

**Beyond Electoral Politics: US-ROK Alliance and the Six-Party
Talks on North Korea**

*Young Whan Kihl
Iowa State University*

The United States - ROK Mutual Defense Treaty, commemorating its half-century mark on October 1, 2003, was hailed as one of the successful, long-standing, military alliances that the U.S. had entered into with its allies in the post-World War II era. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Korean War, there was a wide-ranging commemorative community program and activities throughout the United States, to honor Korean War veterans and their family members.¹

Because of the unforeseen development of rising anti-Americanism in South Korea, and a backlash in Washington's policy community in 2002-03, the U.S.-Korea security alliance has undergone undue stress in recent years with a delicate process of reassessment as to its ultimate purposes and merits. The varying perceptions of the Korean peninsula security threats, posed by Pyongyang's on-going nuclear weapons program, seem to top the list of reasons for a widening gap in perspectives between Seoul and Washington on their mutual security policy and pending conflicts over issues in U.S.-Korea relations.

It is difficult to foresee what lasting impact the 2004 U.S. presidential election will have on the future of the U.S.-Korea alliance. Its effect on the U.S.-North Korea nuclear standoff, however, has been one of stalemate rather than breakthrough during the Six-Party Beijing talks and negotiations in 2004. This article will begin by providing a broader context of "how and why" the 2004 national elections, both for South Korea and the United States, are important. This will be followed by an analysis of each of three inter-related issues: (1) the rise of anti-Americanism in South Korea; (2) reconfiguring the US-ROK military alliance; and, (3) the Six-Party Talks on North Korea's nuclear standoff. It will end by drawing some lessons and policy implications for the future, which requires nurturing a mature and prosperoU.S. alliance between Washington and Seoul.

The basic reasons for the widening gap in perspectives between Seoul and Washington, are, first of all, attributable to the new political reality and dynamics within the respective alliance

partners as manifested by national electoral politics. In South Korea since the December 2002 election of President Roh Moo-Hyun, a new generation of political leadership has entrenched itself in Seoul. A generational fault line divides the country on issues related to North Korea and relations with the United States. In the United States the George W. B.U.S.h Administration's commitment to wage a global war on terrorism in the post-9.11 security environment, underscores a new U.S. policy of preemptive attack to defeat transnational terrorism. This is reinforced by the U.S. strategy of transforming its military from a static Cold War defense posture to a globally deployable and employable strike force.

A. Beyond Electoral Politics

South Korea's Sixth Republic has, since 1988, been resilient as a liberal democracy. It shares with the United States the political institutions of a constitutional democracy based on the principles of a presidential, rather than a parliamentary, system of government. Under this system political authority is allocated among the three separate and distinctive branches: the legislative, executive, and judiciary. Like the U.S., incumbent leaders of Korea's executive and legislative branches, excluding judges in the judiciary, are popularly elected by a national electorate in accordance with established institutional rules and procedures.

In both the U.S. and Korea national elections are held at regular intervals. The members of the unicameral legislative body for South Korea, are chosen every four years, whereas those for the U.S. Congress stand for reelection every two years in the case of the House of Representatives and every six years for the U.S. Senate, one third of whose membership is subject to reelection every two years. The respective presidents are elected every four years in the case of the U.S., but every five years in the case of the ROK. In both countries the judges in the high courts, including the Supreme Court Justices, are appointed rather than elected by the voters. Electoral democracy is one thing, but constitutional democracy is expected to follow the principles of "the rule of law" instead of "the rule by men." The latter principle was the norm of politics in South Korea throughout its authoritarian era in the past years. The "rule of law" standard will make democratic governance both possible and desirable.

In democracy "all politics are local" and the United States and South Korea are no exception. The issue definition and articulation of renewed public policies for democracy are

undertaken through periodic elections by the respective government leadership following electoral contests and outcome of national presidential and parliamentary elections.

The 17th National Assembly election was held on April 15, 2004, to choose the members of a 299 member unicameral parliament, whereas the forthcoming 2004 U.S. elections will choose both a new president to serve a four-year term and the members of the U.S. Congress for the entire 435 seats in the House of Representatives for two-year terms, and one third of the 100 seats in the Senate to serve six year terms.

The 2004 general election for South Korea was already held on April 15, whereas the 2004 U.S. Presidential and Congressional elections are yet to take place on November 2. For this reason this article will offer more analysis of the electoral outcomes of South Korea, and less on the U.S. national election. An analysis of the on-going U.S. presidential campaigns, between the incumbent President George W. Bush of the GOP John Kerry of the Democratic Party from Massachusetts, is a matter of speculation at the time of this writing.

A. The April 15, 2004 National Assembly Election: An Analysis²

The legislative dominance of the Uri Party (Our Open Party for Participation), established through its dramatic electoral victory on April 15, 2004, helped to restore political stability for the remainder of Roh's five-year term in office, to end February 25, 2008. The electoral returns, as shown below, indicate the major historical realignment that will shape the political landscape of South Korea's Sixth Republic in the next four years.

The 17th National Assembly election was remarkable because, unlike some other preceding general elections, there was no major disagreement over wide-ranging campaign issues. Anti-Americanism, for instance, was not as much a campaign issue in the April 2004 parliamentary election as it was so during the December 2002 presidential election. The same was true for the issue of the North Korean nuclear standoff during the April 2004 election.

Candidates and political parties were held hostage by a single agenda item—the recent impeachment of President Roh by the outgoing National Assembly. The opposition parties were hamstrung and handicapped in their campaigns by a voter backlash against impeachment that delivered a bonanza of votes to Uri Party candidates. The Roh administration's crucial policy failures, such

as the lowest economic growth rate, ineptness of presidential leadership, and a campaign funds scandal involving presidential aides, did not appear to have affected voters who supported the Uri Party that Roh had endorsed.

