The Evolution in anti-Americanism in South Korea: From Ideologically Embedded to Socially Constructed

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1. Introduction

Why should policy-makers and academics continue to be concerned about anti-Americanism? America has been the major player since the end of the Cold War. With the vanishing of the power of the Soviet Union, there has been a power vacuum, which was filled by the U.S. unilaterally and which has been challenged by many countries who are envious and angry of the role the U.S. plays in the world. In particular, Asia has become a hot issue when it comes to U.S. foreign policy interests. Some scholars have predicted that China will going to try to “throw” the U.S. out of Asia (Friedberg 2000). This would be devastating for U.S. strategic, political, and economic interest. Anti-Americanism is an indicator that the U.S. position is losing power and support abroad. It also means that those countries, which try to fight the U.S., might gain support from groups that promote anti-Americanism. The result of this struggle could be destructive because it might create another power vacuum with no single country strong enough to fill in the gaps.

Anti-Americanism has been a phenomenon in many counties since the end of World War II. Surprisingly, during the Cold War period, those countries, which were heavily supported by the U.S. excessively, have been countries that showed the strongest anti-American sentiment (Hollander 1992). South Korea (hereafter Korea) was seen as the most pro-American country among the allies (Kim 1994: 36); however, this tendency has shifted to a strongly expressed anti-American sentiment during the 1980s and again during the late 1990s after the Korean economy collapsed.

The hypothesis of this paper is that there has been a shift of anti-Americanism from an ideologically embedded state to social construction. During the Cold War, anti-Americanism in Korea was mainly supported and vocalized by radical leftist student groups, whose roots could be found in the nationalist movement during the Japanese colonization. Although the Korean government and the bourgeoisie (those figures whose opinions were openly expressed) were pro-American, there have been groups (especially student groups) who criticized America and American influence since the establishment of political and military ties between the Korean and the American government. At first, Koreans were hopeful about American support in their attempts to democratise the country. These hopes were destroyed when it became obvious that the American government was supporting the dictatorships of Rhee Syngman and Park Chung-hee instead the more democratic government of Chang Myon.

With the end of the Cold War and the introduction of democracy, anti-American sentiments started to become more pronounced by the general public, more so after the collapse of the Korean economy in 1997. Due to the International
Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout, many Koreans began criticizing the Western world, especially the U.S., perceiving the help they received not as a blessing but rather as a condescending act of domination. In order to find proof for this hypothesis, it will be necessary to examine several periods in modern and contemporary Korean history starting with the colonial period and the nationalist movements at the time around the 1920s. That was when nationalism and nationalist ideology started to flourish among Korean intellectuals, especially among students who studied abroad. Furthermore, the period of liberation will be discussed focusing on the role of the U.S. and on the perception many Koreans shared at the time of the entry of U.S. forces into Korea. This appears to be necessary because many Koreans feared that America could become the next colonizing power, a suspicion which seemed reinforce in the phrase “in due course” stated in the Cairo Declaration from 1943. Moreover, the 1980s will be researched because the 1980s showed the resentment many Koreans, especially students, felt toward the U.S. presence and influence. Finally, the transition during the 1990s shall be looked at. The questions of how and why the perception of U.S. Korean policy changed and why an anti-American sentiment spread among the broader public will be answered in this section. A look at the current state of Korean-American relations will be discussed in the conclusion. With the inauguration of the Bush administration there have been many problems concerning the issue of anti-Americanism, which shall be only mentioned here.

During the last decade, anti-Americanism has gained popularity due to across the board factors, which affect the common folk: the economic crisis, American pressure on the Korean government to open the Korean market, and the antipathy towards a growing influence of American culture which threatens the existence of Korean traditions. This new trend of anti-Americanism is implied when talking about socially constructed anti-Americanism because a greater part of the Korean population shares the sentiment in opposition to a few students and scholars during the Cold War period. Another difference is that during the Cold War period but particularly during the 1980s, the expression of anti-Americanism was much more outspoken and violent than today although it was not supported (at least not openly) by the majority of the people. These days, many more people criticise the U.S. without expressing it violently any more. What is the significance of violence or lack of here? Korea is no longer a developing country, but rather a major economic power; materialism and capitalism have taken over, and Korea, as well as the Korean people, wants to be treated as an equal. Although many people oppose a strong American influence and wish to be seen as equal, they have for the most part matured beyond violent clashes. Hence, anti-Americanism has reached a higher intellectual level where people try not to be as emotional but more rational, expressing their feelings and critiques rather with words than with acts of violence.

