

**Changing East Asia, Unchanging U.S. Strategy:
A Global, Regional and Local Perspective**

By
Jongtae Kim
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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Direct all inquires to: Jongtae Kim; University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Sociology;
326 Lincoln Hall, 702 S. Wright Street, Urbana, IL 61801; kim252@uiuc.edu; 217-333-6515

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Jongtae Kim
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

As the Cold War system was, paradoxically, an important political pillar of U.S. hegemony, its strategy based on tension and conflict was quite effective during that period, legitimating its intervention around the world. In East Asia, the alliance system under U.S. hegemony that involved South Korea and Japan was legitimated on the ground of the confrontation with North Korea and China. Amid the contemporary historical global shift accompanying regional and local changes, however, the U.S.-centered system in East Asia is being seriously challenged. A noticeable paradox of U.S. power in East Asia is that its decline is actually accelerated by the power-based bid for maintaining it. The key question of this paper is whether the tension- and conflict-based strategy inherited from the Cold War is still useful in East Asia in the context of contemporary multipolarizing world. For the answer, this paper analyzes global circumstantial shifts, new regional dynamics in East Asia, and growing anti-American sentiments among South Koreans.

Key words: U.S. hegemony, East Asia, Cold War strategy, globalization, multipolarization.

Introduction

As George W. Bush took office, a hard-won peaceful mood surrounding the Korean Peninsula turned rapidly into tension and conflict. Overconfident in U.S. military power, the hardliners, i.e., the neoconservatives, in the administration bade for maintaining its hegemony in East Asia through confrontation rather than negotiation. The strategy based on tension and conflict, which is rooted in the realist tradition of political thought, has long been adopted in U.S. foreign policy, and was quite effective in maintaining its hegemony during the Cold War period. The Bush administration's unilateral militaristic turn represents a variant of this tradition rather than an exception to it (Alexander 2007).

During the Cold War, the U.S. foreign strategy was primarily based on tension and conflict, aimed at the containment or rollback of communism. Paradoxically, the confrontation with the communist bloc legitimated U.S. intervention around the world, through which it enjoyed its hegemony (Wallerstein, 2000; Johnson, 2004b; Su-Hoon Lee, 2004). However, in the post-Cold War era, the world has undergone a sea change in political, economic, and social circumstances, questioning the hegemonic status of the U.S. Nonetheless, some American thinkers tend to define the post-Cold War world as a "unipolar world" dominated by the "indispensable nation"-- the U.S. (Brzezinski, 1997). U.S. unilateralism is justified on grounds of its power and morality (Kagan, 2002; Krauthammer, 2002/03; Brooks and Wohlforth, 2002).

The strategy based on tension and conflict should be evaluated in light of various global, regional, and local circumstances. If the tension- and conflict-based strategy of the U.S. was effective in the Cold War period when its hegemony was at the peak and other global and regional circumstances were appropriate, it is questionable whether it is still suitable to today's

world. In this regard, it is important to note that the strategic circumstances have changed and there are distinct global shifts accompanied by new regional trends. At the global level, for example, there is not much evidence supporting a unipolar world today. Rather, the decline of U.S. power is noticeable in several dimensions, which raises a question regarding the sustainability of the tension- and power-based strategy. Amidst the “war on terrorism” under the Bush doctrine, the heavily indebted U.S. economy was sustained by capital inflow from poorer countries. When hegemony is a form of consented domination, the political and cultural leadership of the U.S. was significantly damaged by its unilateralism. In this situation, the substantial debate on U.S. hegemony today is not whether it is steady or on the decline, but whether it is on the decline or has already ended (Nederveen Pieterse, 2004; Wallerstein, 2000, 2004b; Arrighi, 1994; Su-Hoon Lee, 1992; Chang 1992). Much evidence holds that in place of the decrepit U.S. leadership, a multipolar world is taking over (Nederveen Pieterse, 2008).

New regionalism in East Asia has challenged the traditional U.S.-led security framework of China and North Korea versus the U.S., Japan, and South Korea. One of the three goals of the South Korean Roh Moo-Hyun administration was to promote the “era of Northeast Asia of peace and cooperation.” The non-governmental level discourses on the era of Northeast Asia are currently very popular in Korea, in which an institution such as the “Asian Union” is frequently envisioned.

China’s economic and political rise leads the sea change of the regional circumstances. China has already become the largest trade partner to South Korea and Japan. In this situation, China has been aiming at both its successful participation in the world economy and a leading role in the future of East Asia (Park, 2004). China’s increasing interaction with the countries in the region implies the decline of U.S. influence in the region, not only because of China’s own

ascendance but also because the countries in the region have more security options other than the U.S.-centered system. Moreover, China's emphasis on regional peace and cooperation is more appealing to the neighboring countries than the confrontational U.S. strategy.

North Korea's desire for participating in the East Asian community is also noticeable. Turning away from Cold War strategy, North Korea has long been proposing to the U.S. a peace treaty in the Korean Peninsula, especially since the early 1990s (Yoon, 2004; Sigal, 2002). North Korea has been wooing South Korea for economic cooperation, as seen in its strategy of inviting South Korean investment in the Kaesung Industrial Complex. Based on the agreements in the first Inter-Korea Summit in June 15, 2000, the two Koreas have been increasing economic cooperation with each other, contributing to a peaceful mood in the Peninsula. Amidst this atmosphere, various social organizations in fields of sports, journalism, art, and scholarship in the two Koreas have recently increased their interaction, which is unprecedented in terms of scale and intensity, looking for the unification of Korea (Jeon, 2006).

Being a bastion country for U.S. security strategy in East Asia, Japan realizes the importance of the East Asian community. Japan is coaxing the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) for political and economic cooperation, and pursuing Free Trade Agreements (FTA) with its East Asian neighbors. Haruki (2003:5-7) notes a recent increase of regionalism in Japan in two ways: first, the interest in "Northeast Asia" among the public, scholars, political parties and peace organizations, and second, the government's interest in strengthening the relationship with the ASEAN (*Ibid.*). The Japanese are currently in a situation of weighing between the newly emerging East Asian community and the traditional U.S.-centered security system. In this regard, Brzezinski (1997:182) observes that even if there are four different

orientations in Japan towards the U.S., all of them are “in agreement on one key regional issue: that the emergence of more multilateral Asia-Pacific cooperation is in Japan’s interest.”

