

Anti-Americanism and the ROK-U.S. Alliance

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INTRODUCTION

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the ROK-U.S. alliance. For the last half century, the alliance has been seen as a deterrent against North Korea, which has helped to create a stable and secure environment for economic growth. Given the value of the alliance, one would naturally expect a gala event to celebrate the 50th anniversary, but no celebration is scheduled in South Korea. Several incidents probably contributed to the somber mood. After the U.S. court martial acquitted two U.S. soldiers involved in the deaths of two school girls killed by a U.S. armored vehicle last winter, anti-Americanism surged, leading to mass candlelight demonstrations, first, to memorialize the two girls and second, to demand revision of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). Moreover, the ensuing signs of fissure in the ROK-U.S. relations over each government's dealings with the North Korean nuclear threat have some calling the state of the bilateral relations a crisis.¹⁾ Much to the relief of those concerned,

1) For the main arguments on "a crisis in the ROK-U.S. alliance," see *Chosun Ilbo*,

the conflict between Seoul and Washington over their policies on North Korea has eased with the South Korea-U.S. summit; however, the anti-Americanism in South Korea is likely to remain for a long time as a source of conflict within Korean society, and may pose an obstacle to ROK-U.S. relations in the future.

The purpose of this paper is to determine whether the surge of anti-Americanism during last year's presidential election poses a real threat to the ROK-U.S. alliance, and to examine the changes in public attitude towards the U.S. in the last six months. Most empirical data used for the paper are based on polls conducted jointly by the East Asia Institute and the *Joongang Ilbo*, in December 2002 and June 2003. Conducted twice with a six-month interval using the same questionnaire, the poll results have proven extremely useful in discerning the changes in public attitude towards ROK-U.S. relations.

Sporadic cases of anti-American sentiment in South Korea have occurred since 1990, caused by crimes against, and injury to Korean nationals, and environmental damage caused by U.S. Forces Korea (USFK). Also triggering anti-Americanism: U.S. pressure to open the Korean market and the so-called "Ohno incident" at the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, but none of these were of sufficient magnitude to pose a threat to the half-century old ROK-U.S. alliance.²⁾ The surge of anti-Americanism last winter, however, was qualitatively different in its size and duration. The demonstration that began in June after the deaths of two school girls snowballed and, by December 14, over 400,000 people nationwide were participating in demonstrations calling for

"Editorial: Seoul and Washington Should Come up with Measures Against Anti-Americanism," December 4, 2002; *Dong-a Ilbo*, "Financial Times Calls the Anti-Americanism in South Korea a Threat to the ROK-U.S. Alliance," November 29, 2002.

2) For insightful research on the history of anti-Americanism in South Korea, Jin-wung Kim, "Recent Anti-Americanism in South Korea: The Causes," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (August, 1989); Sook-Jong Lee, "Sources of Anti-Americanism in Korean Society: Implications for Korea-U.S. Relations," Jong-Chun Baek and Sang-Hyun Lee (eds.), *Korea-U.S. Relations in Transition: Korea-U.S. Alliance in Retrospect and Prospects for a New Strategic Partnership* (Sungnam: The Sejong Institute, 2002).

justice in the deaths of the school girls and for revision of the SOFA. It was by far, the largest anti-American demonstration ever in South Korea.

As anti-Americanism was increasing in South Korea, tensions were also rising on the Korean peninsula concerning the North Korean nuclear program. In the past, there had been a general pattern of increased public support for the ROK-U.S. alliance whenever a threat to national security arose. Last December, the security threat against the Korean peninsula mounted with Pyongyang's announcement of intentions to resume the nuclear programs, yet there was no sign of waning anti-Americanism. In fact, it continued to grow regardless of the nuclear standoff with the North. Moreover, unlike past scandals, the so-called "Northern Wind" incident failed to influence the outcome of the presidential election. In other words, the past pattern of increased support for the U.S. in the presence of a security threat from North Korea no longer held true.

Such changes in the behavioral pattern have led some to call the situation a crisis in the ROK-U.S. alliance. They argue that anti-Americanism in South Korea will send the American public (therefore, the U.S. Congress) a negative image of South Korea, and could lead to negative political consequences such as a complete withdrawal of the USFK. The withdrawal will increase the national security threat, which, in turn, will deter foreign investments in South Korea, ultimately leading to a drop in exports to the U.S. Those who call the current situation a crisis argue that if public indifference to security issues is the cause of the rising anti-Americanism, the sunshine policy is also the cause. In other words, with the implementation of the sunshine policy, the public lost its perspective on security issues with North Korea, and, as a result, public support for the ROK-U.S. alliance as a deterrent against North Korea has weakened.³⁾

3) Such a reversal in the public view on North Korea may be due primarily to the improved inter-Korean relations since the 1990s, particularly the 2000 inter-Korean summit. Byung-Kook Kim, "The U.S.-South Korean Alliance: Anti-American Challenges," *Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2003), pp. 240-241.

In an interesting turnaround, a poll conducted in June, just six months after the mass demonstrations of last winter, showed a reversal in public opinion on the ROK-U.S. alliance, from negative to positive. This sudden change in public opinion led to two questions about the nature of anti-Americanism in South Korea. Was the anti-Americanism seen in the mass vigils last winter serious enough to threaten the legitimacy of the ROK-U.S. alliance, as claimed by those who called the situation a crisis? What is the cause of the reversal in anti-Americanism, which was on the rise just six months ago despite the North Korean nuclear threat? It would also be interesting to see which civic groups have changed their positions, and why.