A decisive Uri Party victory in the general election, capturing 152 seats in the 299-seat National Assembly, followed by 121 seats by the Grand National Party (GNP) and a meager 9 seats by the Millennium Democratic Party (MDP), was far better than pollsters had predicted on the eve of the presidential impeachment voting on March 12. Only three other groups; the Democratic Labor Party (DLP) (10 seats), the United Liberal Democrats (ULD) (4 seats), and Independents/Others (3 seats) were successful in placing candidates.³ This helped an embattled President Roh Moo-Hyun, who was humiliated by an opposition-dominated National Assembly to vindicate his cause. Roh's hands before the Constitutional Court were also strengthened in his successful effort to win back his presidency. On May 14, the Constitutional Court gave its verdict by rejecting the National Assembly impeachment and restoring the presidency to Roh Moo Hyun.

Neither of the opposition parties, the GNP or the MDP, returned as the majority party in parliament. The GNP had 137 and the MDP 61 seats in the outgoing legislature; the Uri Party only 49 seats. This will mean that a change in the status-quo will be accelerated in South Korea's political landscape--a movement away from old politics toward new politics, overcoming "regionalism and bossism" in party politics. The era of "Three Kims" in Korean politics was declared over officially with the victory of Roh Moo-Hyun in the December 2002 presidential election.

It is no coincidence that the Uri Party broke away from the ruling MDP and stands for the party of "openness and participation" at the grass-roots. Roh was the MDP standard bearer in the December 2002 presidential election, but he quit the party to endorse the progressive splinter faction, that launched the new Uri Party only six months before the general election of April 2004. Roh now has the pro-government Uri Party on his side, and it commands a simple majority in the unicameral legislature. In supporting progressive social legislation the Uri Party will be enjoined by the DLP, which has emerged as the third-ranking party in parliament.

The U.S. Presidential Election Campaigns and the Korean Security Issues

The U.S. presidential election campaign is heating up on the security issues, not surprisingly, on the eve of the November 2 election. The Democratic presumptive nominee, John Kerry, on June 2, accused the Bush administration of ignoring the threat of terrorists' using nuclear weapons. In a major address at West Palm Beach, billed as a "New Strategies for New Threats," Kerry pledged to appoint a coordinator to round up the Weapons of Mass Destruction and to boost U.S. efforts to cut off the supply of nuclear materials, if elected. "We know how to reduce this threat. We know how to achieve this goal. And with the right leadership, we can achieve it quickly," he contended, adding that "We have done too little, often too late, and we have even cut back on our efforts or turned away from the greatest threat that we face in this world today—a terrorist armed with nuclear weapons." Kerry further proposed stopping the production of new weapons-grade uranium and plutonium, reducing current stocks of nuclear weapons and cutting off Pentagon plans to develop new, low-yield nuclear weapons. "We also don't need a world with more usable nuclear weapons," he continued. "We need a world where terrorists can never find one, make one or use one."⁴

Kerry's speech referred to "the dark day in September" and the possibility of a "looming mushroom cloud on the horizon," echoing the rhetoric often used by Bush administration officials in the months before the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. Kerry said, correctly, that the war in Iraq has distracted the United States from two greater nuclear threats: North Korea and Iran, the other two charter members of Bush's "an axis of evil" in his 2002 State of the Union address. Kerry called the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran "unacceptable" and said the Bush administration is "negotiating over the shape of the table" with North Korea while that nation continues to build atomic bombs it could sell to terrorists." He said the United States should continue Six-Party talks with Pyongyang's neighbors, "but we must also be prepared to talk directly with North Korea," adding that "this problem is too urgent to allow China or others at the table to speak for U.S."⁵

There was no immediate reaction from President Bush to the Kerry speech of June 2. The Bush campaign said all along that the administration was exerting pressures on North Korea and Iran through U.S. allies in Europe and allies and friends in Asia. Republican Representative Porter Goss of Florida, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee and the nominee chosen by Bush to

replace George Tenet as CIA head, was quoted as calling Kerry's speech a "belated, me-too approach" and added: "I also think it's unrealistic and dangerously naïve to assume that we're going to get all the nukes in a lockbox somehow...I don't think that's going to happen anytime soon. The effort is worthwhile, but I don't think you're ever going to get 100 percent."⁶

B. Why Is the U.S.-Korea Alliance in Trouble? Three Issues

To answer the question of "Why the ROK-U.S. alliance is in trouble," it is necessary to clarify, first, what military alliance entails as a foreign policy tool and, second, how the alliance is addressing each of the three on-going conflict issues which affect bilateral relations.

A military alliance, according to Glenn Snyder (1997), is a formal association of states for the use (or non-use) of military force against other specified states.⁷ Its aim is to increase the military capabilities of allies at a time of peace and war because alliances are typically against, not for, some country. The concept of an alliance in modern times has acquired a life of its own, as demonstrated by NATO expansion and the EU enlargement. In this sense, some would argue that alliance should not be a goal per se but only a strategy. Such a view is reflected in the axiom of Lord Palmerston (1848) that "states should have 'no eternal allies or perpetual enemies' only lasting interests should guide policy actions."

Alliance-making, admittedly, is controversial with pro and con views on costs and benefits.⁸ Alliance costs are high because an alliance (a) reduces future freedom of action; b) raises the risk of entanglement; and, c) also enhances the risks of entrapments and abandonment. Alliance benefits, on the other hand, are also high because: a) an alliance is more economic, i.e., sharing of defense burden, while arming is generally expensive; b) it enhances security via deterrence and defense (in case deterrence fails); and, c) it prevents the member from allying with an adversary (that is known as preclusion rule).