Accompanied by these global and regional shifts is a change in East Asian people’s perceptions of their neighbors and the U.S. In South Korea, for instance, the U.S. is no longer regarded as the guardian of the “free world,” but, frequently, as a cause of tension and conflict in East Asia (Haksung Kim, 2007). Regarding the Japanese perception of the U.S., Johnson (2004a:58-59) notes that “[i]n 1994, when the possible existence of a North Korean nuclear arsenal first surfaced in the media, [. . .], the Japanese named the U.S. as ‘the biggest threat to world peace’ [. . .].” This situation entails growing anti-American sentiments in East Asia (Jinwoong Kim, 2005; Kim, Park, and Oh, 2003; Kim and Choi, 2005). In contrast, there is an increasing number of South Koreans who perceive its Northern part as a brother whom they should embrace, rather than an enemy (Haksung Kim, 2007). Reflecting China’s emergence as the largest trade partner to South Korea, the image of China among Koreans is also rapidly improving (Sangwon Lee, 2005).

In light of these global, regional, and local dynamics, the U.S. strategy in East Asia seems to be quite static. While East Asian scholars are debating whether the U.S. hegemony is still declining or has already ended, many American scholars and politicians are arguing for an “unprecedented global hegemony” or “Pax Americana.” When it itself is regarded by many regional people as a threat to peace, the U.S. tends to consider itself as a stabilizer. As a result, rather than adjusting to or leading those changes, the U.S. continues to rely on the power-based strategy that was effective under its hegemony during the Cold War. Hence, there is a marked discrepancy between the changing circumstances and the unchanging U.S. strategy.

This situation raises an important question: whether this ongoing cold war strategy is still effective. The primary aim of this paper is to investigate the validity of U.S. strategic security framework in East Asia in light of contemporary global, regional, and local dynamics. Despite many arguments pointing out the inappropriateness of current U.S. policy on East Asia, there is not much research that examines it with a historical-global, regional, and local perspective, which is needed for a more comprehensive understanding of the situation. At the global level, I employ a historical perspective in looking at the phenomenon of globalization, which in itself is deeply associated with hegemonic transition, multipolarization, and the resurgence of East Asia. At the regional level, I contrast the U.S. current strategy with East Asian countries' new movements towards a cooperative regional community. At the local level, I focus on the change in South Koreans' perceptions of the U.S., North Korea, and China, which is an important factor that undermines the contemporary alliance system.

Regarding the U.S. strategy in the future, some scholars express a need for a new framework reflecting the circumstantial changes. Considering a different hybrid future of East Asia, Pollack (2007) argues that the U.S. needs to define a larger concept of the regional future, not tailored to the military strategic requirements. However, this voice seems to be insignificant within the U.S. policy-making structure. The prevailing voices are preoccupied with the U.S.-centered military alliance system, which was quite effective in its heyday. These are frequently associated with some thinkers' justification of U.S. unilateralism based on (over)confidence in its power (Kagan, 2002; Krauthammer, 2002/03; Brooks and Wohlforth, 2002).

Much evidence suggests that the U.S. impeded, rather than promoted, various peace processes in East Asia, e.g., North Korean-Japanese normalization of relationship and South Korean Kim Dae-Jung administration's electricity aid to the North (Su-Hoon Lee, 2004). One of

the important factors underlying this strategy is the interests of the military-industrial complex of the U.S. (Johnson, 2004b). Conflict-ridden East Asia may serve the interests of the American military-industrial complex and the political power associated with it. However, the question is whether this serves the U.S. "national interests." In this regard, this paper provides an opportunity to broaden the understanding of the current situation in East Asia, and to think of different ways in which the U.S. can participate in it.

The Hegemon of the Cold War

Hegemony in the international system is defined in various ways, but basically refers to a powerful country's political, economic, and cultural influence on others. Wallerstein (2004a:94) defines it as "those situations in which one state combines economic, political, and financial superiority over other strong states, and therefore has both military and cultural leadership as well." The attributes of leadership and influence in the concept of hegemony should be distinguished from those of formal and informal domination of empire. As Gramsci (1971) notes, hegemony requires the followers' consent.

There is a general consensus among scholars that the post-World War II period until the early 1970s was the peak of U.S. hegemony. One of the important pillars of U.S. hegemony was the Cold War system in which various institutional frameworks were established, based on the ideological (or strategic) confrontation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. This means that, paradoxically, the "threat of communism" played a crucial role in maintaining U.S. hegemony (Wallerstein, 2000; Johnson, 2004b; Su-Hoon Lee, 2004). During its heyday, the primary aim of the U.S. foreign policy was to contain the expansion of communism. The two major communist

powers, the Soviet Union and China, were identified as the greatest threats to U.S. security and its national interests. Thus, Europe and Asia were put on the highest priority in the post-war U.S. foreign policy (Gordon, 1969).

In East Asia, the U.S. regarded Japan as the most important country for its regional strategy because, for the U.S., Japan seemed to be the most capable country in Asia whose power could counteract communist China. Japan was thought by the Americans to have a casting vote in the regional balance of power. One of the most worrisome scenarios for the U.S. was the Japanese-Chinese alliance. In this context, as with the Marshall Plan in Europe, U.S. interests lay in the reconstruction of defeated Japan after the war. Arrighi (1996:28) notes this U.S. strategy in terms of “the need to upgrade the Japanese economy so as to turn it into a bastion and show-piece of the US policy of containment of Communist power in Asia.”

The tension in the Korean Peninsula was another important condition supporting U.S. hegemony in East Asia. In fact, as many scholars address, the Korean War pushed the button for the Cold War.¹ With the Korean War as a momentum, “the U.S. could succeed in reconstructing Europe and Japan, creating the liberal world economic order, and in building its hegemony through the spread and hardening of the Cold War system” (Su-Hoon Lee, 2004:259).² The tensions and conflicts in the Peninsula after the Korean War continuously reminded East Asian people of the necessity of the U.S. presence in the region. In this sense, U.S. war against

¹ Vasquez (1993:175) notes that “the Cold War does not really begin until the Korean War.” He goes on to say that “it is the Korean War and not NATO or the ideology of the Cold War that produces a permanent and dramatic increase in US military expenditures [. . .]” (*Ibid.*).

² Su-Hoon Lee (2004) considers the Korean War as a crucial event for the survival of the contemporary world system. He says that “the Korean War played an important role in saving the world system that was in peril since the ‘thirty-year war’” (*Ibid.*:259).

communism in East Asia was embodied in the confrontation between the two Koreas. This situation legitimated the U.S.-Japan-South Korea alliance system that was one of the most important pillars of U.S. hegemony in East Asia.

