreased to two major bases—Camps Casey and Red Cloud. Fourteen thousand Second Infantry Division troops will be shifted away from the DMZ-Seoul area to south of the Han River. Forces will be consolidated at the major air hub of Osan-Pyeongtaek and the major navel hub at Chinhae-Pusan. Seven thousand troops of the Eighth Army at Yongsan will relocate farther south, outside of Seoul.

Korea alliance has been the one of the most important alliances to the United States and the most crucial alliance to South Korea, anti-Americanism in Korean society begs more serious attention from academics and policymakers. Although the majority of Koreans see the necessity of maintaining the alliance with the United States, anti-Americanism is clearly working toward the potential decline of public support for the alliance.

## **II. Characteristics of Contemporary Anti-Americanism in Korean Society**

### *Korean Anti-Americanism*

Today's anti-Americanism in Korean society can be distinguished from anti-Americanism found in other countries. First, it is not a reactionary movement based on a marginalized national psyche or isolation from the benefits of globalization—a common explanation for anti-Americanism in the Middle East. South Korea has been a model country that has benefited greatly from being an active player in the global trade and telecommunication revolution. The Korean version of anti-Americanism demonstrates that even a winner in the globalized economy can turn to anti-Americanism. Second, Korean anti-Americanism is not essentially cultural or religious (Shin 1996, 787–803). Christianity is one of the leading religions in South Korea, and English is the most popular foreign language and, in fact, is a key to educational and professional success. Affluent Koreans are vigorous consumers of U.S.-style food and popular culture. The traditional values of Confucianism do clash with Western values from time to time, but most Koreans comfortably reconcile those values. In particular, the Western values of openness, individualism, and pluralism are increasingly finding a permanent place in the social norms of Korean society.

Today's anti-Americanism in Korean society is largely political, arising from bilateral U.S.-Korea relations. Increasing unilateralism in the foreign policy espoused by the Bush administration negatively affects the minds of not only Europeans but also Koreans. Most ordinary Koreans feel U.S. dominance in international politics in a rather remote way; Koreans tend to see U.S. dominance most clearly in the perceived imbalance in U.S.-Korean bilateral relations. The perception of U.S. strength vis-à-vis South Korea is intensified when the affected party is a poor Korean farmer protesting the opening of the rice market, a prostitute murdered by an American GI, and schoolgirls killed by U.S. tanks. These events—aided by other forces to be discussed shortly—helped produce increasing public resentment against perceived U.S. dominance over South Korea.

Asymmetrical power relations are inevitable when a country forges a bilateral relationship with the world's most powerful country. What is unique in the case of South Korea is the fact that the material bases for the power gap with the United States have changed dramatically. When South Korea concluded a military alliance with the United States in 1953, South Korea was a country devastated by war as well as a country with extreme, chronic poverty and chaotic politics. By the late 1980s, however, South Korea had become an affluent society and even became a member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in the early 1990s. Furthermore, a democratic transition followed economic success, and Korean democracy is being consolidated despite some growing pains. Experiencing a dramatic change in Korea's national status, many Koreans today seek recognition and respect from Korea's longtime patron, the United States. Long secure from imminent threat from North Korea and materially comfortable, Koreans have begun to question their identity vis-à-vis the United States and weigh their own national interest as an independent country. This postsuccess new nationalism seems to be more salient than inter-Korean, one-race-of-people nationalism in explaining Korean attitudes toward the United States in 2003.

### ***New Forms of Anti-Americanism in Korean Society***

Today's anti-Americanism in Korea is also different from Korea's anti-Americanism of the past. Despite strong suppression, anti-Americanism took root in Korean society after the post-Yushin, Park Chung-hee era in 1980 and expanded during the subsequent Chun Doo-hwan era. The earliest form of anti-Americanism was initiated by university students and some progressives who came to acquire an imperialist worldview during the 1970s. Their ideological bent was that of the neo-Marxist or dependency schools of Third World nationalism that were mainly concerned about the economic disparities between rich and poor nations.

The most serious form of anti-Americanism formed as part of the democratization struggle after the Kwang-ju incident in 1980. The idea that the United States supported a dictatorial government for the sake of political stability and security was widely accepted during the latter period of the Park regime in the 1970s. Nevertheless, the occasional tensions that the nationalistic President Park was creating with the United States put some limits on the parallel development of the anti-Park democratization struggle and anti-U.S. sentiment. The United States was still expected to play a check-and-balance role vis-à-vis the dictatorial Park regime when political oppression was severe. It was the 1980 Kwang-ju incident, however, and the continued support of the Chun regime by the United States that made the anti-U.S. movement an integral part of Korea's democratization struggle. Many Koreans believed that General John A. Wickham of the United States granted Chun's 26 May 1980 request to release the

Korean Army's Twentieth Division to put down the rebellion in Kwang-ju. These people held the United States partly responsible for the massacre of hundreds of Kwang-ju citizens.<sup>4</sup>

The anti-U.S. movement of the 1980s relied on student activism, and the protests led by students nearly always involved violence. Militant students made several highly publicized stormings of U.S. government properties, including the U.S. Information Service in downtown Seoul. Student movements during the 1980s were led by strong leftist and nationalist ideologues who were anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian, and anti-American. The United States was condemned as an ally of the dictatorial Korean government and Korean conglomerates, both of which were accused of oppressing the Korean masses (*minjung*). Although some leftists and dissidents joined with the students in their anti-U.S. protests, the great majority of Koreans were worried about and opposed student radicalism against the United States. National security was still the overriding concern of Korean citizens, and the perceived U.S. negligence in the democratization struggle did not develop into popular anti-Americanism.

