



## CHAPTER 1

**Democratic Consolidation in South Korea,  
Military-First Politics in North Korea,  
And Strategic Readjustment in the  
ROK-U.S.-DPRK Triangle**

*Alexandre Y. Mansourov*

**Introduction**

The 16<sup>th</sup> presidential election on December 19, 2002, was a milestone in the course of democratic consolidation in the Republic of Korea. This volume examines the significance of the election in the history of ROK political development from historical and comparative perspectives; analyzes key election statistics and main electoral strategies and tactics; assesses the election impact on the ROK domestic politics, economy, and social development; and reviews its implications for the inter-Korean relations and ROK's diplomacy. This book also evaluates President Roh Moo-hyun's policy aimed at establishing a self-reliant armed forces structure in the ROK, considers the long-term sustainability of the U.S.-ROK alliance in the context of the ROK domestic trends and global U.S. defense transformation strategy, examines the impact of the U.S.-ROK military force realignment on the peninsula on the global war against terrorism, regional WMD proliferation concerns, the South-North Korean conflict resolution, the U.S.-Japanese security alliance, engagement with

the rising China, and on other security relations in Northeast Asia,. Finally, this book will briefly explore the prospects for developing a multilateral regional security architecture in Northeast Asia.

### **Completion of Democratic Transition in the South**

The 16<sup>th</sup> presidential election proved to be a final step on the South Korean road to democratic maturity<sup>1</sup> (see Table 1.1) and a fine example of the culminating point in the “third wave” of global democratization process that began in the late 1970s and spread across more than a hundred countries in the Southern Europe, East Asia, and Latin America.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For more background information on South Korea’s democratization process and its impact on Korean domestic economy, politics, civil society, and foreign policy, one can read Kyung-ae Park’s chapter and Ilpyong Kim’s chapter in this volume, as well as Sang-Yong Choi, ed., *Democracy in Korea: Its Ideals and Realities*. Seoul: Seoul Press for the Korean Political Science Association, 1997; Chung-in Moon and Jongryn Mo, eds., *Democratization and Globalization in Korea: Assessments and Prospects*. Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1999; Choi, Jang-jip, *The Conditions and Prospects of Democracy in South Korea*. Seoul: Nanam (Korean), 1996; Koo, Hagen, ed., *State and Society in Contemporary Korea*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993; Burton, Michael and Jai P. Ryu, “South Korea’s Elite Settlement and Democratic Consolidation.” *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 25 (Summer): 1-24; Jongryn Mo and Chung-in Moon, eds., *Democracy and the Korean Economy*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1999; Cotton, James, ed., *Korea Under Roh Tae-woo: Democratization, Northern Policy, and Inter-Korean Relations*. Canberra: Allen & Unwin, 1993; and Haggard, Stephan, ed., *Macroeconomic Policy and Performance in Korea, 1970-1990*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the third wave of democratization around the world, one can read Huntington, Samuel P., *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991; Diamond, Larry, “Is the Third Wave Over?” *Journal of Democracy*. Vol.7, no. 3. 1996; Linz, Juan J., and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996; Diamond, Larry, and Platter, Marc F., eds., *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1993; Haggard, Stephan, and Kaufman, Robert R., eds., *The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995; Przeworski, Adam,

**Table 1.1 Results of Past Presidential Elections in the ROK<sup>3</sup>**

| <b>Presidential Election (No. of people who actually voted)</b> | <b>President-elect (% of votes cast in favor)</b>      | <b>Differential (No. of votes)</b> | <b>Runner-up (% of votes cast in favor)</b>  |
|---|--|------------------------------------|--|
| 1 <sup>st</sup><br>July 20, 1948                                | Rhee Syng-man<br>(elected by National Assembly)        |                                    |  |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> (7,020,684)<br>August 5, 1952                   | Rhee Syng-man<br>Liberal Party<br>(74.6%)              | 4,441,265                          | Cho Bong-am<br>Independent -11.4%            |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> (7,210,245)<br>May 15, 1956                     | Rhee Syng –man<br>Liberal Party<br>(70.0%)             | 2,882,629                          | Cho Bong-am<br>Independent -30.0%            |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> (9,633,376)<br>March 15, 1960                   | Rhee Syng-man<br>Liberal Party<br>(100%)               | -                                  | -  |
| 5 <sup>th</sup><br>(10,081,198)<br>October 15, 1963             | Park Chung-hee<br>Democratic Republic Party<br>(46.6%) | 156,026                            | Yun Bo-seon<br>Minjung Party-<br>45.9%       |
| 6 <sup>th</sup><br>(11,058,721)<br>May 3, 1967                  | Park Chung-hee<br>Democratic Republic Party<br>(51.5%) | 1,162,125                          | Yun Bo-seon<br>New Democratic Party (45.3%)  |
| 7 <sup>th</sup><br>(11,923,218)<br>April 27, 1971               | Park Chung-hee<br>Democratic Republic party<br>(53.2%) | 946,928                            | Kim Dae-jung<br>New Democratic Party (45.3%) |

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*Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991; and O'Donnell, Guillermo, "Illusions about Consolidation." *Journal of Democracy*. Vol. 7, no. 2, 1996.

<sup>3</sup> See *The Chosun Daily News*, December 21, 2002, Seoul, ROK.

| <b>Presidential Election (No. of people who actually voted)</b> | <b>President-elect (% of votes cast in favor)</b>                | <b>Differential (No. of votes)</b> | <b>Runner-up (% of votes cast in favor)</b>  |
|---|--|------------------------------------|--|
| 13 <sup>th</sup><br>(22,603,411)<br>December 16,<br>1987        | Roh Tae-woo<br>Democracy and<br>Justice Party<br>(36.6%)         | 1,945,157                          | Kim Young-sam<br>Unified Democratic<br>Party (28.0%)   |
| 14 <sup>th</sup><br>(23,775,409)<br>December 18,<br>1992        | Kim Young-sam<br>Democratic<br>Freedom Party<br>(42.0%)          | 1,936,048                          | Kim Dae-jung<br>Democratic Party<br>(33.8%)<br>Chung Ju-young,<br>Hyundai Group CEO<br>(16.3%) |
| 15 <sup>th</sup><br>(25,642,438)<br>December 20,<br>1997        | Kim Dae-jung<br>National Congress<br>for New Politics<br>(40.3%) | 390,557                            | Lee Hoi-chang<br>Grand National<br>Party (38.7%)<br>Lee In-je (19.2%)                          |
| 16 <sup>th</sup><br>(24,760,141)<br>December 19,<br>2002        | Roh Moo-hyun<br>Millennium<br>Democratic Party<br>(48.9%)        | 570,980                            | Lee Hoi-chang<br>Grand National<br>Party<br>(46.6%)  |

The 16<sup>th</sup> presidential election was a free and fair election.<sup>4</sup> In a sharp departure from Korean political traditions, there was no evident money influence or ballot box corruption observed.<sup>5</sup> There appeared to be neither intelligence meddling nor military interference in the electoral process.<sup>6</sup> In the end, an obvious anti-

<sup>4</sup> See David Steinberg's chapter in this volume.

<sup>5</sup> A good analysis of the origins and evolution of political corruption in the ROK is presented in Byeong-seog Park, "Political Corruption in South Korea: Concentrating on the Dynamics of Party Politics," in Sang-Yong Choi, ed., *Democracy in Korea: Its Ideals and Realities*. Seoul: Seoul Press for the Korean Political Science Association, 1997, pp. 351-384.