It is possible that the new governing leadership and its followers are yet to examine seriously the fundamental objectives and rationale of the US-ROK alliance and the appropriate role that alliance plays in the conduct of war and peace as a strategy of statecraft and diplomacy. The lack of strategic vision on the art of statecraft in foreign relations and diplomacy regarding the use of power and balance of power seems to underscore the basis dilemma

faced by the leadership of the Roh Moon-Hyun Administration in Seoul.

Power is the essence of international politics embodied in the ability to achieve one's purposes or goals. Power is often equated with the possession of certain resources or the ability to get others to do what they otherwise would not do (Robert Dahl). Recently, Joseph Nye has argued that power has two dimensions or types: hard power, like military troops, and soft power, translated as the ability to lead.⁹ Power typically requires sticks (threats) and carrots (inducements). Thus conceived, the balance of power is identified as "a constant rule of prudent politics" (David Hume) in diplomacy. It is a measure intended to prevent war by distributing power among many states. Its assumptions, to be successful as a tool of statecraft, are: 1) efficacy of (mutual) deterrence; 2) an equilibrium needed to prevent war; 3) power, not good will, which counts most in diplomacy, and 4) a decentralized way of managing power.

The golden rules of balance of the power, as a policy, consists of the following measures: 1) oppose the increase in power by any country; 2) ally with the weaker side; 3) remember that no alliance is permanent; 4) show moderation toward the defeated; 5) avoid petty quarrels; and, 6) realize that the actors must have shared values. The United States and South Korea, as alliance partners, may or may not have met some of these "requirements of prudent politics" of a balance of power that underscore the security alliance. Manifestation of the rule of prudent politics of diplomacy may or may not be shown in each of the following three conflict issues and cases of bilateral ties and relations between Seoul and Washington.

a) Anti-Americanism in South Korea: Nature and Characteristics

First, what are the origins, nature and characteristics of anti-Americanism in South Korea today? During the 2004 electoral campaigns anti-Americanism did not seem to have played as major a role as in the 2002 presidential election campaigns. However, the rising wave of anti-Americanism did play a decisive role in influencing the electoral process in the 2002 presidential campaigns.

In December 2002 candidate, Roh Moo Hyun, a self-educated former human rights lawyer, emerged from relative obscurity to defeat establishment candidates in both the primary and general elections. Roh captured 48.9% of the vote to his conservative opponent Lee Hoi Chang's 46.6%, after campaigning

on a platform of reforming Korean politics, economic policymaking, and US-ROK relations.

The 2002 election was notable for three inter-related factors. First, Roh was favored by voters under the age of 45, who emerged during the election as anti-status quo forces. Second, Roh's victory was due in part to his criticisms of the United States, and candidate Roh benefited from the massive demonstrations in late 2002, protesting the acquittal of two U.S. servicemen, who were operating a military vehicle when it killed two Korean schoolgirls. Third, thriving civil society groups exerted a significant influence in determining South Korea's political outcomes.¹⁰

Prior to assuming the presidency, Roh's only previous government experience had been an eight-month term as Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries in 2000 and 2001, and two terms as a lawmaker in the National Assembly, from 1988-1992 and 1998-2000. The origins of the recent anti-Americanism in South Korean politics are traceable to two sources: first, a reflection of the 2002 national election outcome in South Korea, and, second, alternative perceptions of North-South Korean relations, involving both the policy issues of the US-ROK security alliance and the US-DPRK nuclear standoff which has brought about the Six-Party Beijing talks.

There is no clear definition of anti-Americanism in South Korea, and anti-Americanism can mean many things to many people. One study characterizes Korean anti-Americanism mainly as "emotional" rather than a radical "ideological" or "militant" type of anti-Americanism that rejects American values and ideals.¹¹ Many scholars have also identified the current phase of anti-Americanism in South Korea as associated primarily with the progress of the democracy movement and democratization in South Korean politics. Recent anti-American activities in South Korea, as shown by the protests and the candle-light vigils to mourn the accidental deaths of the two school girls, for instance, were centered on the perceived hypocrisy and double standard of the United States and its failure to act according to its ideals of democracy, human rights, and legal justice.¹²

This explains why anti-Americanism in South Korea was most active and widespread, not only among the young people but also among the various interest groups in the civil society on the eve of the December 2002 presidential election. The tide of anti-Americanism in South Korea was already present, associated with the democratization movement in the past as evidenced during the

Kwangju uprising, the United States was blamed by student activists and intellectuals as being responsible for sabotaging the democratization movement in the 1980s. Recent anti-Americanism in 2002-03, not surprisingly, can be seen as a manifestation of the youth generational phenomenon, the generation that did not experience the Korean War but who cherish with heightened self-pride the nationalism of the Korean people.

b) Reconfiguring of US-ROK Alliance

In terms of a second point of conflict issues between the U.S. and South Korea, Seoul must realize and come to grips with the reconfiguration of the ROK-U.S. alliance as part of the new U.S. global security strategy. Alliance-making is more than an act of coalition-building. Not surprisingly, the U.S. has informed South Korea that 12,500 U.S. troops, one third of its 37,000 troops stationed in the Korean peninsula along the DMZ, will be withdrawn by the end of 2005. The bomb shell of this troop withdrawal plan was announced during the ninth US-ROK Future of the Alliance Talks (FOTA) in Seoul early in June. It will be the first such troop cut on the Korean Peninsula since the early 1990s.