However, the tendency of existing theories on anti-Americanism to overlook the complex and multilateral nature of public's anti-American sentiment has made it difficult to approach such questions. For example, those who call the current situation a crisis (based on the logic that the demonstrations for revision of the SOFA will exacerbate anti-Americanism, which will, in turn, lead to a crisis in the ROK-U.S. alliance) do not draw a distinction between the demonstrations demanding justice for the deaths of two school girls/revision of the SOFA and the opposition to the ROK-U.S. alliance itself, which are qualitatively different issues.

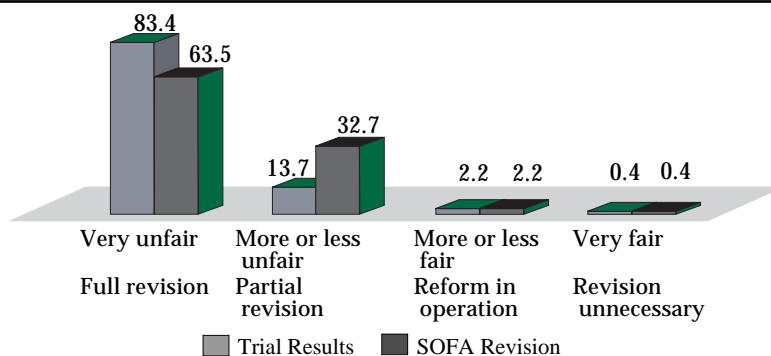
In this paper, the anti-Americanism in South Korean society will be looked at on two different levels: as opposition to the legitimacy of the ROK-U.S. alliance and as a demand for change in the institutions and procedures of the alliance. The opposition to the legitimacy of the ROK-U.S. alliance has the characteristic of anti-Americanism in that criticism of the U.S. role on the Korean peninsula is made at the ideological level. Critics of the legitimacy of the ROK-U.S. alliance are also critical of deterrence against North Korea as justification for the presence of U.S. armed forces in South Korea and for the ROK-U.S. alliance. Critics of the institutions and procedures of the ROK-U.S. alliance, on the other hand, recognize the legitimacy of the alliance, reasoning that anti-American sentiment seen in demonstrations and the demand for the SOFA revision may be interpreted as transient

feelings of unfairness about the court martial ruling. What they want is improvement in the ROK-U.S. relations to bring about more equality between the two countries. While the majority of South Koreans recognize the legitimacy of the ROK-U.S. alliance, they think that there are many improvements to be made to ensure equal partnership.⁴⁾ For a more accurate understanding of the complex nature of anti-Americanism in South Korea, it is important to approach the subject from the two different levels mentioned above.

A summary of the main arguments of this paper on the content and nature of anti-Americanism in South Korea, based on empirical analysis of opinion polls, is as follows. First of all, poll results show that the wave of anti-American sentiment of last December stemmed from popular discontent with the outcome of the trial of the two soldiers charged with the deaths of the two school girls and with the SOFA, rather than from opposition to the legitimacy of the bilateral alliance. Mounting discontent with the administration and institutions of the alliance has led to rising criticism against the legitimacy of the alliance. Nevertheless, given the widespread mistrust of North Korea and perception of the ROK-U.S. alliance as a deterrent against North Korea, this paper argues that the surge of anti-American sentiment of the recent past is temporary, and does not pose any real threat to the alliance between Seoul and Washington.

Even though the overall level and content of anti-Americanism in South Korea do not pose a threat to the bilateral ties, this paper also argues that the polarization on security issues manifested in the candlelight demonstrations and last year's presidential election pose a potentially serious threat to the future of the ROK-U.S. alliance. When asked about (1) the role of USFK, (2) what makes a desirable ROK-U.S. alliance, (3) North Korea and (4) the legitimacy of the sunshine policy in the December poll, there was a sharp polarization of views among people of different age groups and political views. To address the

4) *Hankyoreh Shinmun*, "Candle Demonstrations and Demand for Revision of SOFA-- Not Anti-American," December 9, 2002.

Figure 1. Attitude on the Trial Results and SOFA Revision (Percent)

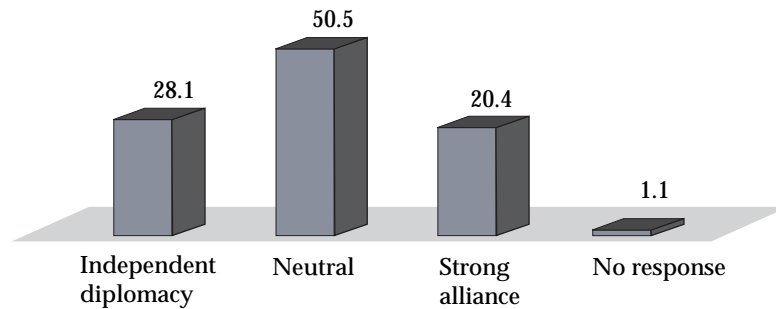
Source: Opinion Survey Poll conducted by East Asia Institute and *Joongang Ilbo* (December 2002).

serious disparity, it is important to find the causes and effects, and possible solutions. Such a trend in public opinion shows possible shifts in anti-Americanism depending on future changes in the security environment due to adjustments in inter-Korean and ROK-U.S. relations, as well as in the ROK-U.S. relations following negotiations for revision of the terms of the alliance. We will now provide support for the key arguments of this paper using empirical data.

THE RISE OF ANTI-AMERICANISM IN DECEMBER 2002: A CRISIS IN THE ROK-U.S. ALLIANCE?

Anti-Americanism: Challenging the Legitimacy of the ROK-U.S. Alliance?