What distinguishes anti-Americanism in Korea since the 1990s is that it is now based in a large segment of Korean society:

- The major actors involved in the anti-U.S. movements are no longer radical university students or dissidents. Participants in anti-U.S. rallies are usually ordinary citizens;
- Established nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—essentially voluntary groups with grassroots membership—are often active in advocating issues and organizing street rallies; focusing on specific issues, they are often guided by a general principle such as environmental protection or protection of human rights;
- Anti-Americanism in Korean society is fundamentally a generational phenomenon; younger people in their 20s and 30s most easily identify with being against the United States; and
- Social problems centering on the USFK are the current focus of organized anti-U.S. rallies and popular anti-U.S. feelings; issues that are raised frequently are related to the USFK—the revision of the SOFA; U.S. soldiers assaulting bar hostesses in camp towns; pollution by the USFK; noisy bombing drills at the

---

4. Nine years after the Kwang-ju incident, in June 1989, the U.S. government issued a statement emphasizing that the United States was never responsible for the slaughter because “neither troops of the Korean Special Warfare Command (SWC) nor elements of the Twentieth Division, employed by the Martial Law Command in Kwang-ju” were under the Korean-U.S. Combined Forces Command (CFC) operational command. The United States said it “had neither prior knowledge of the deployment of SWC forces to Kwang-ju nor responsibility for the actions here” (Kim 1989, 762).

Maehyang-ri camp; and the irksome presence of the U.S. base, Yongsan, in the center of Seoul.

### **III. Sources of Rising Anti-Americanism in Korean Society**

There are three major sources of rising anti-Americanism in Korean society: demographic change, the democratization of Korean society, and the changing threat perception and consequent revision of security norms since the inter-Korean rapprochement.

#### ***Demographic Change***

In 2000, the total population of South Korea was approximately 46 million; 29 percent of the total was under the age of 20 and, therefore, could not vote. The age breakdown of the adult population of approximately 35 million was: 17.3 percent aged 20–29, 18 percent aged 30–39, 15.1 percent aged 40–49, 9.4 percent aged 50–59, and 11.2 percent aged 60 and over. The generation gap is a key to understanding attitudinal differences among Koreans because cultural and political differences among generations are obvious (Kim 2002, 109–22). Various polls reveal that the younger generation tends to be more politically progressive and culturally liberal.

The generation gap in South Korean attitudes toward the United States reflects the rapid historical change in South Korea itself. Koreans aged 20–29 are in the generation of affluence and democratization. They were nurtured under prosperous parents and spent their childhoods in an increasingly liberalized and democratized society. Koreans aged 30–39—the so-called 3-8-6 generation, meaning those who were born during the 1960s, who spent their rebellious youth in the oppressive 1980s under the authoritarian regime of Chun Doo-hwan, and who turned 30 during the 1990s—are the most progressive. They were young students, some already in college, during the notorious Kwang-ju incident of May 1980; and they experienced the successful transition to democratization in 1987 made possible by massive popular uprisings. Koreans aged 40–49 also share the spirit of Korea's democratization struggle against the authoritarian regimes of Park Chung-hee and Chun, but they are more realistic and pragmatic as scions of successful modernization of 1960s and 1970s. Koreans aged 50–59 have memories of the Korean War and the time of their poverty-stricken youth. Koreans aged 60 and over represent the hardship generation that had to survive under the turbulent circumstances of colonial rule, post-independence chaos, and war.

These radically different life experiences determined by decades of life significantly affect Korean attitudes toward the United States. Younger Koreans—those aged 10–19 and 20–29—feel a cultural affinity with the United States. Eating Western

food, enjoying U.S. popular culture, and globaltrotting via the Internet, they are the most internationalized generation. Although they view the United States as a strong and important country, they also view it as an object of equal partnership. Rejecting the hierarchical relationships at home, they tend to see international relationships horizontally. The anti-U.S. reactions of this generation should be distinguished from any ideologically oriented anti-Americanism of older generations. In contrast, Koreans aged 50 and over view the United States as a savior that has deterred the aggression of the Communist North ever since the Korean War. Attitudes of middle-aged Koreans toward the United States are ambivalent and divided. While they recognize the U.S. contribution to their peace and prosperity, its implicit support of their past dictatorial regimes and its seeming indifference in their past democratization struggles are ingrained in their memories.

Statistics demonstrate the sheer political weight of the younger generation. Two-thirds of Korea's population is under the age of 40. Korean voters are roughly divided into two groups: younger voters in their 20s and 30s and older voters in their 40s and older. In the most recent Presidential election, Korean voters in their 40s were regarded as the pivotal age group. As the part of the population that is ambiguously aspiring to both stability and reform, Koreans in their 40s can be a critical mass in the delicate political balance between the younger and older generations.

Younger Koreans are better equipped to express their political opinions and mobilize for political actions. Korea's highly developed information technology infrastructure has made the Internet an essential means of communication for most younger Koreans. Seemingly trivial issues such as criticism of Koreans' dog eating and unfair rules in international sports create popular anti-U.S. sentiments. Cyberspace has become a very effective political space where younger Koreans can be mobilized for specific issues. Although this kind of anti-Americanism comes and goes and lacks a specific political agenda, it can easily escalate, and its influence is strong enough to have meaningful political repercussions. A salient example is the sudden burst of anti-Americanism during the 2002 Winter Olympics when a popular Korean skater and gold medal contender, Kim Dong-song, was disqualified in the final lap, allowing a U.S. opponent, Anton Ohno, to win the gold. Many Koreans, especially younger ones, felt that the disqualification was somehow intentional, especially given the fact that it was made in response to a gesture of complaint by Ohno. An anti-Ohno Web page was immediately created, and Korean netizens vigorously protested the judge's decision. A satirical anti-U.S. song was soon written, and it became popular even among primary-school children.