<sup>6</sup> For an insightful historical record of the military intervention in the ROK's

establishment candidate won, and the ruling elite accepted the popular verdict without recourse to violence.<sup>7</sup> The 16<sup>th</sup> presidential election set the precedent for the first Internet generation to vote in an e-democracy in Korean style.<sup>8</sup>

These accomplishments notwithstanding, the 16<sup>th</sup> presidential election failed to bridge traditional differences between the Honam and Yongnam regions (see Table 1.2),<sup>9</sup> exacerbated the generational gap between the so-called 386 and 5060 generations (see Table 1.3),<sup>10</sup> and revealed a significant digital divide between the young and the old.<sup>11</sup> For the first time in Korean history, the presidential election campaign played down the ideological schism between the right and the left, even despite its failure to address growing socio-economic cleavages in the Korean society.<sup>12</sup>

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electoral process, see Clifford, Mark L., *Troubled Tiger: Businessmen, Bureaucrats, and Generals in South Korea*. Armonk, NY, and London: M.E. Sharpe, 1998.

<sup>7</sup> See David Steinberg, *op. cit.*

<sup>8</sup> See Mr. In-Hae Huh's chapter in this volume for details.

<sup>9</sup> For an excellent overview of regional differences in the ROK's politics and electoral campaigns, see Wonmo Dong, "Regional Cleavage in South Korea Politics," in Sang-Yong Choi, ed., *Democracy in Korea: Its Ideals and Realities*. Seoul: Seoul Press for the Korean Political Science Association, 1997, pp. 225-248.

<sup>10</sup> For a useful description of generational differences between the 386 generation and 5060 generation, see Byung kook-Kim, "*South Korea's Evolving Political Identities-What Do Public Opinion Data Tell Us?*" a paper presented at the 2004 East Asia Forum held at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, RI, on August 26, 2004.

<sup>11</sup> See Mr. In-Hae Huh, *op.cit.*

<sup>12</sup> For a comprehensive overview of the evolution of ideological cleavages in the ROK, see Byung-kook Kim, "Ideology, Organization, and Democratic Consolidation in Korea," in Sang-Yong Choi, ed., *Democracy in Korea: Its Ideals and Realities*. Seoul: Seoul Press for the Korean Political Science Association, 1997, pp. 135-177.

**Table 1.2. 2002 Presidential Election in the ROK: Vote Results by Region<sup>13</sup>**

| <i>Location</i> | <b>Lee Hoi-chang</b> | <b>Roh Moo-hyun</b> | <b>Lee Han Dong</b> | <b>Kwan Young Kil</b> | <b>Kim Young Kyu</b> | <b>Kim Kil Soo</b> |
|-----------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Nation</b>   | 11,443,297(46.6)     | 12,014,277(48.9)    | 74,027(0.3)         | 957,148(3.9)          | 22,063(0.1)          | 51,104(0.2)        |
| <b>Seoul</b>    | 2,447,376 (45.0)     | 2,792,957 (51.3)    | 12,724(0.2)         | 179,790(3.3)          | 4,706 (0.1)          | 6,437 (0.1)        |
| <b>Pusan</b>    | 1,314,274 (66.7)     | 587,946 (29.9)      | 2,148 (0.1)         | 61,281 (3.1)          | 1,380 (0.1)          | 2,064 (0.1)        |
| <b>Daegu</b>    | 1,002,164 (77.8)     | 240,745 (18.7)      | 1,699 (0.1)         | 42,174 (3.3)          | 810 (0.1)            | 2,064 (0.1)        |
| <b>Inch'on</b>  | 547,205 (44.6)       | 611,766 (49.8)      | 3,600 (0.3)         | 61,655 (5.0)          | 1,612 (0.1)          | 1,978 (0.2)        |
| <b>Kwangju</b>  | 26,869 (3.6)         | 715,182 (95.2)      | 803 (0.1)           | 7,243 (1.0)           | 305 (0.0)            | 1,014 (0.1)        |
| <b>Daejôn</b>   | 266,760 (39.8)       | 369,046 (55.1)      | 2,157 (0.3)         | 29,728 (4.4)          | 747 (0.1)            | 1,408 (0.2)        |
| <b>Ulsan</b>    | 267,737 (52.9)       | 178,584 (35.3)      | 997 (0.2)           | 57,786(11.4)          | 502 (0.1)            | 716 (0.1)          |
| <b>Gyunggi</b>  | 2,120,191 (44.2)     | 2,430,193 (50.7)    | 26,072(0.5)         | 209,346(4.4)          | 4,119 (0.1)          | 8,085 (0.2)        |
| <b>Gangwon</b>  | 400,405 (52.5)       | 316,722 (41.5)      | 3,406 (0.4)         | 38,722 (5.1)          | 969 (0.1)            | 2,713 (0.4)        |
| <b>Chungbuk</b> | 311,044 (42.9)       | 365,263 (50.4)      | 3,205 (0.4)         | 41,731 (5.1)          | 949 (0.1)            | 2,610 (0.4)        |
| <b>Chungnam</b> | 375,110 (41.2)       | 474,531(52.2)       | 4,973 (0.5)         | 49,579 (5.4)          | 1,303 (0.1)          | 4,322 (0.5)        |
| <b>Chunbuk</b>  | 65,334 (6.2)         | 966,053 (91.6)      | 2,505 (0.2)         | 14,904 (1.4)          | 817 (0.1)            | 5,187 (0.5)        |
| <b>Chunnam</b>  | 53,074 (4.6)         | 1,070,506 (93.4)    | 2,832 (0.2)         | 12,215 (1.1)          | 988 (0.1)            | 6,707 (0.6)        |
| <b>Kyungbuk</b> | 1,056,446 (73.5)     | 311,358 (21.7)      | 3,332 (0.2)         | 62,522 (4.3)          | 1,344 (0.1)          | 2,936 (0.2)        |
| <b>Kyungnam</b> | 1,083,564 (67.5)     | 434,642 (27.1)      | 3,332 (0.2)         | 62,522 (4.3)          | 1,344 (0.1)          | 2,936 (0.2)        |
| <b>Cheju</b>    | 105,774 (39.9)       | 148,423 (56.1)      | 744 (0.3)           | 8,619 (3.3)           | 288 (0.1)            | 981 (0.4)          |

*P.S.: percentage in brackets.*

<sup>13</sup> See *The Chosun Daily News*, December 21, 2002, Seoul, ROK.

**Table 1.3 2002 Presidential Election in the ROK: Generational Differences<sup>14</sup>**

| Age bracket <sup>15</sup> | Lee Hoi-chang | Roh Moo-hyun | Others |
|---------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------|
| 20's                      | 28.5 %        | 60.6 %       | 10.9 % |
| 30's                      | 33.5 %        | 60.5 %       | 6 %    |
| 40's                      | 46.6 %        | 43.9 %       | 9.5 %  |
| 50's                      | 63.0 %        | 28.4 %       | 8.6 %  |

*P.S.: In December 2002, the total number of eligible voters in the ROK was 34,991,529 people, and the number of people who actually voted was 70.8%, or 24,760,141 people.*

It was evident that all along it was Lee Hoi-chang's election to lose. The 67-year-old conservative leader of the Grand National Party Lee Hoi-chang presented himself as a traditional man of "law and principle," who would clean up corruption-ridden South Korean politics, cut off financial and humanitarian aid to North Korea until its alleged nuclear weapon program was dismantled, and pursue pro-market and pro-business economic policies at the expense of labor and trade unions, if he were elected president on 19 December.<sup>16</sup> Mr. Lee lost his second presidential bid in 2002,

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<sup>14</sup> See *The Chosun Daily News*, December 21, 2002, Seoul, ROK.

<sup>15</sup> The sample size is 1636 people.