To determine whether anti-Americanism fueled by the demonstrations could pose a possible threat to the bilateral alliance, we will turn to an empirical analysis of public opinion of the U.S. according to the December poll. For a more accurate understanding of the multi-dimensional aspect of the anti-American sentiment, the analysis was conducted with a distinction between those demanding

Figure 2. Attitude on Desirable ROK-U.S. Relations (Percent)

Source: EAI-*Joongang Ilbo* Survey Poll (December 2002).

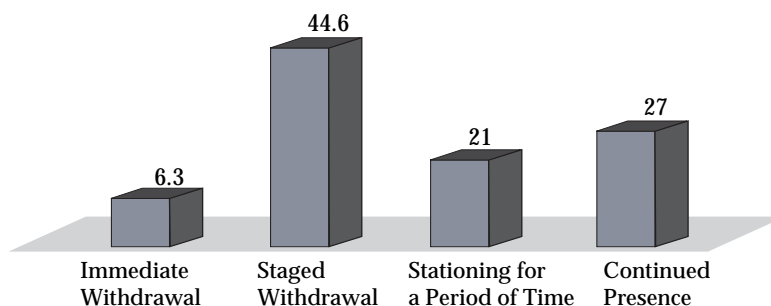
revisions in the terms of the ROK-U.S. alliance and those criticizing the legitimacy of the alliance.

1. Popular Demand for Institutional Reform in the ROK-U.S. Alliance

Public criticism of the unfairness and inequality in the ROK-U.S. alliance and the demand for changes in the operation and institutions of the alliance have reached the level of a national consensus. The representative issue is revision of the SOFA. As shown in Figure 1, a total of 97.1 percent of South Koreans responded that the trial that acquitted last November of the two U.S. soldiers was unfair. Moreover, the majority were also critical of SOFA, with 63.5 percent supporting a complete revision of the SOFA and 32.7 percent, a partial revision.

Washington's lukewarm attitude towards the South Korean people's demand for institutional change triggered public animosity towards the U.S., ultimately leading to mass candlelight demonstrations. Three weeks passed following the deaths of the schoolgirls, before the two U.S. soldiers involved in the case appeared before the South Korean police for questioning. Furthermore, by refusing the request for transfer of jurisdiction, the U.S. government gave the impression that it was more interested in protecting the two soldiers than in finding the truth and bearing responsibility. That it took

Figure 3. Attitude toward USFK (Percent)



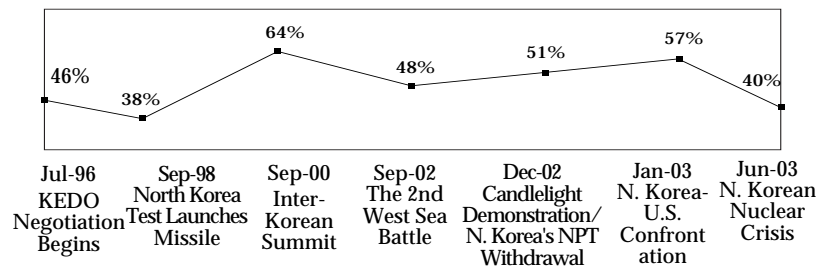
Source: EAI-Joongang Ilbo Survey Poll (December 2002).

President Bush six months to offer an apology for the deaths of the schoolgirls also fueled public animosity. Some civic groups also shifted from their initial demand for truth-finding and transfer of jurisdiction to a demand for revision of the SOFA, which constitutes the basic framework of the ROK-U.S. alliance.

2. Public Opinion on the Legitimacy of the ROK-U.S. Alliance

The national consensus on the need for institutional change in the operation of the ROK-U.S. alliance, coupled with Washington's seeming indifference, led to the mass demonstrations, the rise of anti-American sentiment, and new questions about the legitimacy of the alliance. However, whether the intensified anti-American sentiment was serious enough to justify the claim of a crisis in the ROK-U.S. alliance is an issue that needs to be verified separately. To determine whether the recent rise of anti-Americanism threatened the legitimacy of the ROK-U.S. alliance, we should first look at the public view on issues closely linked to the alliance between South Korea and the U.S., and gauge public opinion about the role of USFK, desired ROK-U.S. relations, the sunshine policy, and Washington's North Korea policy.

Asked about South Korea-U.S. relations (see Figure 2), 70.9 percent recognized the legitimacy of the alliance, with 20.4 percent supporting

Figure 4. Attitude Trends on the Withdrawal and Reduction of USFK*

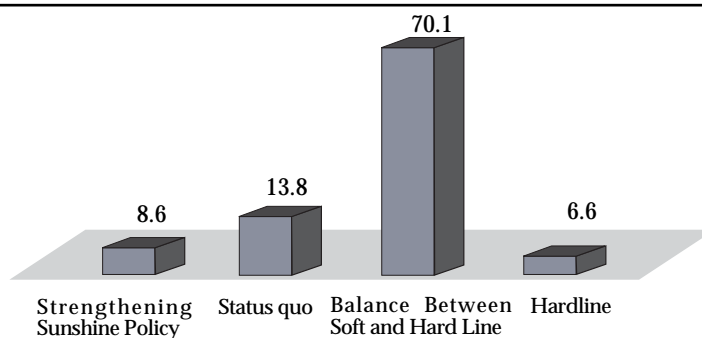
*Responses on immediate withdrawal and partial reduction are combined.

Source: Results from Lee Nae-young, *op. cit.*, Table 3-1, p. 60 and EAI-*Joongang Ilbo* Survey. Poll are reorganized.

a stronger alliance and 50.5 percent taking the middle-road position of supporting the alliance the way it is. The remaining 28.1 percent called for national defense autonomy.

