

The Evolution of Anti-Americanism in Korea: Policy Implications for the United States

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Abstract

Improved Korea-U.S. relations would serve the interests of both nations and promote global/regional peace and stability. Therefore, the two nations should work together to alleviate anti-Americanism in Korea. A key to accomplishing this task is for the United States to adequately understand its nature, origin, evolution, and political implications. This paper argues that the anti-Americanism articulated as an ideology emerged during and after the Gwangju Uprising in 1980, and that the subsequent ideological/intellectual struggles have spawned two distinct activist groups: the Self-Reliance faction with pro-DPRK leanings, and the Equality faction of both the anti-war and anti-neoliberal globalization lines. It emphasizes the significance of the newly-established anti-American social networks and a policy change on the part of the United States as well. This paper places utmost importance on the policy implications of distinguishing between these two camps of social activists. In a nutshell, it is argued that the U.S. policy-makers need to be keenly aware that whether anti-Americanism will increase or die out in Korea greatly depends on an accurate understanding of both the nature and consequences of Korean social/political changes and policy decisions that take such an understanding into consideration.

Keywords: The Gwangju Uprising, debate on social formations, social context, democratization, the Self-Reliance faction, the Equality faction, career activists

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Introduction

In 2004, tens of thousands of Koreans waged anti-American demonstrations, demanding that the Korean government not dispatch its troops to Iraq, a country that they viewed as having been unjustifiably invaded by the United States. On July 17, 2005, Korea's Constitution Day, hundreds of protesters called for a statue of American General Douglas MacArthur to be dismantled in the western port city of Incheon. In support of their actions, they argued that if the United States had not intervened in the civil war the Korean people could have achieved national unification; they also claimed that the statue was a shameful symbol of the U.S. military presence on the Korean peninsula. On March 15, 2006, farmers and activists clashed with government-hired construction workers in a village south of Seoul as the government tried to evict farmers to allow the relocation of U.S. military bases in their village. The activists participating in the confrontation argued that the relocation would dangerously weaken the deterrence capabilities against North Korea which has forward-deployed a large number of long-range artillery. As such, they seemed to indicate that the relocation would disturb the balance of power on the peninsula. They also maintained that Pyeongtaek would likely become a station for U.S. expeditionary forces, and could potentially drag Korea into a foreign conflict spanning across all of East Asia. Most recently, protesters demanded the termination of the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (KORUSFTA) negotiations, pointing out that American business would destroy vulnerable sectors of the Korean economy.

These examples of unrest and political confrontation are only a few of the most recent and prominent expressions of what would be generally called "anti-Americanism" in Korea. And, this has grown so strong and prevalent that they will have to be reckoned with as one of main factors when the Korean government formulates its foreign policies. Despite the conflicts and disagreements, the logic of international politics operating in Northeast Asia seems to indicate that the strengthening of the bilateral relations between Korea and the United

States would effectively serve their mutual and collective interests, which include peace and stability on the Korean peninsula.¹ Thus, it would be imperative that both nations stabilize bilateral relations by smoothing over points of friction at various levels in general and alleviating anti-Americanism in particular.

In order to reduce the level of anti-Americanism in Korea, an adequate understanding of its origins is necessary. A number of perceptive analyses have emphasized the significance of such factors as democratization and unprecedented social transformation in Korea, the recently reduced North Korean threat, and the unilateralist foreign policy of the United States under the Bush administration.² However, what seems more important from a policy perspective is to understand what constitutes “anti-Americanism” as an organized ideology,³ through what processes and historical context it took form, and who is and has been leading the anti-American movements in Korea. Yet, almost paradoxically, it appears that most Americans and many Koreans are not familiar with these important issues. Even some Korea watchers who claim to grasp Korean politics have neither a deep historical understanding of the issue, nor actually catch up with the dynamically changing realities of the present modern decade of events in Korea.