Because the political influence of younger Koreans has been growing, building a good image and developing trust toward the United States among younger Koreans appears to be the most immediate challenge in maintaining strong U.S.-Korean relations.

### ***Democratization and Power Shift***

Under authoritarian regimes, the police and intelligence agencies suppressed the expression of anti-Americanism, and it was denounced as being an act of subversion. The agencies, in fact, tied it to the “dangerous” forces of leftists or ultra-nationalists who ultimately served the interests of North Korea. After the three popularly elected governments of Roh Tae-woo (1988–93), Kim Young-sam (1993–98), and Kim Dae-jung (1998–2003), however, the democratization of Korean society provided opportunities for minority groups to raise their voices and diverse social groups to participate in major public policy processes. In particular, civic groups in Korea have emerged as watchdogs against the use of excessive or unfair powers. Thus, security policy is no longer reserved for public elites in the government and the military who, in fact, have begun to question the U.S. and Korean governments on deals to purchase U.S. weapons. Civic groups have also raised the issues of the lax treatment of U.S. soldiers accused of crimes and pollution problems (Moon 2003).

One of democratization’s important effects on U.S.-Korean relations is that progressive political forces have controlled power during recent years. Demands for participatory democracy and an equitable society remain strong despite the costly process of trial and error produced by a decade-long reform drive. Conservative parties and politicians who traditionally favor the United States have not effectively accommodated these popular demands in their political agendas and have lost two presidential elections.

Democratization in terms of a power shift is critical to bringing about significant change in U.S.-Korea relations. The entry into government and politics of left-wing leaders has become conspicuous in recent years. Former dissidents, civic leaders, and intellectuals from the nonelite track have begun to hold numerous public positions, and they have become part of the policy process. These new leaders tend to keep their distance from both the traditional establishment and the United States. Because of the lack of communication between them and U.S. officials, U.S.-Korea relations have been strained recently.

### ***Security Norm Changes***

Security norms in contemporary Korean society are in flux. Perceptions of North Korea and of the policy of the South Korean government toward the North show the clearest cleavage between conservatives and progressives and also between the two major parties: the ruling party and the most important opposition party. This cleavage on North Korea-related issues is evolving into different security norms and thus, ultimately, into a different U.S.-Korea alliance (Bong 2003, 18–29). The inter-Korean rapprochement following the 15 June 2000 summit between President Kim Dae-jung and North Korean leader Kim Jong-il changed popular perceptions of North Korea

among South Koreans. Many Koreans now view North Korea as having neither the willingness nor the capacity to wage a war against the South. The image of North Korea as a nation of one race of people has strengthened while the perception of the North as an enemy state has weakened. The perception of a diminished threat against the South from the North has not only reduced the value of the U.S. troops as a deterrent against the North's aggression but also created a divergence between the United States and South Korea on how to respond to the current nuclear threat posed by North Korea.

The current nuclear standoff further strengthened the South's uneasy feelings toward the U.S. government. South Koreans had previously feared a Communist takeover by the North, but today the fear is over a new kind of war involving a military conflict between the United States and North Korea. The nuclear ventures of North Korea, in both 1993–94 and 2003–04, have prompted the United States to consider the possibility of surgical strikes on nuclear facilities in North Korea. When the nuclear crisis in 1993 led to the brink of war, South Koreans blamed North Korea exclusively. In the current situation, in contrast, many Koreans have come to subscribe to the idea that the danger of war is being exacerbated by the Bush administration's hard-line policy against North Korea. Since exchange and cooperation in economic and social arenas expanded following the June 2000 summit, many Koreans now seek the dividends of peace and wish to avoid a return to the Cold War on the peninsula. Furthermore, the geopolitical fact that nearly half of the population of Seoul and the adjacent Kyung-Ki province are within striking distance of North Korea's 12,000 artillery tubes makes even the most conservative Koreans worry about the Bush administration's tough stance against North Korea.

The ongoing talks on relocating and/or reducing USFK troops have contributed to quieting the anti-U.S. protesters. More Koreans have become sensitive to any influence that the anti-U.S. protests could have on those talks. U.S. relocation of the Second Infantry Division from the DMZ farther toward the southern part of South Korea and a reduction of the division's size would immediately increase public support for maintaining the USFK in South Korea. Over the long term, however, relocating the division would damage the Korean public trust of the U.S. commitment to South Korea's national security. Because Korean society has been divided politically in many aspects, maintaining such trust through the demonstration of a solid U.S. commitment to South Korea's defense will be important in preventing the USFK from becoming a political agenda item.