As shown in Figure 3, 48 percent favored the presence of U.S. armed forces in South Korea (27 percent for continued presence and 21 percent for a certain period), while 51.5 percent favored withdrawal of USFK (44.6 percent favored gradual withdrawal and 6.3 percent immediate withdrawal). Considering the critical role of USFK as a deterrent against North Korean aggression and as a basis of bilateral ties, the poll results show an overall negative view on the legitimacy of the ROK-U.S. alliance. There is also a discrepancy between the overall negative view of USFK and the majority view favoring maintenance and strengthening of the ROK-U.S. alliance.

According to one hypothesis, the negative attitude towards USFK was caused by public outrage with the acquittal of the two American soldiers and discontent with the SOFA. To support the hypothesis, we traced the history of change in public opinion on the U.S., as shown in Figure 4, on the withdrawal and reduction of USFK. We can see that criticism of USFK varied according to the progress in inter-Korean relations. In other words, when inter-Korean relations showed signs of

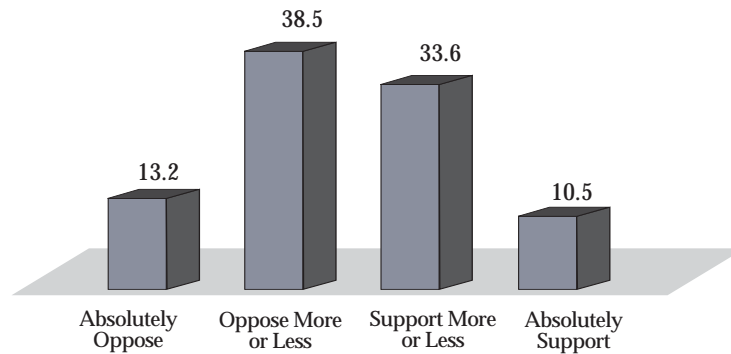
Figure 5. Desirable North Korea Policy Directions (Percent)

Source: EAI-*Joongang Ilbo* Survey Poll (December 2002).

improvement, public opinion favored reduction of US armed forces, and whenever there was a security threat, public opinion showed support for the presence of USFK.⁵⁾ When inter-Korean relations became strained due to North Korea's missile test in 1998, only 38 percent of South Koreans favored withdrawal or reduction of USFK, but the figure increased to 64 percent in a September 2000 poll that coincided with the post-summit reconciliation between the two Koreas. Then, with the second South-North naval shootout in the summer of 2002, the percentage of those critical of USFK dropped to 48 percent.

Yet, despite the rising North Korean nuclear threat and North Korea's announced intention to restart its nuclear program and disable UN surveillance equipment at nuclear reactors, opinion in favor of withdrawal or reduction of U.S. armed forces in Korea increased to 57 percent in January, from 51 percent in a poll conducted just a month before, in December 2002. However, public support for withdrawal

5) For more research on the changing public attitude towards North Korea linked with changes in inter-Korean relations, see Tae-Hyun Kim, "Domestic Support for the Korea-U.S. Alliance in the U.S. and Korea," Jong-Chun Baek and Sang Hyun Lee, (eds.), *op. cit.*

Figure 6. Evaluation of the Bush Administration's Hardline Policy (Percent)

Source: EAI-*Joongang Ilbo* Survey Poll (December 2002).

and reduction of USFK dropped significantly, to 40 percent, in the poll taken six months later, in June. The change in public opinion supports the hypothesis that the rise in anti-Americanism of last winter, especially in the negative attitude towards the USFK, was a temporary outburst fueled by mass demonstrations and political circumstances surrounding the presidential election.

It would be useful to look at public opinion on North Korea and, in particular, on the sunshine policy, since the legitimacy of the ROK-U.S. alliance is based on the principle of deterrence against North Korea. As Figure 5 indicates, 70 percent of South Koreans want a policy that balances engagement and a hard-line approach, as opposed to wanting one or the other. As shown in the preference distribution chart in Figure 6, there is a sharp split between those who support and those who oppose the Bush administration's hard-line policy on North Korea. This chart also shows two conflicting attitudes of South Koreans towards North Korea: the waning of the Cold War logic of containment, on one hand, and a lingering mistrust of North Korea as a partner, on the other. The conflicting attitudes can be attributed to the changed international environment in the post Cold-War era and improved relations between South and North after the inter-Korean

Table 1. Attitude on Desirable South Korea-U.S. Relations

		Desirable S. Korea-U.S. Relations			Total
		More Independent Diplomacy (28.4%)	Neutral (51.0%)	Strengthened Alliance (20.6%)	
By Age N=1020	20s	38.6%	49.2%	12.1%	100.0% (264)
	30s	34.2%	55.6%	10.2%	100.0% (275)
	40s	22.2%	59.1%	18.7%	100.0% (203)
	More than 50	17.3%	42.1%	40.6%	100.0% (275)
By Ideology N=1008	Progressive	38.3%	44.9%	16.8%	100.0% (303)
	Neutral	25.4%	57.0%	17.6%	100.0% (409)
	Conservative	22.3%	49.3%	28.4%	100.0% (296)
By Area N=1019	Seoul	30.5%	46.9%	22.6%	100.0% (226)
	Incheon/ Kyonggi	24.5%	61.8%	13.7%	100.0% (241)
	Kangwon	17.6%	58.8%	23.5%	100.0% (34)
	Daejeon/ Chungchung	27.4%	57.5%	15.0%	100.0% (113)
	Kwangju/ Cholla	41.5%	37.3%	21.2%	100.0% (118)
	Daegu/ Kyongbuk	25.0%	47.4%	27.6%	100.0% (116)
	Busan/ Kyongnam	26.1%	49.1%	24.8%	100.0% (161)
	Cheju	40.0%	30.0%	30.0%	100.0% (10)
By Supporter N=723	Lee Hoe-chang	21.6%	51.3%	27.1%	100.0% (306)
	Roh Moo-hyun	32.7%	47.7%	19.6%	100.0% (367)
	Kwon Yong-gil	44.0%	42.0%	14.0%	100.0% (50)

Source: EAI-*Joongang Ilbo* Survey Poll (December 2002).

summit, which helped to foster a positive attitude towards North Korea. On the other hand, the two West Sea naval clashes and the North Korean nuclear program have provoked mistrust of North Korea.

