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Identity Politics and Policy Disputes in U.S.–Korea Relations

GI-WOOK SHIN

Anti-American sentiments and slogans swept South Korea during its 2002 presidential campaign. These movements were not new for the country, but for the first time, they had a crucial impact on its alliance with the United States. A second North Korean nuclear stand-off had just occurred, and candidate Roh Moo Hyun's vows to continue engagement with the North, despite the crisis, were clearly at odds with the George W. Bush administration's desire to isolate Pyongyang. In the past, such a threat would have led the South to consolidate its alliance with the United States for reasons of national security. Also preceding the 2002 election, a massive wave of anti-American sentiment had erupted in response to the handling of a U.S. military training accident that killed two Korean schoolgirls: Catholic priests went on a hunger strike, and tens of thousands of Koreans—not just activists but middle-class adults—protested against the United States.¹ According to a 2003 Pew survey, aside from certain Arab states, France, and Russia, South Korea was identified as one of the most anti-American countries.² A 2004 RAND report likewise showed that many South Koreans' previously positive views of the United States had become increasingly unfavorable.³ As new progressive, nationalist policy elites sought

¹ George Wehrfritz, "Angry at the Yanks: Strange Times for U.S. Troops Helping to Defend South Korea," 13 January 2003, accessed at <http://www.newsweek.com/id/62765>, 17 June 2009.

² Pew Research Center, Pew Global Attitudes Project Survey, "Views of a Changing World, June 2003," accessed at <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/185.pdf>, 7 January 2009. See also David Steinberg, "Korean Attitudes towards the United States: The Complexities of an Enduring and Endured Relationship" (paper presented at the Georgetown Asian Studies Program Conference, Washington, DC, 30 January 2003).

³ Eric V. Larson, Norman D. Levin, Seonhae Baik, and Savych Bogdan, *Ambivalent Allies? A Study of South Korean Attitudes toward the U.S.* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2004).

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to reassess the U.S. role in inter-Korean relations and unification, the rationale for the alliance was being questioned and became a subject of intense debate within the South.

Across the Pacific, there was no comparable anti-Koreanism in the United States; however, many U.S. experts and observers of Korean affairs were deeply concerned about the changing views of the United States and the alliance. In addition, the newly established Bush administration had become deeply skeptical of efforts to engage North Korea, including the Bill Clinton administration's 1994 Agreed Framework and the South's Sunshine Policy. The Bush administration's perspective contended that there was new evidence that the northern regime was pursuing an enriched uranium route to nuclear weapons, presenting a grave security threat to the United States. This "new" North Korean threat was taken as particularly serious for the United States in its post-September 11 context, inasmuch as it focused its foreign policy on the dangerous nexus between rogue states with weapons of mass destruction capabilities and terrorists seeking to strike the American homeland. Yet this thinking collided with that of the Republic of Korea (ROK). In contrast to the U.S. view, many South Koreans, especially progressives, had begun to perceive their northern neighbor as a poor sibling in need of assistance and a partner to engage.

Although there had never been a "golden age" in United States–Republic of Korea (U.S.–ROK) relations, and officials in Seoul and Washington denied the existence of any tension,⁴ these developments in U.S.–Korean relations led many scholars and experts to question the future of the U.S.–ROK alliance.⁵ They were increasingly concerned about the growing policy rift over the North as well as about the anti-Americanism in the South. On the eve of the alliance's fiftieth anniversary, *The New York Times* dubbed South Korea—long perceived to be one of the most stalwart partners of the United States—"one of the Bush administration's biggest foreign policy problems."⁶

What had happened to 50 years of robust alliance relations? Had they been irreparably damaged? Or were the strains merely "growing pains" bound to emerge in the maturation process of such an unequal relationship forged in the Cold War? If the mood of the Korean public changed, would U.S.–ROK relations get back on track? Could administrations in Seoul and Washington

⁴ Daniel Snider, "The U.S.–Korea Tie: Myth and Reality," *The Washington Post*, 12 September 2006.

⁵ Victor D. Cha, "Shaping Change and Cultivating Ideas in the US–ROK Alliance" in Michael H. Armacost and Daniel I. Okimoto, eds., *The Future of America's Alliances in Northeast Asia* (Stanford, CA: The Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, 2004); Victor D. Cha and David C. Kang, *Nuclear North Korea: A Debate on Engagement Strategies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Victor D. Cha, "Korea's Place in the Axis," *Foreign Affairs* 81 (2002): 79–92; and Ted Galen Carpenter and Doug Bandow, *The Korean Conundrum: America's Troubled Relations with North and South Korea* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

⁶ Steven R. Weisman, "Threats and Responses: East Asia: South Korea, Once a Solid Ally, Now Poses Problems for the U.S.," *The New York Times*, 2 January 2003.

with similar policy approaches to the North restore relations? Had the alliance entered a new era that warranted a new strategic rationale?

This article examines U.S.–ROK relations from 1992 to 2003, a decade that witnessed the end of the Cold War, full Korean democratization, inter-Korean reconciliation, two nuclear crises, and the beginning of the U.S. war on terror. In South Korea, democratization and the end of the Cold War propelled South Koreans to rethink their place in the region and the world, a process that prompted questioning of conventional views of their nation's relationships with the United States and North Korea. During the study period, the United States dealt with two North Korean nuclear stand-offs, the second occurring in the context of the war on terror. As North Korean issues are often said to be at the heart of changes in the U.S.–ROK relationship, this period presents a fascinating opportunity to examine how the incongruence in identities and interests pervading U.S.–ROK relations have affected the alliance and what kind of indelible mark such a disparity may have left on the future of the relationship.

This article examines U.S.–ROK relations through the lens of the news media in both countries. If news can be considered a “first draft of history,” and if perception matters in politics and international relations, then media analysis can serve as an important gauge of the status of bilateral relationships. Besides providing readers with factual or descriptive information on key events and issues, news coverage casts the spotlight of public attention on previously obscure or undisputed issues and can frame the terms of public debates and evaluate specific policies. Through these priming and framing roles, the media can impact public opinion as well as foreign policymaking. Therefore, content analysis of news coverage of the U.S.–ROK relations can be expected to offer insights into policy orientations and constraints in the two nations.

SOURCES OF THE STRAIN: ANTI-AMERICANISM OR POLICY RIFT?

The loosening of alliances has been mentioned as a general trend in the post-Cold War era, leading many to perceive changes within the U.S.–ROK alliance in a global context.⁷ In particular, adherents to this notion contend that U.S. arrogance and unilateralism in world affairs—especially in the context of the war on terrorism and the military action in Iraq—have alienated many nations, and Seoul's increasing distance from Washington during the final years of this study period is only one example. Yet the ROK, albeit reluctantly, has deployed troops to Afghanistan and Iraq to demonstrate support for the U.S.-led war against terrorism and to reaffirm the importance of the alliance in a troubled time. While general dissatisfaction with U.S. policies in the September 11 era may have been an exacerbating factor in the Korean case, one needs to be more specific in explaining evident strains in the U.S.–ROK

⁷ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

relationship. In this context, two major arguments have been advanced to explain the strained relationship.