<sup>16</sup> Mr. Lee was born to an elite family in North Korea's Hwanghae province in 1935, but he grew up in the South after his father, a public prosecutor, got a new posting. A clever student, Mr. Lee also studied law and became a judge at the age of 25, having graduated from the prestigious Seoul National University. He went on to become the country's youngest-ever Supreme Court judge at the age of 46, and was nicknamed "Bamboo," a Korean term for an upright person of principle. In 1988, he was appointed as the head of the ROK's state election watchdog, and, in 1993, moved on to head an anti-corruption drive under then-President Kim Young-sam. He was appointed prime minister in 1993 but resigned after a few months, frustrated at the lack of real power in the mainly ceremonial job. In 1996, he became the chief election campaigner for the then-ruling New Korea Party (NKP). In 1997, the NKP merged with another party to

primarily because of his lack of personal charisma (despite his “bamboo” image), poor campaign organization, personal scandals related to his relatives,<sup>17</sup> and his mercurial detachment from popular sentiments and moods.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast, Mr. Roh Moo-hyun displayed tremendous personal charisma and even sex appeal among female voters. He read opinion polls closely and adjusted his positions accordingly. He mastered information technology tools and the Internet to his benefit. Riding on a surging wave of anti-Americanism, Mr. Roh, a “repeated loser,” proved to become a “comeback kid,” who was able to connect with the “outsiders’ majority” and become “a bridge candidate” who beat the odds to deliver his anti-establishment message to the Blue House.<sup>19</sup>

One of the main questions remains, “Who is Mr. Roh?” Obviously, only time will tell. There is no consensus on many aspects of his enigmatic personality.<sup>20</sup> Mr. Roh was born in a traditional family of poor farmers in the southeastern region of Kimhae. To escape poverty, he joined the army and studied law after his return. But, in 1981, in the course of his legal aid work,

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become the current Grand National Party, and Mr. Lee ran unsuccessfully as its presidential candidate for the Blue House against Mr. Kim Dae-jung.

<sup>17</sup> For example, despite Mr. Lee’s “Bamboo” image, he was tainted by accusations that his two sons avoided compulsory military service by deliberately losing weight before medical examinations.

<sup>18</sup> See Mr. Euikwan Chang’s chapter in this volume for details.

<sup>19</sup> See Daniel Pinkston’s chapter in this volume for details.

<sup>20</sup> President Roh is married to his childhood sweetheart and they have a son and a daughter. He says he enjoys mountain climbing and bowling. He spent his two months of impeachment in March-April 2004 reading in seclusion and hiking around the hills behind his official residence.



Mr Roh was asked to serve as a public defender of more than twenty students who were arrested for possessing prohibited literature, for which they were arrested and tortured for nearly two months. "When I saw their horrified eyes and their missing toenails, my comfortable life as a lawyer came to an end," Mr Roh is often quoted as saying. He became one of the leaders of the "June Democratization Struggle" in 1987, against the dictatorship of Chun Doo-hwan. Like former President Kim Dae-jung, he was jailed for his involvement in the pro-democracy movement -- he was sentenced to three weeks in prison in September 1987, on charges of assisting striking workers. After his release from jail, he became involved with the pro-democracy movement through his work as a human rights advocate. Mr Roh entered politics in 1988 -- winning a parliamentary seat as a member of Kim Young-sam's pro-democracy party. He made his name at the National Assembly by grilling top officials from the past military junta during a special parliamentary hearing on graft.

Regarding Mr. Roh's risk propensity, some people believe that he seems to be quite risk-averse; hence, policy continuity should prevail during his presidential term. In contrast, others argue that he is rather risk-prone, and, hence, one should expect some bold initiatives and big changes during his years in office. With respect to Mr. Roh's leadership style, some analysts believe that he is a "hands-on guy" whereas others see the traces of the "imperial president" in Mr. Roh. With respect to the question whether or not Mr. Roh can learn, some observers argue that, yes, he is pragmatic, a fast learner, and has an open mind, whereas others disagree, and contend that he has some unshakable core beliefs and is ideology-driven in his policy initiatives.

Regardless of the differences in opinion on Roh Moo-hyun as a leader, it is difficult to make a judgment on the important question as to whether Mr. Roh is anti-American or not. It is still too early to say. Arguably, despite some public misperceptions, he can be seen as a fan of America and he likes to compare himself to

Abraham Lincoln. Despite some of his provocative campaign statements, on the policy side President Roh made all the right moves since taking office in shepherding the ROK-U.S. relationship towards a better future. Especially noteworthy is his courageous stance in support of the U.S. military campaign in Iraq and his decision to dispatch the ROK troops to Iraq -- even against the wishes of his key netizen constituency.

Concerning the DPRK's policy and reaction to the ROK's presidential election, it is worth mentioning that the so-called "Northern Wind" turned out to be an insignificant factor in the 16<sup>th</sup> presidential elections.<sup>21</sup> This development serves as another example of the maturation of the ROK democracy. Assessing the impact of the presidential election on the inter-Korean relations, one can see that President Roh is determined to carry forward President Kim Dae-jung's "sunshine policy" toward the North<sup>22</sup> in his own "policy for peace and prosperity," placing great emphasis on transparency, reciprocity, and mutual accountability.<sup>23</sup>

### **Personal Reminiscences of the Election Day**

The uncomfortable truth about the U.S. policy in Korea is that the 16<sup>th</sup> presidential election demonstrated its failure in shaping Korean policy preferences and influencing Koreans' ultimate choice for their leader. Namely, conservative Grand National Party (GNP) candidate, Mr. Lee Hoi-chang, the long-time U.S.

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<sup>21</sup> For a detailed presentation of this argument, see Dr. Ryoo Kihl-jae's chapter in this volume.

<sup>22</sup> An excellent analysis of President Kim Dae-jung's "sunshine policy" can be found in Chung-in Moon and David I. Steinberg, eds., *Kim Dae-jung Government and Sunshine Policy: Promises and Challenges*. Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1999. Also see Levin, Norman D., and Yong-sup Han, *Sunshine in Korea – the South Korean Debate over Policies Toward North Korea*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2002.

<sup>23</sup> See *The Policy of Peace and Prosperity*. Seoul: Ministry of Unification, ROK, 2003, and *The Road to Peace and Prosperity: The ROK's Policy Toward North Korea*. Seoul: Ministry of Unification, ROK, 2004, at [www.unikorea.go.kr](http://www.unikorea.go.kr).

favorite, who had enjoyed the full backing of Washington, as demonstrated during his January 2002 visit to the U.S., lost against seemingly unbeatable odds. Whereas the liberal New Millennium Democratic Party (MDP) maverick candidate, Roh Moo-hyun, whom the United States had silently opposed and bet against, won against very long odds.

It is noteworthy that this startling outcome happened in a country that owes a lot of its proud accomplishments to its fifty-year-old alliance with the United States. Specifically, the United States had liberated Korea from the Japanese colonial yoke, rebuilt it from fratricidal war ruins into one of the world's most successful and dynamic economic powerhouses, defended its ally from all enemies for the past fifty-five years, and saved it from financial bankruptcy by single-handedly orchestrating the IMF bailout in 1997, and was even able to transplant successfully its cultural and political values of liberal democracy and individual freedoms to the South. Under these circumstances, how could a candidate running on a foreign policy platform that was in open contradiction with the proclaimed U.S. national interests in the region win an upset victory in a landmark election, the results of which would shape Korean politics and foreign policy priorities for the next five years? The honest answer, no matter how paradoxical it may sound, is that the United States actually helped him win it!

Many observers believe that the United States itself is largely responsible for the recent rising wave of anti-American sentiment and nationwide mass anti-American demonstrations in the ROK. The first G.W. Bush administration and Kim Dae-jung's government got off to the wrong start from the very beginning, had a very rocky relationship in the past two years because of U.S. increasingly unilateralist, hard-line policy towards North Korea, which Seoul perceives as heavy-handed, belligerent, and totally indifferent to the explicitly stated ROK government's preferences and "sunshine" views. The first G.W. Bush administration's perceived lack of respect for Kim Dae-jung's government injured

Korean-American alliance. The U.S. taking sides in the six-month Korean presidential marathon and rumored attempts to influence its outcome in a mature liberal democratic society added insult to injury. Finally, the rushed acquittal of two U.S. servicemen who were accused of accidentally killing two Korean 13-year-old schoolgirls while on duty, and what was perceived as a lack of accountability, remorse, and moral justice by the U.S., sparked the fire fueled by traditional anti-Americanism. No wonder the Blue House seemed to be in complicity with street demonstrators and reluctant to intervene and cool off the anti-American feelings in early December, while Mr. Roh Moo-hyun simply rode this monster wave to electoral victory like a skillful surfer at the Pipeline Masters. In 2002, Korea was lost, and no one was held accountable for that.