3. Polarized View of the ROK-U.S. Alliance

Posing a potentially serious threat to the future of the ROK-U.S. alliance is the sharp polarization of public attitude towards the U.S. based on political sentiment, age groups, regions, and the presidential candidate supported by the respondent.⁶⁾ Table 1 shows the results of cross-analysis of public view on the ROK-U.S. relations by age groups, political sentiment, region, and the presidential candidate supported by the respondent. 38.6 percent and 34.2 percent of people in their twenties and thirties, respectively, responded that they prefer national defense autonomy, while the proportions for people in their forties and fifties and above were only 22.2 and 17.3 percent, respectively. A total of 59.1 percent of those in their forties took the moderate position while 40.6 percent of people in their fifties and above said they favor a stronger ROK-U.S. alliance, showing a sharp disparity in views between the two age groups. In short, the preference for national defense autonomy was stronger among younger age groups, while those fifty and above showed a preference for a stronger ROK-U.S. alliance.⁷⁾

Asked about preference for national defense autonomy, 38.3 percent among progressives, 25.4 percent among moderates, and 22.3 percent among conservatives answered in favor, while 57 percent among moderates showed preference for the middle road position. There was a sharp contrast between the proportion of conservatives who answered in favor of the ROK-U.S. alliance (28.4 percent) and the proportion of progressives (16.8) and moderates (17.6). The support rate for national defense autonomy in the two Jeolla Provinces and Seoul recorded an above-average rate of 28.4 percent, while it was only 17.6 percent in Kangwon Province. By contrast, the support for a

6) On polarization of views among different age groups and political views, see Lee Nae-young, "Polarization of View on Security Issues and the Dilemma of Making Decisions on Foreign Policy" (in Korean), Lee nae-young and Lee Ha-kyoung (eds.), *Dilemma and Choice in the Roh Administration* (Seoul: East Asia Institute, 2003), pp. 70-76.

7) Such polarization of views among different age groups was a phenomenon observed since the 1980s. The gap has simply become visibly wider. For characteristics of anti-Americanism in the 1980s, see Jin-wung Kim, *op. cit.*

stronger alliance was above average in South Kyongsang Provinces (27.6 percent in Daegu, North Kyongsang Province and 24.8 percent in Busan, South Kyongsang Province) and Kangwon Province (23.5 percent). Lastly, only 21.6 percent of the supporters of presidential candidate Lee Hoi-chang favored national defense autonomy while Roh Moo-hyun and Kwon Young-ghil supporters showed relatively greater preference for it, with 32.7 and 44 percent, respectively.

Polarized views on security issues based on age, political sentiment, and preferred presidential candidate also emerged between the general public and opinion leaders. According to a poll conducted by the *Joongang Ilbo* and the East Asia Institute in January 2003, on the general public and opinion leaders, the general public showed a support rate of 59.8 percent for greater autonomy in relations with the U.S. and 56.6 percent for withdrawal of USFK, while the proportions were 43 and 28.7 percent, respectively, for opinion leaders, indicating that they have a relatively more favorable view of the ROK-U.S. alliance and USFK.⁸⁾

Polarization of public opinion on security issues, such as North Korea policy and the ROK-U.S. relations, is the key cause of ideological conflict in South Korea today. The conflict is likely to continue to plague South Korea for a long time, and the polarized view on security issues may be an obstacle to gaining the national consensus required for promoting government's policy on North Korea and the ROK-U.S. relations. Polarization on security issues seems most salient among different age groups and political leanings, but considering the correlation between age and political tendencies, the primary factor for the polarization may be the generation gap. As for the reasons for the progressive tendencies among South Korean in their twenties and thirties on issues such as North Korea and the U.S., the subject is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the following

8) Jeong Han-wool and Lee Hyun-ji, "Opinion Leaders: Moderator of Reform or Representatives of Conservatism" (in Korean), Lee Nae-young and Lee Ha-kyoung (eds.), *op. cit.*

conjectures can be made on the matter. The main explanation for the younger generation's attitude towards North Korea is that they did not experience the Korean War, and thus, have no direct experience of the North Korean threat. This may also explain why they tend to be more critical of the ROK-U.S. alliance. That the majority of organizers and participants of the mass demonstrations last year were young people and that protests were mainly organized through the Internet explain why younger people, who constitute the largest proportion of the Internet users, are likely to harbor relatively strong anti-American sentiment. Finally, Roh Moo-hyun, who had the greatest support from the younger generation and who called for equal partnership in ROK-U.S. relations in his campaign promises, may also have fueled anti-American sentiment among the young.

The poll showed that anti-Americanism in South Korea has more to do with improving institutions and procedures in its alliance with the U.S. than challenging the legitimacy of the alliance. With more than 70 percent of the population favoring maintenance or strengthening of the alliance, it would be difficult to characterize the anti-Americanism in South Korea as challenging the legitimacy of the alliance. However, the fact that the support for withdrawal of USFK reached a majority shows an overall discontent with the present terms of the ROK-U.S. alliance and the possibility that the discontent could develop into a challenge against the alliance in the future. The polarity among South Korean, based on age and politics, not only triggers domestic conflict; it could also threaten the future ROK-U.S. alliance.

A SUDDEN REVERSAL IN PUBLIC OPINION

Reversal in Anti-American Opinion in 2003: Who and How?

