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Tae Kyoan Kim (Seoul National University)

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Professor, Seoul National University



I. Global Trends in Development Cooperation and Democracy Promotion

As a strategic instrument, international development cooperation (IDC) in general, or official development assistance (ODA) in particular, holds dual policy values reflecting the national interests of donor countries along with the context of international political dynamics, while also realizing universal values demanded by global governance. While all UN member states have collectively set the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which the international community is supposed to achieve by 2030, as a common universal objective and making efforts to implement them, the global governance for IDC is facing a multiple crisis due to complex challenges including the COVID-19 pandemic, US-China strategic competition, the Russo-Ukrainian war, and so forth.

Above all, there is a growing tendency for IDC policies to be increasingly utilized as tools to serve a state's geopolitical objectives. Despite the freeze or reduction of budgets for

ODA allocated overseas due to the financial commitments to domestic public health security for global pandemic, Western democracies' responses to China's aggressively expanding Belt and Road Initiative have become stronger as part of the strategic competition between the United States and China. For example, as a new development cooperation platform centered on the US and G7, Building Back Better World (B3W) in 2021, and Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII) in 2022 were established, and pledged to provide transparent and high-quality infrastructure to cooperation partner countries in the Global South. Additionally, the Indo-Pacific strategies, such as the United States, Japan, and South Korea, actively included elements of humanitarian assistance and infrastructure-centered projects, and the platforms for providing high-quality infrastructure support have been established within the QUAD. Furthermore, through the summit meeting between South Korea- the United States- Japan held at Camp David in August 2023, the states agreed to solidify a 'free and open' order by jointly responding to global issues such as economic norms, climate change, and development cooperation, as well as security cooperation.

Meanwhile, the United States, Japan, South Korea, and the G7 have been collectively playing a pivotal role in implementing IDC policies promoting democracy, peacebuilding, and human rights protections. Such policies are regarded as shared cooperative tasks aimed at establishing a liberal and rule-based international order. Tasks such as democratic governance, the rule of law, a rights-based approach, and peacebuilding, which are universal values and serve as crosscutting criteria for sustainable development, have become key agendas for IDC in response to the evolving international landscape. In addition, various sectors and themes, collectively referred to as 'democracy aid,' have emerged as a significant

issue area in supporting democracy abroad for individual donor countries by sharing their democratic experiences. Particularly, discussion within the international community regarding the Ukraine post-war recovery initiatives for regarding the protection and restoration of liberal democracy has become more pronounced in the face of the Russo-Ukrainian war. South Korea is also expected to actively participate in the Ukraine recovery project through IDC initiatives as South Korea includes Ukraine post-war recovery support initiatives in its increased 2024 ODA budget.

Along with the grand changes in global governance of IDC at a macro-level, the microscopic trend to strengthen the localization of development projects is emphasized also by both donor agencies and local communities of developing countries. It is widely acknowledged that aid effectiveness is sapped when the infusion of development assistance on a global scale fails to culminate in genuine local ownership and a proactive impetus for development cooperation within the recipient state's sphere. Recent emphasis in the international community, including the United Nations, on the principle of 'localization' in the field of IDC calls upon the essential component of foreign aid for democracy promotion, as the concept of localization underscores the local ownership, which is an embedded autonomy of local partner cooperation agencies, and local communities rather than donor countries or international organization, as an ultimate driver of IDC. Consequently, this suggests that the attainment of effectiveness and accountability in development cooperation initiatives necessitates the cultivation of civic participation and democratic governance within partner countries. To facilitate the localization of global development efforts, donor organizations would increasingly find it imperative to augment

their support for democracy-building initiatives, including direct backing for the activation of civil society within recipient societies and the enhancement of local community capacities. As we look ahead to approximately seven years remaining until the target year of 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the new formulation of post-2030 development objectives, it is increasingly probable that discussions pertaining to global democratic governance will prominently feature the role of democracy promotion as one of principal pillars for post-2030 agendas.

II. South Korea's Domestic Changes and its Contributive Diplomacy for Global Democracy

Domestic policy changes in South Korea related to IDC can be categorized into the following three trajectories.

First of all, the Yoon administration has incorporated the 'global pivotal state contributing to freedom, peace, and prosperity' and value-based contributive diplomacy as core pillar of its diplomatic strategy within the framework of the 120 national tasks. The 'Global Pivotal State' signifies the willingness of South Korea's commitment to actively utilize resources such as ODA in the key areas of multilateral diplomacy as a way of South Korea's presences in global leadership. This can be assessed as South Korea's commitment to assume a prominent position within the global order founded upon universal values, unencumbered by limitations imposed by regional rivalries, particularly within the framework of the

competition between the United States and China. The Yoon administration emphasizes free and democracy as the Global Pivotal State's main value, thereby expanding the value-driven diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific region in cooperation with the Biden administration. Therefore, Seoul's value diplomacy anchored in democracy promotion can be visualized as an IDC policy which is aligned with Washington and Tokyo for the identical purpose of promoting democracies abroad. President Yoon's commitment of 100 million USD in democracy assistance over the next three years, as announced during the second Summit for Democracy, reflects this direction.