A typical example of such blatant expression of bias is apparent when an American researcher says, “Negative trends in Korean attitudes appear particularly pronounced among those in their 30s and 40s, fueled in part by radical non-governmental organizations and ‘leftist’ civic groups, the growth of which had been actively encour-

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1. A discussion on the mutual benefits of the alliance can be found in Park Kun Young (2005).
 2. Good analyses on this issue include Kim Seung-hwan (Winter 2002-03), Moon (2002), and Kim and Lim (2007).
 3. Anti-Americanism can be defined as an organized ideology that systematically opposes the values and behaviors of the United States as a nation. Anti-American sentiments are different from it in that it is more emotional, temporary, and unorganized.
 4. Norman D. Levin (2004, 30). Mark E. Manyin distinguishes between “radical leftists” and “individuals who support the alliance but oppose U.S. policy on specific

aged by Kim Dae-jung government.”⁴ The Korean attitudes the writer refers to actually date back to the early twentieth century, have a complex historical background, and have been actively reinforced by a “particular” group of civic activists. The history of and changes in Korean politics and society are not well understood primarily because most Americans receive information from Korean conservative newspapers that offer English-translated coverage and their long-time Korean colleagues with traditional political views. Unfortunately, the reality increasingly tends to defy their views, perspectives, and explanations. The purpose of this paper is to understand what constitutes Korean anti-Americanism, to analyze its emergence and evolution, and to discuss its policy implications for the United States.

The Emergence of Anti-Americanism in Korea

Anti-American “sentiments” in Korea did not organize into a systematic ideology until the 1980s. The pre-1980 anti-American sentiments were largely of the “flash in the pan” variety: momentary, emotional, and unorganized reactions to the sporadic political events that arguably did involve the United States. These events include the secret Taft-Katsura Agreement (1905) that nullified the Treaty between the United States and the Kingdom of Joseon (1882), the first treaty ever signed between the United States and the former body of Korea, and the consequent Japanese colonial rule of the Korean peninsula, the 38th parallel erected against the will of Koreans, the American military administration that spawned political, economic, and military structure in Korea dependent upon the United States, and the American acceptance of the May 16th military coup (1961) that overthrew the first democratic government in Korea. By

issues.” He is a rare exception in that he disaggregates anti-Americanism despite that his three-way categorization does not seem to capture the reality and that his analysis is rudimentary and superficial in dealing with its formation and evolution. Manyin (2003, 9).

contrast, the anti-Americanism of the 1980s, which displayed a distinctive ideological tendency, pursued a fundamental and structural change in the Korean social system armored with an anti-American revolutionary theory.

The anti-Americanism of the 1980s primarily stemmed from “the May 18 Uprising” in Gwangju and its aftermath. Witnessing the tragic incidents in the early 1980s and the interactions between the Korean military junta and the U.S. government, many young Koreans became convinced that the Gwangju massacre was possible only with tacit consent of the United States (possessing at that time the right to operational control over most of the Korean armed forces, some of which moved without prior authorization by the U.S. commander to suppress the uprising), suggesting that the United States consciously chose to shelter the authoritarian military dictatorship.⁵ This perception led to their disillusionment about the United States that had “preached” democracy, freedom, and human rights; their disillusionment quickly turned into a widespread skepticism, if not cynicism. Among the public, many felt that the U.S. interest was doomed to obstructing the democratic development in Korea. This seemed vindicated when senior U.S. government officials stated, “This is not a human rights issue. It is a question of the national interest of the United States in achieving and maintaining stability in Northeast Asia,”⁶ and “The political and social stability is essential to progress in Korea” at the summit meeting in 1981, expressing American support for the unambiguously anti-democratic regime led by General Chun Doo-hwan.⁷

Progressive-minded activists came to harbor resentment toward the United States as they concluded (with expressed conviction) that

5. People in Gwangju expected and hoped that the U.S. government would intervene and try to reverse the coup process. Their expectations seemed realized when they knew on May 24, 1980 that a U.S. aircraft carrier was at anchor in Busan harbor. But, their hope turned into despair and resentment when they discovered that the ship was there to protect its national interest and the Korean military junta.