First, the *anti-Americanism thesis* points to the ostensible rising tide of anti-Americanism in South Korea as the principal source of bilateral tension. Literature that focuses on anti-Americanism in South Korea connects the phenomenon to a multitude of factors: the generational divide and demographic change in the South, the U.S. war on terror and other Bush administration policies, Korean nationalism, reduced threat perceptions of North Korea, views of China as a viable strategic partner alternative, supposed historic U.S. complicity in the suppression of Korean democracy, and a perception of U.S. arrogance based on events ranging from the U.S. military's alleged disregard for South Korean citizens to a judgment considered unfair in a speed-skating contest in the 2002 Winter Olympics in Utah.⁸

In particular, two events in 2002 sparked major outpourings of anti-American sentiment in South Korea: first, President Bush's characterization of North Korea as a member of the "axis of evil" during his State of the Union address in January, and second, a U.S. military training accident in June, in which two South Korean schoolgirls died after being crushed by a U.S. armored vehicle. In line with these events, public opinion polls showed a clear deterioration in South Koreans' views of the United States. Many in the South, especially those in their twenties and thirties, contended that the United States had not only failed to appreciate Korean interests, but that it had also actively pursued policies running counter to these interests. As one U.S. expert on Korean affairs noted, "The Korean brand of anti-U.S. sentiment exhibits the notion that the United States blocked the national will of the people, reflected in the perceived lack of American respect for [Korean] foreign and domestic concerns," especially inter-Korean engagement.⁹

While the anti-American thesis should be taken seriously, it lacks the specificity required for empirical inquiry. First, it fails to identify why only

⁸ See Derek Mitchell, ed., *Strategy and Sentiment: South Korean Views of the United States and the U.S.-ROK Alliance* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2004); David Steinberg, ed., *Korean Attitudes toward the United States: Changing Dynamics* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2005); Larson et al., *Ambivalent Allies*; Katharine Moon, "Korean Nationalism, Anti-Americanism, and Democratic Consolidation" in Samuel S. Kim, ed., *Korea's Democratization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 135–157; Young-Shik Bong, "Anti-Americanism and the U.S.-Korea Military Alliance" in *Confrontation and Innovation on the Korean Peninsula* (Washington, DC: Korea Economic Institute, 2003), 18–29; Sook Jong Lee, "Allying with the United States: Changing South Korean Attitudes," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 17 (Spring 2005): 81–104; Robert Marquand, "How S. Korea's View of the North Flipped," 22 January 2003, accessed at <http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0122/p01s02-woap.html>, 17 June 2009; and Nae Young Lee and Jung Han-oorl, "Panmi yŏron kwa hanmi tongmaeng" [South Korean Public Opinion on Anti-Americanism and the U.S.-ROK alliance], *Kukka chŏllyak* [National Strategy] 9 (2003): 58–32, accessed at http://www.sejong.org/Pub_ns/PUB_NS_DATA/kns0903-03.pdf, 17 June 2009.

⁹ "U.S.-Korea Relations: Opinion Leaders Seminar" (Korea Economic Institute, Washington, DC, July 2003), 7.

recent anti-Americanism strained the U.S.–ROK alliance, whereas the arguably more widespread and even violent anti-American movements of the 1980s did not have a similar effect. Second, while both conservative and progressive forces in Korea became critical of the United States in the later years of the study period, their respective views of the U.S.–ROK relationship were increasingly divergent. The progressives were the primary critics of the relationship, while conservative forces sought to defend the importance of the alliance, presumably because of their concern over growing anti-Americanism within Korean society. This suggests that there is not necessarily any direct link between anti-American sentiment and the anti-alliance views. Finally, the anti-Americanism thesis fails to view the change in the U.S.–ROK relationship as an interactive process involving both nations, not simply a reflection of events or sentiments in one country.

The second explanation can be termed the *policy rift thesis*, as it refers to the allies' diverging perceptions of the North Korean threat and the consequent policy rift over how to deal with a North Korea pursuing nuclear weapons. For example, a study by the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC, entitled "South Korean Views of the United States and the U.S.–ROK Alliance," concluded that "it is the apparent difference in perceptions of and policy toward North Korea that is challenging most seriously the foundations of the alliance."¹⁰ Similarly, a report from another Washington-based think tank, the Korea Economic Institute, warned that "if the United States and South Korea could not reach agreement on how they viewed the North Korean threat, the U.S.–ROK alliance would be in grave trouble."¹¹

According to the policy rift thesis, the end of the Cold War and new inter-Korean engagement (epitomized by the 2000 Korea Summit) brought important changes in how South Koreans viewed the North and, consequently, the U.S. role in their national defense. From the U.S. perspective, the September 11 attacks changed the landscape of national security policy, placing even greater emphasis on nonproliferation. The United States regarded North Korea as a serious regional and even global security threat, whereas many South Koreans came to perceive the North—now a partner in inter-Korean reconciliation—as a weak state with severely diminished capacity to threaten ROK national security.¹² Thus, the traditional allies no longer viewed the North Korean nuclear issue through the same lens, and this difference allegedly strained the alliance. Divergent views and approaches to the North Korean issue posed a fundamental challenge to the U.S.–ROK alliance, as alliances must rest on a

¹⁰ Mitchell, *Strategy and Sentiment*, 107.

¹¹ "U.S.–Korea Relations: Opinion Leaders Seminar," 3.

¹² Taek-Young Hamm, "North Korea: Economic Foundations of Military Capability and the Inter-Korean Balance" in Philip Yun and Gi-Wook Shin, eds., *North Korea: 2005 and Beyond* (Stanford, CA: Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, 2006); Mitchell, *Strategy and Sentiment*.

congruence of strategic interests and a willingness to share risks and costs.¹³ Whereas North Korea had earlier stood as the threat that necessitated cooperation in the alliance, divergent perceptions and policy approaches toward the regime now tested U.S.–ROK relations.

The policy rift thesis may well explain recent strain in the alliance during the second nuclear stand-off but fails to answer why its rationale was challenged much earlier in the South, especially by Korean progressives, over a much longer period. The thesis cannot adequately explain the existence of divergent and contested views *within* South Korea about its North Korean policy either—the strain reflected more than policy preferences, as it had to do with identity politics in their society. Thus, in my view, the policy rift thesis may well explain the American view of the strained relationship but not necessarily the Korean perspective.

Accordingly, we need to carefully examine the ways in which Koreans and Americans respectively approach U.S.–ROK relations. This is primarily because they may employ different lenses, or frameworks, in understanding the relationship, due to different structural positions in the alliance or asymmetrical relations in the alliance, as specified below. Therefore, the examination should not only address how Koreans and Americans have assessed their bilateral relationship over time, but more importantly, it must also discern the conceptual frameworks wherein such assessments have been made. If Koreans and Americans indeed utilize different frameworks, then an explanation must be provided as to why and how. Doing so involves a nuanced examination of sentiment, conceptually separating that which is critical of the other country from that which is critical of the bilateral relationship or the alliance.