This dramatic announcement followed an earlier agreement by the two allies to remove 7,000 U.S. troops from Korea, so that they could be dispatched to Iraq. This figure, however, will be incorporated into the total reduction figure of 12,500 U.S. troops just announced. The pending issue of particular concern in the US-ROK alliance pertains to a reconfiguration of the U.S. force deployment, as part of the U.S. Global Position Review (GPR). At a recent meeting of the 9th FOTA in Seoul, the U.S. chose to present a strategic concept of USFK instead of addressing any specific reduction scales and related issues, such as burden-sharing and a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) revision, the primary concern of the ROK side in negotiation.

This U.S. position was reaffirmed by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld during his meeting with his Korean counterpart, Cho Young-kil, while attending the third Asian Security Conference in Singapore on June 19. Rumsfeld made it clear that the alliance between Korea and the U.S. has reached a critical juncture and the reorganization of U.S. forces stationed in Korea, in accordance with the U.S. GPR, was inevitable. He stressed the need to manage rapid mobilization forces in the 21st century, instead of maintaining fixed forces in a certain area. He added that the two countries would strengthen a future-oriented alliance in line with the new security

environment and status of Korea. He used the occasion to thank Seoul for its decision to fulfill the Iraq troop commitment despite various difficulties, while asking Korea to cooperate with the U.S. in relocating the Yongsan base as soon as possible.¹³

Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon, during a regular press conference on June 20, said that there was no need to amend the Korea-U.S. mutual defense pact because of the USFK redeployments. Noting that “USFK’s primary and intrinsic mission is to maintain peace and security on the Korean peninsula,” Ban stated that concrete projects such as the move of the U.S. Yongsan Garrison and the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division would take place through close consultation between the two sides. He added that the costs of moving the U.S. bases could be solved only by composing a base transfer agreement and then estimating concrete needs based on that agreement while coming up with a “master plan.”¹⁴

For his part, ROK President Roh Moon-Hyun proposed a new security roadmap to enhance “independent defense capability” while maintaining ties with the U.S., so that the ROK would not be swayed by major international powers. In a Memorial Day speech, Roh stated, “We are not a country in a remote region being swayed by (super-power) politics. It is needless to say that we should have the power to defend ourselves, given our status and role.”¹⁵ Roh’s statement could be seen as a reaction to the just-announced U.S. withdrawal of 12,500 troops from South Korea as part of the GPR troop realignment.

c) The U.S. DPRK Nuclear Standoff and the Six-Party Beijing Talks

The third point of conflict has to do with an analysis and evaluation of the latest round of Six-Party Talks on North Korea’s nuclear standoff.

The most recent multilateral negotiation on North Korea’s nuclear standoff, hosted by China in Beijing, involved the U.S., North Korea, South Korea, Japan, and Russia. They had failed to produce any breakthrough in the preceding three sessions so far in bridging the gap between the U.S. position on CVID (Comprehensive, verifiable, irreversible dismantlement) and the DPRK demand for concessions in return for a freeze on its nuclear program.

Unlike the preceding two rounds of Beijing talks, the first in August 2003 and the second in February 2004, the third Six-Party talks on June 22-26 had narrowed the gap between the American

and North Korean positions on the conditions for a nuclear settlement. In the opening third session of the Six-Party talks on June 23, North Korea's chief delegate, Kim Gye-gwan, stated that the DPRK was willing to give up efforts to develop nuclear weapons "in a transparent way" if the U.S. ended its "hostile policy" toward the DPRK. If the United States withdrew its demand for a complete and irreversible dismantling of the program and accepted our compensation demands, we are prepared to submit specific proposals concerning freezing the nuclear program at these talks in order to break the current stalemate and to reinvigorate the Six-Party talks," Kim said.¹⁶

U.S. chief delegate James Kelly said in his opening statement that "We are prepared for a serious discussion and we have a proposal to offer." He added, without giving any details, that "a focus on the common objective, and a practical and effective means to attain it, will lead in a very positive direction with new political, economic and diplomatic possibilities." According to David Sanger of the New York Times, U.S. negotiators would offer the DPRK new but "highly conditional" incentives to give up its nuclear weapons at the talks, including a provisional U.S. guarantee not to invade. The newspaper quoted U.S. officials as saying President Bush had authorized negotiators to offer the incentives in what would be the first significant, detailed overture to the DPRK since he took office in January 2001. Under the proposal, aid would begin flowing to North Korea once its leader, Kim Jong-Il, had made a commitment to dismantle his plutonium and uranium weapons.¹⁷

The Bush administration was deeply divided on what stance to take towards North Korea, with the State Department reportedly urging dialogue and the Pentagon and the vice-president's office urging caution (if not outright hostility) towards Pyongyang. Washington had seized upon the Six-Party formula, however, as a way of maintaining dialogue without having to hold direct bilateral talks with the North Koreans. The latest third round of Six-Party talks was noteworthy for a significant "re-packaging" of the Bush administration's proposals. The new plan involved "immediate rewards" for North Korea in the form of heavy fuel oil imported from South Korea, if it agreed to dismantle its nuclear weapons program. This plan could be interpreted as a way to test North Korea's true and serious intentions on denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. It also reflected the pressure Washington was

experiencing from Japan and South Korea to show greater flexibility toward Pyongyang.¹⁸

Pyongyang's threat of a possible nuclear test, repeated during face-to-face talks with the U.S. delegation, overshadowed the latest round of Six-Party talks. North Korea took a more upbeat and self-assured assessment of its stance, however, when its Foreign Ministry spokesman stated, on June 28, that its delegation had held exhaustive negotiations with the U.S. side, for nearly two-and-half-hours on the sidelines of the Six-Party talks. During that time North Korea claimed to have clarified details concerning the nuclear freeze, on the premise that the U.S. would withdraw its demand for CVID.¹⁹ It also claimed that an agreement was reached on such issues as "taking simultaneous actions" on the principle of "words for words" and "action for action" by insisting that the so-called issue of "reward for freeze" was "positive progress" made at the talks.