Now let me turn to a personal account of the presidential campaign and election itself. I was invited to observe the presidential election by the chairman of Mr. Roh Moo-hyun's election campaign committee, Mr. Shin Gye-Ryun, who later served as President Roh's first chief of staff after the election. Although at that time, Mr. Roh was considered a junkyard underdog, a "pro-North sympathizer," and a widely expected loser, trailing "our guy" by almost twenty points just four weeks before the election, I thought Mr. Roh still had a chance for an upset. I also believed he would be a better president for Korea and for the long-term credibility, sustainability, and vitality of the ROK-American alliance (in a "Nixon goes to China" sort of way). Finally, since this represented a great opportunity to see the election process from the inside, I accepted his invitation with gratitude.

By the time I got to Korea on December 16, Mr. Roh's luck had changed noticeably. In a big surprise move, he merged his party with that of another maverick, popular businessman-turned politician, Mr. Chong Mong-joon's party, National Alliance 21, and formed a unified candidacy, thereby reducing a wide-open, three-man race to a tighter two-man contest and closing a twenty-

point gap with the GNP front-runner in domestic pre-election polls. His widely known disrespectful views of America had begun to gain him considerable sympathy amidst rising anti-American sentiment in the country. He ran on a “DJ-light” platform. He was able to hold his own in three nationally televised policy debates in early December and even got away almost unscathed with his controversial proposal to move the administrative capital out of Seoul to the southeastern city of Taejon.

When I arrived in Seoul, a bustling city of 7.7 million eligible voters, 71% or 5.5 million of whom actually did vote on December 19, the most surprising first impression was the lack of any outdoor political advertising and election campaigning. In contrast, when I was in Taipei in March 2000 to observe the Taiwanese presidential elections, the city was swamped with election posters, candidates’ images, political ads; and it was rocked with huge and small political rallies daily. This time around in the ROK, however, in accordance with the new anti-corruption legislation, in order to reduce election expenditures and prevent future collusion and corruption between big businesses sponsoring elections and government officials who were in debt to them, the ROK legislature decided to conduct presidential election campaigns in mass media and over the Internet only, mostly at the public expense and on an equal basis for all candidates. It was weirdly quiet and orderly, and clean on the streets (setting aside periodic anti-American rallies around the U.S. Embassy in downtown Seoul implicitly endorsed by all candidates), but fierce electoral wars were led in the news media, TV ads, and cyberspace.

To my great surprise, the first thing my Korean interlocutor said was that I was part of the news of the day in Korea. It just happened that a day before a leading ROK Internet news provider, Ohmynews.com, without my knowledge or permission had copied an article from a policy discussion forum among the U.S. “Korea watchers,” in which I stated that the main issue for this election should be war or peace with North Korea and volunteered a

prediction that Mr. Roh was likely to win on a peace platform. The article had been translated into Korean, shown to Mr. Roh who apparently liked it and decided to refocus his entire campaigning in the last days before the election around the issue of war and peace, instead of domestic policy priorities. The result was that not only the article made the headlines of all major newspapers, but also Mr. Roh began to refer to my argument at every rally he went to in the last few days of the campaign. His campaign spokesman repeatedly cited my analysis, whereas the GNP spokesman challenged its validity and applicability to Korea and questioned Mr. Roh's sincerity in his claims that he was not a pro-North Korean stooge and his credibility as a peace-maker and U.S. ally. Because of this, right upon arrival I found myself in the very heart of the election campaign, with the two leading candidates heatedly debating my argument in public by either praising for enlightening or blaming for misleading the Korean public, respectively.

This situation occurred without my prior knowledge or intent. The paradox is that if I had wanted to play some kind of a role in the Korean election, I probably would have failed to make any difference at all, no matter how hard I would have tried. And here I was: with an absolute intention to stay neutral, objective, and to do nothing which could be construed as influencing the elections, but the result was that the fate threw me right into the middle and thick of it and cast my lot with one side against the other against my original wishes, just because someone somewhere saw what I had written somewhere else for some unrelated purpose and decided to use it elsewhere for his own purposes unrelated to the original intent at all. Speaking about the theory of complexity! Could a stone thrown in the waters off the California Pacific coast ever cause a Tsunami wave here in Hawaii?

This led to my "fifteen minutes of fame" in Korea. Because of the now "famous" status, I became an instant NMDP "star." Every party official and staff member wanted to meet, which gave me an

unprecedented access to the inner workings of Mr. Roh's electoral machine. I met with all five of top NMDP leaders, most senior campaign officials and analysts, and sat in on leadership strategy sessions at the party headquarters and tactics discussions at the both war rooms (one for the cyber war and another for general election warfare).

The gist of all these sessions and interviews was that in the last three days before the election all internal polls indicated that Mr. Roh had finally overtaken Mr. Lee and was leading by a comfortable 6.9-7.5 percent margin at the traditional 78-80% voter turnout rate. If the general voter turnout were to drop to lower 70s, due to the possible low participation rate by the twenty-somethings, then the margin of victory was expected to shrink to 3.9 percent. In the worst-case scenario of some last minute bad news from North Korea, which was expected to favor conservative Mr. Lee, Mr. Roh was still projected as a winner with a 0.9-1.5 percent margin.

The Roh camp expected to get the overwhelming support from the voters in their 20s and 30s, more than half of the voters in their 40s, a convincing majority of the urban vote, most of the voters from the Yongnam regions, 95 percent of the votes below flag and general rank from the military, as well as a majority of the female votes. The NMDP believed that as long as the general voter turnout stayed above 70 percent, they would be able to win.

Interestingly, all conversations about campaign issues, strategy, and tactics tended to end with the same question, which apparently worried Mr. Roh's camp the most in the last days of the campaign. Namely, they kept asking whether I expected "any more shoes to drop from North Korea" -- any possibility of a missile launch on December 18, or a naval clash like on the eve of the World Cup finals, or an armed provocation around the DMZ? These allegedly pro-North Korean folks from the Roh camp were so insecure about

the North and what it might do to influence election outcome against their will and interests.

I tried to reassure my counterparts that the United States was watching North Korea very carefully and made it clear to Pyongyang that no pre-election provocation would be tolerated. What I did not emphasize to them, of course, was the U.S. message allegedly sent to Kim Jong Il via Tokyo that said something like “if Lee goes down, then you die,” meaning if Kim were to try to undermine Mr. Lee’s campaign, this would be the beginning of the end for his regime as far as this administration was concerned.

In turn, I kept asking my counterparts how credible their internal polling data was because they had missed it twice before – during June 2002 local elections and August 2002 parliamentary by-elections. Could they be misreading the public opinion again? No, they were very certain this time, they said. But, most importantly, I kept challenging them to think about “the unknown unknowns,” some unpredictable events, which could upset their predictions in the final stretch. The reply was always the same: “If there is no news (which is good news) from the North, and the United States does not stab us in the back, we will be OK.”

What is worth noting is the fact that all these NMDP officials and strategists knew very well that I was a U.S. Department of Defense employee, but they thought I understood and shared their beliefs, and they did not mind me being privy to the inner workings of their electoral machine. If Mr. Roh Moo-hyun trusted me, then they could trust me, too. That led me to believe that neither Mr. Roh, nor his party was actually anti-American. They just disliked a particular kind of U.S. policy towards Korea and would like to see it change in order for the ROK-U.S. alliance not just to survive, but to prosper, while adjusting to the new challenges facing the post Cold War world.



Late in the night on December 18, I attended the now notorious night rally in Seoul's Myongdong district, which allegedly led to the last-moment breakup between Mr. Roh and Mr. Chung. Honestly, I did not hear or observe anything, which could have upset Mr. Chung's supporters. If anything, a friend of mine from the NMDP headquarters told me that in one of his last lines Mr. Roh had again cited me by name in his reference to the war or peace issue – honestly, I did not catch it, but my Korean is not perfect either (although, the party people promised to give me the tape of this event for the record). That night, I went to sleep with no doubt that Mr. Roh would win and, if my Korean friends were to be believed, I would enjoy considerable respect and access within the newly elected Roh administration.