IDENTITY VERSUS POLICY IN ALLIANCE

Although the U.S.–ROK relationship has become more comprehensive over the years, a military alliance still forms its core. Alliance formation is a critical tool in international politics, and nations establish alliances to increase their security by merging their capabilities against a common enemy. According to the neorealist theory of international relations, the way in which power is distributed determines the nature of the system (for example, unipolar, bipolar, multipolar) and, in turn, shapes how states will pursue their interests within that system (balancing or bandwagoning).¹⁴ Alliances can be symmetric or asymmetric, depending on the relative power of the involved partners and, like many other institutions, alliances change over time.

¹³ Stephen Walt, “Why Alliances Endure or Collapse,” *Survival* 39 (Spring 1997): 156–179.

¹⁴ See Kenneth Neal Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979); John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001); Stephen M. Walt, *Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987).

In neorealist terms, the U.S.–ROK alliance has been asymmetric. Although South Korea is a sovereign state, the United States has acted as its patron, in both military and economic terms, for decades. The existing literature on alliance politics has addressed this type of asymmetry in power between allies. James Morrow, for instance, lays out a basic theoretical framework for alliances between unequal partners, emphasizing the trade-off between autonomy and security that each partner accepts as part of an alliance bargain. In his view, asymmetrical alliances are easier to form and tend to last longer, because each side receives different (complementary) benefits and can deliver its end of the bargain.¹⁵ Glenn Snyder also details how the relative balance of power and degree of dependence among allies can determine the course of alliance management. In his view, the more dependent a state is, the more likely the costs and risks of abandonment (defection) will outweigh those of entrapment (being committed to a situation wherein the interests of one side are not necessarily served).¹⁶

Therefore, in an asymmetric alliance, such as the U.S.–ROK relationship, it is reasonable to expect partners to have different interests and to approach the alliance accordingly. As Morrow asserts, both the patron (larger state) and client (smaller state) view each other through diverse lenses that are driven by different motivations based on notions of power and alliance.¹⁷ In more-general terms, one can argue that the client views the alliance in larger terms than does the patron. For the client state, the patron is not just a partner in sharing common interests. It is not only crucial to its national security but even acts as a “significant other” in the formation of its national identity. As a result, discussions tend to focus on the overarching purpose of the alliance. On the other hand, for the patron state, the alliance is more narrowly defined as a specific policy issue, and the scope and depth of discussions tend to be limited.

To adequately understand the ways in which South Koreans approach issues related to U.S.–ROK relations, then, one first needs to acknowledge that the significance of the issues extends beyond policy and domestic politics into deeper questions of national identity. Accordingly, the anti-Americanism thesis must be expanded and reframed to fit the larger context of identity politics. This expanded analytical framework can be termed the *identity thesis*. At the same time, the policy rift thesis has explanatory power in terms of the U.S. approach to U.S.–ROK relations, since Americans tend to conceive of these issues in the context of policy.

It is my central contention here that the U.S.–ROK relationship is linked to the issue of national identity for Koreans, while it is largely a matter of policy for Americans. To South Korea, the United States is not simply another state

¹⁵ James D. Morrow, “Alliance and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capacity Aggregation Model of Alliances,” *American Journal of Political Science* 35 (November 1991): 904–933.

¹⁶ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), particularly page 166.

¹⁷ Morrow, “Alliance and Asymmetry.”

in the international system with which it shares certain interests. Rather, the United States has been a significant other, shaping South Korea's national identity in the post-1945 era. For the United States, however, South Korea served principally as a strategic bulwark against regional communist advancement during the Cold War era. Thus, while U.S.–ROK relations became a pillar of national identity for Koreans, for Americans, the alliance was a matter of policy with little, if any, particular bearing on the national psyche. The difference in these respective frameworks for U.S.–ROK relations stems from these two nations' relative levels of power and roles in the international system and has important implications in understanding the nature and evolution of the bilateral relationship.

DATA AND METHOD

In examining U.S.–ROK relations during the study period, I use newly collected data from two major U.S. daily newspapers—*The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*—as well as two South Korean daily newspapers—*Chosun Ilbo* and *Hankyoreh Shinmoon*.¹⁸ The U.S. dataset consists of 3,328 articles that appeared in the two newspapers from July 1994 to January 2004 (2,109 from the *NYT* and 1,219 from the *WP*), whereas the Korean dataset is composed of 1,724 editorials and opinion columns that appeared in the two dailies from July 1994 to July 2003 (937 from *Chosun* and 787 from *Hankyoreh*).¹⁹ For the U.S. data, articles were obtained from the Lexis database, whereas South Korean articles were obtained from the KINDS database.

Eight coders were employed for coding U.S. news and five coders examined South Korean articles. To ensure the level of reliability generally expected by the research community, all of the coders underwent extensive training and were subject to the same training procedures. In the United States, the eight coders analyzed roughly 200 of the same articles by which inter-coder reliability was assessed. When the kappa statistics are computed, the news tone shows that kappa equals 0.80, whereas 0.40 is typically considered “fair” and 0.50 “good.” Comparable inter-coder reliability was also obtained with the South Korean data (kappa equals 0.76). Thus, inter-coder reliability was satisfactory by any standard.

News tone was determined as mechanically as possible. First, each paragraph was coded “positive,” “negative,” or “neutral,” and then the numbers of positive and negative paragraphs were tallied. If the proportion of positive

¹⁸ In my original study, I included one more U.S. daily, *The Wall Street Journal* (WSJ). However, because I am focusing primarily on security issues related to the alliance and the brunt of coverage of the relationship as reported in the WSJ concerned economics and trade, I omitted it from the current study. See note 21. *Chosun Ilbo* and *Hankyoreh Shinmoon* represent conservative and progressive views in South Korea, respectively.

¹⁹ For a detailed discussion of the dataset, see chap. 2 in Gi-Wook Shin, *One Alliance, Two Lenses: U.S.–Korea Relations in a New Era* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

(or negative) paragraphs exceeded 75 percent of all paragraphs, the article's tone was determined as "primarily positive" (or "negative"), and the article was assigned a score of 2 (or -2). If the proportion of positive (or negative) paragraphs fell between 60 percent and 75 percent, an article's tone was coded "somewhat positive" (or "somewhat negative"), and it was assigned a score of 1 (or -1). Articles that were determined to be "mixed/neutral" were assigned a score of 0. To avoid determining an article's tone based on inadequate information, the tone was not coded if fewer than three paragraphs were available.

U.S.–SOUTH KOREA RELATIONS IN THE MEDIA

To assess the validity of the two principal arguments presented above (the policy rift thesis and the identity thesis), I employ the following multi-level analysis using the media data from both countries. As noted above, this approach is based on the premise that perception matters in international relations, so that media analysis can serve as an important gauge of the status and change of the bilateral relationship over time.