If the DPRK's proposal for "reward for freeze" is accepted, Pyongyang reiterated that it would "freeze all the facilities related to nuclear weapons and products" churned out by their operation. This freeze would then lead to the ultimate dismantlement of the nuclear weapons program, because they would not only refrain from producing more nuclear weapons but also from transferring and testing them. "Reward for freeze" should include, as Pyongyang insists, not only the U.S. commitment to lifting sanctions and the blockade against the DPRK but also the energy assistance of 2,000,000 kw through the supply of heavy oil and electricity.²⁰ This is exactly the same amount of energy that would have been supplied by the KEDO project, which suspended its construction of two light-water reactors as part of the 1994 Geneva Agreed Framework.

As the third round of multilateral talks ended inconclusively, the PRC's Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi issued an eight-point Chairman's Statement and told reporters that progress was being made, even if a "serious lack of mutual trust" still existed among participants. The Associated Press reported that the Bush administration was giving the DPRK at least a passing grade in negotiations to halt its nuclear weapons program and suggested the slow-moving talks to denuclearize the Korean peninsula might be making headway.²¹

During the third session of the Six-Party Talks in late June, the U.S. reiterated its policy stance on CVID but also outlined "five corresponding measures" in return for a nuclear freeze by the

DPRK. This amounted to a package deal of proposals by both Washington and Pyongyang. The U.S. offer included, according to Seoul's Foreign Ministry Web site: (1) heavy oil; (2) a provisional security guarantee; (3) longer-term energy aid; (4) direct talks about the lifting of economic sanctions and removing the DPRK from its list of terrorist states; and, (5) retraining of nuclear scientists during a three-month "preparatory period" of dismantlement.²²

The "bi-multi-lateral" approach to diplomacy toward North Korea, which the Six-Party Talks on North Korea's nuclear standoff epitomizes, is neither right nor wrong as a peace strategy. During the first act of the North Korean nuclear standoff in 1992-94, the U.S. and the DPRK chose to defuse the nuclear crisis via face-to-face talks in Geneva through bilateral diplomacy. During the second act of the current nuclear standoff, which began in October 2002, the U.S. chose to confront the DPRK within the multilateral forum of the Six-Party talks involving other regional powers: South Korea, Japan, China, and Russia. All these bilateral or multilateral frameworks for diplomatic negotiation and bargaining are nothing more than diplomatic tools, and means to the end of a political settlement. So long as "there is the will, there will be the way" to be found in the quid-pro-quo settlement of the nuclear standoff.

The 2 + 4 formula, which the Six-Party Beijing talks symbolize, is regarded by the Bush administration as more conducive to making the multilateral negotiation process with the DPRK flexible and credible, although the venue of bilateral diplomacy cannot be completely ruled out, whether within or outside the multilateral diplomatic forum in Beijing. By virtue of agreeing to host the Six-Party talks, China has become more than an equal partner. It has assumed a greater role as intermediary or third party in fulfilling a diplomatic settlement between the DPRK and other participants of the U.S., South Korea, Japan, and Russia.

On July 2, 2004, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell held talks with the North Korean Foreign Minister, Paek Nam-sun, in Indonesia for about 20 minutes on the sidelines of an ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum) meeting, the U.S. State Department spokesman termed this Powell-Paek talk a "conversation." Powell told the press that the two sides had used the opportunity to reaffirm their positions. "These are difficult negotiations, it just doesn't happen overnight. There's a great deal of mistrust between the United States and North Korea," he said.²³ He was also quoted as reconfirming that "the U.S. has no intention to attack North Korea"

and delivering President Bush's word: "It is possible to cooperate with each other in important areas even if ideologies and political systems are different."

A statement released shortly afterwards by North Korea seemed equally cautious. "If the United States is of the position to improve the bilateral relations, the DPRK also will not regard the U.S. as a permanent enemy," the statement quoted Paek as saying.²⁴ Despite this upbeat claim by Pyongyang, it is clear that the North Koreans are "waiting for the outcome of November's U.S. elections, with an expectation that a new president might bring about a situation advantageous to them.

C. Uncertainty of the U.S. Election Outcome and Diplomatic Moves following the Six-Party Talks in Beijing

There are troubling signs that the U.S. Korea alliance is continuing to be as shaky as ever. The question is why? What can be done about this sorry state of alliance relations?

The U.S.-Korea security alliance has been weakened since 2002 as a result of the rise of anti-Americanism. Unless and until alliance partners are willing and ready to repair the damage through constant caring and nurturing of alliance ties, the alliance will die sooner or later. That is the danger and the challenge confronting the leadership in both Seoul and Washington. As a way of renewing their commitment to the alliance, especially in dealing with the Iraq War situation, U.S. and ROK leaders are evoking expressions of coalition and coalition-building or partnership.

Yet, "alliance without allies" makes little sense because the term alliance is defined as a "formal agreement between two or more countries to protect each others' security interests at the time of an outside threat or an invasion." Alliance with anti-Americanism, in place of pro-Americanism, sounds not only illogical but also non-sensical. This raises the fundamental question of what is, or is not, an alliance. Why do nations enter into military and security alliances?

Crucial to the future U.S.-Korea security alliance will be the nature of North-South Korea relations. Is there any correlation between anti-U.S. sentiment and pro-North Korean sentiment? Does the rise of anti-American sentiment in South Korea, for instance, increase the chances for North Korea's success in driving a wedge between the United States and South Korea, thereby undermining the security alliance? The answer to this question is

uncertain, but the attitude of the Korean people is changing, especially on the part of younger Koreans.