Secondly, in contrast to the global trend among advanced Western donor countries freezing or reducing their ODA budgets, South Korea is actively increasing its ODA budget for 2024. South Korea's forthcoming ODA budget for the next year is being promoted at a scale of approximately 6.5 trillion won, representing an increase of about 40 percent compared to the previous year. This marks a notable surge in percentage increase, particularly when compared to other Western donors within the OECD DAC membership, who have adopted austerity measures in their ODA policies, especially during the global pandemic and refugee crises. The challenge lies in effectively channeling this substantial budget augmentation. Deliberations regarding the allocation of ODA across broad categories encompassing climate and environmental initiatives, digital infrastructure, Ukraine's reconstruction endeavors, and humanitarian assistance are already in progress, but further discussion in the public sphere would be a necessary condition to delineate concrete plans. Consequently, more endeavors aimed at reformulating South Korea's ODA strategy and vision should be re-oriented towards fostering global democracy in consonance with a value-driven

diplomatic approach, rather than adhering to its conventional, fragmented ODA implementation model, which merely entails utilizing a portion of the augmented budget.

Thirdly, South Korea has established a consensus within its society, which facilitated the partnership agreement between civil society organizations (CSOs) and the government by enhancing mutual understanding through development cooperation initiatives. This consensus centers on the government's role in constructing a normative framework that not only clarifies but also fosters the continuous deepening of the collaborative relationship with civil society. In 2019, during the 32nd Committee on International Development Cooperation (CIDC) meeting, the 'Policy Framework for Government-Civil Society Partnership in International Development Cooperation (hereafter, Policy Framework)' was officially adopted. Subsequently, in 2021, the 'Implementation Plan for the Policy Framework' was unveiled following deliberations within the government-CSO regular policy commission. Accordingly, an institutional platform established for conducting the Policy Framework enables the government to either directly execute or delegate IDC projects by not only providing support to Korean development CSOs, but also facilitating synergistic engagement between CSOs and the government concerning development cooperation initiatives and project implementations. This Policy Framework serves as the institutional basis upon which the government-civil society partnership is anticipated to assume a pivotal role in the formulation and execution of South Korea's IDC projects, with a specific focus on contributing to the advancement of democracy promotion.

III. Prospecting Strategies for South Korea's Contributions to Democracy Aid

Democracy aid does not presuppose a single standardized model or sector. The complex processes in selecting various aid modalities and interconnected sectors related to democracy promotion can be integrated into the broad, comprehensive framework of aiding democracy in partner countries. Such an integrated approach results in diversifying the selection of sectors and aid implementation methods in accordance with the domestic conditions of the donor country. South Korea's contributions to democracy promotion should also reflect its unique characteristics of value-driven foreign policies and key ODA priorities, which would finally lead to policy recommendations. Moreover, Korea's democracy aid will be difficult to plan or implement properly if it does not cooperate with multi-stakeholders beyond government agencies. A multi-layered cooperation system for democracy aid partnership involving key government agencies, the legislature, civil society, and other major domestic organizations must be established as a prerequisite. Considering the changes in the environment of IDC both domestically and internationally, as well as the integrated approach via the multi-stakeholder partnership of various domestic implementing entities of democracy aid, the four strategic responses of the Korean IDC policy for global democracy support can be proposed as follows.

1. Integrated Management through the whole-of-society Approach

A comprehensive, society-wide approach that comprehensively reconstructs the values and roles contributed by South Korea's support for global democracy should be institutionalized as the foundation of South Korea's roadmap for managing democracy aid in an integrated fashion. Although Korea's experiences in democracy aid have not been long, its historical experiences with democratization and democratic consolidation as political processes are richer and deeper than those of any other democracies. South Korea's democratization experiences can provide more appealing and practical support for partner countries in the Global South than traditional Global North donors, making its global democracy promotion more distinct from the traditional paths of aiding democracy abroad by Western democratic donors. Given South Korea's intricate journey of democratic development, marked by a rapid modernization process encompassing Japanese colonial rule, the Korean War, economic expansion in a condensed way, and political democratization, its experiences carry a greater degree of credibility when compared to Western donor states that previously held colonial dominion. In a nutshell, South Korea's endeavors in promoting democracy abroad can be seamlessly incorporated into the alternative way of political modernization that the Global South wants to develop, thus contributing to a broader global narrative of democratic promotion for the Global South.