On the other hand, the U.S. could maintain its hegemony through East Asian people's consent to it. In South Korea, U.S. cultural power was strengthened by the tension in the Peninsula. Cultural images such as "democracy," "freedom," and "affluence" (attributed to the U.S.) were compared with the negative images of North Korea amid the intense anti-communism in South Korea. Thus, for most South Koreans during the Cold War, their Northern brother was described merely as the ex-invader whereas the U.S. was the savior. Under the perceived threat from North Korea, South Koreans and Japanese were willing to ally with the Americans. In South Korea, for example, anti-U.S. sentiment was rare, and, if any, was rejected by the public as benefiting the enemy and risking national security. As the U.S. strategy during the Cold War fed on tension and conflict, some designate it as the "threat-based strategy" or the "scare tactic" (Kim and Jones, 2007; Samsung Lee, 2001).

A Realists' World and Tension Making

One of the most influential political thoughts in the U.S. has been the realist tradition that reflects Hobbesian worldview.³ Realists argue that the international system, which consists of the "billiard ball-like" nation-states, is in principle an anarchy (Morgenthau, 1978; Waltz, 1979; Gilpin, 1981; Mearsheimer, 2006). Since all nation-states are concerned about their own

³ A classic example of realist U.S. foreign policy is George Kennan's "containment policy" toward the Soviet Union in the 1940s (Samsung Lee, 2001).

survival and security in this anarchic situation, the struggle for power characterizes international relations. Hence, interstate conflict and war are inherent in the nature of the international system. This theory plays an important role leading the U.S. to various strategies of power politics, such as military buildup and alliance making. This also serves today as a theoretical background of Americans' self-proclamation of the "chess player" playing for preventing world disorder or anarchy (Brzezinski, 1997).

Realists' assumption that all nation-states are inherently war-prone in their search for security and survival in an anarchic international system is disputed by substantial empirical evidence. For example, focusing on the unequal distribution of conflict and war across states and dyads, Maoz (2004:109-10) maintains that "the top 10 percent of the states accounted for 49.7 percent of all MIDs, and for 56.8 percent of all wars in the system" and "the upper centile of the dyads accounted for 34 percent of all MIDs [Militarized Interstate Disputes] and for *over 95 percent of all interstate wars for this population* (emphasis in original)," which proves that certain nation-states are more war-prone than others. Moreover, various realists' assumptions, arguments, and political suggestions about international relations provide a ground for power politics which tends to lead to conflict and war rather than peace (Vasquez, 1993; Vasquez, 1998).

Nevertheless, realists' influence on U.S. foreign policy did not end with the end of the Cold War. Rather, as Haggard (2007:25) points out, "since the end of the Cold War, realists have predicted a continued if not heightened risk of crisis and military conflict and a low probability of cooperation on security issues." After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, the Clinton administration and the following Bush administration showed a notable difference from each other in their applications of realism to foreign policy. The Clinton

administration tried to move away, to some degree, from the “threat-based” strategy by prioritizing economic interests, whereas the Bush administration “makes a sharp U-turn to transform the unipolar moment of the U.S. into a unipolar era through a radical use of force” (Kim and Jones, 2007:7).

The Bush doctrine represents the administration’s unilateral power-based foreign policy. Some try to explain this doctrine as a departure from traditional U.S. foreign policy. However, it might be more reasonable to understand it in the context of realist tradition, given that its basic assumptions are based on power politics. Alexander (2007:40) says that “the neoconservative foreign policy thinking embodied in the Doctrine is a variant of realism, specifically ‘balance-of-threat’ realism.” According to him, the neoconservatives’ idea, which underlies the doctrine, is distinguished from neorealism in that the former is concerned with “intention” or “regime type” of other states, whereas the latter with “power balance.” The neoconservatives argue that whether a country is small or big is not very important to the security of the U.S., but the nature of “regime type” is, which implies the need for pursuing the “regime change” of “rogue states.”

After the collapse of the Eastern bloc, the U.S. needed to devise a substitute for the pre-existing global strategy. Some argue that the post-Cold War U.S. administrations replaced it with a “strategy of openness,” aiming at world economic integration under the supremacy of a sole superpower. Bacevich (2002) argues that encountering resistance in the process of this, the U.S. resorted to force, resulting in the militarization of its foreign policy. A sentiment underlying this view is that the American use of force is passive, defensive, thus, innocent. However, this view cannot explain many situations in which the U.S. prefers confrontation and conflict to negotiation and diplomacy. Many observers are doubtful, for instance, why the U.S. does not positively engage in various peace proposals from North Korea. Moreover, after the

Cold War, the U.S. made an aggressive “demonization” of some countries, labeling them as “rogue states.” In fact, “the concept of a ‘rogue state’ as a locus of major threats emerged as a prominent feature of U.S. foreign policy in the post-Cold War era,” making an exclusionary, rather than open and inclusive, international society (Saunders 2006:26). Su-Hoon Lee (2004) defines the post-Cold War era as a period in which the U.S. sought for another hegemony through the “New Cold War (Sin-naeng-jeon).”

The search for hegemony was overtly militarized in the Bush II administration, taking the September 11 attacks as an opportunity. During the early period of the Bush administration, various peace processes in East Asia, such as the North Korean-Japanese normalization of relationship and South Korean Kim Dae-Jung administration’s electricity aid to the North, were impeded by the U.S. (Su-Hoon Lee, 2004). The South Korean governments during the Bush terms created dissonance with the U.S. because of their “Sunshine Policy” aimed at reconciliation with the North.

The second round North Korean nuclear crisis is further evidence of U.S. power-based strategy, the nature of which should be understood on the basis of three key points. First, before the issue singled out, the Bush administration provoked the security-sensitive North Korea by designating it as an “axis of evil,” along with the threat of attack, violating the 1994 Geneva Agreed Framework. Given the peaceful mood surrounding the Korean Peninsula during the late Clinton term, this militaristic turn of the Bush administration was regarded as a bold initiative. Second, North Korea has long, especially after the Cold War, been expressing its desire to change current armistice to a peace treaty in the Korean Peninsula and to normalize the relationship with the U.S. (Yoon, 2004). For this political goal, Pyongyang has also been announcing its willingness to give up its weapons programs (Sigal, 2002). And third, North

Korean capacity to attack the U.S. as well as South Korea and Japan is quite limited. North Korea's military spending in 2002 was \$1.2 billion, 0.2% of the total world spending, compared with U.S.'s \$382.2 billion, 45% of world total (Beal, 2005).⁴ Cha and Kang (2003:21) argue that "even if the North develops nuclear weapons, the threat of a devastating U.S. response will prevent it from ever using them."