6. Oberdorfer (1980).

7. Shorrock (1996, 19-22).

the “United States valued anti-communism more than human rights and democracy,” and that, therefore, its national interest would ultimately obstruct peace and unification on the Korean peninsula. To further this resentment, rumors had begun to swirl in Korea during the early 1980s that the United States might carry out a preemptive strike on North Korea if a Soviet-instigated conflict occurred in the Middle East.⁸ These same un-named sources also suggested that the United States, exercising its military prowess, might actually use its tactical nuclear weapons deployed in Korea against the will of the Korean people. A number of anti-American protests in the early 1980s, often violent ones, were rooted in this perception of U.S. hegemony over Korea and elsewhere. Despite the fact that there was no true support for the veracity of the claims circulated, the seeds of fear and anti-Americanism had begun to spread like weeds in many Korean minds.

However, after witnessing the tragic Gwangju massacre, and a series of “poorly conceived” anti-American projects, some intellectuals came to appreciate the importance of an approach that looks at reality from an objective and scientific perspective. Such an intellectual search was partly fulfilled when “the publication-cultural-academic movement” started to produce in the late 1970s works on critical social theories, dependency models, and Marx-Leninist ideas. A group of intellectuals, with access to such progressive works, tried to analyze and understand the reality of Korean society through a systematic and generalized conceptual framework. This endeavor led to a great debate on “social formations” in Korea. Participants in this debate were intellectuals who asked and answered the question of “how to understand Korean society,” designating the United States as a primary constitutive unit in Korean social formations and shaping the Korean perception of the United States embodied in the Gwangju Uprising along ideological dimensions.⁹

8. An interview with a senior official of the Roh Moo-hyun administration who led the anti-American movement in the early 1980s (October 30, 2005).

9. The initial debate on the Korean social formations was initiated by Park Hyun-chaе and Lee Dae-gun with their articles published in *Changjak-gwa-bipyеong* (Creation

The debate on the Korean social formations was a struggle between those who defined Korea as a “colonial semi-feudal society (or a colonial semi-capitalist society),” and those who insisted upon a “neo-colonial state monopolistic capitalism.” More specifically, the former regarded Korea as a colonial society and traced the fundamental contradictions found in Korean society to American “colonial” rule such that the imminent revolution in Korean society would be an anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, anti-feudal, and national liberation. Despite some internal disagreement, this first group of intellectuals tended to take the stance that “the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” being the only democratic bridgehead to accomplish such a revolution in the Korean peninsula, was entitled to lead a revolutionary movement in “the South.” In short, they called for national liberation, and have been named the “NLists”.

The latter group held disparate views. Contrarily juxtaposed to the “colonial view,” the second group of intellectuals refused to define the Korea-U.S. relations as equivalent to the relations found between a colony and a colonial master. Although the United States exercised dominance over Korea politically, economically, as well as militarily, they viewed this dominance as implicit rather than explicit. These intellectuals went on to argue that the Korean “fascists” were not just American puppets but actual “social forces” with a considerable autonomy based on their independent material bases. Moreover, they understood that the old landlord class had (arguably and most likely) perished as a consequence of a land reform such that any trace of semi-feudalism vanished and that monopolistic capitalism had already matured in Korea. The real challenge, then, was to settle a class struggle between monopolistic capitalists and laborers, and a national liberation struggle was not to be reckoned with at all. Accordingly, an impending revolution would be best described by its orientation to socialist people’s democracy. For this, they have been

and Criticism) in 1985 which was followed by more serious and comprehensive debates from which the NL group emerged as a winner. An extensive survey on these debates is found in Park and Cho (1989).

called the “PDists.”