You cannot even imagine how totally shocked I was (as the rest of Korea, I must add) when the early morning newspapers broke the news that right after the above-mentioned last public rally and only an hour and a half before the election day, Mr. Chung Mong-joon, whose support was deemed to be crucial in boosting Mr. Roh's standing to par with Mr. Lee's and swinging the undecided voters in the former's direction, made an inexplicable and obviously irrational decision to abandon his ally, withdraw his support, and told the voters to go with their conscience, which read for Mr. Lee. It was a bombshell.

All along I heard rumors that there were ups and downs in the Roh-Chung alliance, that Mr. Chung was not fully committed to Mr. Roh's candidacy, that he was not happy with the post-election power-sharing arrangement they had agreed upon and, therefore, was not whole-heartedly campaigning on behalf of Mr. Roh, that Mr. Lee's camp tried very hard to lure Mr. Chung away from Mr. Roh's camp. But, every time I raised this issue with the NMDP officials, the latter were adamant that they held Mr. Chung under control, that he would honor his word, and, despite his hesitations, he would not flip.

What Mr. Chung did at the eleventh hour was clearly designed not just to hurt but to destroy Mr. Roh's campaign, because Mr. Chung hoped to take away at least ten-to-twenty percentage points from Mr. Roh, which would have ensured the latter's defeat. Why Mr. Chung Mong-joon did what he did will remain one of the unsolved mysteries of this campaign.

All of a sudden, Mr. Chung Mong-joon from the NMDP's "darling" became the NMDP's "public enemy number one." Most Korean observers promptly concluded that this last minute betrayal would cost Mr. Roh his presidential bid and would inevitably propel Mr. Lee into the Blue House within the next twelve hours. The mood turned against Mr. Roh so quickly that by midday December 19, most analysts had begun to predict a landslide victory for the GNP. The TV channels began to broadcast documentaries about Lee Hoi-chang's life and about what was wrong and must be corrected with the DJ government. They showed happy smiling faces of GNP operatives and senior officials anticipating an easy victory in just a few hours. As the preliminary voter turnout data trickled in pointing to an unusually low turnout, the GNP began to sense the smell of victory in the air and started its preparations for victory celebrations at the GNP headquarters. I felt bad because "my guys" appeared to be losing it.

Having observed how South Korean voters cast their ballots at a couple of polling stations in the morning, I had to make a very important decision in the afternoon, i.e. which party headquarters to go to in order to witness the official announcement of the election results. As probably all Koreans did at that point, I had very serious doubts whether this time Mr. Roh would be able to repair the damage and come back again as he had done before – he simply did not have enough time to reach out and explain himself and was not even allowed to say anything publicly on the election day -- the day when Mr. Chung stabbed him in the back. I knew that the "who is who" of Korean political *bon monde* and foreign press would gather at the GNP headquarters to congratulate Mr.

Lee Hoi-chang with what increasingly looked like a landslide victory giving him a mandate to overhaul the entire Korean political system at his pleasure.

This notwithstanding, I decided to stay with Mr. Roh's camp to the end and go to the NMDP headquarters to share the pain of defeat together with the people who had invited me to Korea, confided in me, and let me be part of the election campaign process. I hoped they would remember who continued to support them in time of internal crisis and disillusionment. Besides, I knew that the GNP was unlikely to forgive me for giving the war or peace issue to Mr. Roh and for siding so openly with their opponent. Moreover, bearing in mind highly personal nature of Korean politics, I had to prepare myself to be shut out off the Korean mainstream politics for the next five years until the next presidential election cycle.

As you can imagine, the atmosphere inside the NMDP headquarters was funereal. There were only two Westerners, myself and a free-lancing European cameraman, in the entire NMDP headquarters! Contrast that with a mob of foreigners swirling around the GNP headquarters around six p.m. The entire party leadership and all Mr. Roh's personal advisors shook my hand and told me how appreciative they were for coming to join them at this difficult and painful moment. The chairman of Mr. Roh's election campaign told me that he still believed that they could pull it off by a point, which, honestly, I found hard to believe at that time. But I still wished him good luck and said that my prayers were going to Mr. Roh. They offered me a chair reserved for party bosses in the fourth row for VIPs. Everyone silently and gloomily waited for the bad news to be confirmed at six p.m. when the initial results of the exit polls were to be announced by the major Korean TV networks. Twenty seconds, nineteen, Lee, Roh, Lee, Roh, five, four, three, two, and, ... Roh Moo-hyun was pronounced as the winner by the networks.

It was beyond belief. The room exploded with high-intensity emotional outburst full of joy and happiness. It was deafening. I have never experienced such an overwhelming sense of elation from someone else's victory. It was complete triumph. Just imagine the roller-coaster ride the followers of Mr. Roh's campaign had been through that day. We came to Mr. Roh's political funeral and were treated to his Phoenix-like miraculous rebirth and ascent to the presidential Olympus. This was something very special and beyond imagination. Only true believers and survivors could share that very special moment of ecstasy and exhilaration.

The crowd greeted every new exit poll data confirming Mr. Roh's upsetting victory with a thunderous standing ovation, victory signs thrown in the air, and joyful cheers and tears. At 6:30 p.m., the networks began to report initial preliminary results of the official counting. First, they showed Mr. Lee in the lead. Then, at around 8:40 p.m., Mr. Roh moved into first place and never moved out of it. He was projected as the winner at ten o'clock and then confirmed at eleven o'clock at night.

Mr. Roh Moo-hyun won with a 2.3% margin, or 574,109 votes, getting 48.9 percent of the vote with the record low voter turnout of only 70.2% or 24.5 million voters of the total 35 million eligible voters. It turned out that the last minute withdrawal of support for Mr. Roh by Mr. Chung Mong-joon did not actually matter much. Perhaps, it may have lowered the voter turnout by five to ten percent, if judged by previous presidential elections, but it failed to shave off more than three points from Mr. Roh's margin of victory. Betrayal did not pay off. Brutus will never become Caesar. The Korean people saw through it and decided to give Mr. Roh Moo-hyun a second chance.

**The U.S.-ROK Military Security Alliance: A Pyrrhic Victory in the Cold War?**

Despite some worrisome signs during the electoral campaign, the impact of the 16<sup>th</sup> presidential election on the U.S.-ROK alliance has been rather positive so far. Initial steps of the Roh Moo-hyun's administration, such as significant continuity in staffing his national security team, proved wrong the "doomsday" talkers, who had predicted an early demise of the 50-year-old security partnership following the ascent of a "left-wing radical populist" in the Blue House. If anything, President Roh may eventually turn out to be the best candidate for "modernizing the overall security relationship" with the United States. President Roh focuses his efforts on achieving greater equality within the alliance decision-making processes, especially on such issues as how to best engage North Korea in the resolution of the ongoing nuclear confrontation.