Given these circumstances, North Korea's challenging actions, including the nuclear program, are to be understood as a resistance for survival. On the other hand, the U.S. did not passively respond to the threat from North Korea, but quite aggressively provoked it. In this regard, Samsung Lee (2001) points out that the U.S. has been worrying about the situation in which the legitimacy of its strategic framework is weakened.⁵

U.S. Hegemony, Decline or End?

The first thing to examine regarding the validity of U.S. strategy in East Asia is its status in the contemporary global order. Many American scholars and politicians argue that U.S. supremacy is still strong and steady. Brooks and Wohlforth (2002), for example, argue that the U.S. is by far a superpower in all power-related areas including the military and economy. In the military area, they emphasize that the U.S. military budget is more than the next fifteen to twenty biggest

⁴ When comparing North Korea's military spending as a percentage to that of the U.S. and its allies, the North's spending is 0.5% of the U.S.'s, 3.7% of Japan's, and 13.8% of South Korea's in 2001. North's spending is 0.4% of the U.S., Japan, and South Korea's spending combined (Beal, 2005).

⁵ Regarding U.S. strategy in East Asia, Lee (2001) also points out that the U.S. sets North Korea and China as potential threats to justify the Theater Missile Defense (TMD) in East Asia, whose technical feasibility is highly suspected.

spenders combined (Brooks and Wohlforth, 2002). Focusing on the gap in many areas between the number-one U.S. and the followers, Brooks and Wohlforth (2002) predict that U.S. dominating world order would last for the time being.

The neoconservative theorists emphasize that today's world is a unipolar one dominated by the U.S. superpower. According to Krauthammer (2002/03), the post-Cold War era following the collapse of the communist bloc is new in that there comes a "new unipolar world" dominated by the U.S. Kagan (2002) argues that the U.S. does not need to be concerned about its allies', especially Europe's, criticism of its policy because the latter's interests and situations are fundamentally different from those of the U.S. He says that "the U.S. can shoulder the burden of maintaining global security without much help from Europe" (Kagan, 2002:25). This theoretical confidence in U.S. power provides a justification for the neoconservatives to proclaim the "new American century" in which they ask the U.S. to promote "American principles" to other countries based on military superiority and to maintain global order through it (Project for the New American Century, 1997).

However, these arguments fail to encompass many realities of today's world in which each nation-state's military ability is, unlike the past colonial era, far modernized. The world's strongest military failed to successfully control such, relatively, weak countries as Iraq and Afghanistan. Moreover, the immense military budget is a weakness, instead of strength. Kennedy (1987) suggests the hegemonic country's tendency of "overstretch" of military capacity as a main cause for its decline.

Despite its global scale, U.S. economy is struggling with various negative indicators. U.S. industrial and manufacturing economies are losing their competitiveness. American brands are losing points, dollar loyalty is fading, and American legitimacy crisis is growing

(Nederveen Pieterse, 2008). U.S. financial market is also unstable, causing investors to seek for other places. Now, the U.S. is the world's biggest debtor.⁶ The U.S. borrowed 60% of all global credit in 2006 and had to spend more than \$400 billion for interest payments alone. In 2005, the U.S. national debt is \$13.5 trillion, which is 11.5% of its GDP.

Despite these economic conditions, the U.S. has been able to sustain its economy through the inflow of capital from the poorer countries in East Asia and the Middle East (Baek, 2005). Amidst U.S. economic slowdown in 2007, worsened by weakening dollar, rising oil price, and subprime mortgage crisis, foreign investors from the Middle East, Asia, and Europe bought American companies at dumping prices. In 2007, foreign investors poured a record \$414 billion into buying American companies and other assets (Goodman and Story, 2008).⁷ This is a situation in which poorer countries sustain the richest country in the world. Todd (2003) argues that the U.S. is not a presiding power of world order any more, but a dependent super power. During the period of U.S. hegemony, the "free world" rested on its hegemony, but now that the latter's political economic capacities are far grown up in the international division of labor, the U.S. cannot live without leaning on those countries.⁸

⁶ Nederveen Pieterse (2004:150) notes that "[i]n the early 1980s, the United States was a net creditor to the rest of the world; it is now the largest net debtor."

⁷ Goodman and Story (2008) on *The New York Times* report that "the United States is now on sale at discount prices." It goes on to say that "[w]ith credit tight, unemployment growing and worries mounting about a potential recession, American business and government leaders are courting foreign money to keep the economy growing" (*Ibid.*).

⁸ Todd (2003:15) notes that "[a]t the very moment when the rest of the world [. . .] is on the verge of discovering that it can get along without America, America is realizing that it cannot get along without the rest of the world."

The historical structural analyses support that the U.S. economic problem is not merely episodic. Regarding historical hegemonic transition, many world-systems analysts argue that contemporary globalization is a historical stage characterized by the hegemonic decline of the U.S. Examining the life cycle of the five-hundred-year-old capitalist world system, Wallerstein (2000) argues that we are living in a critical historical moment in which two important historical cycles are converged: one is the transition of the contemporary world system which is at its last stage, and the other is the decline of U.S. hegemony. Historic events such as the Vietnam War, the rise of Europe, Japan, and the Newly Industrialized Economies (NIEs) have accelerated the decline of hegemony (Wallerstein, 2000).⁹

Arrighi (1994) explains the hegemonic transition by the structural dynamics of capital. According to him, contemporary financial globalization is a symptom of hegemonic transition. He says that “[t]hroughout the capitalist era financial expansions have signaled the transition from one regime of accumulation on a world scale to another” (Arrighi, 1994:ix-x). This argument is based on Marx’s idea of “M-C-M’ process.”¹⁰ Based on this logic, Arrighi (1994:4) argues that financial expansions “are integral aspects of the recurrent destruction of

⁹ For Wallerstein (2004b), hegemonic power is something created in an effort to prevent a world empire. He holds that “hegemonic powers always enter into, must enter into, a process of slow decline” because “maintaining hegemony requires an ever greater turn to investment in the military sector that undermines economic competitiveness, political legitimacy, and ideological leadership” (*Ibid.*).