The target of the military alliance must be clearly identified if the US-ROK alliance is to be kept intact in the years ahead. The main enemy of the alliance has been identified by the ROK as the DPRK, north of the demilitarized zone that bisects the Korean peninsula. A recent survey showed, however, that the Korean people's anti-communism has decreased and anti-Americanism has notably increased. In 2004, Research & Research and Gallup Korea carried out a survey to find out which country was perceived to be the enemy of Korea. According to this survey, those from their 20s to their 40s picked the U.S. (57.9 percent in their 20s, 46.8 percent in their 30s and 32.3 percent in their 40s) as Korea's biggest enemy, although people over 50 said North Korea (52.5 percent) was the key opponent.²⁵

The ruling Uri Party is seeking to revise the National Security Law to exclude the DPRK from the list of anti-state organizations, a move expected to create a stir in the entire South Korean political sphere. The existing law designates the DPRK as an anti-state group, but the move coincides with the ROK Defense Ministry consideration of an effort to stop labeling North Korea as the "main enemy" in its White Papers. Instead, the Paper this year will reportedly use milder terms, such as "military threat" or "main threat." Some party officials argue that the law should be scrapped rather than revised, and Uri Party Chairman Shin Ki-nam is quoted as stating "South Korea no longer needs the anti-communist law, which was introduced more than half a century ago to guard against the threat from North Korea."²⁶

As the Roh Moo-Hyun administration pledges greater self-reliance in national defense, ROK-U.S. relations will continue to weaken, and distrust between Seoul and Washington will continue to deepen. As a result, the-called "blood-tie" alliance between the ROK and the U.S., which has been the catch phrase in the past, is being cast away. The ROK government, according the Japanese press report, is taking precautions against a possible change in the U.S.-Korea relationship when the U.S. announced it would sharply reduce the amount of U.S. forces stationed in Korea.²⁷

The newly-appointed Unification Minister, Chung Dong-yung, who was an ex-Uri Party chairman and campaign manger during the 17th National Assembly election in April, was to meet his counterpart from Pyongyang during the inter-Korean cabinet-level

talks scheduled August 3, 2004 in Seoul. Whether a new policy initiative toward North Korea on inter-Korean relations will come up in the days ahead is not clear. What seems clear is that the Roh Moo-Hyun administration policy on North Korea will impact the future status of Seoul's relations with Washington on the security matters including the Six-Party talks on North Korea's nuclear standoff.

On the eve of the U.S. Presidential election on November 2, there are flurries of diplomatic activity in Northeast Asia that will impact future relations between North Korea and other countries in the region. The DPRK has asked the PRC to provide fuel for military purposes, according to a Japanese news agency quoting military sources familiar with bilateral relations, but Beijing has spurned the requests out of fear that the fuel could be used for missile and nuclear development.²⁸ Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov visited Seoul and Pyongyang in June and reportedly discussed the possibility of piping natural gas from deposits off Sakhalin island through the DPRK to the ROK. The project would cost about \$5 billion and take four years to implement once an international consensus was reached. This would be part of a compensation package in return for scrapping its nuclear program.²⁹ Under this proposal Pyongyang would be able to tap the pipeline at a subsidized price to ease its serious energy shortage, while Seoul would gain direct access to gas at market rates.

In the DPRK, according to one source, 72 percent of its energy was coal-based, 16 percent water-based and only 7 percent oil-based in 2000.³⁰ The DPRK dependency on oil imports dropped drastically after the collapse of communist bloc countries and especially the on-set of the current nuclear standoff in October 2002, which led to the suspension of the KEDO delivery of heavy oils to North Korea.

Another consideration to be kept in mind is that trade between the DPRK and the ROK jumped 21 percent to \$325 million in the first six months of 2004, from \$269 million in the same period in 2003. This change was attributed to an increase in commercial trade between the two Koreas as well as ROK aid shipments to the impoverished DPRK. One-fourth of the 400,000 tons of rice South Korea committed itself to loan North Korea in June is expected to be sent, via overland routes in the eastern and western sections of the heavily fortified border, at a date to be fixed

later.³¹ Clearly, South Korea's Roh Moo-Hyun administration is committed to promoting inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation.

The DPRK insists that the reduction and redeployment of U.S. forces in the ROK are targeted not only against them but also aimed at restraining the PRC and Russia. The *Rodong Shinmun*, the official organ of the North Korean Workers' Party, said on July 15 in a commentary, "The U.S. troop reduction and relocation are an attempt to suppress our country (the DPRK) and restrain its neighboring countries."³²

The U.S. army is reported to have developed a missile capable of destroying the DPRK's suspected underground facilities of nuclear weapons, according to a U.S. defense weekly. This will be deployed with U.S. forces stationed in the ROK. The new missile, upgraded in its penetration ability to detonate hidden targets better, is clearly designed to target the DPRK's possible hidden nuclear weapons and facilities. Quoting U.S. Department of Defense officials, the U.S. forces serving in the ROK will be the first to be equipped with six of these missiles, when its development program ends in a year.³³ Pyongyang is clearly aware of the fact that time is running out and its options are rapidly dwindling on the diplomatic front. At the same time it is losing the opportunity for a peaceful settlement of the nuclear standoff with the United States.