1.1. Defining anti-Americanism

Anti-Americanism is difficult to define; however, it manifests itself in at least four different categories: inauthenticity; capitalism, the associated injustices and inequalities and decline of the quality of life; aggressiveness and repressiveness, their cultural sources and by-products; and the loss of meaning and the deformation of the individual; the critiques of individualism (Hollander 1992: 49). Broadly, it can be defined “as any hostile action or expression toward the United States, its government,
domestic institutions, foreign policies, prevailing values, culture, and people” (Kim 1994: 37).

Another definition by Yi Ch’ae-bong suggests that "anti-Americanism can be seen in various forms from doubt and disappointment to disdain and opposition against the American government's policy, culture and society” (Yi 1989: 11).

Paul Hollander also gives another definition stated in an interview with Brian Lamb on April 19, 1992:

A mindset, an attitude of distaste, aversion or intense hostility, the roots of which may be found in matters unrelated to the actual qualities or attributes of American society. In short, the way it is used here, anti-Americanism refers to a negative predisposition, a type of bias which is, to varying degrees, unfounded, regarded as an attitude similar to its far more thoroughly explored counterparts, such as racism, sexism or anti-Semitism.

And he gives another one in the same interview:

What holds together the varieties of anti-Americanism is a sense of grievance and the compelling need to find some clear-cut and morally satisfying explanation for a wide range of unwelcome circumstances associated with either actual states or feelings of backwardness, inferiority, weakness, diminished competitiveness or a loss of coherence and stability in the life of a nation, a group or individual.

All these definitions express a perception against America's political and military influence, although the last definition points more at a notion of envy towards American lifestyle as well as at a notion of a feeling of American ascendancy. In the case of Korea it should become obvious that especially military factors have played a crucial role. During the Cold War, military, political, and ideological issues might have been the most important factors when trying to define anti-Americanism, today, especially after the financial crisis in 1997, the importance of economical and cultural issues has increased, however military and political issues have not disappeared. Therefore, anti-Americanism in South Korea will here be defined as a rejection of the American political and military superiority criticized mainly by a few student groups and leftist movements during the Cold War, which after the financial crisis in 1997 especially but also before developed into a broadly supported notion against America's political, military, economic, and cultural influence. It asks for independence from U.S. Far Eastern policy as well as for the right to handle their own problems by themselves. Anti-American supporters in Korea also encourage the idea that the U.S. hinders Koreas attempt for reunification with the North and blames it for the failures of the Sunshine (Engagement) Policy.

2. Rise of Nationalism

As in most other nations (except England and perhaps France), Korean nationalism arose as a response to a crisis that it faced beginning from the late 19th century. As Korea signed an unequal treaty with Japan in 1876 and witnessed the breakdown of the existing East Asian order, Koreans were searching for ways to reform their inefficient system in order to participate in the formation of a new East Asian order. (Shin 2000a: 3.)
Nationalism plays an important role when one wants to talk about anti-Americanism. In Korea especially it can be argued that nationalism was an important factor during the Japanese colonial period and during the ongoing Korean War as well as afterwards. We have to question now, where this nationalistic sentiment came from. Professor Gi-Wook Shin talks about a divided group of Pan-Asianists and Nationalists.

Korea first learned about nationalism and Pan-Asianism from copies of books that were translated by Korean scholars in the late 19th century. Pan-Asianism was a concept that embraced the idea that the Asian countries, the so-called "yellow race" should unite and build a front to the united European and American race. "Accepted as a natural category of people, yellowness became the basis for a variety of groups around East Asia to propose regional solidarity to resist Western white imperialism" (Shin 2000b: 7).