¹⁰ This is Karl Marx’s general formula of capital. According to Arrighi (1994:5), “Money Capital (M) means liquidity, flexibility, freedom of choice. Commodity Capital (C) means capital invested in a particular input-output combination in view of a profit. Hence, it means concreteness, rigidity, and a narrowing down or closing of options. M’ means expanded liquidity, flexibility, and freedom of choice.” Because of the capitalists’ preference of “flexibility,” this systemic dynamics occurs.

'old' regimes and the simultaneous creation of 'new' ones." Thus, current financial expansion and neoliberal globalization are, in fact, signaling the "autumn" of a U.S. era that is on the verge of being replaced by a new world order whose characteristics are yet unknown.

While some theorists, including world-systems analysts, argue for the decline of U.S. hegemony (Hwang, 1991; Eunjin Lee, 1992), many others consider that it is already over. Chang (1992) argues that the U.S. is not a hegemon any more, even as of the early 1990s. Based on the hegemonic stability theory, he argues that the U.S. was no more a rule-maker, as was illustrated in the failures of the Uruguay Round and of the establishment of a new world order at the time, and that there was a distinct tendency for the followers such as Europe and East Asia to move away from the influence of the U.S. Considering that hegemony is leadership based on consent, Su-Hoon Lee (2004) also argues that the U.S., whose reliance on unilateralism is recently noticeable, is not a hegemon anymore.

The Resurgence of East Asia in a Multipolarizing World

Another marked global condition, accompanied by the decrepit U.S. hegemony, is the resurgence of East Asia. The geography of major manufacture industries such as automobile and semiconductor in the world economy was already changed by the performances of the NIEs in East Asia (Dicken, 2007). In the financial field, vast foreign reserves of East Asia are a safeguard against global financial turbulence (Nederveen Pieterse, 2008). This economic situation entails the reduction of Asian countries' reliance on the U.S. In fact, Asian countries are already helping one another afar from U.S. hegemony (Nederveen Pieterse, 2008; Arrighi,

1996). China has already risen as the largest trade partner to South Korea and Japan and the amount of trade among these countries is rapidly increasing.

At the center of the rise of East Asia is China whose national potentiality exceeds any other country's on the planet. Based on the estimates of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Nederveen Pieterse (2006:6) notes that "China's GDP is likely to pass that of Japan around 2016 and approach the size of the U.S. by 2040 [. . .]." Since early 2003, "China has overtaken the United States as the prime place for foreign investment" (Nederveen Pieterse, 2004:150). Emphasizing that Asian countries have already become the largest overseas investors in the U.S., Nederveen Pieterse (2004:151) adds that "China has become one of the world's five largest holders of Treasury securities." This argument echoes the East Asian capital inflow into the U.S. Moreover, China's economic growth is based on actual productive power (Dicken, 2007). World-systems analysis makes a point that the rise of East Asia is a historical systemic event. Arrighi and Silver (1999) argue that the hegemonic transition from North America to East Asia, in particular China, is quite apparent. For them, the problem in front us is how we can make the transformation without conflict.¹¹

The rapid economic growth of East Asia reflects oriental globalization *per se*. Many literatures on oriental globalization hold that the economic, political, and cultural power of Asia remained stronger, compared to Europe, as late as the nineteenth century. In this context, the more appropriate term of the rise of Asia today might be the "resurgence of Asia." The attitude seeking for the origin of globalization in European modernity is Eurocentric, that is, based on a

¹¹ Arrighi and Silver (1999:286) says that "[w]hat lies [. . .] are the difficulties involved in transforming the modern world into a commonwealth of civilizations that reflects [. . .] the reemerging China-centered civilization."

fabricated Eurocentric history (Nederveen Pieterse, 1994). It should be noted that “Europe” is the product of the interaction with the “Orient” (*Ibid.*). Disputing the discourses of Chinese isolationism and of its withdrawal from the global economy as “Eurocentric myth,” Hobson (2004:50) maintains that “[b]y 1100 the leading edge of global intensive power had shifted across to China and remained there until the nineteenth century.” He goes on to say that “before 1839 China was able to both control those Europeans who were officially allowed access to its market, and militarily defeat any European challengers [. . .]” (*Ibid.*:73).

Thus, some views that seek for the historical origin of globalization merely from the fifteenth century Europe lose the historical context. Nederveen Pieterse (2006:1) says that “the Orient came first and the Occident was a latecomer.” According to this perspective, globalization started far before the times the Eurocentric globalization literatures focus on, e.g., post-war, post-1800, or post-1500. Taking into account the historical Asia’s “forwardness” centered on Chinese civilization, Nederveen Pieterse (2006:2) holds that “500 C.E. may rank as the start of oriental globalization and 600 as the beginning of the big expansion of global trade.” Hobson (2004) says that the first industrial miracle occurred in the eleventh century Sung China.

The rise of East Asia reflects the contemporary multipolarization of the world. Many thinkers observe global repositioning and realignments toward growing multipolarity (Nederveen Pieterse, 2008). This emerging world is different from the previous systems in its relatively horizontal, cooperative feature. Instead of the strict international division of labor that forced the majority of countries to follow the rules set by a few powerful countries or a hegemon, the emerging world is based on multipolar regional cooperation. Even some political realists do not deny this global trend. Brzezinski (1997:209), for example, says that “[i]n the long

run, global politics are bound to become increasingly uncongenial to the concentration of hegemonic power in the hands of a single state [. . .].” He provides an insight into this, saying that “[t]hat is so not only because nation-states are gradually becoming increasingly permeable but also because knowledge as power is becoming more diffuse” (*Ibid.*).

In this global trend, the core-periphery or the North-South hierarchy is being blurred. In places of such overarching international institutions as the IMF, World Bank, and G8, the influences of the regional communities in the South such as the Mercosur, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and G77 are increasing (Nederveen Pieterse, 2008). In this shifting world, such discourses as the “clash of civilizations,” “anarchic international system,” are losing ground. In light of this historical trend, some political groups’ bid for the new American century becomes ahistorical.

Towards the East Asian Community

Reflecting global shifts, East Asian countries’ movements towards the cooperation-based East Asian community are active more than any other times in the past. The idea of the East Asian community was initiated in 1990 by the Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad’s proposal of the East Asian Economic Group (EAEG) or the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC), a regional free trade zone encompassing the ASEAN and the Three (China, South Korea, and Japan). However, the need for the East Asian Community was addressed in earnest from the Asian financial crisis in 1997 (Han-Woo Lee, 2007). The first “ASEAN Plus Three (APT)” meeting was held in 1997 and its significance was strengthened by the crisis. In December 1998, the South Korean president Kim Dae-Jung proposed the East Asian Vision

Group (EAVG). Its report that was submitted to the fifth APT meeting in November 2001 suggested the promotion of regional identity as an important goal for the East Asian Community.