The NLists eventually out-powered the PDists, at last putting an end to the extended debates over social formations. One major reason for the NLists’ victory was that the PDists were unable to provide practical guidelines concerning the issues of national unification and American dominance in South Korea.¹⁰ To the contrary, it was the popularity of the ideology of “Juche” (self-reliance) that, in large part, strengthened the position of the NLists vis-à-vis the PDists. In fact, the NLism was basically part of the ideology of Juche that was rapidly spreading among some intellectuals within South Korea, who were fascinated with the idea of “national self-reliance.” They also became versed in the history of DPRK resistance against the Japanese colonial rule or post-1950 recovery. While witnessing how the DPRK managed through incidents confronting the United States, including the USS Pueblo incident, they became convinced that such assertiveness was rooted in the ideology of Juche.¹¹ Although far from an immaculate system of theory, the ideology of Juche, composed of four succinct and readily accessible key concepts (independence, in thought, political independence, economic self-sufficiency, and self-reliance in defense), appealed greatly to some South Korean intellectuals. Supplemented by concepts of people’s democracy and “qualification of fine character,” the Juche ideology ushered in a new era of mass movements for the social activists, who heretofore were largely confined to the underground (*golbang*). In contrast, those who failed to suggest an alternative to the main ideas of national liberation were steadily pushed aside.

It seems plausible to suggest that Kim Yeong-hwan, also known by the alias “Gangcheol” (iron), played a key role in spreading Juche ideology in South Korea in the 1980s. Best known for his *Gangcheol Letters*, which were widely circulated among student activists, he vehemently defended the Juche ideology as a viable resistance dis-

10. Another vulnerability of the PDists was related to the global demise of communism.

11. A written interview with a “386” leader who participated in the anti-American movement in the early 1980s (September 21, 2005).

course and supported national liberation by forming a coalition with the DPRK. His argument was based on the claim that the United States bore primary responsibility for the Gwangju massacre. Such an emboldened claim instigated enormous response among activists, thus giving birth to the “Jusa” clique, supporters of the Juche ideology. It is still unclear how influential the DPRK was in the process, though. The persistent propagandistic broadcasting by the DPRK may have indirectly contributed to such a transformation. The first generation of the “Jusa” clique is, therefore, considered the product of self-generation. In fact, Kim Yeong-hwan, who boarded a submarine and secretly met Chairman Kim Il Sung in the DPRK, later confessed that he had recanted his adherence to the Juche ideology after the clandestine meeting.

Those who were actively involved in the Korean unification movement as NLists in the 1980s have evolved into different groups with different ideas about social movements, North Korea, and the United States. Still, it is undisputable that the Korean unification movement led by student NL activists during the 1980s and 1990s (labeled as “the campaign to better understand the DPRK”) was the spiritual precursor of the current anti-Americanism in Korea. Most importantly, a number of prominent people currently considered anti-U.S. figures were key members of the Korean unification movement at the time or are their products. As shown above, the emergence of anti-Americanism in Korea should be seen as a response in large part to the American preoccupation with anti-communism, which was perceived as being hostile toward North Korea, the object of Korean unification, while being lenient with other anti-democratic military dictatorships. This is a major characteristic that distinguishes Korean anti-Americanism from that of others.¹²

12. Anti-Americanisms found elsewhere in the world have similarities and differences. For example, European anti-Americanism, especially the one found in France, has been mainly driven by U.S.’s perceived unilateralist foreign policy (e.g. its ignorance of multilateralism (Vedrine 2004, 121), biased attitudes toward Palestine-Israel conflict (Vedrine 2004, 120; Wall 2004, 127)), dependence on hard power

The Evolution of the Anti-Americanism

Global-Local Changes and the Split in Anti-Americanism

In the 1980s, the winners of the “great debate” dominated the Korean opposition to the United States. In other words, those who depicted the United States as evil led the anti-American movements, whereas the influence of those who maintained that Korea should be more autonomous vis-à-vis the United States and that their imminent struggle should be against the dominant capitalists was marginal. However, a series of critical events began to change this power configuration in the 1990s. First, the collapse of existing socialism around the early 1990s led to a decline in anti-Americanism in Korea. Although unrelated to the socialist movement, mainstream anti-Americanism was definitely based on empathy with socialism. The failure of realizing socialism in the real world wreaked havoc on the NL camp. Moreover, the Juche ideology of the DPRK that dovetailed with an economic crisis and political impasse no longer appealed to the social activists as a viable alternative to the status quo. Disillusioned, many abandoned their pursuit. Consequently, the number of aggressive advocates dwindled.