## IV. South Korean Attitudes toward the United States

### *General Population*

According to the Pew Research Center (2002), South Korea ranked eighth among the 44 countries surveyed in terms of unfavorable attitudes toward the United States. Only 53 percent of South Koreans had a favorable view of the United States; 44 percent were unfavorably inclined. The survey was conducted from 28 July to 10 August 2002, which was months before Korea's anti-Americanism intensified as a result of the deaths of two schoolgirls and the subsequent acquittal of the U.S. soldiers accused of their deaths. Compared with six other Asian countries, South Korea's favorability rating vis-à-vis the United States was lower than the Philippines (90 percent), Japan (72 percent), Vietnam (71 percent), Indonesia (61 percent), and India (54 percent). Only Bangladesh (45 percent) had a lower percentage favoring the United States. The 1999–2000, 58 percent voiced favorable attitudes toward the United States, not much higher than in 2002. Thus, for the past few years, the percentage of Koreans favoring the United States has been consistently low. Another striking result of the survey was South Korea's perception of unilateralism on the part of the United States and its opposition to the U.S.-led war on terrorism. Almost three-quarters, 73 percent, of South Koreans thought of U.S. foreign policy as unilateral in the sense that it does not adequately address the concerns of other countries, and 72 percent of South Koreans opposed the U.S.-led war on terrorism. These survey data provided U.S. opinion leaders with ready evidence of South Korea's anti-Americanism.

Many surveys reveal that Korean attitudes toward the United States have deteriorated. For example, a questionnaire survey by the Samsung Economic Research Institute (SERI 2003), conducted among 1,500 Koreans during January 2003, found that Koreans who have favorable feelings toward the United States dropped by 11 percent (from 36 percent to 24.5 percent) over the two years from 2001 to 2003. In addition, Koreans with negative feelings toward the United States increased by 20 percent over the same period (from 21.7 percent to 41.9 percent).<sup>5</sup>

A survey conducted by the newspaper *JoongAng Ilbo* in June 2003 (*JoongAng Ilbo* 2003b) showed, however, that Korean attitudes toward the United States actually had improved from their nadir in mid-December of 2002—when candlelight rallies protesting the deaths of two schoolgirls and demanding the revision of SOFA were in full swing. In December 2002 (*JoongAng Ilbo* 2002) a poll of 1,030 Koreans showed that 64

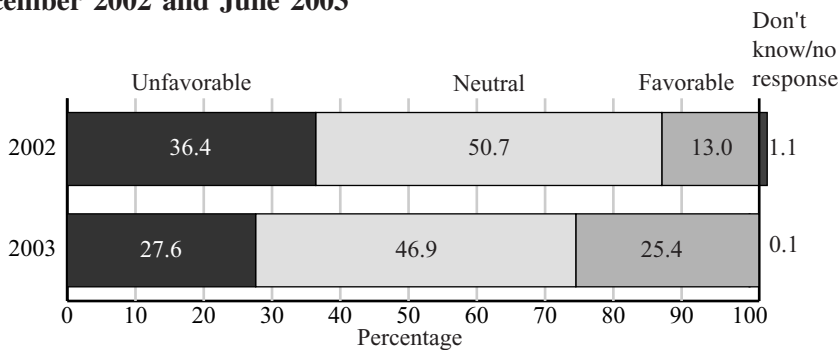
---

5. Koreans who answered that they don't have any special feeling about the United States decreased from 42.3 percent to 33.6 percent.

percent of Koreans supported full revision of the U.S.-Korea SOFA. After six months, the *JoongAng Ilbo* poll showed the proportion declined to 29 percent.<sup>6</sup>

The image of the United States in Korea was also improving (*Figure 1*). In mid-December 2002, 36.4 percent of those surveyed felt the United States was “unfavorable,” while only 13.0 percent viewed the United States as being “favorable.” Half—50.7 percent—chose the middle point of 5 on a scale of 1–10. By June of 2003, however, only 27.6 percent answered that the United States was “bad,” while 25.4 percent answered the United States was “good.” Fewer—46.9 percent—chose the number 5. Thus, in mid-2003, 12.4 percent more of the Korean population answered “good,” while 8.8 percent fewer answered “bad.”

**Figure 1: Poll Results in Korea on Koreans’ Image of the United States, December 2002 and June 2003**



Sources: *JoongAng Ilbo* 2002; *JoongAng Ilbo* 2003b.

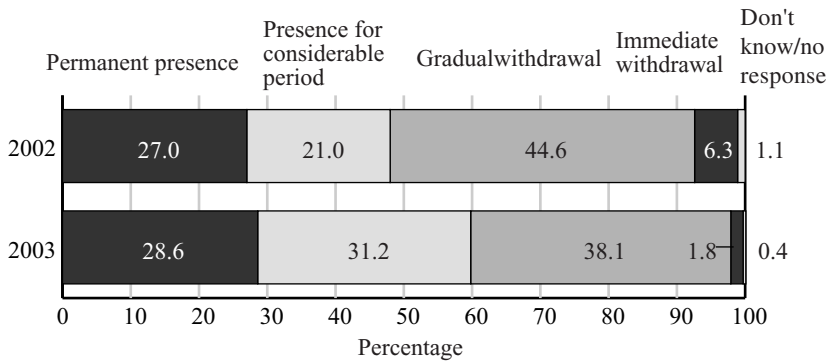
Note: Total for 2002 exceeds 100 percent because of rounding.