In 2004, the APT meeting decided to hold the East Asia Summit (EAS), a broader annual pan-Asia forum encompassing India, Australia, and New Zealand in addition to the 13 APT members. Since the first meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in December 14, 2005, the EAS has been seeking for regional cooperation against the global and regional problems, aiming at the construction of a unified East Asian Community. Adopted in this summit, the Kuala Lumpur Declaration clarified the shared view that “the East Asia Summit could play a significant role in community building in this region” based on “our shared interests in achieving peace, security and prosperity in East Asia and the world at large” (ASEAN, 2005).

Among the Three countries, South Korea and China have recently been very positive towards the regional community. The Roh Moo-Hyun administration of South Korea earnestly promoted various projects towards the regional community by setting one of the three goals of national affairs, the policy towards the “era of peace and prosperity of Northeast Asia (Pyungwha wa Bonyoung ui Dongbuka Sidae).” In his inaugural address on February 23, 2003, President Roh emphasized Korea’s leading role in the new era of Northeast Asia, saying that “we need to advance the day when people can ticket for Paris at Pusan and arrive at the center of Europe via Pyongyang, Sinuiju, China, Mongolia, and Russia” (Roh Moo-Hyun, 2003). The South Korean terminology of “Dongbuka (Northeast Asia),” vis-à-vis East Asia or Asia-Pacific, is a concept implying a certain degree of detachment from the U.S.-centered system that is based on the division of the Korean Peninsula excluding North Korea. Considering the concept of “Dongbuka” as “a new spatial imagery” reflecting the end of U.S. hegemony and the rise of China, Su-Hoon Lee (2004:134) notes that “while the concept of East Asia or Asia-Pacific has a

limitation of excluding North Korea, 'Dongbuka' has the merit of including the whole Korean Peninsula." For advancing the new era, the Roh administration gave first priority to the policy of liberating the region from the threat of war, which led to some disharmony with the Bush administration.

On the inauguration of the Roh administration in 2003, the "Presidential Committee on Northeast Asian Business Hub" was launched, which was later transformed into the "Presidential Committee on Northeast Asian Cooperation Initiative." The initiative was grounded on the idea of the cooperative combination of the regional capital (Korea, Taiwan, and Japan), labor (North Korea and China), and resources (Russia, North Korea, and China), for regional prosperity. In this initiative, Seoul aimed at becoming the central city of finance and physical distribution on the BESETO (BEijing-SEoul-TOKyo) Line. The significance of this initiative lies in its vision of a new regional community based on cooperation and peace. The Roh administration's succession of the "Sunshine Policy" of the previous Kim Dae-Jung administration towards North Korea should be understood within this broader framework.

To the Sunshine Policy, the North replied with the policy of "reform and openness." Realizing the limitation of the Stalin-style classic socialist model, North Korea was moving in the direction of reform. Taking the "7.1 (July 1st)" measure in 2002 as a momentum, the North accomplished drastic reforms and openness in the economic system, centering on marketization, decentralization, and liberalization of foreign trade (Il-Gi Kim, 2006). Kim (2006) analyzes that North Korea was following the Chinese, Vietnamese model, which focused on maintaining the socialist system through the reforms and openness of the economic system. Reflecting this atmosphere, the political, economic, social interactions between South and North Korea drastically increased during the Roh administration (Il-Gi Kim, 2006; Jeon, 2006).

For China, the idea of the East Asian Community is promoted as an opportunity to drive away U.S. influence in the region. Hence, criticizing U.S. imperialist attitude, unilateralism, and the Missile Defense (MD) system, China argues that the post-Cold War international order should be based on the multilateral system respecting each nation's diversity and sovereignty (Kwon and Shen, 2007). Turning to the ideas of "cooperative security" and "comprehensive security" in the late 1990s, China has been positively participating in the regional cooperative system (Han-Woo Lee, 2007). China has the "two track strategy," one of which aims at the successful participation in the world economy and the other aims at the leading role in East Asian regional cooperation (Park, 2004). After mentioning the FTA between China and the ASEAN in November 2000 China-ASEAN Summit, Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji officially proposed it in the fifth China-ASEAN Summit in the next year (Han-Woo Lee, 2007). Joining the WTO, China reached the "Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation" with the ASEAN, which promises the establishment of the free trade zone until 2010 (*Ibid.*). For the regional community, China held the first meeting of the "Network of East Asian Think Tanks" in Beijing in September, 2003.

A loyal ally to the U.S. satisfied with being the number-two in the U.S.-centered system, Japan was relatively reluctant to the establishment of the regional community. Deciding to join the MD system in December 2003, Japan showed its weight on the relationship with the U.S. It considers the U.S.-Japan alliance system as a ground to enhance its role in the international society, setting China and North Korea as a potential threat (Kwon and Shen, 2007). However, Japan was not able to remain indifferent to the global and regional trends. Triggered by South Korean and Chinese movements, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi mentioned a cooperative East Asian community in January 2002, signing the Economic Partnership

Agreement with Singapore. In Japan-ASEAN Commemorative Summit in December 2003, Japan addressed the strengthening of the cooperative relationships with the ASEAN countries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2003). Furthermore, being called for by 10 Japanese think-tanks, the “Council on East Asian Country” (CEAC) of Japan was launched in May 2004, encompassing the industrial, governmental, and academic figures concerned with regional community. Regarding the background of its inauguration, the Council says that “[t]he concept of an ‘East Asian Community’ has been spread quietly but steadily leading to the formation of a gigantic trend in the East Asian region” (CEAC, 2004).¹²

The U.S. does not welcome these regional movements. Responding to the first EAS, the former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage stated that “[m]y view is this is a thinly veiled way to make the point that the United States is not totally welcomed in Asia. I think that’s a real mistake” (cited in Pempel, 2007). Regarding the proposal of EAEG by the Prime Minister Mahathir, the precursor of the APT, the U.S. government put “considerable pressure on Japan and South Korea to reject the proposal” (Stubbs, 2002). Haggard (2007:37) says that “[g]rowing intra-Asian integration and a new center of economic gravity in China could culminate in a regional economy and institutions from which the United States would be excluded.” Yet, there is no sign that the U.S., adhering to the system centered on itself, changes its attitude and tries to lead the new regional movements.