Second, the Clinton administration and its foreign policy managed to change the perception of the United States held by many Korean anti-Americanists. In fact, the United States under Clinton was a new experience for these activists, who had struggled against the U.S. Republican administrations during the 1980s. To their surprise, the Clinton administration opened the 1990s with a series of

(rather than soft power (Wall 2004, 126), cultural hegemony, materialism-commercialism, and capitalist system with little regulation (Wall 2004, 125). Latin Americans tend to hold negative images of United States for its maximization of profit as they perceive that their economic history with the United States has been full of exploitation and plundering by the United States (McPherson 2004, 142). It seems plausible, therefore, to argue that the Korean anti-Americanism is unique in that it mainly derives from the division of the nation. McPherson (2004); Vedrine (2004); Wall (2004).

new proposals and policies that contrasted with more ideologically-oriented ones that had been pursued by the previous conservative administrations. The Clinton administration also successfully brought about the Agreed Framework to resolve the North Korean nuclear problems through diplomacy. And it discussed with the North the future of U.S. forces in South Korea, something which had been simply unimaginable in the past. The North-South summit meeting in 2000 with the consequent June 15th Joint Declaration was one of the most inspiring, historic, and nationalist deeds in the history of Korea for many anti-American activists. They realized that it would not have been possible without the support of the Clinton administration. Such unprecedented accomplishments were sufficiently impressive to anti-Americanists, who began to question their indiscriminate objection to the United States. Realizing that unquestioning opposition to the United States would not even contribute to attaining national self-reliance in the bilateral relations, the anti-Americanists began to embrace flexibility and practicality.

Third, Korea's rapid progress succinctly contrasted with the view of Korean society held by NLists. Anti-American advocates fell into utter confusion over this remarkable progress to the extent that they began to ask whether Korea still remains a colonial semi-capitalist society. For instance, there emerged a new perception that Korea was hardly an American colony while watching democratization under Kim Young-sam and Korea-U.S. relationship in conflict over foreign policy and trade issues.

As a result, the pro-DPRK anti-Americanism led by the NLists lost centripetal force and social appeal, disintegrating into splinter groups. Some now openly supported the Juche ideology while others retained only the concept and strategy of solidarity movements, eschewing the Juche ideology. Yet another group is often critical of the DPRK regime. But, the power and influence of the former NLists who composed the dominant portion of the "Unification Solidarity" still remained substantial in the anti-American movement in Korea. Meanwhile, the former PDists coalesced with the "Peace Campaign," arguably relevant to the "Counterculture Movement" in the Western

Hemisphere of the 1960s. As they were less enthusiastic about the pro-DPRK anti-American struggle in the 1980s than about the struggle against the dominant capitalists, they are now more interested in opposing war (and promoting disarmament) and the neo-liberal globalization, including KORUSFTA, in which the United States has been a major player and target of their protest.

One important qualification is in order, however, regarding the relationship between the PDists and the Peace Campaign. It is undeniable that the former PDists compose the core of the Peace Campaign. However, unlike the Unification Solidarity, which was even unable to inherit all of the former NLists (because of the changes mentioned above), the Peace Campaign, with its historical appeal to the younger generation, was able to recruit new activists who were liberal but not necessarily anti-American. As a result, the Peace Campaign has become a more influential social force compared with the PDists in the 1990s, but with a less ideological focus.