First, the news tones of articles about the U.S.–ROK relationship are compared in accordance with combinations of U.S. and Korean administrations. This examination is intended as an empirical test of the policy rift thesis, which maintains that the collision between the Kim Dae Jung administration's Sunshine Policy and the George W. Bush administration's hard-line approach toward the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) marked a distinct turning point for the U.S.–ROK relationship. If this thesis does possess explanatory power, then one should expect a clear downturn in the media news tone on U.S.–ROK relations during the overlapping period of the DJ Kim and Bush administrations. One should also expect the news tone to have remained largely unchanged after the Roh Moo Hyun administration took office, since it continued the engagement policy of Kim Dae Jung. This is what would be expected from the U.S. media data, as the policy rift thesis is assumed to explain the American view.

However, a rather different pattern is anticipated from the Korean news media. First, critical views of U.S.–ROK relations should appear in the Korean media, especially in the progressive newspaper, much earlier than the Bush–Kim overlap. Such criticism would reflect Korean progressives' efforts to reformulate their national identity in the post-authoritarian, post-Cold War context. Second, significant differences in progressive and conservative views of the alliance should also be apparent, as their views are closely related to their respective national identities. And third, these differences should have increased over time, as contention between the two sides intensified in the later years of this study period. Together, these findings should lend strong support to the identity thesis that is expected to explain the Korean view.

Second, my analysis includes a further comparison of news tones regarding U.S.–ROK relations during the two nuclear stand-offs. If the policy rift thesis

is correct, then one should expect the news tone regarding the relationship to have turned significantly more negative during the second nuclear crisis, as compared to the first one in the mid-1990s. That is, during the first crisis, the alliance partners pursued a fairly unified approach toward the North, despite some concerns by the South Korean government, whereas during the second stand-off, the partners disagreed over the most suitable policy approach, based on fundamental differences over the utility of engaging North Korea. Thus, the U.S. news media is expected to display more-negative tones about the U.S.–ROK relationship during the second stand-off.

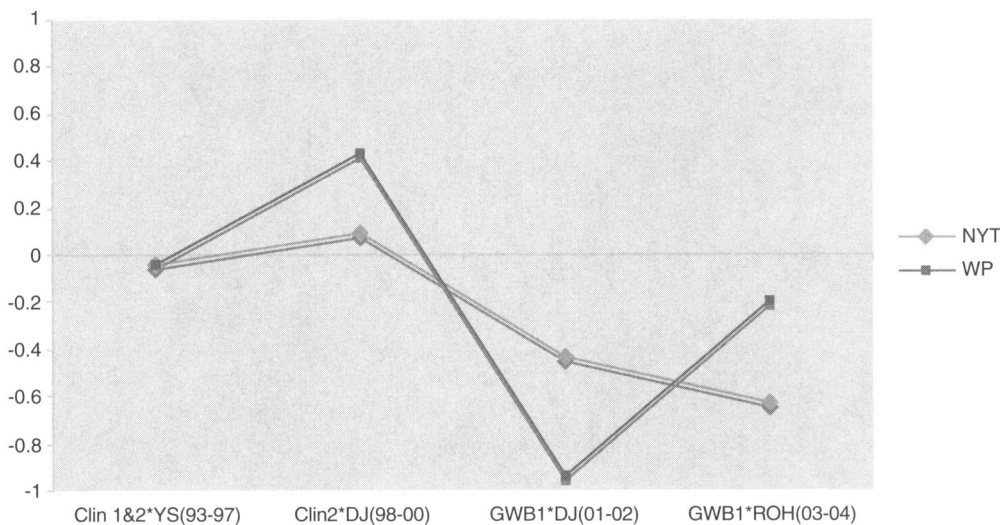
However, the South Korean media may display different patterns in tone. If the primary impetus for South Koreans' changed views reflected their effort to redefine their nation's relationship with the United States in the post–Cold War era, as the identity thesis suggests, then the change in views on U.S.–ROK relations should be expected to occur *before* the policy disputes over the nuclear issue. This would hold true at least in the case of the progressive newspaper, since progressive forces in South Korea led the challenge to prevailing views of the North and the alliance. Conversely, the conservative newspaper may have become even less critical of U.S.–ROK relations during the second nuclear crisis, primarily because during the later years of this study period, conservative political forces demonstrated significant concern over ostensible alliance deterioration and thus came to stress the importance of the alliance.

Media Views by Administration

Figure 1 shows findings from the U.S. media. As expected, prior to the overlap of the Kim Dae Jung and Bush administrations, U.S. media tone in the two dailies (*The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*) on the U.S.–ROK relationship was relatively neutral to positive. During the Kim Young Sam and Clinton administrations, Figure 1 shows, news tone was almost neutral for the two dailies, and during the Clinton and Kim Dae Jung years, in both papers, it became positive (.088 for the *Times* and .437 for the *Post*). Indeed, these specific years recorded the most positive tones of the study period, as the Clinton administration largely endorsed the engagement policy of the Kim Dae Jung government. These years were marked by significant diplomatic accomplishments, including the 2000 summit, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's trip to Pyongyang, and the establishment of the U.S.–ROK–Japan Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group.²⁰ However, the U.S. media tone took a striking downward turn with regard to the U.S.–ROK relations when the Bush administration came to power (–.431 for the *Times* and –.941 for the *Post* during the Kim Dae Jung and Bush years). The highly negative *Post* tone reflected the fact that its coverage focused more on security/diplomacy-related issues (for example, alliance) than did that of the *Times*. This change

²⁰ Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 420.

FIGURE 1
Tone on U.S.–ROK Relations by Administration Overlaps: U.S. Media



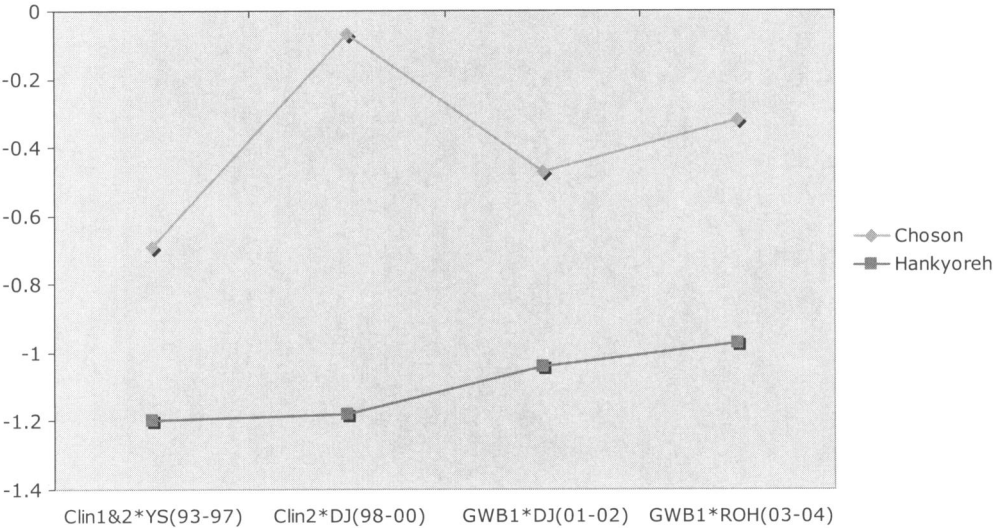
Source: Gi-Wook Shin, *One Alliance, Two Lenses: U.S.–Korea Relations in a New Era* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 166.

in news tones supports the policy rift thesis: From the U.S. perspective, policy differences on North Korea seem to have had a profound impact on perceptions of the alliance.