Korean support for the USFK also increased (*Figure 2*). In December 2002, about 48 percent supported the USFK presence, while 50.9 percent supported gradual or immediate withdrawal. Six months later, however, support for the presence of USFK

6. *JoongAng Ilbo* also carried out a poll in the mid-September 2003 with the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). For the 1,710 Korean adults polled, results show that 93.1 percent viewed the U.S.-South Korea alliance as “important” for the national interest while only 6.8 percent viewed the alliance as “unimportant.” Almost 9 out of 10—87.4 percent—of respondents answered that the USFK is “important,” while 12.5 percent of them said it was “unimportant.” Almost two-thirds, 62.9 percent of respondents, answered that the USFK must stay in Korea for the foreseeable future; while 22.4 percent and 4.0 percent, respectively, supported USFK’s “gradual withdrawal” and “immediate withdrawal.” Only 10.1 percent of respondents supported the continuous presence of the USFK even after reunification. On the issue of the future of the alliance, 73.2 percent of respondents supported “maintaining or strengthening the current level,” while 26.2 percent favored “decreasing the scale of the alliance.” One-third—34.8 percent—of respondents pointed to anti-U.S. sentiments in South Korea as the number one factor weakening the U.S.-Korea alliance, while 27.0 percent of respondents thought the number one factor was the “U.S. hard-line policy toward North Korea”; and 23.9 percent thought the “inter-Korean rapprochement” was another factor weakening the alliance (*JoongAng Ilbo*-CSIS 2003).

increased to almost 60 percent, while proponents of withdrawal decreased to approximately 40 percent.

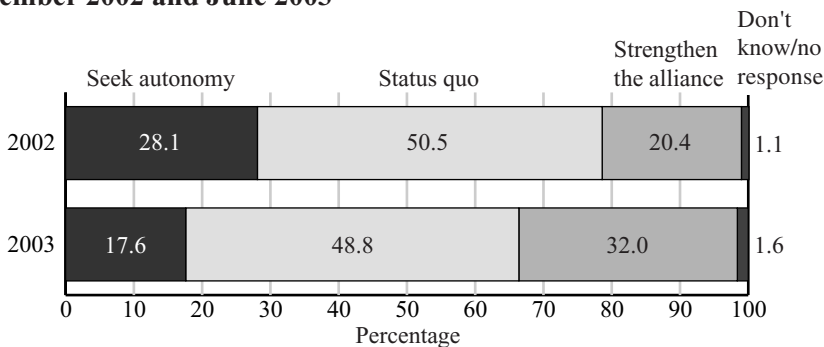
**Figure 2: Poll Results in Korea on Future Status of U.S. Forces Korea (USFK), December 2002 and June 2003**



Sources: *JoongAng Ilbo* 2002; *JoongAng Ilbo* 2003b.

Support for strengthening the U.S.-Korea alliance also increased from 20.4 percent to 32.0 percent during the six months between the two polls, and the percentage of Koreans seeking autonomy from the United States decreased (**Figure 3**). The balance in Korea shifted toward a favorable view of the U.S.-Korean alliance if the neutral position is discounted.

**Figure 3: Poll Results in Korea on the Direction of the U.S.-Korea Alliance, December 2002 and June 2003**



Sources: *JoongAng Ilbo* 2002; *JoongAng Ilbo* 2003b.

**Age groups.** In both surveys, late 2002 and mid-2003, the differing responses of different age groups were striking. Favorable responses exceeded unfavorable ones only in the 50-and-over age group. The younger the respondents, the more negative the image of the United States. This difference, however, narrowed considerably in

the 2003 survey. Younger age groups' opinions changed the most (see *Table 1*), an indication that anti-U.S. feelings of younger Koreans are based on a populism that can be triggered by major incidents.

**Table 1: South Koreans' Image of the United States, December 2002 and June 2003**

Age	Unfavorable			Neutral			Favorable		
	2002	2003	% change	2002	2003	% change	2002	2003	% change
20-29	51.7	39.0	-12.7	40.5	39.9	-0.6	7.8	21.1	+13.3
30-39	43.0	37.6	-5.4	51.1	42.2	-9.3	5.5	20.1	+14.6
40-49	31.9	24.5	-7.4	56.2	52.4	-3.8	11.9	23.1	+11.2
50 and older	18.8	10.7	-8.1	55.3	53.5	-1.8	25.9	35.5	+9.6

Sources: *JoongAng Ilbo* 2002; *JoongAng Ilbo* 2003b.

The majority of Koreans aged 50 and older, born before the 1953 Korean War armistice, support the continuous presence of the USFK (*Table 2*). About 83 percent think the USFK must stay in Korea either permanently or for a considerable period of time, and 70 percent of this age group held this opinion even during December 2002, a time of high anti-Americanism. Younger Koreans, on the other hand, expect the withdrawal of the USFK in the future. Although during the time between the two polls about 8-10 percent of Koreans in their 20s and 30s switched to support USFK's presence, still more of them sided with the idea of gradual or immediate withdrawal.

Differences in Koreans' opinions regarding the future direction of the U.S.-Korea alliance can also be categorized by age group. The majority of respondents chose the middle option—status quo in the U.S.-Korea alliance—but those who chose the other

**Table 2: South Koreans' Opinions on the Future Status of USFK, December 2002 and June 2003**

Age	Permanent presence			Presence for considerable period			Gradual withdrawal			Immediate withdrawal		
	2002	2003	% chg.	2002	2003	% chg.	2002	2003	% chg.	2002	2003	% chg.
20-29	9.4	13.5	+4.1	24.4	30.6	+6.2	57.7	50.1	-7.6	8.6	5.2	-3.4
30-39	16.4	14.9	-1.5	22.6	31.7	+9.1	52.1	52.7	+0.6	8.9	0.4	-8.5
40-49	28.7	28.3	-0.4	19.2	34.9	+15.7	43.2	34.5	-8.7	5.2	1.5	-3.7
50 and older	52.8	54.2	+1.4	17.5	28.6	+11.1	25.9	16.9	-9.0	2.5	0.3	-2.2

Sources: *JoongAng Ilbo* 2002; *JoongAng Ilbo* 2003b.

options—strengthening the alliance or greater autonomy—differ significantly by age. The age gap between December 2002 and June 2003 narrowed, however, as more younger Koreans came to favor the U.S.-Korea alliance. The change among Koreans in their 20s is especially noteworthy with regard to the question of seeking a foreign policy autonomous from the United States; it showed a decline of 17.8 percent. Also, about 17 percent more Koreans in their 30s support the idea of strengthening the U.S.-Korea alliance. While half of the Korean population favors the current state of the alliance, the remaining half is polarized between the pro-American position and the anti-American position, with the former regaining some support.