The fundamental difference between “the self-reliance faction (a popular title for pro-DPRK anti-Americanists, Unification Solidarity, S-RF)” and “the equality faction (a popular title for former PDists, the Peace Campaigners, EF)” centers on their relationships with the DPRK. In retrospect, only a small proportion of those involved in student movements of the 1980s maintained a close contact with the DPRK. Contrarily, the current S-RF’s proclivity to the DPRK is extraordinarily solid, open and public. For instance, at a conference co-organized by Korea’s progressive social groups in the wake of North Korea’s nuclear test in 2006, the participants from the S-RF such as the Research Center for Progressive Movement, the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (Minju Nochong), and the Unification Solidarity, argued without qualification that the North’s nuclearization should be viewed as a legitimate response to the U.S.’s hostile policy toward the North and that the North’s possession of nuclear weapons should be accepted as its nuclear deterrent or self-defense means.¹³

13. Specifically, Bak Gyeong-sun, from Research Center for Progressive Movement, suggests that “North Korea is now in possession of the strongest nuclear deterrent

In contrast, the EF is fairly critical of the DPRK. In fact, these peace activists tend to condemn the DPRK for conducting a nuclear test while at the same time criticizing the U.S.'s lack of active diplomacy. For example, the Center for Peace and Disarmament, People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, issued a statement indicating that "it opposes and strongly condemns the military adventurism by the North Korean authority that is trying to gain possession of useless nuclear weapons and take the security of the Koreans hostage while intending to use the nuclear weapons for negotiation purposes." And, it continues to suggest that "the North's nuclearization is simply unacceptable" and that "it should immediately dismantle the nuclear weapons."¹⁴ Similarly, this group distinguishes itself from the S-RF in terms of its attitude toward the human rights questions in the DPRK. Unlike the S-RF, which denies the existence of human rights violations in the DPRK, the EF flatly acknowledges them, although it considers "feeding the North Koreans" to be more urgent than "improving their political rights." It seems fairly clear that although supportive of a policy of reconciliation and cooperation toward the DPRK, the interest of the Peace Campaign of the EF is in preventing a war in the Korean peninsula rather than endorsing the DPRK or its policies.

Furthermore, whereas the S-RF is closely connected with the DPRK, the EF tries to forge an international solidarity. The two

that would deter the U.S.'s pre-emptive nuclear attack," and that "the North's nuclearization is significant in that it is free from the U.S.'s nuclear blackmail." Kim Yeong-jae, the head of the unification policy bureau, the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (Minju Nochong), maintains that "it would be irresponsible to argue that North Korea must not have nuclear weapons" and that "the North's nuclearization is totally understandable in the context of history." Han Hyeon-su, Policy Chief of the Unification Solidarity, argues that "one should understand the circumstances under which the North operates as it is in confrontation with the U.S.'s hegemonic policy." Bak (2006).

14. For the text, refer to http://www.peoplepower21.org/article/article_view.php?article_id=17909. At the conference mentioned above, Ryu Ju-hyeong, an EF activist from the Social Progressive Solidarity, expressed his concern that "the peace and anti-war movement may lose its public base and popular support if the progressives accepts the North's action as legitimate and inevitable one." Ryu (2006).

camps may cooperate with each other if there is a need. However, they will likely find it hard to regard each other as a like-minded colleague or comrade. Specifically, their distinctiveness is evident in their respective stance toward the statue of General McArthur that stands in a park in the city of Incheon, which was the site of his amphibious landing operations during the Korean War. The bronze statue represents a prime object of hatred for the S-RF, who believes that McArthur drove the DPRK into despair. The EF considers it inappropriate to commemorate a “war hero” from a pacifist perspective. Consequently, the S-RF is far more vocal about the statue issue.