A very different pattern emerges from the Korean data, however. As Figure 2 shows, the progressive paper’s tone on U.S.–ROK relations was most critical *prior to* the overlap of the Kim Dae Jung and Bush administrations: During the Clinton and Kim Young Sam administrations, *Hankyoreh*’s average tone was -1.20 , and its tone remained similarly negative during the Clinton and Kim Dae Jung years (-1.18). This is in sharp contrast to the U.S. media, which recorded its most positive tones during these years. The progressive news tone improved (that is, was less negative) slightly during the Bush–Kim Dae Jung years (-1.04) and Bush–Roh Moo Hyun (-0.97) years, but these changes were marginal, with the tone still being very negative. These findings from the Korean media do not lend empirical support to the policy rift thesis, as the progressive tone toward U.S.–ROK relations remained highly negative throughout the whole study period.

The tone of *Chosun Ilbo*, the conservative newspaper, toward U.S.–ROK relations was most negative during the Clinton–Kim Young Sam years (-0.69). The YS Kim administration had supported the United States to engage in direct negotiations with the North but to limit the scope of the talks to the nuclear issue. Although working-level and behind-the-scenes U.S.–ROK cooperation was quite good, YS Kim objected to the “package deal” formulation of Clinton,

FIGURE 2
Tone on U.S.–ROK Relations during Administration Overlaps: Korean Media



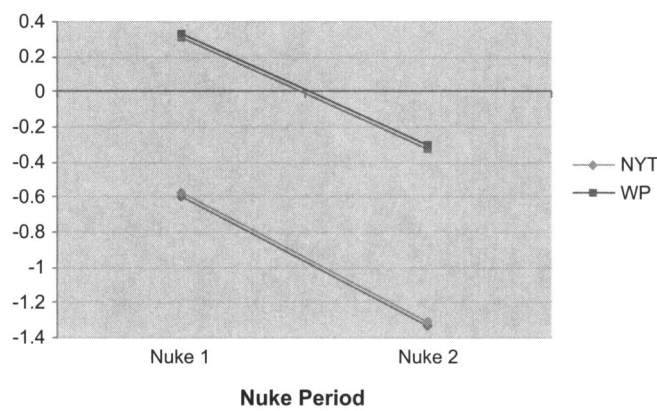
Source: Gi-Wook Shin, *One Alliance, Two Lenses: U.S.–Korea Relations in a New Era* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 167.

charging that Seoul had been marginalized. *Chosun*’s critical tone reflects Korean conservatives’ concern over U.S. engagement of Pyongyang throughout the Clinton–YS Kim period and sense of being left out in this negotiation process.

After the Clinton–Kim Young Sam period, *Chosun*’s tone toward the U.S.–ROK relationship seems to have improved and then deteriorated in a pattern similar to that of the U.S. newspapers, although its tone never became positive. The conservative newspaper’s tone improved significantly from the Clinton–Kim Young Sam to the Clinton–Kim Dae Jung years, during which the tone was close to neutral (–0.07). This is somewhat surprising, given the conservative critique of the Kim Dae Jung government and its engagement policy, but as noted earlier, those years were marked by significant diplomatic strides such as the North Korea–South Korea summit. *Chosun*’s tone turned more negative during the Bush–Kim Dae Jung years (–0.47) and then improved slightly during the Bush–Roh Moo Hyun years. Improvement during the Bush–Roh years—a time characterized by nuclear crisis, anti-American sentiment in Korea, and difficulties in coordination—may seem counterintuitive. But in fact, it appears to reflect conservative efforts to bolster the alliance in accordance with fears that progressive expression of anti-alliance sentiment might be undermining the U.S. commitment to South Korean security during a dangerous time.

Together, the findings from these analyses demonstrate that the U.S. media’s view of the U.S.–ROK relationship deteriorated noticeably after 2001,

FIGURE 3
Tone on U.S.–ROK Relations during Nuclear Crises: U.S. Media



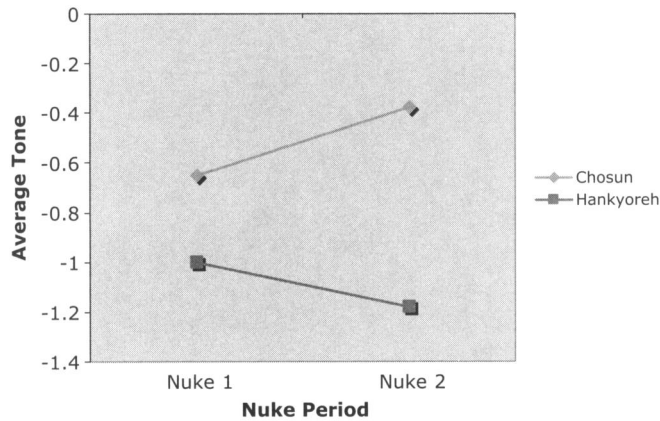
Source: Gi-Wook Shin, *One Alliance, Two Lenses: U.S.–Korea Relations in a New Era* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 178.

when the Bush administration began to openly express its skepticism of Kim Dae Jung’s engagement policy and the Agreed Framework. This finding offers strong support for the policy rift thesis. On the other hand, findings based on analyses of the South Korean media demonstrate that the progressive newspaper was consistently critical of the relationship, whereas its conservative counterpart reacted to the progressive critique by stressing the importance of the U.S.–ROK relationship in the recent past. Thus, during these study years, a critical gap existed between the progressive and conservative newspapers in their views of U.S.–ROK relations and the U.S. role on the peninsula. These findings can be interpreted to reflect identity politics, as associated with efforts to redefine South Korean national identity, especially vis-à-vis its traditional ally.

Media View during the Nuclear Crises

U.S. media tone regarding U.S.–ROK relations during the two nuclear stand-offs also confirms the policy rift thesis. First, as expected, the news tone on the U.S.–ROK relationship during the first crisis was not very negative. In fact, *The Washington Post* recorded a positive tone. This indicates that the general status of U.S.–ROK relations was relatively favorable, at least in the eyes of the U.S. media, as the two allies shared similar threat perceptions and carried out close coordination throughout the first nuclear crisis. Second, the decline in the news tone from the first to the second crisis largely confirms our expectations. As shown in Figure 3, both *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* exhibited significant declines in tone toward U.S.–ROK relations, reflecting policy discord between the two allies. The second nuclear crisis broke out in an

FIGURE 4
Tones on U.S.–ROK Relations during Nuclear Crises: Korean Media



Source: Gi-Wook Shin, *One Alliance, Two Lenses: U.S.–Korea Relations in a New Era* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 176.

environment in which the U.S.–ROK alliance was being contested and in which differences in perception of the common threat—upon which the alliance was founded—were becoming more conspicuous.²¹

As to the Korean media, Figure 4 shows that the progressive newspaper’s tone was highly negative during *both* crises. Clearly, progressive criticism of the U.S.–ROK relationship was already present during the first crisis, whereas this degree of negative coverage was not seen in the U.S. media at the time. Once again, this finding can be interpreted as supporting the identity thesis. This progressive criticism, present during both nuclear crises, was related to efforts to redefine Korea’s relationship with the United States in the post–Cold War era.