On the other hand, nationalism went far beyond that. Nationalists saw the threat of the Japanese and realized that Japanese did not plan to unite with the other Asian nations especially not after the Protectorate Treaty of 1905. "The piece was an expression of betrayal and marked an end to a call for pan-Asianist alliance" (Ibid: 10), therefore they were proposing "an energetic and nationalistic Korean state that can survive in a world of rampant imperialism" (Ibid: 11). They wanted to fight imperialist powers, especially Japan.

It was necessary to create a sense of a national identity, which according to Shin did not exist in the first half of this century. "Nationalism was a modern and Western phenomenon but as it spread into other parts of the world, it has taken various shapes and meanings, reflecting historically specific circumstances that a given country or people faced" (Ibid: 2). At first, it was rather difficult to find unique features that would provide the people with a collective identity, however, the representatives of the nationalist group like Sin Ch’ae-ho and Pak Unsik (1895-1925) tried very hard to find evidence for Korea’s uniqueness. Sin even reinterpreted the Korean history to place the Korean nation in the category of "historical race" (Ibid: 12). Furthermore, Shin points out that Sin tried to underline the importance of the national spirit, which was necessary to form an organic body, which was connected through a pure bloodline (Ibid). Sin is responsible for making Yi Sunsin and other historic figures national heroes in his attempt to create the real "Korean national spirit" (Ibid: 13).

In the case of Korean nationalism it was not so much the white Westerners that were seen as a threat but rather the Japanese who were the major enemy. That was different from Pan-Asianism, which saw Asia as a united front fighting against the imperialistic West. "Some even called for Japanese leadership in bringing "reform and progress" to Korea and peace to Asia" (Ibid: 14). Hence, Pan-Asianism was rejected also because the leaders of this group were seen as pro-Japanese.

Other nationalists, like Ch’oe Namsôn, tried "to present a Korea-centred view of East Asia to counter Japanese depiction of Korean history" therefore he restored "Tan’gun as the founder of the Korean nation" (Ibid: 16). With Tan’gun there was Shamanism and other national heroes (e.g. Yi Sunshin) that were supposed to show Korea’s uniqueness and to help to find a national identity. "Korea developed an organic, ethno-cultural, and collectivistic version of national identity centred around a belief in ethnic unity or racial homogeneity." (Shin 2000a: 3)

Many people who suffered under the Japanese regime were anxious to overtake these nationalistic ideas and even more so after the country was divided after 1945. After the Korean War ended in 1953, Korea was in a crisis and nationalism seemed to be a possible panacea. It was important, according to Shin, that the people
could "envision a society in which they can live together not only as ethnic Korean fellows but as equal citizens of a democratic polity" (Ibid: 23). He claims that the same held true for former East Germany when after reunification there were many problems.

2.1. Nationalism in Opposition to anti-Imperialism

During the years of Japanese colonization, there have been several nationalistic Korean groups, who tried to fight the invaders and uphold the Korean spirit. Michael Robinson in his book *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea, 1920-1925* talks about two major groups: cultural nationalists and leftist nationalists. Although, he focuses mainly on cultural nationalists, he manages to provide the reader with a good interpretation of the problems that existed between both groups. In this part of the paper, the group that rebelled strongest against anti-Imperialism will be examined: the leftist (communist) nationalists.

The first official Korean Communist party did not exist before 1925. This was due to factional disputes among the Koreans in exile and the harsh repression by Japanese police. Their main goal was to liberalize the country from the Japanese imperialists. With their criticism of the cultural nationalists, a deep split occurred between the Korean nationalist groups at home and abroad, which was also supported by the Japanese. The difference between these two groups was that the cultural nationalist tried to be active in the borders set by the Japanese authorities. They were more concerned with losing their voice by abolishment than with getting their message out to the people. Therefore, they were criticized as being elitist (because they were trying to gain favors for some influential groups, e.g. the Korean manufacturers) and pro-Japanese by leftist nationalists, who were more radical in their approach. This led to stricter punishment by the Japanese censors and to the abolishment of leftist newspapers and magazines. Kaebyok was eventually shut down in 1926 due to its radical content. Other magazines and newspapers were permitted but abolished after publishing only a few issues (sometimes it was even less than a few issues) (Robinson 1988: 115). It also provoked the Japanese to abolish the communist party as well as all communist activities.