Anti-Americanism Today and Its Policy Implications

It should be noted here that anti-Americanism in Korea nowadays is qualitatively different from the one found in the 1980s. A few key changes deserve a mention. First, there was a tactical change. The NL activists seem to have concluded that the “mass-protest” tactic was not effective, as seen in the Incheon (May 1986) and Konkuk University (October 1986) incidents. In Gramscian terms, they seem now to pursue a tactic of “the war of position” combined with or supported by a tactic of “the war of maneuver.”

Second, there was a change in the “social context” of Korea. In other words, social perception has changed as it is no longer permissible to imprison a person simply because s/he protests against the United States or its policy. Democratization does matter greatly in this regard. Additionally, many who tasted a sense of “self-reliance” during their college years during the 1980s and 1990s are now leaders in various sectors of society. Their empowerment, then, led to a wider acceptance that the open expression of anti-Americanism is sufficiently tolerable in a mature society. The technological progress in telecommunication, including the Internet, also made it possible to reach a larger audience.

It is politically significant, then, that, as a result of these changes and transformations in tactics, as well as the social, political, and technological environment of anti-Americanism, anti-American

movements that have been led by college student activists are now largely operated by social groups. Most importantly, career activists, in full charge of social movements, continue to spawn their own agenda, work in coalition with other groups, and build their public relations by appealing to the mass media. Such a specialization in personnel, unheard of in the 1980s, now works as an important input in bringing about changes in the Korean political landscape. The reason why the anti-American movements have become a hot political and social issue nowadays is closely related to the formation and workings of these career activists. By reaching out to the general public through professional PR staff, sophisticated advocates of anti-Americanism won the sympathy of many laymen.

Thus, the Korean anti-Americanism of today has been established in a favorable social setting and is making a political and ideological appeal to the public in a persistent and persevering manner. The United States will benefit from initiating a policy change in its attempt to contain anti-Americanism in Korea. For example, the United States needs to understand that the Bush administration's hard-line and unilateralist policy toward North Korea produced the perception in the South that the United States was unilaterally pursuing its own interests at the expense of South Korea. The United States, which has been deeply involved in Korean peninsular affairs both militarily and otherwise, supported South Korea's initiative on this matter under the Clinton administration by pursuing its own engagement policy toward North Korea, culminating with the visit of Secretary of State Albright to Pyongyang in October 2000. However, following the January 2001 inauguration of the Bush administration seemingly committed to the neo-conservative political ideology and unilateralist foreign policy, and followed by 9/11—an event that provided political lift and impetus to such an approach—the American engagement policy became a thing of the past. Instead, the Bush administration's approach toward North Korea has focused on disciplining the "evil" dictatorship. In addition to cooling relations between Washington and Pyongyang, the Bush administration's tough stance has had a dampening effect on North Korea's opening-

up policy and inter-Korean relations. Regardless of their preferences for South Korea's North Korea policy, most South Koreans believe that the overly hostile attitude on the part of the United States toward the North has seriously lessened the probability of defanging North Korea, realizing long-awaited family reunions, and fulfilling trans-Siberian/European economic dreams generated by the North-South Joint Declaration of June 15, 2000.

In addition, the United States should practice more active and far-sighted public diplomacy with Korea—"engaging, informing, and influencing key Korean audiences"—to improve its image there, which will in turn help provide the moral basis for U.S. leadership in the world. One of the key principles that would undergird effective U.S. public diplomacy in Korea involves deep understanding of Korean history and culture. One recent example of an American action that Koreans appreciated is the historic decision made by the U.S. Ambassador Christopher Hill and the U.S. government in September 2004 to visit Gwangju to pay tribute to those killed during the bloody 1980 military crackdown.¹⁵ A similarly positive U.S. attitude toward Korea's history and culture will enable Washington to win the Korean people's hearts and design a more realistic Korea policy.