On the other hand, the conservative newspaper’s tone toward U.S.–ROK relations became more positive during the second crisis. This is in sharp contrast to the changes in tone of the U.S. media and was largely because Korean conservatives, concerned with alliance deterioration, came to defend the importance of the alliance. In addition, this positive change occurred even though its tone toward the United States itself (not reported here) declined from the first to the second nuclear stand-off. These seemingly inconsistent findings suggest that even as the conservative paper was critical of U.S. foreign policy on a broad level, it valued the U.S.–ROK alliance, especially during times of tension between the United States and the DPRK. As a result of different tone

²¹ *The Wall Street Journal* showed little change in tone from the first to the second crisis. This also confirms that the strains in the U.S.–ROK relations were primarily over security issues (that is, DPRK policy), and not trade or economic matters, which financial papers like the *Wall Street Journal* seem to be most interested in covering.

trends in views of the U.S.–ROK relationship, the gap between conservatives and progressives further increased, indicating greater division among South Koreans in their views of the alliance. These findings not only support the identity politics thesis but also attest to the need for separating anti-American and anti-alliance sentiments.

IDENTITY POLITICS AND POLICY DISPUTES IN U.S.–KOREA RELATIONS

Analysis of U.S. and Korean media coverage shows that the evolution of South Korean views on U.S.–ROK relations over the last 15 years must be placed in the context of identity politics, reflecting a larger societal effort or trend, led by South Korean progressives, to redefine South Korea's position in the emergent post–Cold War and post-authoritarian era.²² Although the power disparity between the allies has decreased, for South Koreans, who are considering their nation's new place in the region and in the world, the United States is not just another country, but one that has significantly shaped their past and will shape their future as well. As sociological theory suggests, formation of a social identity presupposes the existence of significant other(s) and the United States is one such other shaping the national identity of South Koreans.

Yet the inverse does not fit this mold: Americans do not view Korea as a significant other who impacts their national identity. Instead, for Americans, relations with South Korea are largely based on policy concerns and regional strategic interests. It can even be argued that Korean policy is only part of the larger U.S. policy approach to East Asia, in which Japan and China are the foremost considerations. Thus, from the American perspective, it is understandable that the strain in the alliance has largely been perceived as stemming from a rift over specific policies such as divergent approaches to North Korea.

My analysis shows that incongruence in perceptions, and thus interests, indeed arose between the United States and the ROK in the post–Cold War, post-authoritarian era and that this incongruence was exacerbated with the Sunshine Policy and in the wake of September 11. During the Cold War, the anti-communist (even anti–North Korean) years, the South shared the U.S. worldview and interests on the peninsula. However, the end of the Cold War and South Korea's subsequent engagement with communist countries—first, China and Russia, and later, the North—transformed South Korean views about their nation's place in emerging global and regional orders. Such revitalized thinking about national identity necessarily included reevaluation of South Korea's two most important relationships: those with their “significant others,” North Korea and the United States. Consequently, identity plays an

²² China and Japan also influence Korean identity. For more on the role of China in South Korea's recent politics of identity, see Gi-Wook Shin, “Asianism and Korea's Politics of Identity,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 6 (December 2005): 610–624.

increasingly important role in shaping Korea's relations with these nations and policy regarding them.

In South Korea, democratization provided the domestic context that facilitated the rethinking of national identity. During the years of authoritarian rule from the late 1940s to the early 1990s, the state explicitly advocated the anti-communist conception of national identity and suppressed any alternative on the grounds of national security.²³ In the process of democratization, however, civil society challenged the authoritarian state's sanctioned notion of identity, opening debate over the proper form of Korean identity for a self-governed nation entering a new era. In this new environment, South Korean progressives began to conceptualize the DPRK not as a staunch enemy but rather as a legitimate partner to engage. They focused on dangers associated with the weakness of the North, and the rationale for the security alliance with the United States—including the burdensome U.S. troop presence in the ROK—was increasingly questioned. The intense debate between conservatives and progressives on the subjects of the North and the U.S.–ROK alliance reflected the two sides' contending views of national identity, which, in turn informed each side's policy positions on the North and the United States.

During this critical time, the elections of the Kim Dae Jung and the Roh Moo Hyun governments institutionalized progressive ideas about South Korean identity vis-à-vis the DPRK and the United States. The progressive policies of the two administrations were incongruent with that of the conservative Bush administration, which was focused on the war on terror and believed that South Korean and Clinton administration engagement of the North had been naïve and ineffective. While South Korean views of the North and the alliance were significantly evolving, American conceptions of North Korea as a threat continued unmitigated. In the latter half of the 1990s, the United States became increasingly concerned over the DPRK's production and proliferation of ballistic missiles, and in the post-September 11 era, the North's renewed pursuit of nuclear capabilities significantly heightened American threat perceptions, especially in light of the Bush administration's concerns over regional nuclear proliferation and potential linkages to global terrorism. Thus, in understanding the changing nature of the U.S.–ROK relationship and the disparity in views during the study years, one must consider the weight of historical timing and how events in both nations—the end of the Cold War, Korean democratization, September 11, and the second nuclear stand-off—had been internalized and thus altered identities and interests.

While the security alliance and the U.S.–ROK relationship have produced fervent debate in South Korea, the alliance draws relatively little coverage in the United States. U.S. media, when discussing South Korea, was more prone

²³ Gi-Wook Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics, and Legacy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006).

to focus on economics and trade rather than security and the bilateral relationship.²⁴ Specifically, Korean newspapers published four times as many articles about bilateral relations as the U.S. newspapers did over the study period.²⁵ Even the current nuclear stand-off with the DPRK did not receive significant coverage, due to competing stories in the United States like the then-open war with Iraq.²⁶ In fact, when one compares the amount of coverage U.S. news conceded to South Korea to that of other countries, South Korea received a level of coverage comparable to those for Switzerland, Argentina, Indonesia, Pakistan, and even North Korea.²⁷ Also, there were only a few editorials and opinion columns on the U.S.–ROK alliance published in the two U.S. dailies during the study period.²⁸ As a recent report from a group of American and Korean experts stated, “One of the key characteristics defining ROK–US bilateral relations is an asymmetry of attention” in favor of the ROK.²⁹ As this study shows, the U.S. newspapers are not locked in a bitter emotional debate over the ROK, the bilateral relationship, or the alliance; rather the newspapers’ divergent coverage stems from their varied interests in specific issues, such as finance and diplomacy, not ideology.