The leftist movement started to gain a stronghold among Koreans after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. That is when the first Korean based Communist Parties were formed on Russian soil. The first Korean Socialist party (Han’in sahoedang), was founded by Yi Tonghwi in Khabarovsk in 1918 and Nam Manch’uns organized a Korean section of the Communist party in Irkusk in the same year (Robinson 1988: 109). These groups were dedicated more to fighting for Korea’s independence than they were to the socialist cause. Their hope was to get Lenin’s help for their fight against the Japanese after helping Russia. The Koreans in Russia during this first period studied the communist literature and tried to spread the word and attract support for Communism in the Korean Provisional Government (KPG) in Shanghai and in Korea.

They faced many problems. Not only were the two communist parties in Russia competing against each other, their attempts to gain support from the KPG in Shanghai were not fruitful and destroyed the rather unstable alliance within the KPG. Another problem was Lenin’s perspective of the Korean situation. He initially decided to help the Korean independence fighters because of his respect to their
devotion to their cause; however, he later withdrew his support due to the ever-widening split among the pro-communist factions.

A second intellectual group, which became a strong supporter for socialism was the group of students who went to study in Japan. When these students came to Japan, they encountered a fairly open intellectual society where they were free to discuss many things including socialism. They started to study socialism from books in Japanese. This had already happened in the early colonial years, but when the authorities realized the radical shift the Korean students in Japan were undergoing, they issued a warning to the students. This was in 1914 already. Five years later, the restrictions for Korean students studying in Japan were lowered and the number of Korean students in Japan as well as the number of students with access to socialist and/or communist material increased (Ibid: 109-110).

The Japanese felt more threatened by leftist nationalists than by the cultural nationalists because they were fighting more openly against imperialism and were more attractive for the greater population due to their popular approach. Although the cultural nationalists also had an anti-imperialistic approach, during the 1920s their voice became weaker because of the fear of abolishment. The leftist nationalists on the other hand continued to fight loudly against the imperialistic intruders, which led to their abolishment.

The fight against imperialism was strongly pronounce in these communist groups due to the Marxist/Leninist ideology they were based on. However, although they had to face many and harsher restrictions by the Japanese Colonial Government, they managed to uphold their ideology, which finally found its climax in the division of the country in 1948.

3. The U.S. comes to Korea: Is America the new occupier?

When the United States finally came to Korea to liberalize the country, Soviet troops had already liberalized the northern part of Korea. They had already formed some type of governmental system, which included pro-Russian and pro-Communist Koreans in political affairs.

In the South on the other hand, there were pro-Communist intellectuals like Pak Hon-yong and Yo Un-yong organizing a governing system establishing Committees around the country in every South Korean city and two days before Lieutenant General John R. Hodge arrived in Inchon, they even founded a Korean government electing Rhee Syngman as president and electing other liberal and rightist intellectuals for other posts. Rhee refused to accept this position arguing that this government was communist and designed to appear moderate when it was actually communist. This Korean government was also ignored by Hodge who called it illegitimate and reestablished old colonial ties with former pro-Japanese Korean and Japanese officials. This decision led to a lot of disappointment and frustration among South Koreans and many people were upset about the condescending attitude the Americans had towards Korea.

U.S. interests in this part of the world were not especially high during this period and even during the 1950s, did not change significantly, although President Rhee forced the U.S. to sign a mutual defense treaty with South Korea towards the end of the Korean War.

Because the U.S. ignored the wishes of the Korean population and their ignorance to Korean history, the U.S. was perceived by many Koreans as another
threat to national independence. There were voices claiming that the United States would become the new occupier not wanting to give independence to the Korean people. This was first feared when Roosevelt and Stalin first agreed to be allies in World War II. In the Cairo Declaration (1st December, 1943) it was stated that Korea would gain independence after liberalization from Japan “in due course.” This upset many Korean nationalists, cultural and leftist, who had hoped for immediate independence once Japan was defeated. The decision to divide the country into zones also showed Koreans that the U.S. government did not perceive Korean nationalists of being capable to deal with their own politics.