Indeed, the United States and the Republic of Korea live in extraordinary times of dramatic changes both at home and abroad. Many visions of the alliance future exist.<sup>24</sup> A number of serious alliance issues percolated during the presidential campaign and in

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<sup>24</sup> For example, see Jonathan D. Pollack and Young-koo Cha, *A New Alliance for the Next Century: The Future of U.S.-Korean Security Cooperation*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1995; Jonathan D. Pollack and Chung-min Lee, *Preparing for Korean Unification: Scenarios and Implications*. Washington, D.C.: RAND, 1999; Norman D. Levin, *Do the Ties Still Bind? The U.S.-ROK Security Relationship After 9/11*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2004; Michael O'Hanlon, "Keep U.S. Forces in Korea After Reunification," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 10, no. 1 (summer 1998): 5-19; Nicholas Eberstadt, "American Security Relations with Northeast Asia after 9/11," *Korea and World Affairs* 26, no. 3 (fall 2002): 335-56; Sang-hyun Lee, "Past, Present, and Future of the Korea-U.S. Alliance," *East Asian Review* 15, no. 2 (summer 2003): 71-86; Doug Bandow, "Cutting the Tripwire: It's Time to Get Out of Korea," *Reason*, July 1, 2003; Victor D. Cha, "Focus on the Future, Not the North," *Washington Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (winter 2002-03): 91-107; Derek J. Mitchell, "A Blueprint for U.S. Policy Toward a Unified Korea," *Washington Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (winter 2002-03): 123-37; Carl E. Haselden, Jr., "The Effects of Korean Unification on the U.S. Military Presence in Northeast Asia," *Parameters* 32, no. 4 (winter 2002-03): 120-32; and Kim Dong Shin, "The ROK-U.S. Alliance: Where is It Headed?" *Strategic Forum*, no. 197 (Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Washington, D.C., April 2003): 3-4.

the first two years of President Roh Moo-hyun's rule. Now, everything is on the table. But, there is no doubt that the second G.W. Bush administration in Washington and the Roh administration in Seoul share strong allied commitment to their common national security goals and joint military defense.

One of the key ingredients for successful completion of alliance re-balancing and future prosperity is to have consultations before action, not after action.<sup>25</sup> Specific adjustments to the combined defense force structure and base relocations constitute relatively minor issues at present. Such issues, along with shifts in roles and missions, as well as changes in command relationships, are likely to be on the Korean agenda only after anxieties over the present nuclear crisis with the DPRK subsides. At that point, it is possible that issues from the electoral campaign such as the wartime subordination of Korean forces to U.S. commanders within the combined defense might be raised again.<sup>26</sup>

Although the Roh administration is expected to continue to advocate a strong alliance, the main problem for enhancing alliance resiliency is to define the glue that will keep the alliance together even without any clear and present threat from North Korea. Seoul and Washington need to develop a common vision for the alliance after Korean unification. Irrespective of the issues at hand, they need to define and mutually recognize the commonly shared norms, beliefs, shared values, emotional attachment, and feelings of mutual loyalty.<sup>27</sup> They also need to harmonize the shared national security interests and strategies of the two countries, especially with respect to North Korea and beyond the

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<sup>25</sup> See Mr. Guy Arrigoni's chapter in this volume.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> For a discussion of the values-based alliance renovation, see Victor D. Cha, "Values after Victory: The Future of U.S.-Japan-Korea Relations," *Pacific Connections*, Pacific Forum CSIS, July 2002.

<http://www.csis.org/pacfor/annual/2002annual.html>.

North Korean threat, as well as their conceptions of how the security is best achieved.<sup>28</sup>

In the absence of such epistemic harmonization, the ROK, despite its middle-power status, clearly inferior to all of its neighbors in national and military power, is likely to strive for a more enhanced independent defense capability.<sup>29</sup> The Roh administration probably will continue to believe that ultimately guaranteeing the ROK's security will require a multilateral regional security framework, and that embedding the U.S.-ROK alliance within some kind of a multilateral Northeast Asian security forum is the best way to assure that Seoul's interests will not be ignored by its more powerful neighbors and to enhance peace and stability on and around the Korean peninsula.<sup>30</sup>

Regarding the challenges facing the U.S.-ROK alliance and its future prospects, some optimists argue that the current state of the alliance understood in broad terms, including the military security relationship, political and cultural affinities, economic bonds, and personal ties, is good.<sup>31</sup> They stress that the issues and concerns arising in the day-to-day alliance management reflect its maturation, vitality, and resilience. Obviously, both American and Korean sentiments toward the alliance are complex and range from strong support to indifference – it is only natural in a democratic society. They underscore that it is incumbent on the national leadership in both countries to strengthen mutual understanding

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<sup>28</sup> See James Miles, "Waiting Out North Korea," *Survival* 44, no. 2 (summer 2002): 37-49 for a discussion of the merits of the coordinated isolation policy; see James J. Przystup, "Anticipating Strategic Surprise," *Strategic Forum*, no. 190 (Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Washington, D.C., March 2002) for a discussion of the policy of active engagement; and Victor D. Cha, "Korea's Place in the Axis," *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 3 (May/June 2002): 79-92 for a description of the coordinated "hawk engagement" strategy.

<sup>29</sup> See Dr. Jong-sup Lee and Dr. Du-hyeogn Cha's chapter in this volume.

<sup>30</sup> See Chang-soo Kim's chapter in this volume.

<sup>31</sup> See Guy Arrigoni's chapter, *op. cit.*

and trust, and lead the alliance restructuring to adapt the military alliance to the evolving international threat environment, by making it a comprehensive security alliance and shifting its primary strategic mission from peninsular defense to the maintenance of regional stability.

In contrast, some pessimists contend that we are looking at the sunset of the U.S.-ROK military alliance. On the one hand, the anti-American sentiment in the South reached a critical mass (it is not “a radical few” or a “passing phenomenon”) and, if left unabated, it would destroy the alliance. Public support for USFK is crumbling both in the ROK and the United States, where its organizational structures are increasingly regarded as relics of the Cold War. Americans are irritated that Korean conservatives are not willing to stand up to the defense of the U.S.-ROK military alliance, whereas many Koreans are wrongly convinced that the alliance arrangements, including the SOFA and OPCON, are unfair to the Korean side -- that the United States is oblivious to the wishes of the Korean people, and that the USFK allegedly hinders Korean unification. They believe that the alliance is “in crisis,” that one side recognizes it whereas the other does not (which one depends on the nationality of the speaker). In their opinion, the “regional alliance” will never happen; when the North Korean military threat finally disappears, the U.S.-ROK alliance may fade away, too. That is why the ROK government is “in a rush” to develop a self-reliant national security doctrine and self-reliant defense capabilities, as well as actively promotes the idea of a “regional balancier’s role” for South Korea in light of the uncertain future of the U.S.-Chinese-Japanese relations in Northeast Asia.

On the other hand, the sea change has been missed, and the U.S.-ROK military alliance is regarded as being increasing irrelevant and burdensome to the current U.S. military needs, especially when it ties up in Korea the 37,000 U.S. combat-ready troops badly needed in other places of the world where the U.S. military conducts the global war against terrorism. The U.S. national



security policy is arguably frustrated by the alliance's rigidities, sensitivities, and complications, which does not bode well for its long-term survivability. The burden is on the Koreans now to determine whether they want the alliance and in what shape, and to start selling their future vision in Washington before it is too late. Alliance and defense self-reliance were said to be mutually exclusive and incompatible.

The middle-of-the-road views<sup>32</sup> caution against extreme conclusions. While recognizing that the U.S.-ROK relationship is facing a critical moment, they urge against crisis talk and stress that anti-American sentiment was probably born under past authoritarian regimes and was an inevitable result of the growing pains and democratization of the South Korean society. They argue that it ebbs and flows, and that mature political leadership can address the alliance management issues without causing any needless ruptures in the overall bilateral relationship. They assert that the emerging South Korean movement toward a more self-reliant system in national defense should be seen as part of the national reconciliation process with the North. It is designed to enhance the ROK's national security; therefore, it is supplementary to the U.S.-ROK alliance, and is not a strategic alternative to it.

Despite recent growth in the ROK's military capabilities, the ROK armed forces still need the U.S. air and naval power, as well as strategic reconnaissance assets to repel a possible North Korean invasion. Moreover, the ROK needs the protection of the U.S. nuclear umbrella in order to deal with the rise of China and Japan's evolution toward a "normal state." In their view, the transfer of responsibility over the Joint Security Area to the ROKA, the Yongsan garrison relocation out of the capital area, the OPCON reform, and the USFK consolidation in the sea and air hubs in Pyongtaek and Osan areas should adequately satisfy the defense

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<sup>32</sup> For example, see Charles M. Perry et al., *Alliance Diversification and the Future of the U.S.-Korean Security Relationship*. The Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis: Merrill/Daniels Press, Everett, MA, 2004.

needs and assuage public fears of both allies. They believe that the U.S.-Japan security relationship may serve as a model for the future evolution of the U.S.-ROK military alliance.