On the other hand, Koreans are engaged in intense debates over the nature of their relationship with the United States, including the military alliance, as it is related to their respective identity. As experts on Korean affairs have argued, during this period, South Korea became caught between two conflicting identities. Political scientist J.J. Suh has termed them the *conservative identity*, which holds the traditional view of the United States as a key ally and partner in national security, and the progressive *nationalist identity*, which pits Korean identity against the United States.³⁰ Not surprisingly, this in-group debate over the identity of the nation often became bitter and emotional, hindering rational discussion, and the gap between these conflicting

²⁴ The degree to which economic coverage drives news on South Korea in the U.S. media is clear. In each year of my study, economic issues were covered at least twice, and often three times the rate of security or domestic political issues. See Shin, *One Alliance, Two Lenses*, chap. 5.

²⁵ Korean newspapers published 610 pieces on the bilateral relationship, while U.S. newspapers accorded only 151 articles. See Shin, *One Alliance, Two Lenses*, 109.

²⁶ See Donald Macintyre, Daniel C. Snider, and Gi-Wook Shin, eds. *First Drafts of Korea: The U.S. Media and Perceptions of the Last Cold War Frontier* (Stanford, CA: Shorenstein APARC, 2009).

²⁷ See Shin, *One Alliance, Two Lenses*, 110–112.

²⁸ Gi-Wook Shin and Hilary Izatt, “Asymmetry of Attention and Role Reversals in Alliances: The U.S.–ROK Case” (unpublished manuscript, Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, Stanford University, 2010).

²⁹ “The Search for a Common Strategic Vision: Charting the Future of the U.S.–ROK Security Partnership” (U.S.–ROK Strategic Forum, co-directed by G. John Ikenberry, Chung-In Moon, and Mitchell Reiss, Seoul, Korea, 18 February 2008), accessed at, <http://www.wm.edu/news/archive/index.php?id=8681>, 8 January 2009.

³⁰ J.J. Suh, “Bound to Last? The U.S.–Korea Alliance and Analytical Eclecticism,” in J.J. Suh, Peter J. Katzenstein, and Allen Carlson, eds., *Rethinking Security in East Asia: Identity, Power, and Efficiency* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 169.

identities became widened in the later years of the study period. Even if the intensity of contention over South Korean national identity does not return to the levels witnessed during the pivotal period examined here, continued disputes over identity are likely. In fact, the establishment of a conservative government has not alleviated the intensity of identity politics. On the contrary, progressive forces continue to contend with the conservative Myung-Bak Lee government on almost every key issue related to the U.S.–ROK alliance and inter-Korean relations. The recent controversy and subsequent debate over the sinking of the South Korean naval ship *Cheonanham* clearly shows the persistent divide between progressives and conservatives.

In sum, Koreans view the United States as a significant other, and the U.S.–ROK relationship is tied to issues of their national identities. On the Korean side, therefore, the evident strain in bilateral relations during the later years of the study period was an inevitable outcome in the process of formulating a new progressive, nationalist Korean identity that challenged the conventional view of the alliance in the post-Cold War, post-authoritarian era (the identity thesis). However, Korea is neither large enough nor important enough to shape U.S. national identity as a significant other. Therefore, Washington's frustrations with Seoul were primarily over divergent policy preferences (the policy rift thesis), underpinned by differing perceptions of essential circumstances and effective methods of inducing change in North Korea. Thus, the asymmetry in power explains why the Korean debate focuses on the larger terms and purpose of the alliance, whereas the scope and depth of the American examination remains limited.

THE FUTURE OF THE U.S.–ROK RELATIONSHIP

The U.S.–ROK alliance has faced many challenges over the years and must evolve in a new environment created by changing domestic and international situations. Stephen Walt specifies conditions under which alliances become less likely to endure. They include cases in which the state posing the original threat becomes weaker, an alliance member becomes “convinced that their adversaries are not as bellicose as they once feared,” the passage of time makes “shared historical experiences” less relevant, and elites seek to improve their domestic political position through attacks on an alliance, especially when sovereignty issues are at stake.³¹

Although reasonable arguments can be made that *all* these conditions applied to the study period, the U.S.–ROK alliance has endured. In fact, despite identity politics and policy disputes, the Bush and Roh administrations worked together to address concerns of the alliance (such as relocation of the United States Forces Korea (USFK) headquarters from Yongsan to Pyongtaek and transfer of wartime operational control,) and to offer a new

³¹ Walt, “Why Alliances Endure or Collapse,” 159.

base of the alliance (such as the KORUS Free Trade Agreement). In addition, polls show South Korean public support for the alliance. According to a June 2006 World Gallup Poll, although less than half (43 percent) of Koreans feel seriously threatened by North Korean nuclear weapons, two thirds (66 percent) believe that U.S. withdrawal from their country would greatly impact the stability of Northeast Asia. Indeed, over 70 percent of Koreans state a preference for retaining the U.S. presence.³²

Both Washington and Seoul acknowledge the imperative to work closely together to develop a broader rationale for the alliance that reflects new realities. Beyond the defense of South Korea and Japan, U.S. alliances with these nations have contributed significantly to regional stability in East Asia. Indeed, the Mutual Defense Treaty commits the two nations to work together to “strengthen the fabric of peace in the Pacific area.”³³ Putting greater focus on this long-enshrined imperative would necessarily involve political will from Seoul, given that the United States would probably emphasize increased ROK–Japan cooperation and multilateral initiatives, such as the Proliferation Security Initiative, in pursuit of this goal. Stressing regional—or even global—peace and stability as an organizing principle would also serve as meaningful U.S. recognition of Korea’s economic and diplomatic stature and identity.

In the first meeting of Presidents Bush and Lee Myung Bak, at Camp David in April 2008, the leaders stressed the allies’ common values and shared challenges in the twenty-first century, calling for a broad-based “strategic alliance” that on the basis of “freedom, democracy, human rights and the principle of market economy ... will contribute to global peace and security.”³⁴ Many notable analysts believe that this is a very positive development, commensurate with South Korea’s enhanced standing in the world, although they stress the importance of early bilateral agreement on the substance and details of such a proposal.³⁵

There are optimistic expectations on both sides of the Pacific that the four-year period of the Lee and Obama administrations represents an opportunity to strengthen the U.S.–ROK relationship. This seems especially true, considering that the last five years featured the overlap of President Roh and

³² Cheoleon Lee, “Gallup World Poll: South Korea’s Political Dilemma,” 22 September 2006, accessed at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/24679/gallup-world-poll-south-koreas-political-dilemma.aspx>, 23 June 2009.

³³ Mutual Defense Treaty between the Republic of Korea and the United States of America (signed 1 October 1953), accessed at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/kor001.asp, 8 January 2009.

³⁴ White House press release, “President Bush Participates in Joint Press Availability with President Lee Myung-Bak of the Republic of Korea” (Camp David, 19 April 2008), accessed at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/04/20080419-1.html>, 8 January 2009.