**Table 3: South Koreans' Opinions on the Direction of the U.S.-Korea Alliance, December 2002 and June 2003**

Age	Autonomous foreign policy			Status quo			Strengthen U.S.-Korea alliance		
	2002	2003	% change	2002	2003	% change	2002	2003	% change
20–29	38.8	21.0	-17.8	49.2	56.3	+7.1	12.0	22.7	+10.7
30–39	34.1	25.6	-8.5	55.5	45.5	-10.0	10.0	27.3	+17.3
40–49	21.7	18.3	-3.4	57.4	50.1	-7.3	18.0	30.5	+12.5
50 and older	17.0	7.1	-9.9	41.6	44.2	+2.6	40.1	45.2	+5.1

Sources: *JoongAng Ilbo* 2002; *JoongAng Ilbo* 2003b.

**Leaders vs. public.** In contrast with the Korean public, Korean leaders are quite solid in their support of strong ties with the United States. Another survey by *JoongAng Ilbo* (2003a), carried out in mid-January 2003, provides useful data that demonstrate the significant differences of opinion between Korea's leaders and the public. To the question of the direction of policy toward the United States by the incoming Roh

**Table 4: South Koreans' Opinions on the Desirable U.S. Policy of the New Government in South Korea, December 2002 and June 2003**

Opinion	Leaders	Public
South Korea should cooperate to maintain the U.S.-led international order in solving all international affairs.	1.8	7.2
South Korea should restore the traditionally close relations with the United States.	54.9	33.0
South Korea should diversify its foreign policy, transcending its U.S.-centered policy.	36.9	48.0
South Korea should revamp its U.S.-centered foreign policy.	5.9	11.8

Sources: *JoongAng Ilbo* 2002; *JoongAng Ilbo* 2003b.

Moo-hyun government, opinion leaders favored the idea of keeping traditional alliance relations with the United States, but the Korean public preferred the idea of a more diversified foreign policy that shifts away from its traditional emphasis on the United States. Elites usually judge national policies in a more rational and pragmatic way; and, knowing the importance of security ties and economic links with the United States, Korean leaders tend to be pro-American rather than anti-American in their overall attitudes.

### ***Power Groups***

Although Korean opinion leaders tend to be pro-American, all influential power groups are not necessarily pro-American. Attitudes toward the United States tend to be quite divided within each power group. Bureaucrats and businesses are the most solidly pro-American groups. NGOs, the media, and academics and intellectuals are very much divided. Politicians tend to be conservative and pro-American while the number of younger politicians voicing criticism of the United States is increasing.

**Politicians.** As of December 2003, the opposition Grand National Party (GNP) retains a solid majority in the National Assembly, with 149 (55 percent) of the total 272 seats. The Millennium Democratic Party (MDP), founded by former President Kim Dae-jung, that used to hold 101 seats by December 2003 was reduced to 41 seats (22 percent) as progressives who have less of an affiliation with the Cholla region moved to a new party, the Uri Party, which holds 47 seats (17 percent). Korean politicians tend to be more conservative on political issues than on economic and social issues, and currently older politicians are slowly being replaced by younger ones, aged 30–49. In addition, the number of progressive politicians who were former dissidents has increased, and younger left-wing politicians tend to be more critical of the United States than older politicians. When the National Assembly voted on 2 April 2003 on a government bill to send noncombat troops to Iraq, 68 representatives voted against the bill and 179 voted for it. Almost half the votes from the ruling MDP at that time went against the bill and accounted for the majority of the nay votes (43 out of 68). Although the outcome of the next legislative election scheduled for April 2004 remains uncertain, the popular demand for political reform is likely to result in younger politicians getting elected.

**Government officials.** Except for the top echelon of political appointees, government officials are recruited through highly competitive national examinations. Serving in the government has traditionally been one of the most popular career paths for Korean elites. Once recruited, officials are insulated from outside competition and enjoy job tenure. As is often the case in other countries, government officials in Korea tend to be a conservative group. With the increasing need for expertise and reflecting popular demand, however, the makeup of government officials has been changing drastically

since the 1990s. Increasing numbers of former democratic activists and intellectuals were called into government service under the past two presidents as a means to facilitate institutional reforms.

The makeup of the government has become even more liberal during the current Roh Moo-hyun government. The entry of former dissidents and civil activists into the government has become more pronounced than ever. Distrusting mainstream elites, President Roh brought in aides and key officials from a younger generation of academicians and activists, most of whom had no previous experience in public service; but, because President Roh himself has toned down his anti-U.S. posture, these emerging government leaders do not necessarily carry out anti-U.S. policies. Nevertheless, a significant number of top government leaders are more willing to raise critical voices against the United States than are the majority of career bureaucrats, who remain conservative and pro-American.

**The business community.** The business community in South Korea is the most conservative and the most pro-U.S. power group. Its main concern is naturally to maintain a competitive edge—for both individual companies and the nation as a whole. The business community seeks further globalization of the Korean economy and opposes radical pro-labor reforms.