As shown in Figures 7 and 8, the results of the opinion poll taken just six months after last year's demonstrations show a remarkable reversal in public opinion. According to Figure 7, support for

Figure 7. Change in Attitude on USFK

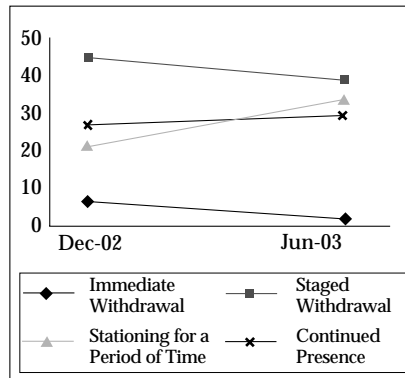
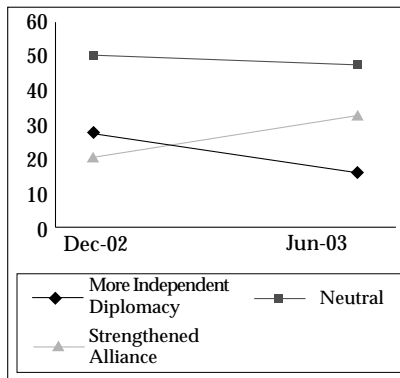


Figure 8. Change in Attitude on ROK-US Alliance



“immediate withdrawal” and for “gradual withdrawal” of USFK dropped from 6.3 to 1.8 percent and 44.6 to 38.1 percent, respectively, in just six months. In contrast, the proportion of those in favor of “extended presence” and “continued presence” increased from 21 to 31.2 percent and 27 to 28.6 percent, respectively. Asked about what would be a desirable South Korea-U.S. alliance in Figure 8, those calling for “national defense autonomy” dropped from 28.1 to 17.6 percent, while showing a sharp rise in support, from 20.4 to 32 percent, for a stronger alliance with the U.S., indicating a clear reversal in public opinion.

Who changed their opinion and how did that change take place? To answer the questions, we have conducted a comparative analysis of the average responses according to political views and age groups on issues directly related to the ROK-U.S. alliance, such as “what is a desirable ROK-U.S. alliance” and “withdrawal and reduction of USFK,” as shown in Table 2 and 3.⁹⁾

9) The question on USFK was coded as follows with 2.5 as the median value: 1=immediate withdrawal; 2=gradual withdrawal; 3=maintain for a certain period; 4=continued presence. For the question on the ROK-U.S. alliance: 0-4 for national defense autonomy; 5 as the median; and 6-10 for a stronger alliance.

Table 2. Means Test between Generations on Attitude Toward U.S.

Issue	ANOVA		December 2002		June 2003		a-b
	Generation	Mean-a (N)	Grouping	Mean-b (N)	Grouping		
USFK (4-score Scale) Median 2.5	20s	2.34 (264)	20s+30s	2.53 (260)			-0.19
	30s	2.46 (276)	vs.	2.61 (266)	20s+30s		-0.15
	40s	2.74 (202)	40s	2.91 (203)	vs.		-0.17
	More than 50	3.22 (277)	vs.	3.37 (298)	40s+More than 50		-0.15
	Total	2.69 (1019)	More than 50	2.87 (1028)			-0.18
US-ROK Alliance (10-score Scale) Median 5	20s	4.02 (264)		5.17 (262)	20s+30s		-1.15
	30s	4.27 (276)	20s+30s+40s	5.03 (267)	+40s		-0.76
	40s	4.93 (209)	vs.	5.40 (204)	vs.		-0.47
	More than 50	5.89 (281)	More than 50	6.56 (298)	More		-0.67
	Total	4.78 (1030)		5.58 (1032)	than 50		-0.80

Source: EAI-*Joongang Ilbo* Survey Poll (December 2002 and June 2003).

Comparing the average values by age group, with 2.5 as the postulated median for the public attitude towards USFK, responses from people in their twenties and thirties leaned towards a reduction of USFK with 2.34 and 2.46, respectively, while a preponderance of responses from people in their forties and fifties (2.74 and 3.22, respectively) were in favor of the continued presence of USFK. However, with discrepancies in the average value among different age groups still present in the June 2003 poll, it would be a mistake to conclude that polarization does not exist. The results suggest that there has been a visible trend towards conservatism among those in their twenties and thirties, showing the value of 2.53 and 2.61, respectively. When looking at the average difference, people in their twenties showed the biggest swing toward conservatism with 0.19. As for the question about the ROK-U.S. relations in the poll last December, the responses from people in their twenties, thirties, and forties were all on the left side of the median value of 5 on the scale with 4.02, 4.27, and 4.93, respectively, showing a strong preference for national defense autonomy, while the value for those in their fifties

Table 3. Mean Change in Attitude Toward U.S. by Ideology

Issue	ANOVA		Dec-2002		Jun-2003		a-b
	Ideology	Mean-a (N)	Grouping	Mean-b (N)	Grouping		
USFK (4-score Scale)	Liberal	2.51 (302)	Liberal	2.67 (221)	Liberal+	-0.16	
	Moderate	2.69 (409)	vs.	2.77 (409)	Moderate	-0.08	
	Conservative	2.86 (296)	Moderate+	3.04 (384)	vs.	-0.18	
Median 2.5	Total	2.69 (1007)	Conservative	2.86 (1014)	Conservative	-0.17	
ROK-US Alliance (10-score Scale)	Liberal	4.32 (303)	Liberal+	4.97 (222)	Liberal	-0.65	
	Moderate	4.74 (415)	Moderate	5.54 (411)	vs.	-0.80	
	Conservative	5.32 (299)	vs.	5.94 (384)	Moderate +	-0.62	
Median 5	Total	4.78 (1018)	Conservative	5.57 (1017)	Conservative	-0.79	