¹² The council adds that its inauguration was “triggered by the launching in 2003 of ‘The Network of East Asian Think-Tanks(NEAT)’ in Beijing and of ‘The East Asia Forum(EAF)’ in Seoul in 2003” (CEAC, 2004).

Growing Anti-American Sentiments in South Korea

When the power-based U.S. strategy is not reflecting the global historical transition and the regional atmosphere, it causes resistance from East Asian people, accelerating U.S. decline. Although anti-Americanism is a decades-old phenomenon, the seriousness of anti-Americanism today is that it becomes a kind of “trend” not only in East Asia but around the world. Jinwoong Kim (2005) notes that as the image of “ugly America” spreads, the U.S. is losing its supporters even from the traditional allies such as South Korea.

Many surveys point out the increasing number of South Koreans perceiving the U.S. negatively. In contrast, the images of North Korea and China are getting better among South Koreans. According to Haksung Kim (2007), the percentage of South Koreans having a favorable opinion about the U.S. rapidly dropped from 70.1% in 1995 to 42.7% in 2004. Many South Koreans recognize that the main party causing tension in the Peninsula regarding the nuclear issue is the U.S. rather than North Korea. When asked to select a country obstructing the resolution of North Korea’s nuclear issue, in Haksung Kim’s (2007) study, the highest percentage of South Korean respondents pointed to the U.S. (36.9%) instead of North Korea (34.6%). However, according to *Hankook Ilbo*’s survey in 2004, the country that respondents think was most influential in the resolution of North Korea’s nuclear issue was also the U.S. (60.1%), instead of North Korea (4.1%) (Haksung Kim, 2007).

An important point in these opinions is that the younger the respondent is, the more negative towards the U.S. (Kim, Park, and Oh, 2003). About the U.S. as a nation, such negative perceptions as “commercialism” and “exclusive sense of superiority” are high among Koreans, whereas positive opinions such as “democratic civil society” are low. About the Americans, the

opinions such as “selfish” are high whereas positive opinions such as “advanced people” are low. The trust levels in Americans as well as American institutions are also low (*Ibid.*).

Besides, South Koreans recast the U.S. with such perceptions as “unfair South Korea-U.S. relationship,” “interruption of the unification of the two Koreas,” and “imperial domination of the world” (*Ibid.*). Kim, Park, and Oh (2003) emphasize that Koreans now do not regard the U.S. as an unconditional ally protecting freedom and democracy, but as a country that should be an equal partner in international relations. They interpret this result as reflecting the younger generation’s voice requesting the horizontal relationship between South Korea and the U.S. The factors such as the growth of South Korea’s national power, the retreat of the older generation that experienced the ideological confrontation with North Korea, and the U.S.’s reinforced unilateralism are contributing to the negative change of South Korean perceptions of the U.S. (*Ibid.*)

According to Jinwoong Kim (1992), a survey conducted in 1965 by the U.S. Information Service in Korea reported that only 1% of the South Korean respondents disliked the U.S. (cited in Kim and Choi, 2005). A survey in 1982 conducted by *Donga Ilbo* reported that only 3.3% of the respondents expressed dislike about the U.S. (*Ibid.*). Kim and Choi’s (2005) report also shows a distinct tendency of increasing negative image of the U.S. among South Koreans: 16.1% in 1988, 29.6% in 1990, 21.7% in 2001, 59.6% in 2002, and 54.0% in 2003. Yet, this does not mean that the U.S. is a disliked country by South Koreans. On the contrary, the U.S. is still one of the countries that are liked by many South Koreans. Given this situation, South Koreans’ negative image of the U.S. does not yet seem to be systemic or ideological.¹³ Jinwoong Kim (1994) says that ordinary South Koreans’ anti-Americanism is at

¹³ Jinwoong Kim (1994) distinguishes the “emotional anti-Americanism (gam-jung-juk ban-mi-ju-ui)” from

an emotional level. Regarding the recent increase of South Koreans' negative images of the U.S., Jinwoong Kim (2005) interprets that it reflects the world criticism of the Bush administration's unilateralism. That is, people are now afraid of the U.S. as a "worrisome giant (geokjung-srun geoin)" (*Ibid.*).

The improving images of North Korea and China among South Koreans are noticeable. Combined with this phenomenon is the increase of South Korea's interactions with these countries. South Korea's export to China were \$35.1 billion in 2003 and \$49.8 billion in the following year, which made China the largest export market to South Korea (Sangwon Lee, 2005). Korean corporations' direct investment in China is also rapidly increasing: \$1.6 billion in 2003 and \$2.2 billion in 2004 (*Ibid.*).¹⁴ China is now the largest trade partner to Korea in both import and export (Hong, 2008).¹⁵ In 2003, South Korea and China upgraded their relationship from the "cooperative partnership" to the "comprehensive cooperative partnership." China considers upgrading this to the highest diplomatic level of the "strategic relationship" (Wootak Lee, 2008). During the second round of North Korean nuclear issue, South Korea shared its interests more with China than with the U.S. in that both pursued the peaceful resolution instead of the hard-lined sanctions against North Korea (Sangwon Lee,

the "ideological anti-Americanism." The former refers to the attitude against specific policies or behaviors of the U.S., whereas the latter the imperial nature of it. Hence, the intensity of anti-Americanism of the former kind is relatively low and flexible.

¹⁴ These are 57.1% (in 2003) and 38% (in 2004) of South Korea's abroad investment totals.

¹⁵ In Korea's import, China overtook Japan, the largest traditional importing partner for Korea, in 2007 with the amount of \$63 billion followed by Japan (\$56.3 billion) and the U.S. (\$37.2 billion). In Korea's export, in 2007, China kept the status of the largest partner with the amount of \$82 billion followed by the U.S. (\$45.8 billion) and Japan (\$26.4 billion) (Hong, 2008).

2005). Reflecting the changing relationship with China, a survey by *Donga Ilbo* in 2004 showed that 84% of South Korean respondents agreed to the need for foreign policy centered on China (*Ibid.*). The Korean Broadcasting System (KBS)'s survey in September 2004 showed that 40.4% of South Koreans supported changing the weight of foreign policy toward China, while 55.8% supported maintaining the alliance with the U.S. (*Ibid.*). Sangwon Lee (2005) also notes that South Koreans' changing perception of China is affected in part by the conflicts with the U.S. revolving around the alliance system.