One should not overlook the role of anti-Americanism during and after the 16<sup>th</sup> presidential campaign and its impact on the Roh administration views and policies. Clearly, Roh Moo-hyun rode to power on the wave of mass anti-Americanism, but after the election he chose to dump it. Of course, anti-Americanism is not a novel phenomenon in the ROK.<sup>33</sup> Radical South Korean students, for example, burned Stars and Stripes with such shocking frequency in the 1980s and 1990s<sup>34</sup> that at the time the North Koreans joked that Americans should feel safer in Pyongyang than in Seoul. The relationship between America and Korea has often been punctuated by “mood swings” ever since it was consummated by the Schufeldt Treaty in 1883.

As Professor Linton observes in his contribution to this volume, anti-Americanism masks four different phenomena in the Republic

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<sup>33</sup> For more background on the anti-American sentiment in the ROK, see Bong Youngshik, “Anti-Americanism and the U.S.-Korea Military Alliance,” *Confrontation and Innovation on the Korean Peninsula* (Washington, D.C.: Korean Economic Institute, 2003); Lee In-ho, “Historic and Cultural Roots of Anti-Americanism in Korea,” in *Anti-Americanism in Korea: Closing Perception Gaps*, Issues and Insights, vol. 3, no. 5 (Honolulu: Pacific Forum CSIS, July 2003); Hahm Chaibong, “Anti-Americanism, Korean Style,” in *Anti-Americanism in Korea: Closing Perception Gaps*, op. cit.; and John Kie-chiang Oh, “Anti-Americanism and Anti-Authoritarian Politics in Korea,” in Ilpyong J. Kim, ed., *Two Koreas in Transition: Implications for U.S. Policy*, Paragon House Publishers: The Washington Institute Press, 1998, pp. 245-262.

<sup>34</sup> Throughout the 1980s, the anti-American phenomena in South Korea included regular burning of American flags and effigies of Uncle Sam at numerous student rallies, the repeated fire-bombing of the U.S. cultural centers in Kwangju after December 1980, in Pusan (March 1982), and in Taegu (September 1983), a bomb explosion in front of the American cultural center in Taegu just before Ronald Reagan’s visit to the ROK in November 1983, a student takeover of the USIS library in 1985, and an attack on the American dependents’ housing area outside the Yongsan garrison in Seoul in November 1988, etc.

of Korea: (1) general and unfocused anti-Americanism that inclines Koreans to see what is valuable in their way of life under constant pressure from a dominant American-led Western culture; (2) the “coming-of-age” type of sharper and more acute anti-Americanism that is a reaction against perceived discrimination, a demand for parity and equality between Korea and the United States; (3) the “hope and disappointment” anti-Americanism stemming from perceived inconsistencies between American ideals and American practices as related to the image of America in Korean eyes; and finally, (4) a breed of anti-American sentiment resulting from the South Korean public’s growing sense of solidarity with North Korea.<sup>35</sup> In his chapter, Dr. Linton concludes that although anti-Americanism does not pose a grave threat to the U.S. interests at present, clearly, as time passes by, it will no longer be viable for the United States to think it can be friends with one half of Korea while remaining a mortal enemy with the other half, because of a growing Korean national consciousness.

### **Prospects for Military Rule in the North**

The North Korean domestic crisis is chronic, structural, and complex in nature.<sup>36</sup> But despite all predictions to the contrary, the North Korean state has not collapsed. Instead, one can witness the

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<sup>35</sup> For a detailed analysis of Korean anti-Americanism, see Steven Linton’s chapter in this volume.

<sup>36</sup> For various analyses of the systemic crisis in North Korea, one can read Kongdan Oh and Ralph C. Hassig, *North Korea: Through the Looking Glass*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2000; and Helen-Louise Hunter and Stephen J. Hunter, *Kim Il Sung’s North Korea*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1999. Also, one can read Andrew Natsios, *The Great North Korean Famine*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2000; and Kang Chol-Hwan and Pierre Rigoulot, *The Aquariums of Pyongyang: Ten Years in a North Korean Gulag*. Trans. Yair Reiner. New York: Basic Books, 2001; Samuel S. Kim, ed., *The North Korean System in the Post-Cold War Era*, St. Martin’s Press (Palgrave): New York, 2001; and Jae Kyu Park, ed., *North Korea in Transition and Policy Choices: Domestic Structure and External Relations*, Kyungnam University Press: Seoul, 1999.

accelerating collapse of the “collapsist school” within the Washington beltway.<sup>37</sup> Not only did the North Korean regime survive its recent crises and challenges, but Kim Jong Il and the KPA remain in total control of the DPRK government policy-making.<sup>38</sup> Although the North Korean leadership’s performance in crisis was neither timely nor adequate, Kim Jong Il was able to mobilize substantial external assistance, especially from China and the ROK, and he eventually took the plunge and launched serious structural socio-economic reforms in the late 1990s. He used the military as the primary driving force in restructuring and modernizing the North Korean economy on the basis of the market-based approach, re-energizing the North Korean society, and consolidating the ruling elites under the slogans of the military-first policy (MFP) with the goal of building “*kangsong taeguk*,” that is, a “powerful and prosperous great nation.”<sup>39</sup>

In 2003-2004, socio-economic reforms were not reversed but further advanced despite increasingly hostile international environment. This may be construed either as a sign that the reforms may have become irreversible or that the leadership may not necessarily have complete control over and cannot help but swim along with the new macro-economic processes and micro-economic behavior that it unleashed in July 2002.

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<sup>37</sup> For the main arguments of the “collapsist school,” one can read Nicholas Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea*. Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1999; and Marcus Noland and C. Fred Bergsten, *Avoiding the Apocalypse: Economic Turmoil on the Korean Peninsula*. Washington, D.C.: Institute of International Economics, 2000.

<sup>38</sup> For instance, see Dae-Sook Suh, Crisis Management by New Leaders in North Korea, in Wonmo Dong, ed., *The Two Koreas and the United States: Issues of Peace, Security, and Economic Cooperation*, M.E. Sharpe: New York, 2000, pp. 3-16.

<sup>39</sup> For a detailed explanation of the military-first policy, one may read Dae-Sook Suh, Military-First Politics of Kim Jong Il, *Asian Perspective*, Center for North Korean Studies, Kyungnam University: Seoul, volume 26, number 3, 2002, pp. 145-167.

The MFP-driven military rule in this context can be both positive and negative. On the positive side, given the fact that the North Korean military is ubiquitous and plays many multi-dimensional roles<sup>40</sup> (as an important economic actor in agriculture, infrastructure construction, R&D, professional education, arms sales and hard currency earning; as the major ideological educator, socializer of the youth, and the general backbone of the society; as the principal veto power in all policy deliberations; and as the military defender of the nation and the principal guarantor of the regime survival), it is very important that the strategic decision to initiate modernization reforms was a military-backed decision. It was driven by the pure self-preservation instinct, not based on Marxist-Leninist or Juch'e ideology. But, without the support of the top military leaders, Kim Jong Il alone could not have made a strategic decision to launch economic reforms. He needed military support for his reforms, and he got it. What seems to be important is the fact that the reform-inclined KPA is elevated to be the primary actor whereas the more conservative Workers' Party of Korea is relegated to be the secondary actor in restructuring the North Korean state and building a "powerful and prosperous great nation."

The fact that North Korea is run by the military under the military-first policy does not mean that the country is hopeless, as the experience of the ROK led by General Park Chong-hee, who orchestrated the South Korean economic miracle, persuasively testifies. If economic reforms continue to bear positive results, following the July 2002 liberalization of prices and wages and introduction of the profit motivation, Kim Jong Il is expected to initiate a gradual privatization of state property, at which time the Korean People's Army may become one of the leading actors in the North Korean privatization process because the KPA generals control so many of the country's key economic assets. Bearing in

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<sup>40</sup> For an excellent functional analysis of the KPA's role, one can read Joseph S. Bermudez, Jr., *Shield of the Great Leader: The Armed Forces of North Korea*. Canberra: Allen & Unwin, 2001.

mind Kim Jong Il's recent fascination with General Park Chong-hee's military rule, in the future North Korea may well develop a corporate-state capitalist economy under authoritarian military leadership, if the KPA generals decide to change their military uniforms for suits, and take key civilian management positions in major industrial combines and trading houses the way their South Korean rivals did back in the 1960s.