Despite their strong entrepreneurial spirit, Korean businesspeople are not properly appreciated and respected in Korea. According to a *JoongAng Ilbo* poll in the spring of 2003, Koreans revealed serious anti-business sentiments compared with the Chinese and Japanese. Almost half—48 percent—of the Koreans surveyed did not think favorably of business in general, and 57 percent held negative views of the *chaebol*. Negative sentiment against the rich is related to both the egalitarian value system of Koreans and a traditional tendency to view the accumulation of wealth as being illegitimate. This sentiment has provided a popular basis for the government's periodic sanctions against the *chaebol*.

The business community is not a strong power group vis-à-vis the powerful Presidency or incumbent politicians in the National Assembly; neither is it well represented in major national policymaking processes as it is in Japan. Nevertheless, the government turns to the business community at times of economic crisis. The urgent calls to improve U.S.-Korean relations for the sake of the nation's economy were certainly influential in adjusting President Roh's U.S. policy.

**NGOs.** Since South Korea made the transition to democracy in 1987, NGOs have been actively organizing. According to a directory of Korean NGOs (Citizens' Voice 2000), about 4,000 NGOs exist in South Korea. If academic associations are included, the number of Korean NGOs increases to 5,570, and with local branches of NGOs,

the number rises to about 20,000. More than half (57 percent) of NGOs surveyed were established during the renaissance decade of the 1990s. Overall, 8 out of 10 NGOs were formed during the past 20 years.

The empowerment of Korean NGOs as a critical force is impressive despite the short history of NGOs in Korea. Civic movements in Korea have focused on advocacy activities while checking and monitoring the government and big business. Drawing their leadership from professors, lawyers, and other professionals, Korean NGOs are active in promoting the public interest in the formulation of major policies. As demonstrated by the “blacklist movement” in which various NGOs banded together to identify and publicly oppose corrupt politicians during the National Assembly election of 2000, NGOs’ political influence has grown strong. NGOs’ cooperation with the government became visible during the Kim Dae-jung government, and additional NGO leaders have been appointed to public posts under the Roh Moo-hyun government. This move is creating controversy within NGOs as well as within Korean society at large.

While the ideological spectrum of Korean NGOs certainly varies from left to right, a majority of them are progressive, pro-reform, and critical of the United States. Korean NGOs started to take an active interest in USFK affairs during the 1990s, and they focused on such problems as pollution, hazardous living environments, and abuses of human rights believed to be associated with the USFK. With the exception of a few radical NGOs, it would be misleading to characterize them as anti-American, however. Nevertheless, their keen sense of national sovereignty and their protection of minority rights tend to make them anti-USFK. So far, however, the anti-USFK civic movement has been limited to demands for SOFA revision.

**Media.** The Korean media have been under fire for the past several years. The three leading newspapers, *Chosun Ilbo*, *JoongAng Ilbo*, and *Dong-A Ilbo*, control about 70 percent of the print media market. Conservative in their news coverage, these mainstream print media often clash with the Blue House (the President’s office and residence) and the ruling party, which view news coverage as being one-sided and anti-reform. Tensions between the Blue House and the print media exploded with a major tax probe in 2001. The uneasy relationship between the Blue House and the mainstream print media is likely to continue under the Roh government as well. President Roh himself has revealed his deep mistrust of *Chosun Ilbo* in particular, and he is likely to take up the agenda of media reform.

Conflict between the media and the government has broadened into a quarrel between print media and broadcast media. Two major broadcasting companies, the Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) and the Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), are under direct government influence. KBS is a state-run company, while 70 percent of

MBC is owned by a government organization called the Foundation for Broadcast Culture. MBC, in particular, can be viewed as more anti-American than any other broadcast medium. More recently, an Internet news outlet called OhMyNews has been attracting the attention of many younger Koreans; OhMyNews has become known for its vocal criticism of the United States.

**Academics and intellectuals.** Academics and intellectuals are also influential in Korea. The Confucian tradition that accords higher status to the literati makes academics and intellectuals into leaders of public discourse and opinion. In addition to their direct influence on students, they frequently contribute columns to newspapers and are the main guests on television talk shows and public forums. A majority of these people earned their postgraduate degrees in the United States, but the number of academics and intellectuals who received their postgraduate education at home or overseas at a non-U.S. institution has also increased. Experience in the United States does not necessarily make U.S.-trained academicians pro-American, but intellectuals who have not been trained in the United States lack the direct experience with U.S. society that is often related to some local intellectuals' anti-U.S. prejudices.

Becoming a professor also tends to lead scholars to adopt a progressive position because the subculture on university campuses places pro-American types on the defensive. Intellectuals with higher degrees but without full-time jobs are likely to take a more critical view of both the establishment within their own society and the United States. South Korea has an oversupply of Ph.D.s, which is saturating the academic job market. The resulting discontent on the part of intellectuals certainly works against the United States, which is often perceived as a society of the haves and the powerful.

## **V. Recommendations for a Sustainable U.S.-Korea Alliance**

The rise of anti-Americanism in South Korea recently has drawn both due attention and an unnecessary backlash. Anti-Americanism in Korean society today should be understood in the context of broader social and political changes in South Korea. Korea's anti-Americanism is not based on a left-wing ideology rejecting capitalism or globalization. At the same time, it is not an ephemeral phenomenon that comes and goes in reaction to specific issues that attract public attention. It is rooted in the dynamic social and political change of South Korea, which has been experimenting with alternative ideas and values. Leaders in the United States would do well to undertake a more careful examination of Korean society today and note two points:

- Most recent polls of South Koreans reveal that they no longer hold a favorable image of the United States. The spread of negative feelings toward the United States suggests that certain incidents can easily trigger anti-U.S. protests. This

bodes ill for sustaining healthy alliance relations between the United States and South Korea.