However, Koreans were split in their opinions. Some believed that the United States would help them to accomplish their goals and used their influence to gain support from the U.S., like Rhee Syngman. Others believed in the Soviet government and/or claimed that the U.S. was trying to occupy Korea. These claims came mostly from the leftist anti-Imperialist faction in the South, which consisted mainly of university students and leftist intellectuals namely the group that dominated the anti-American/anti-dictatorship movement throughout the Cold War period. Their major argument was the fact that the U.S. government supported dictatorships instead of a democratic government. Later on they accused the U.S. military of being responsible for the murder of student activists in Kwangju in May 1980, which, as will be seen in the next chapter, led to a decade of anti-American terror in Korea.

4. The Eighties: Increasing criticism

The 1980s was one of the toughest decades in Korea. Students were revolting on the street against the Chun Doo-hwan government; the U.S. the alleged supporter of the government and for democracy.

[At that time] Anti-Americanism became so intense that few Americans could walk the streets of Seoul without fear of insult or worse; the U.S. Embassy, which sits conspicuously adjacent to the seat of government in Seoul, came to look like a legation in Beirut, with concrete revetments and heavy security to keep the madding crowd at bay. (Cumings & Mesler 1998: Internet source)

Students were blaming the United States for the Kwangju massacre and for their position towards the South Korean government. Before the U.S. was remembered as a country having helped South Korea during the Korean War; however, this position was mainly held by older groups in Korean society. "The war generation is now a minority … and the memories of younger Koreans are not of liberation but of repression" (Bандow 1987: Internet Source). Many of the younger generation lost their faith in America. One reason was that after the fall of Rhee Syngman, "the U.S. embassy officials tried to support the elected [Chan Myon] government, but Washington refused to back them; the Kennedy administration decided to assist the military junta instead" (Ibid). Therefore, at that time too, the students and many other Koreans "suspected America of having been involved in the coup staged by the then-general Chun in 1980" (Ibid). Bandow states another reason for the student's anger and suspicion after the Kwangju Massacre:

The fact that Wickham raised no objection to Chun’s use of the troops and later publicly stated that the Koreans were not ready for
democracy made it appear that Washington would blindly support any pro-American government, regardless of whether it was cruel.

Hence, the anti-American sentiment grew and several incidents were recorded where Koreans attacked American soldiers or civilians. However, even after Roh Tae Woo was elected as the Korean president, the protests did not stop and anti-Americanism was still rampant among Korean citizens. This became particularly clear, "when Koreans lustily cheered a Soviet team to victory over the United States in the 1988 Olympics" (Holloran 1997: Internet Source).

In conclusion, it can be stated that anti-American sentiment during the 1980s was probably at a fairly high point due to the anger and fury that arose after the Kwangju massacre. Before America was seen as a supporter of the Korean people by most within the Korean society, however, the people lost trust when they saw America not intervening in the actions that were going on in Kwangju and throughout Korea during the Chun governmental period.

5. The End of the Cold War: Rising Problems and Transition

With the beginning of the 1990s democracy started to develop in Korea, especially after Kim Yong Sam, a well-known fighter for democracy, won the presidential election in 1993. Changes were expected and they came: for instance, the development of a free press started to take place during the time when President Kim Yong Sam held office. Although the democratisation process is still going on, many things have changed in Korea.

Although this period of time can be characterized as a period when anti-Americanism was not expressed very frequently, it was a period where the foundations were laid for a new type of anti-Americanism in Korea. After the election of President Kim Yong-Sam, many people believed that Korea finally achieved a state of democratic governance. This also took away the basis for many student movements who were fighting vigorously for democracy. With a democratic government in place, many groups which were active in the democratization movement during the 1980s had to look for new objectives and goals to lose their legitimacy.

These new problems that occurred during the 1990s were due to pressure from the U.S. to open Korea’s markets. Significant here is also the entry of Korea in the WTO in 1995. From that time on Korea had to follow certain economic standards and criticism from abroad grew louder when Korea did not follow these requirements. There were many issues, particularly trade issues, with the U.S. who forced Korea to open its market in all kind of fields but especially in the areas of agriculture and cars.