Source: EAI-*Joongang Ilbo* Survey Poll (December 2002 and June 2003).

and above was 5.89, showing a strong support for maintaining and strengthening of the ROK-U.S. alliance. The average margin of difference for those in their twenties and thirties (1.15 and 0.76, respectively) was much wider than those in their forties, fifties and above (0.47 and 0.67, respectively). In other words, there has been an overall trend towards conservatism among different age groups during the last six-month period, and what is remarkable is the change in the attitude among those in their twenties and thirties, whose margin of change signifies a turnabout in their political positions, switching from progressive to conservative.¹⁰⁾

When comparing the average value of people's attitudes towards the U.S. by their different political leanings (as shown in Table 3), the change found among different age groups is similar to the trend towards conservatism; however, progressives were close to the middle-road position with 2.51 percent on issues regarding USFK in

10) Table 2 and Table 3 show the average values for each group using the ANOVA. In the ANOVA model, it showed that the numbers must be $p < 0.05$ to have any significance, and the classification for the same groups for post comparison was the result of using Scheff and Dunnett's T3 method.

last December's poll, the moderates 2.69, and the conservatives, with the most conservative position, at 2.86. In the June 2003 poll, the progressives and conservatives showed a remarkable swing towards conservatism with 2.67 and 3.04. On the ROK-U.S. relations, the progressives showed a higher preference for national defense autonomy in 2002 with 4.32 (the moderates showed at 4.74), while the value for the same group in the 2003 poll shifted to the left of the mean value, to 4.97. In summary, there was an overall trend towards conservatism when comparing the results of the two polls conducted in December 2002 and June 2003, and one remarkable change was the conservative swing found among people in their twenties and thirties who had represented the progressives during the last presidential election.

Causes for Waning Anti-Americanism

What caused the rapid decline of anti-American sentiment in the span of six months? Although the question deserves a separate study, and while attempts to answer the question using only the available poll results will be limited, we can infer several important variables.

1. The Domestic Political Environment at the Time of Polling

It is interesting that the public's negative sentiment of the U.S. worsened despite the mounting North Korean nuclear threat during the presidential election. The wave of anti-Americanism, which caused some to express concern about public indifference to security issues, had some correlation to the special circumstances surrounding the presidential election last year. Just before the race moved into full swing, the presidential candidates jumped on the bandwagon of anti-Americanism that surged following the acquittal of the two U.S. soldiers. We must consider the impact that candidates' action might have had on the public's anti-American sentiment. In addition to candidate Kwon Young-ghil, conservative candidate Lee Hoe-chang also joined the crowd by signing a nationwide petition sponsored by a

civic group demanding revision of the SOFA and a personal apology from U.S. President George W. Bush. He even considered the possibility of participating in a candlelight demonstration. Candidate Roh Moo-hyun, who felt it was inappropriate for a presidential candidate to sign the petition, nevertheless, called for national defense autonomy during his campaign, which also contributed to mounting anti-Americanism.

There is a correlation between the waning anti-Americanism in the June 2003 poll and people's disappointment with the Roh administration. According to a *Hankook Ilbo* poll on the president's performance during his first hundred days in office, 39.7 percent answered that their opinion of him had worsened since the inauguration, much higher than the 13.9 percent who showed support for the president.¹¹⁾

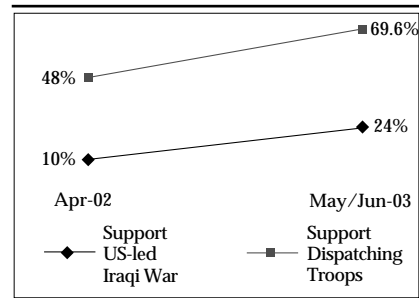
The plummeting popularity of the Roh administration helped to enhance the conservative position favoring a stronger ROK-U.S. alliance, and it may have also helped the younger generation to form a more realistic perspective on ROK-U.S. relations.

The allegation of illegal payments to North Korea by the Kim Dae-jung administration, which raised doubt about the legitimacy and effectiveness of the sunshine policy, may also have played a role in the recent conservative swing on security issues.

2. The Rising North Korean Nuclear Threat and the War on Iraq

Immediately following South Korea's presidential election, tensions between North Korea and the U.S. escalated with the outbreak of the nuclear issue. On December 27, 2002, North Korea removed the seal on the nuclear fuel rods that had been installed after the 1994 Agreed Framework signed in Geneva, and on December 31, Pyongyang expelled the IAEA delegation of weapons inspectors. In early 2003, North Korea declared its intention to withdraw from the

11) *Hankook Ilbo*, "Poll on the Roh Administration's Performance in the First 100 Days since the Inauguration," May 26, 2003.

Figure 9. Attitude toward Iraqi War and Dispatching Korean Troops

*Source: Compiled from *Donga Ilbo's* March-2003 Survey Poll (Donga Ilbo, April 1, 2003); *EAI-Joongang Ilbo* Survey (June 2003); Gallup Korea Survey Research (March 18, 2003); and Pew Research Survey (May 2003).

Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). Meanwhile, Washington's unilateral plans for reduction and reassignment of USFK alarmed many South Koreans, and increased public support for the USFK presence, resulting in increased public appreciation of the importance of the ROK-U.S. alliance.¹²⁾

The U.S. war on Iraq that started in March provided an opportunity not only to exhibit American military might, but also to send a warning message that North Korea could be the next

Iraq. The impact on South Koreans is two-sided. On the one hand, public opposition to the Bush administration's war on Iraq reached 90 percent, while public opinion shifted to pragmatic acceptance of the reality. As seen in Figure 9, only 48 percent supported the dispatch of Korean troops to Iraq in a poll conducted in March, but the number increased sharply to 69.6 percent in June. The sudden change in public opinion may be due to public recognition of America's status as the most powerful nation, as manifested by the war on Iraq, and the growing threat to the security of the Korean peninsula caused by the North Korean nuclear crisis.