On the negative side, due to the over-expansion of military roles, the over-politicization of the KPA, and the "military sprawl" in North Korean society, the KPA's primary role, i.e. the military defense of North Korea, tends to be downgraded and downplayed. Despite the KPA's continuous claim on almost half of the DPRK's government budget, its resources are still limited and unduly stretched out. As a result, the KPA's military readiness suffers and actual military capabilities continue to deteriorate despite the military-first policy. Moreover, the principal reason why some foreign governments do not believe in economic reforms in North Korea is precisely the military-first policy, the dominant role that the KPA still plays in the North Korean decision-making process, and the belief that the MFP precludes any constructive resolution in nuclear negotiations.

### **Strategic Readjustment within the ROK-U.S.-DPRK Triangle?**

Many observers argue that the U.S. emphasis on preemption and perceived proclivity for unilateral intervention in the aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup> visibly unsettled Northeast Asia. In a region where history is important, perceptions matter, and rhetoric counts, there seems to be a linkage between 9/11 and popular views of the United States as a growing threat to regional security, as a "passive-aggressive hyper-power, angry and suffering from a post-traumatic stress disorder."

Some are fearful that as part of its global posture review and defense transformation process, the United States may be intent on reducing its military presence in Northeast Asia, leaving an unwelcome power vacuum behind. As a result, one can observe a splash of the government rhetoric advocating increasingly self-reliant defense capabilities and preemptive military doctrines, revival and proliferation of long-dormant nuclear ambitions, and acquisition of advanced TMD capabilities on a region-wide basis, including the DPRK, ROK, PRC, Russia, Japan, and Taiwan. The question remains, however, whether a traditionally war-prone region where many great power interests often clash, filled with more self-reliant states that are less dependent on the U.S. security umbrella, will be more stable and peaceful in the long run or not.

Consequently, ROK security perceptions are in a flux. The North Korean conventional military threat is seen as diminishing. The significance of the North Korean asymmetric warfare threat, including the WMD threat, is downplayed. The Roh Moo-hyun administration regards Pyongyang as a “partner” or a “little brother in need,” not as “evil,” and views inter-Korean reconciliation and reunification, not the regime change in Pyongyang, as the only viable long-term solution to the North Korean security threat and nuclear crisis. Moreover, the ROK public is increasingly worried about the possibility of the U.S. unilateral use of force against North Korea. Generational shift in the ROK and President Roh Moo-hyun’s foreign policy opened a wide perception gap and policy divergence between Seoul and Washington, especially on North Korean issues. A groundswell of anti-American sentiment in South Korea, that dominated the presidential and mayoral elections in December 2002, and a deepening crisis of national identity in the ROK led to the victory of the “pro-independence faction” in a series of major government reshuffles in 2004 and transformed the character of the National Assembly in parliamentary elections in April 2004. These new political circumstances reinforce the impetus for more independent foreign

policy and self-reliant national defense and create uncertainties for the future of the U.S.-ROK alliance.

In contrast to the Bush administration's policy toward the DPRK, it is the Roh government's position that North Korea should be engaged in multilateral nuclear talks rather than internationally isolated, pressured through the peaceful regime change mechanisms provided under the North Korea Human Rights Act passed by the U.S. Congress in October 2004, or subdued through various operations involving the use of force such as the Proliferation Security Initiative.

Some South Korean observers take a step further and suggest that living with a limited nuclear power in the North for the time being, albeit undesirable in principle, would be preferable to a regional war or an unverifiable nuclear agreement. They concede, however, that in the long run only regime transformation in Pyongyang could guarantee an irreversible, verifiable, and unconditional dismantlement of the North Korean nuclear program, because of Kim Jong Il's seemingly irredentist nuclear ambitions.

In the meantime, Seoul continues its efforts to convince Washington that one of the first necessary steps on the way towards a nuclear settlement on the Korean peninsula should be "a nuclear freeze" on the DPRK's "declared nuclear activities and facilities" as a temporary "place-holder" for either a step-by-step incremental resolution of the current nuclear crisis or a "bigger and bolder" new deal between the DPRK and the international community that could resolve most of the pending security concerns of the parties involved in the six-party talks in the so-called "big bang approach." In this sense, the initiation and institutionalization of the six-party process in Beijing is a landmark development in building a multilateral regional security architecture in Northeast Asia. Only time will tell whether or not they will bear any fruit. But, some analysts suggest that the six-party talks are too valuable to abandon, whatever the DPRK does



and no matter how the nuclear crisis is resolved. Therefore, they should be extended to include other security concerns of regional powers, not just the North Korean nuclear issue.

### **Contributions to the Present Volume**

The present edited volume is a product of two international conferences – “2002 Presidential Election in the Republic of Korea: Implications and Impacts,” and “Enhancing Security, Cooperation, and Peace on the Korean Peninsula,” which took place at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu, Hawaii, respectively from April 15 to 17, 2003, and January 27 to 29, 2004. The book’s fourteen chapters are divided into three parts: Part One – the 16th ROK Presidential Election in Historical, Comparative, and Policy Perspectives; Part Two – Implications of the 16th Presidential Election for South Korea’s Domestic Politics, Economy, and Society; and Part Three – Impact of the 16th ROK Presidential Election on the Inter-Korean Relations, the U.S.-ROK Security Alliance, and Korean Diplomacy. The aim of the book is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the experience of democratic consolidation in the ROK and its impact on the life, well-being, and happiness of the Korean people and peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. This book is a product of the collaborative efforts of almost a hundred policy practitioners and academics from six countries who attended these two conferences, including consuls general from Japan and ROK, officials from the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of Defense, KEDO, United Nations Secretariat, and various "think tanks" in Washington, D.C., as well as two dozen participants from the Republic of Korea, three from Japan, four from Russia, one from Australia, one from Taiwan, eight from U.S. Pacific Command, fifteen from Joint Intelligence Center, Pacific, two from U.S. Army Pacific, two from Pacific Air Forces, four from Pacific Forum, and other Hawaii participants and observers.

In part one, chapters two through six examine key milestones in the ROK's political development, assess the historical significance of the 2002 presidential election, analyze the democratic consolidation experience in South Korea from a comparative political perspective, discuss major issues in the presidential election campaign, analyze the winning and losing strategies and tactics during the campaign, and highlight the role of the Internet in the 2002 presidential election.

In part two, chapters seven through nine examine the evolution of the party system and highlight the future of party politics in South Korea in light of the 2002 presidential election, discuss the election impact on political and socio-economic cleavages in the country, and assess President Kim Dae-jung's legacy in Korea's history.

In part three, chapters ten through fourteen look at the role of North Korea in the ROK's presidential election campaign, discuss various visions of the future U.S.-Korean security relationship, discuss the impact of anti-American sentiment on the U.S.-ROK military alliance, analyze President Roh Moo-hyun's plans to establish a self-reliant defense and its impact on the ROK-U.S. alliance, and introduce alternative approaches to conflict resolution on the Korean peninsula, including the North Korean nuclear crisis.

The premise of this book is that maturation of democracy in the South exemplified by the 16<sup>th</sup> presidential election, political decompression in the North epitomized by the military-first policy, and intensifying inter-Korean reconciliation may necessitate a strategic readjustment within the ROK-U.S.-DPRK triangle. The United States can no longer be a strategic ally of one Korea while remaining a deadly foe of the other. Washington, Seoul, and Pyongyang must find a way to harmonize their national security interests, looking beyond the North Korean threat as the core driver in their triangular diplomacy. ❧