Many Koreans criticized the U.S. for their attitude towards Korea: they claimed that Korea could not open because they could never compete with American products due to their lack of resources and overall “backwardness” in comparison to the U.S. However, the U.S. government remained unyielding in their demands and finally realized a slow opening of the Korean market in the beginning and mid 1990s.

After the opening of the market, a lot of foreign goods (and in particular U.S. goods) came to Korea and with the goods came the culture. Many American chain fast-food restaurants opened up and started to dominate the streets of Seoul. Over the years, this attracted increased cultural criticism. Especially tradition and Korean culture advocates started to reject the growing impact of the invasion of American culture.
These factors created an aversion in many Korean minds. Criticism grew louder and started to tarnish U.S. reputation once more. This time, however, Koreans did not use acts of violence perhaps due to the reasons mentioned in the introduction. Anyhow, a stronger and broader resentment against the U.S. military, U.S. policy, and U.S. culture started to emerge, which only grew even stronger and broader during and after the economic crisis.

6. The Economic Crisis

The early 1990s until around 1995 can be characterized as rather stable. Although there were some problems these were minor once and did not have a significant impact on anti-Americanism. Actually, during the mid 90s anti-Americanism might have been at one of its lowest points ever considering that there were almost no anti-American demonstrations or any other reported acts of violence against U.S. citizens. This might have been due to the election of Kim Yong Sam, a well-known freedom fighter, in 1992 and to a stable and optimistic economic situation.

That changed rather rapidly after the beginning of the Korean financial crisis but especially after the bailout by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the end of 1997. Although the IMF is an international organization many people view it as an entirely American organization. The people in Korea and other nations that suffered during the financial crisis could not overlook the "Schadenfreude" (Higgott 1998: Internet Source) by the other Western nations, especially America.

It was well known that the West was astonished and maybe even upset about the up rising of the Asian economy in such a rapid speed and that the East was very proud of its success over the West, what they showed rather openly. However, the crisis showed that the "Asian Way" failed.

Korea's rapid economic development and remarkable political achievements in recent years are a fundamental source of Korean national pride. In stark contrast, the economic crisis represents one of the most pivotal events to negatively shape modern Korean perceptions, both internal and external, equal in impact to the Japanese occupation, the Korean War, and the Kwangju Massacre for most Koreans (Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS) 1998: Internet Source).

This explanation - especially the "discovery" that all was not what it should be in the banking system - has made it difficult for many Western analysts to disguise a certain Schadenfreude at the situations in which these states now find themselves. If pride cometh before fall, then even the most saintly found it difficult to ignore the discomfort that Dr. Mahathir - and other high-profile exponents of the superiority of the "Asian Way" that had accompanied high East Asian growth in the 1990s - now faced (Higgott 1998: Internet Source).

This was bitter medicine for the ones who failed and in order to keep face, many people came up with a conspiracy theory, which explains that the financial crisis was put into play by the West to make the East fall.
Whether it is true or not, it is interesting to realize that many people in Korea did not see the failure and roots of the crisis in their own misdoing or in the misdealing of their own government, instead they started blaming Western nations, the IMF - but in particular the U.S. An anti-American backlash was the consequence. The Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS 1998: Internet Source) puts it this way:

Anger and shame regarding the crisis and the IMF role were expressed early in the crisis through resurgent nationalism and an anti-American backlash. America’s most famous diplomat, Henry Kissinger, cautioned recently that a "very virulent" kind of nationalism forms a particularly strong undercurrent in South Korea and urged restraint against promoting a sense of U.S. triumphalism. The by-product of an austere IMF program, with prescriptions most Koreans - including many well-educated elites - believe were shaped by U.S. policymakers, could trigger an extended bout of anti-Americanism, not only in Korea, but also throughout Asia.

This anti-American backlash is troubling. Their first reason is, it undermines regional peace and security and "it may undercut regional support for a continued U.S. military presence precisely when an American presence is necessary to buttress stability."

Secondly, "strong anti-Americanism could trigger a negative reaction in the United States, in particular with members of Congress." The U.S. ambassador to Korea, H.E. Stephen W. Bosworth, (Stephen W. Bosworth at the 23rd IEWS (Institute for East and West Studies) Diplomatic Round Table Series at Yonsei University in November 2000) expressed this concern as well when he pointed out how important the United States are for Korea’s security but these days even more for Korea’s economy. He mentioned that Korea has to realize and is realizing that it is a global player and that "the World is watching them." However, if they continue to express a strong anti-American sentiment, they will have to face a change of perception by the American population and that could have consequences for Korea.