³⁵ “New Beginnings” in the U.S.–ROK Alliance: Recommendation to U.S. Policymakers (Korea Society and Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center of Stanford University, 14 April 2008), accessed at http://ksp.stanford.edu/events/new_beginnings_toward_a_new_era_of_ussouth_korean_partnership/, 19 June 2009.

the 386ers (progressive politicians who came of age during the fight for democratization) with President Bush and the neoconservatives, which was, at least in the early years, possibly the least workable combination of leadership for the alliance. New hope is justified, and both sides have reason to be optimistic.

President Lee has stressed the importance of the U.S.–ROK alliance and has indicated that he will attempt to promote trilateral collaboration among South Korea, the United States, and Japan. Lee has also promised that, unlike his predecessor, he will take a pragmatic, interest-based approach to foreign affairs and national security issues, a message that was well-received in both Washington and Tokyo during his first presidential trip abroad.³⁶ President Barack Obama has echoed the importance of consulting with key U.S. allies in pursuing a foreign policy agenda, and early indications of his policy suggest that he will take a more-realist approach to international relations. As to the U.S.–ROK alliance, Obama said:

Forged in blood during the Korean War more than a half-century ago, the alliance has sustained itself through the crucible of the Cold War and remains central to U.S. security policy in East Asia.... We need to work with South Korea on a common vision for the alliance to meet the challenges of the 21st century, not only those on the Korean Peninsula but in the region and beyond.³⁷

At their summit in Washington on 16 June 2009, Presidents Lee and Obama announced a “Joint Vision for the Alliance,” highlighted by the U.S. commitment to provide nuclear protection to South Korea so as to counter a growing nuclear threat from the North. The two leaders, referring to the planned transition of wartime military control, agreed to advance a plan to restructure their half-century-old military alliance to allow the ROK to “take the lead role in the combined defense” of the peninsula, “supported by an enduring and capable U.S. military force presence.”³⁸ The two administrations seem to have repaired some of the past strains on the alliance and currently enjoy a higher level of policy collaboration.

Nonetheless, the United States should be wary of raising expectations for a dramatic change in South Korea as a result of this power shift to a conservative government. As shown in this study, the Korean political landscape has evolved significantly since democratization, with the coming to power of previously marginalized groups and the development of a vibrant civil society.

³⁶ For example, see Michael Armacost, “New Hope for U.S.–South Korea Ties,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 April 2008; Foster Klug, “Bush Welcomes Like-Minded South Korean President Friday,” Associated Press, 18 April 2008; “Fukuda–Lee Meeting Marks Dawn of New Era,” *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 22 April 2008.

³⁷ Barack Obama, “U.S. Presidential Candidate Barack Obama’s Views on Relations with Asia,” *Comparative Connections*, October 2008, accessed at http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/0803qobama_views.pdf, 8 January 2009.

³⁸ Jong-Heon Lee, “U.S. may extend military role in S. Korea,” 17 June 2009, accessed at http://www.upiasia.com/Security/2009/06/17/us_may_extend_military_role_in_s_korea/5283/, 19 June 2009.

These groups and their ideas (particularly about the North and the alliance) persist, and identity politics may well reemerge quite quickly in line with events, such as the 2002 USFK accident. Indeed, the controversy over the agreement to begin re-importation of U.S. beef to Korea represented the first such case under the Lee administration. The President viewed the spread of public anxiety over U.S. beef as politically motivated,³⁹ and the conservative *Chosun Ilbo* compared the outpouring of emotion and the holding of candle-light vigils in the summer of 2008 to the sweeping anti-American reaction to the 2002 schoolgirl incident.⁴⁰

The divided South Korean political landscape is not likely to change in the near term, and this dynamic may hinder the ability of ROK governments to think and act strategically. Although Korean conservatives regained presidential power, the progressive voice was not lost in politics, as has been seen in recent progressive victories in local elections. This constituency still remains important in Korean society, and the United States should not underestimate it or its ideas. In fact, there is a good chance that the progressives will win the presidential election to be held this year. If progressives were to come back to power, they would aggressively pursue policies congruent with their identity, with regard to both North Korea and U.S. Their pursuit of active engagement with the North is likely to be at odds with the policy of the next U.S. presidential administration, whether Democratic or Republican, and their pronounced opposition to the signed KORUS FTA is sure to produce tensions. In other words, identity politics and policy disputes will continue to shape U.S.-Korea relations. In this regard, this study not only shows a description of what happened a decade ago, but also offers an important framework to understand the bilateral relationship in the coming years.

Thus, the social and political dynamics that amassed during the years of the study period signal that this is new political terrain and that any government must operate within a transformed context, molded by the recent contesting of Korean identity. As this study has demonstrated, South Koreans, particularly progressives, use a different lens than Americans do in viewing the alliance. Perhaps the development is inevitable in a new era marked by Korean democratization, the end of the Cold War, inter-Korean rapprochement, and U.S. preoccupation with the struggle against global terrorism. Having different lenses is not, however, unusual for the states in an alliance, especially one of asymmetry, and it will not necessarily undermine the bilateral relationship if there is mutual appreciation and if different lenses can produce compatible visions.

The main challenge rather stems from the fact that the South Korean lens is divided and that the U.S. lens is clouded. Koreans are sharply divided in their view of the alliance, while Americans view Korean policy as being confusing at times. This was a blatant theme in the Bush administration's DPRK policy.

³⁹ "President Lee Links Public Anxiety on U.S. Beef to Political Motivations," *Hankyoreh*, 13 May 2008.

⁴⁰ "U.S. Beef Imports Fuel Online Scaremongering," *Chosun Ilbo*, 5 May 2008.

Korea's divided polity is unlikely to change in the near future, and the Obama administration is preoccupied with the Middle East and South Asia, leaving affairs on the Korean peninsula as major but nevertheless secondary policy issues.

Therefore, the main task for the ROK is to build a national consensus on its policy toward the North and the alliance, while the main task for the United States is to present a coherent policy toward the peninsula in close collaboration with its ally. Ultimately, if the U.S.–ROK relationship is to evolve to meet new challenges, leaders and policymakers in both countries must recognize that this is a new era, in which they employ different lenses in approaching the alliance driven by their own national interests and identities. In particular, the United States needs to respect the ROK as a legitimate partner. South Korea can no longer be perceived as a dependent client in the alliance and the United States must acknowledge the political constraints that identity politics impose on the ROK government. On the other hand, Koreans need to understand that the American mindset regarding security issues, including the Korean peninsula and the U.S.–ROK alliance, has significantly changed since the September 11 terrorist attacks. Therefore in order to construct a viable alliance that meets the challenges of a new era, both nations must march together, treating their partner as it is, not as it was or as they might wish it to be.*

* This article is adapted, and revised from Gi-Wook Shin, *One Alliance, Two Lenses: U.S.–Korea Relations in a New Era* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010). I would like to thank Hilary Izatt and Joyce Lee for assistance.