- Korean society today expects greater recognition and equal treatment vis-à-vis the United States. USFK affairs are becoming a focal point where U.S. attitudes are being tested. A majority of Koreans welcome the continued stationing of the U.S. troops on Korean soil, but social problems such as pollution and unfair handling of crimes committed by the U.S. military are likely to invite further protests and resentment. As the security perceptions of many Koreans have changed since the inter-Korean rapprochement, the social costs of hosting the USFK have been highlighted while military and economic benefits are being taken for granted.

Koreans' changing sentiments and views of the United States lead to the following recommendations:

**Reenergize the alliance.** The U.S. government and U.S. opinion leaders need to reenergize the U.S. alliance with South Korea by drawing a new blueprint that is more suitable for a pluralized, stronger South Korea. The Cold War rationale for the U.S.-Korea alliance has long since lost its appeal for Koreans, with more Koreans viewing North Korea as a poor brother to be helped rather than as a threat. Redefining and expanding the *raison d'être* of the alliance will be critical for sustaining the alliance into the future.

**Manage USFK affairs.** Public incidents involving the USFK could have been better managed, and the USFK needs a more active public-relations policy. Although the USFK has started to reach out to neighboring communities, its public relations at the national level remain limited and ineffective. USFK should consider strengthening its public relations staff, who can share information with Korean counterparts through regular meetings or, at least, can cope with damaging incidents more skillfully. At a minimum, the USFK should hire more Korean-speaking personnel for senior staff positions. USFK should also respond more strongly to distorting or misleading media coverage and should even consider litigation in some instances.

**Reach out to Korean civil society.** The United States needs to make greater efforts to curtail souring Korean attitudes toward the United States. So far, activities of major U.S. organizations based in Seoul have been limited to interacting with the already pro-U.S. groups of high-level bureaucrats, politicians, business leaders, and academicians. These U.S. organizations, including the U.S. embassy, American Chamber of Commerce, and the Asia Foundation, should try to build lines of communication and personal networks with potentially anti-U.S. groups in Korean civil society. The media, NGOs, and university campuses are three major areas where the United States needs to be vigorous in expanding the relationship.

To build public support for the U.S.-Korea alliance, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University, and the Seoul Forum recently suggested the following measures: (1) the United States should make a more concerted effort at local community outreach; (2) the governments on both sides should create a SOFA hotline for public grievances regarding social problems caused by USFK; and (3) the two governments need to set up a joint committee designed to oversee implementation of the SOFA (International Security Program 2003). These measures can be a good start toward controlling potential damage to the alliance. To maintain public support for the alliance, however, more long-term visions and plans are needed. For example, both the United States and South Korea need to set up programs for civic education on the value and rationale of the alliance. Also, not only the U.S. government but also U.S. civil society should take the initiative to build trustworthy relations between the citizens of the two societies. If these efforts are made, accommodating South Korea's confidence and noisy democracy into the alliance relationship could actually be a good opportunity to solidify the U.S.-Korea alliance in the new era.

## REFERENCES

- Bong, Young-shik. 2003. Anti-Americanism and the U.S.-Korea Military Alliance. In *Confrontation and Innovation on the Korean Peninsula* (Washington, D.C.: KEI, 2003).
- Citizens' Voice. 2000. *Shimin Danche Chong Ram 2000* [Directory of Korean nongovernmental organizations 2000]. Seoul: Citizens' Voice.
- Dupuy, R. Ernest, and Trevor N. Dupuy. 1993. *The Harper Encyclopedia of Military History: From 3500 B.C. to the Present*. New York: HarperCollins.
- International Security Program, CSIS. 2003. "Strengthening the U.S.-ROK Alliance: A Blueprint for the 21st Century" (Washington, D.C., and Seoul: Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS); Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University; Seoul Forum for International Affairs, 2003), [www.csis.org/isp/U.S.-ROKAlliance.pdf](http://www.csis.org/isp/U.S.-ROKAlliance.pdf).
- JoongAng Ilbo*. 2002. Poll on Koreans' attitudes toward U.S.-Korea Relations. 15–16 December.
- . 2003a. Poll on the Roh Moo-hyun government. 4–13 January.
- . 2003b. Poll on attitudes one year after the deaths of schoolgirls. 9–10 June.
- JoongAng Ilbo*-CSIS. 2003. Poll on U.S.-Korea relations. September.
- Kim, Jin-wung. 1989. Recent Anti-Americanism in South Korea. *Asian Survey* 29, no. 8 (August).
- Kim, Seung-hwan. 2002. Anti-Americanism in Korea. *Washington Quarterly* (Winter).
- Lee, Sook-jong. 2003. Sources of Anti-Americanism in Korean Society. In *Korea-U.S. Relations in Transition*, ed. Baek Jong-chun and Lee Sang-hyun, 161–80. Seoul: Sejong Institute.
- Moon, Katharine H. 2003. Korean Nationalism, Anti-Americanism, and Democratic Consolidation. In *Korea's Democratization*, ed. Samuel Kim. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. 2002. *What The World Thinks in 2002*. Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center. December. <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=165>.
- Samsung Economic Research Institute (SERI). 2003. Poll on Koreans' attitudes toward the United States. January.
- Shin, Gi-wook. 1996. South Korean Anti-Americanism: A Comparative Perspective. *Asian Survey* 36, no. 8 (August).