The financial crisis was a dark era throughout Asia. For many nations it meant a loss of pride. The bailout by the IMF was therefore not perceived as the helping hand but as the hand that was slapping them in the face. Some people warned that this perception "maybe promoting a new round of anti-Americanism in the region" (Bello 1998: Internet Source). The Clinton administration has used the IMF to enforce reforms and due to these reforms a lot of people where laid-off and put in a miserable situation. Some people foresaw that:

When Korea begins to experience the real consequences of the austerity measures, for example, potential unemployment of as many as 1.5 million people, Korean politicians will deflect the people's anger by placing blame on the IMF, sowing the seeds for a renewed round of resentment (APCSS 1998: Internet Source).

In Korea, the financial crisis was called "IMF crisis". This clearly shows who is being blamed for their misery - the IMF - and as mentioned earlier, the IMF is being perceived not as an international organization but as an American one or at least as an organization that is being heavily influenced by America. In the end, this is the same thing.
Although the early and mid 90s where less influenced by an anti-American sentiment, the IMF and their bailout program did not just re-established but it also spread and broadened the scope of anti-Americanism after a rather quiet time.

7. Conclusion

Anti-Americanism is difficult to define and many people might even use the term rather loosely. If somebody criticizes one or two things about America, he or she is not automatically anti-American but rather is criticizing one fact or dimension of American society. Anti-Americanism includes a broader notion of criticism. It rejects American ideals, politics, and dominance. It rejects the fundamentals on which American society and U.S. policies are based in not always a very rational manner.

The concept of anti-Americanism implies more than critical disposition: it refers to critiques, which are less than fully rational and not necessarily well founded. It usually alludes to a predisposition, a free-floating hostility or aversion, that feeds on many sources besides the discernible shortcomings of the United States … Among the major sources of such anti-Americanism we find nationalism (political or cultural), the rejection of (or ambivalence toward) modernization and anti-capitalism (Hollander 1992: 7)

In South Korea, there have been groups opposing the U.S. throughout the Cold War although these voices were oppressed by the respective pro-American dictators in the country. The movement finally found its outlet and gained attention during the violent demonstrations and activities in the 1980s. These groups mainly based their resentment and aversion on ideological problems, being influenced by leftist (communist and socialist) thought. Therefore the period from 1945 to the early 1990s is called, ideologically embedded anti-Americanism in this paper. These groups have called the U.S. presence in Korea occupation and have perceived it more as an imperialist force which hindered reconciliation with the North rather than the good friend or older brother who protected the South from the North.

This criticism still exist. However, since the end of the Cold War this type of criticism has spread and a new type of criticism emerged among the Korean people marking the shift towards a socially constructed anti-Americanism. On the one hand, people started to perceive the U.S. as an imperialist force that only helped Korea during the Korean War and with economic aid after the war for its own benefit (this was even more so after the economic crisis). It has also criticized U.S. intervention in Korean internal affairs as well as the behavior of the U.S. military in Korea and the SOFA agreement. On the other hand, they have started to blamed the U.S. for exploiting the Korean economy and for destroying Korean traditional culture. Koreans also started to look at the U.S. as a hindering force in the reconciliation and reunification process with North Korea.

The latter one is particularly important with the change in administrations in Washington. Whereas the Clinton administration appeared to be pro reconciliation and seemed to be helping Korea to achieve their goal of reunification especially with the Summit in 2000, the Bush administration has rejected most agreements and arrangements with North Korea achieved prior, during Clinton’s time in office.

What does this mean to anti-Americanism? Anti-Americanism is going to increase and spread even more and not only throughout Korea but throughout East Asia because the new strategy for U.S. foreign policy does not only touch upon
Korean issues but also upon other major issues within East Asia. If the hardliners in Washington continue with their provoking strategy, they are not only going to endanger the security in the area but also lose a very important ally in the area without which it is going to be difficult to maintain a strong presence in East Asia.

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