The focused effort on the part of the United States to neutralize the spread of anti-Americanism in Korea not only involves a policy change but also identifying the core of the movement. In other words, it seems that the most significant political implication that the evolution of anti-Americanism in Korea has for the United States is distinguishing between the pro-DPRK anti-Americanists and the peace advocates who at times support the former depending on the

15. By contrast, only after President Chun Doo-hwan stepped down at the end of 1987 and the opposition in the National Assembly grew stronger did the United States begin answering questions concerning its involvement in Gwangju. On June 19, 1989, Washington issued the "United States Government Statement on Events in Gwangju, Republic of Korea," in response to formal requests from the National Assembly. While the report rebutted most of the myths of American culpability for events in 1979 and 1980, the ten-year delay in issuing the report did little to assuage the feelings held by many Koreans.

issue. Indeed, anti-Americanism as a peace movement stands in sharp contrast to the anti-Americanism predominant in the 1980s and its most recent “redux” that depicted the United States as evil. It is important to note that the former is opposed to a particular policy of a particular U.S. administration rather than have indiscriminate ideological hostility toward the United States and its values. In addition, it keeps an arms-length distance from the DPRK. Actually, it seems awkward to suggest that an opposition to a particular policy of a particular U.S. administration or even a political assertiveness toward the United States is anti-American to begin with. An American democrat criticizing the Bush administration’s Iraq policy, for example, is not labeled as anti-American. The peace activists in Korea are critical of the unilateralism manifested in the Bush administration’s foreign policy, but they hardly denounce the U.S. system or its values themselves. Given that overthrowing the United States is not even a part of their agenda, it is rather injudicious to brand their motives as “anti-American” in a sweeping manner.

Admittedly, this distinction is indeed simplistic. For instance, the mainstream members of the Roh administration tend to be more inclined to the EF than the S-RF. Yet their stance does not exactly correspond to the EF. It seems plausible to suggest that their view is close to a call for a more autonomous Korea or the standpoint that asserting Korea’s own views at the present time will promote its long-term interest of attaining national development and autonomy, although it may create bilateral friction in the short-term. Such a perspective, admittedly liberal but certainly not anti-American, is also prevalent in Korean intellectual circles to the extent that it presumably competes with the existing view that the strengthening of the Korea-U.S. alliance supersedes all other foreign policy objectives.

In short, the point is that the extent and depth of anti-Americanism in Korea are often exaggerated and misconstrued. Many Korean and American conservatives tend to both consciously and unconsciously disregard subtle but significant differences between anti-Americanism and anti-American sentiments. In contrast, the S-RF tends to label moderate peace advocates as opportunists. The undeni-

able fact, however, is that these moderates comprise a significant part of Korean society. Therefore, if the conservatives persist in categorizing the current Roh or the previous Kim Dae-jung administrations as “pro-DPRK anti-U.S.,” they are either being driven by blind political/electoral incentives or being misled by a failure to recognize the changes and diversification of anti-Americanism in Korea.

Conclusion

Improved Korea-U.S. relations would serve the interests of both nations and promote global/regional peace and stability. Therefore, the two nations should work together to alleviate anti-Americanism in Korea. A key to accomplishing this task is for the United States to adequately understand its nature, origin, evolution, and political implications. This paper argues that the anti-Americanism articulated as an ideology emerged during and after the Gwangju Uprising in 1980, the incident through which “American hypocrisy” was revealed, and that the subsequent ideological/intellectual struggles, combined with large-scale global/local events, have spawned two distinct activist groups, the Self-Reliance faction with pro-DPRK leanings, and the Equality faction of both the anti-war and anti-neoliberal globalization lines. It emphasizes the significance of the newly-established anti-American social networks and a policy change on the part of the United States as well. Utmost importance is placed in this paper on the policy implications of distinguishing between these two camps of social activists.

Anti-Americanism in Korea will be persistent as long as the U.S. remains Korea’s military ally, and important trade partner as well as a global superpower. The U.S. policy-makers need to be keenly aware that whether anti-Americanism will increase or die out in Korea greatly depends on an accurate understanding of the nature and consequences of Korean social/political changes and policy decisions that take such an understanding into consideration.

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