For the increasing number of South Koreans, the North is no more a threat to their security. After the Cold War and the collapse of the communist bloc, more and more South Koreans, especially the younger generations, recognize the North as a brother. For a question of a survey by the Korea Gallup in 2006 that "in case of war between the U.S. and North Korea, with which South Korea should stand?", 65.9% of the respondents whose ages are 16-25 chose North Korea, while 28.1% chose the U.S. (Haksung Kim, 2007). For a question about the intention of North Korea's nuclear development, respondents answered that it was for "regime security (39.5%)" and "negotiation leverage against the U.S. (36.95%)," while the answer that it was for "threatening South Korea" was 14.8% (*Ibid.*).

These opinions reflect Kim and Jones's (2007:13) observation that "[t]he North looked more like a failing state, in need of outside aid, than a rogue capable of waging war against its other half." This is especially the case for the young post-war generations. Kim and Jones (2007:13) add that based on this perception, young generations "criticized South Korea's military alliance system as not only unnecessarily crippling sovereignty, but also dangerously dragging it into the U.S. war on terror against its will." In addition, regarding a long-term factor affecting South Koreans' trust levels in the U.S., Kim, Parker, and Choi (2006:439) suggest that

the U.S. should be worried about the image of the U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) “since it is one of the major causes of declining trust in the USA.”

The Need for a New Framework

As of the early 21st century, East Asia is a battlefield between the political power pursuing a new cooperative region and that trying to maintain the tension-based “status quo.” In this struggle, the U.S. is at the center of the power trying to maintain tension and conflict. In this sense, the U.S. is an impediment rather than a facilitator of a cooperative new region of East Asia (Pempel, 2007). As Pempel (2007:63) points out, the U.S. “has been highly skeptical of exclusively Asian regional arrangements, and [. . .] that skepticism continues.”

Some provide insights into the need for a new U.S. strategy on East Asia. Alagappa (2003) notes that future Asia would be dominated neither by the U.S. nor by China. He envisions, instead, a “hybrid system entailing regional stability, increased well-being, local spheres of influence, and the reliance on formal and informal forums and rules to manage [national] differences” (cited in Pollack, 2007:91). This vision shares some points with the discourse of the multipolar world. In this context, the need for the reconsideration of current U.S. strategy is strong. On the ground of these circumstantial changes, Pollack (2007:91) properly suggests that a “future U.S. strategy must define a larger concept of the regional future, not a vision tailored exclusively to the military strategic requirements of the U.S.”

The peaceful construction of the East Asian Community does not necessarily mean the exclusion of the U.S. from it. For a picture of future Northeast Asia, Haruki (2003), for example, suggests an idea of the “ANEAN (Association of North-East Asian Nations)”

including the two Koreas, Japan, China, the U.S., Russia, and Mongolia. Emphasizing the unified Korea's crucial role in this community as a mediating power, he mentions the possibility of the exclusion of the U.S. and Russia. However, he adds that the development of the community would be promoted by the inclusion of the two countries. For this, the U.S. needs a different strategy from that of today.

However, reactionary power is not weak. Not a small number of scholars and policy makers are still talking about the future of East Asia on tension-based relationships, ignoring the global and regional trends. National Bureau of Asian Research's (2007) conference report, for instance, argues for the need for maintaining the current U.S.-South Korea alliance system, mentioning the possibility of the battle between South Korea and the U.S. in case of the alliance system not working. However, the validity of this kind of tension-based argument is doubtful, given the circumstantial global, regional, and local changes aforementioned.

For the peaceful participation in East Asia, the U.S. should make an effort to solve the "Korean Problem," that is, the tension in the Peninsula, as soon as possible since it is no more a useful tool for the U.S. to justify its power-based strategy, but, a source of anti-American sentiments in the region. The MD strategy, which needs the threat from North Korea and China, is losing ground, accelerating U.S. alienation from East Asia. The wave of global and regional trends in East Asia is too big for the U.S. to reverse. More and more East Asian people are realizing that the U.S. treats them as scapegoats for the interests of the military-industrial complex. The practical and moral way for the U.S. in this situation is to elaborate the policy of peaceful participation in East Asia, if it is truly concerned with the era of "Asia-Pacific region."

Conclusion

This paper examined the validity of the ongoing power-based strategy of the U.S. in East Asia, in light of the global, regional, and local conditions. The contemporary global circumstances are represented by U.S. power decline and the resurgence of East Asia. Given this historical trend, this is not a world where the U.S. can afford to claim another century, but it cannot live without leaning on the world. In place of U.S. hegemony, regional cooperative interaction and the idea of regional union are taking over. As for the global future, a multipolar world is envisioned, in which no nations hold such a sway over the international order as the U.S. did in the twentieth century.

In line with the collapsing framework of ideological confrontations among the countries in the region, people in East Asia are increasingly aware of the need for the transition towards peace and cooperation. Regarding the “threat” from the communist countries, Kurozumi Makoto at the University of Tokyo says that “it is a comic show that Japan makes a great fuss about North Korea’s Daepodong missile” (Yong-Ok Kim, 2007). This kind of awareness encourages the regional countries to move towards cooperative new era, breaking with the confrontational framework in the past.

In these historical global and regional circumstances, the U.S. seems to be fixated to the past when its power was at the peak, failing to adjust to the new trends. The Bush administration’s hostile attitude toward North Korea, which brought about the second round nuclear crisis, should be understood in the context of the neoconservatives’ proclamation of the “new American century.” Unfortunately, however, the paradox of this miscalculated bid is its loss of position in the East Asian community. Unlike the Cold War era, U.S. “threat-based

strategy” is no more effective in justifying its presence in East Asia, but, counterproductive for its “national interests.” Being regarded as a worrisome giant by East Asian peoples, U.S.’s unchanging strategy preoccupied with its military power causes resistance from the local people. The tension with North Korea is no more a useful tool to politically mobilize East Asian people. Rather, it increases the negative images of the U.S.

Preoccupation with hegemony is passé, and a multipolar world is emerging. An important problem is how the U.S. adjusts to these shifts. Despite much skepticism on the possibility of U.S. self-correction because of its deeply institutionalized cold war apparatuses, Kennedy’s (1987:534) words are cited here: “the only serious threat to the real interests of the United States can come from a failure to adjust sensibly to the newer world order.”

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