Despite the latest positive developments in nuclear negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang, the likelihood of settling the US-DPRK nuclear standoff is not promising, perhaps not until after the U.S. Presidential election on November 2. The U.S. chief negotiator, Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly, appeared before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee on July 15, and noted that the DPRK had acknowledged during the recent third round of the multilateral nuclear talks in Beijing that most of its nuclear programs was "weapons related." While they said they wanted to maintain a civil nuclear program, they also acknowledged that most of their nuclear program remained weapons related. The DPRK has refrained from stating publicly that it has nuclear weapons, although it speaks of an existing 'nuclear deterrent.'³⁴

D. Future Prospects and Conclusions

U.S. presidential election politics has entered a critical stage. The national party conventions energized the American voters to show their support for the presidential candidate of their respective political party.

The on-going U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have become hot campaign issues, and, depending on how the war on the insurgency forces in each country is carried out, the potential for the U.S.'s opting for a war against the reclusive North Korea under its leader Kim Jong-Il will be affected. In a remarkable turn around, the Bush administration adopted an entirely different negotiating policy toward North Korea's Kim Jong-Il regime, which President Bush earlier called an axis of evil country. It is doubtful, however, that George W. Bush has given up his view of Kim's North Korea as a charter member of that axis of evil.

On July 12 President George W. Bush once again urged the DPRK and Iran to abandon the development of nuclear weapons. In his speech at the Oak Ridge National Nuclear laboratory in Tennessee, where nuclear weapons from Libya are stored, Bush said: "We're working with responsible governments and international institutions to convince the leaders of North Korea and Iran that their nuclear weapons ambitions are deeply contrary to their own national interests." Bush continued, "Three years ago, a private weapons proliferation network was doing business around the world. This network operated by the Pakistani nuclear scientist, A. Q. Khan, was selling nuclear plans and equipment to the highest bidder, and found willing buyers in places like Libya, Iran, and North Korea," insisting, "We have ended one of the most dangerous sources of proliferation in the world, and the American people are safer."³⁵

According to a former U.S. special envoy for the DPRK (Charles Pritchard, who was appointed by the Clinton Administration but resigned from the Bush Administration in late 2003), there was little likelihood of Pyongyang working for meaningful progress before the U.S. presidential election on November 2. "Other than talks for the sake of talks [the Six-Party talks] produced an environment in which North Korea, in my opinion, will not, cannot, test a nuclear weapon." Pritchard told a private conference of financial investors in Seoul on May 20, that testing a bomb or missiles would upset what the North sees as a favorable situation in Six-Party talks.³⁶ Whether the DPRK will forego the atomic testing, however, will remain to be seen; it all depends on how the subsequent sessions of the Six-Party talks will proceed from Pyongyang's perspective. One cannot rule out the possibility of "election surprises" on the eve of the U.S. presidential

election. Kim Jong Il might be tempted to escalate the conflict by testing nuclear devices in a timely way.

“If Bush wins another term, I foresee that there is likely to be a tightening of the noose on North Korea, economically and diplomatically” according to Pritchard, who is sharply critical of the Bush administration for engaging in an “informing, rather than consulting, process” with its allies, while trying to resolve the nuclear crisis. Pritchard was basically supportive of the Bill Clinton Administration’s North Korean policy initiative, such as the 1994 Geneva Agreed Framework that outlined by the 1999 William Perry Report on North Korea.

“If John Kerry wins the election, what you’ll see is not a change in goal, but how it goes about this, with more sharing of information with allies and a bilateral dialogue,” Pritchard said. “We are now 18 months into the crisis, the Bush administration has been steadfast in its refusal to meet with the North Koreans in a bilateral forum and in the 18 months, what do they have to show for it? They have a de facto nuclear North Korea, which may have up to eight nuclear weapons,” he said.³⁷

Whereas the Democratic Party (both for Clinton and for Kerry) seems to prefer an approach of US-DPRK bilateral and direct talks, the position that Pyongyang prefers, the GOP seems more in favor of the multilateral approach (that is, the Six-Party talks in Beijing) to address the North Korean nuclear standoff. If bilateral and direct talks are deemed necessary, the Bush administration prefers to do so within the multilateral framework.

Finally, we need to acquire a broader picture of the institutional role of electoral politics in a democracy to see how the U.S. presidential election will affect the future of the U.S.-ROK alliance as well as Korea’s “uncertain security future” beyond the multilateral diplomatic framework. The domestic political reality of a constitutional democracy, like the United States and Korea’s Sixth Republic, is such that new leaders are selected periodically through popular elections in accordance with the institutional rule of electoral politics. This epitomizes “the zero-sum” gaming and the winner-takes-all principle. If the incumbent President, George W. Bush, is not reelected on November 2, all the talk about changes of foreign and security policies laid out by the administration vis-à-vis the ROK and the DPRK will become a moot question.

If John Kerry is elected in November, plans to cut the U.S. forces could be called off or postponed. Kerry is said to be opposed

to plans to reduce American forces stationed abroad, according to the Kerry camp. Instead, he is said to have a plan calling on U.S. allies to reinforce their military strength, which would allow U.S. forces to move, whether from Germany to East Europe or South Korea away from the DMZ. Kerry is said to favor first pulling American troops out of the vicinity of the DMZ, where fire power is concentrated, and seeking an eventually unified Korea, even though he thinks that won’t happen in the near future. “Making statements about that right now would not be a prudent thing to do,” Kerry’s national security spokesman Mark Kitchens is quoted as saying, when asked about Kerry’s plans “You never know what the situation will be.”³⁸ As the presidential campaign progresses, further statements and clarifications on Kerry’s stance on U.S. force redeployment are likely to follow.