12) Despite South Korea's request for postponement of the third session of the Future of ROK-U.S. Alliance Policy Initiative meeting on July 23, 2003, it was reported that an agreement was reached on the transfer of JSA guard duty to South Korea, the relocation of the 2nd Infantry Division from the north to south of the Han River, and withdrawal and relocation of Yongsan Garrison and other U.S. military bases by 2006.

3. President Roh's Switch to a Pragmatic Diplomacy

After the inauguration, President Roh switched to pragmatic diplomacy, urging the public to refrain from holding demonstrations, explaining that the country was faced with the more pressing task of resolving the North Korean nuclear issue. The switch in Roh's diplomatic approach was interpreted as his intention to seek a solution to the nuclear threat through the ROK-U.S. alliance, and this interpretation was affirmed by a series of moves that followed, such as the swift decision to send non-combat troops to Iraq and his unprecedented emphasis on the ROK-U.S. alliance in the South Korea-U.S. summit in April. The two leaders affirmed their commitment to solidify bilateral ties, reaching an agreement to seek a peaceful resolution and other concrete measures for the nuclear issue. It is difficult to believe that this is the same man who commented that he would mediate if the U.S. and North Korea went to war, a comment that caused Chung Mong-jun of the National Alliance 21 to withdraw his support for Roh the night before the election.¹³⁾ As discussed above, the conservative swing among the younger generation and former progressives was a remarkable change in the public view of the U.S.; and, considering that these groups make up the key support base for President Roh, the change of opinion among these groups may have something to do with President Roh's switch to a pragmatic diplomacy.

CONCLUSION

The anti-Americanism in South Korea that led some to claim a crisis in the ROK-U.S. alliance last December has rapidly subsided in a

13) The same change was also seen in the June poll to the question of President Roh's policy towards the U.S., whose average was 6.01 (national defense autonomy (0-4), moderate (5), and a stronger ROK-U.S. alliance (6-10)), showing a significant change from 5.23 in the poll taken just six month ago in December.

short span of six months. Those who saw the situation as a crisis may now consider the waning anti-Americanism as signaling a resolution of the crisis. However, as discussed in the beginning, there are two aspects to the public view of the alliance: criticism of the legitimacy of the alliance itself and demands for revision in the alliance. Calling the rise of anti-American sentiment of last winter a crisis in the ROK-U.S. alliance is just as hasty a judgment as interpreting the decline of anti-American sentiment indicated in the June poll as a resolution of the crisis.

As shown in the analysis, it is clear that the popular attitude towards the U.S. has been rapidly shifting towards recognizing the legitimacy of the ROK-U.S. alliance. However, considering that views on U.S. issues vary widely depending on the situation and that there is still divided sentiment towards the USFK and North Korea, it would be a mistake to conclude that the crisis in the alliance has been completely resolved.

The popular demand to change the institutions and procedures governing the ROK-U.S. alliance has subsided since last December; however, there is still a national consensus on the issue. The tension still exists between Seoul and Washington around issues, such as revision of the SOFA, sharing of defense expenses, changing the Land Partnership Plan, and returning military bases and training grounds used by the USFK to the South Korean government. Despite the agreement reached at the summit between Roh and Bush on troop relocation, Washington is giving the impression that it is taking unilateral action to relocate troops as part of a global strategy for the realignment of U.S. military forces around the world. This illustrates that elements of conflict are still latent at the institutional level in the Seoul-Washington relations, and that another outburst of anti-American sentiment is highly likely should another unfortunate tragedy occur.

To prevent another wave of anti-Americanism that could strain the ROK-U.S. alliance, cooperation and commitment from both governments are urgently needed. It is important to understand that

the rise of anti-Americanism in South Korea, along with the demand for revision of the SOFA and candlelight demonstrations, stemmed from the people's desire for a more reciprocal alliance with the U.S. Seoul and Washington should, therefore, pursue equal bilateral relations and prevent the temporary surge of anti-American sentiment from developing into a movement that challenges the legitimacy of the alliance in the future.

Secondly, the South Korean government should not be swayed by capricious and emotionally-charged public opinion, but should maintain consistency in its policy on ROK-U.S. relations and North Korea based on an objective perspective regarding security issues. Pursuit of a policy based on public support requires close attention to trends in public opinion and preferences. Such a policy may lack perspective and consistency, however, and fall prey to the evils of populism. Furthermore, the government should (1) take into account polarized opinion on security issues among different age groups and political views, (2) make greater efforts to create a national consensus on North Korean policy and (3) iron out the differences in ROK-U.S. relations. Should polarization on security issues be left unresolved, generational and ideological conflict around security issues is likely to continue to plague South Korea, and may even impede efforts toward an effective North Korean policy and ROK-U.S. alliance.

Currently, there is a serious challenge against the peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. Pyongyang continues to play the dangerous nuclear card, using brinkmanship as a strategy for regime survival, and the Bush administration is unrelenting in its hard line policy towards North Korea. For a peaceful resolution of the current security threat, Seoul and Washington should solidify their ties of the last half century and direct their efforts towards eliminating the North Korean nuclear threat. Standing firm against the wild fluctuations in anti-American sentiment, both countries need to show real effort to enhance bilateral relations, thus transforming the supposed crisis into an opportunity.