In closing, it is clear that both Bush of the Republican Party and Kerry will push for the dismantling of the DPRK’s nuclear program. They are likely to differ sharply, however, in their strategies and approaches to the diplomatic resolution of the nuclear standoff. Kerry said publicly on August 2, that he would negotiate with the DPRK directly to end the North Korean nuclear program, if he takes office. He stated, citing a policy report entitled “Our Plan for the U.S.,” that “The North Korean nuclear crisis became more serious while the George W. Bush administration concentrated on Iraq, and it was reported that North Korea produced enough new materials to make six to nine nuclear bombs.” He also added “I’ll try to come to a comprehensive agreement to end the North Korean nuclear program completely, irrevocably, and verifiably.” As for the US-ROK relationship, he said, “I’ll actively work for a better relationship to advance cooperation with the South, a historical ally in the matter of economy and security”³⁹

From the larger perspective of defending America’s national interest, despite their difference in their approaches, they both seem to agree on the substantive point that the United States would be better off seeking a peaceful diplomatic settlement of this tangled and complicated nuclear standoff through a bi-multilateral forum, if necessary, such as the on-going Six-Party talks on North Korea’s nuclear standoff.

Endnotes

¹See, for instance, Planned Commemorative Events activities for each year

(2000 through 2003) by the 50th Anniversary of the Korean War Commemoration Committee, U.S. Department of Defense, 2000.

² For an analysis of South Korean electoral politics, including the latest 17th general election, see Young Whan Kihl, *Transforming Korean Politics: Democracy, Reform, and Culture*. (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe), 2004, especially “Transforming Electoral Politics through Presidential Impeachment: An Epilogue” and Postscript, pp. 343-351.

³ The Democratic Labor Party (DLP) has emerged as the third largest voting bloc within parliament, ahead of both the MDP and the ULD, by virtue of its capturing enough nation-wide support to win eight at-large delegates, even if it was successful in winning only two electoral districts. The DLP chairman, Kwon Young-ghil, was elected this time from an industrial district of Changwon City instead of the Ulsan City district as he did four years ago. Along with two independents Chung Mong-joon was elected as a member of National Unity 21, the political party that he himself founded.

⁴ “Kerry Warns of Nuclear Terrorism.” *CNN.com*, June 2, 2004.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Glenn Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

⁸ As for discussions on the cost and benefits of alliance-making in world politics, see *Ibid.*; Charles W. Kegley, Jr. and Gregory Raymond, *A Multipolar Peace? Great Power Politics in the Twenty-first Century*. (New York: St. Martin’s, 1994), 89-120. As for an application of the balance of power theory on alliance and alignment, as related to the United States relations with Japan and Korea, see Victor D. Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The U.S.-Korea-Japan Security Triangle*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

⁹ See Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Bound to Lead* (1990) and *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (2004).

¹⁰ Mark E. Manyin, *South Korean Politics and Rising “Anti-Americanism”: Implications for U.S. Policy Toward North Korea* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, May 6, 2003), 8-10.

¹¹ Kim, Jin-wung, “The Nature of South Korean Anti-Americanism,” *Korea Journal* (Spring 1994).

¹² Bong, Hongshik, “Anti-Americanism and the U.S.-Korea Military Alliance,” *Confrontation and Innovation on the Korean Peninsula*, (Washington, D.C.: Korea Economic Institute, 2003), 20.

¹³ The *Chosun Ilbo*, “Korea-U.S. Alliance at Critical Juncture: Rumsfeld,” *Digital Chosun* June 20, 2004.

¹⁴ “FM Says No Need to Amend Korea-U.S. Mutual Defense Pact,” *Chosun Ilbo*, *Chosun.com*, June 20, 2004.

¹⁵ “ROK Leader Moots New Security Roadmap,” *Agence France-Press*, June 6, 2004.

¹⁶ The Associated Press, “Envoy: Pyongyang willing to give up nukes,” June 23, 2004.

¹⁷ David Sanger, “U.S. to Offer Incentives to Sway North Korea in Nuclear Talks,” *New York Times*, June 23, 2004, A-3.

¹⁸ Jonathan Marcus, “High stakes at North Korea talks,” *BBC News*, June 25, 2004.

¹⁹ Korean Central News Agency, “DPRK Foreign Ministry Spokesman on Six Party Talks,” June 28, 2004, as posted in NAPSNET Daily Report, June 29, 2004, p. 2.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ “State Department Credits North Korea with Constructive Negotiations,” *The Associated Press*, June 28, 2004.

²² “US Offers 5-Point Proposal to N. Korea,” *Korea Times*, July 13, 2004.

²³ “Powell confers with North Korean minister,” *CNN.com*, July 2, 2004.

²⁴ “Powell meets N Korean minister.” *BBC News*, July 2, 2004.

²⁵ “For Young Koreans, U.S. ‘Main Enemy.’” *Chosun.com*, June 30, 2004.

²⁶ “Uri to exclude North Korea from Anti-State List,” *Korea Times*, July 15, 2004.

²⁷ “Korea-U.S. Relations Drifting After Roh Pledges Self-Reliance.” *Dong-A Ilbo*, July 15, 2004.

²⁸ “N. Korea Asks China to Provide Fuel for Military Purposes.” *Kyodo News*, July 13, 2004.

²⁹ “‘Gas for Nukes’ Proposal gains momentum.” *Korea Times*, July 13, 2004.

³⁰ “N Korea’s Energy Supply Only 8 PCT of S Korea,” *Yonhap/Asia Pulse*, July 13, 2004.

³¹ “Seoul to Send 100,000 tons of Rice Aid Overland to N. Korea.” *Yonhap*, July 13, 2004.

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³³ “Defense News: U.S. Develops Missile Targeting North Korea’s Nuclear Facilities,” *Chosun Ilbo*, July 13, 2004.

³⁴ “North Korea said its Nuclear Programs are Weapons Related: US.” *Agence France-Presse*, July 15, 2004.

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