South Korea's democracy assistance necessitates a comprehensive strategy that effectively links interconnected thematic areas and consolidates diverse executing bodies, all with a core focus on advancing democratic values. Hence, there is a pressing requirement to

institutionalize a systematic framework for integrating and overseeing the myriad projects associated with South Korea's multifaceted democracy promotion efforts. As previously discussed, democracy aid encompasses a wide array of sectors and themes; even if such assistances operate within a sector or theme, not explicitly denoted as "democracy" such as public administration, electoral systems, and governance, it can be encompassed within the multiple classification of democratic contributions at a macro level. Therefore, in order to operate the experience of democracy support in a comprehensive manner, an inclusive system for building and managing data related to democratic elements implemented across various sectors is essential. Currently, the unified concept or systematic management method, regarding the data collection of democracy aid, has not been set in South Korea, so the budget size of democracy-related aid projects cannot be accurately verified, and the content of those projects tends to be fragmented. The execution of democracy assistance initiatives should extend beyond government agencies and involve a diverse array of implementing entities associated with democratic engagement. Notably, the cooperative efforts and functions of both the National Assembly and civil society actors are underscored. In order to harness South Korea's extensive democratic expertise for meaningful contributions within the sphere of development cooperation, the collaborative engagement between the National Assembly and CSOs should be highlighted as pivotal implementing bodies for democracy aid, transcending the realm of government aid agencies.

2. National Assembly-Centered Contributions to Global Democracy

South Korea's attempt to enhance the positive promotion of democracy at the global level should transcend the purview of government agencies, thereby rather pivoting towards the National Assembly which serves as the wellspring of democratic politics in South Korea in the sense of its active participation in both direct and indirect democracy assistance initiatives. To establish a robust institutional framework, it becomes imperative for the National Assembly to constitute a parliamentary-level foundation or fund specialized to support democratic transition in partner countries, akin to the Swedish Political Party Foundation. This platform would facilitate collaborative efforts between ruling and opposition parties, ensuring a sustainable mechanism for advancing democracy in partner developing countries, irrespective of changes in government leadership. In circumstances where the South Korean government might encounter challenges in actively orchestrating and implementing democracy promotion initiatives due to the political sensitivities associated with such democracy aid, the National Assembly and its political party foundations are able to mitigate political sensitivities by collaborating with domestic and international CSOs to promote democracy assistance, rather than directly through governmental agencies of recipient partner countries. Additionally, the National Assembly can take the lead in formulating legislation to formalize South Korea's contributions to global democracy, and furnish a legal framework for the executing bodies involved in the implementation of democracy aid. All in all, the National Assembly, as the political institution

representing South Korea's democracy, has the advantage of being able to seek democracy promotion with legitimacy.

3. Contribution to Democracy Promotion Abroad Through the Partnership with Civil Society

Active collaboration with domestic development CSOs, CSOs in partner nations, and local communities is imperative as a pivotal executing entity for South Korea's contributions to global democracy. Particularly, South Korea should strategize the formulation of development cooperation initiatives that enable the direct allocation of its ODA to support CSOs in partner countries. Nordic donor countries have already demonstrated the merits of bolstering their domestic development CSOs, facilitating engagement between Nordic civil societies and those of partner nations to directly implement democracy promotion projects. While South Korea has previously provided direct assistance to domestic development CSOs via the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), this support has been characterized by short-term efforts, and presently, no direct assistance is being extended to CSOs for the purpose of democracy promotion abroad. In order to foster the localization of development cooperation and democracy assistance, South Korea should conduct a comparative analysis of the pros and cons associated with methods that entail direct support to CSOs partnered with Korean aid agencies. Subsequently, projects should be undertaken to directly bolster civil society through a localization strategy that leverages comparative advantages. One of the central objectives that South Korea's ODA policy

should pursue is the concept of “localization,” with CSOs from both South Korea and partner countries being the pivotal actors at its core. Nevertheless, if there are reservations about entrusting the capabilities of CSOs in partner countries or concerns regarding the transparency and accountability of CSO partnership management, the effectiveness of South Korea’s ODA projects may eventually become uncertain, ultimately placing a burden on the South Korean government. Therefore, it is critical to identify mechanisms that enhance the capacity of CSOs in partner countries through prioritized cooperation projects with domestic development CSOs.

4. Providing Democracy Aid Through Multilateral Cooperation

South Korea has the potential to develop a strategy for fostering the global proliferation of democracy by leveraging both domestic assistance mechanisms and implementing entities, in conjunction with embracing multilateral aid approaches. Conventional multilateral institutions, such as the United Nations and the World Bank, possess extensive experiences in executing development cooperation initiatives aimed at realizing universal values encompassing democracy, human rights, and gender-related issues, often through assessed or voluntary contributions. International Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) like ‘Oxfam’ and ‘Save the Children’ have also played direct and indirect roles in advancing global democracy promotion efforts. In its pursuit of a distinctive path for democracy contributions, South Korea should concurrently seek to expand avenues for cooperation with international organizations and NGOs, aiming to make meaningful contributions to democracy

advancement on the international stage and gain insights into the democracy promotion mandates of multilateral institutions. Furthermore, South Korea can strategize and engage in collaborative democracy assistance projects with groups such as the G7 or the trilateral partnership involving South Korea, the United States, and Japan. Additionally, South Korea can actively promote democracy cooperation through mini-lateral initiatives alongside partner countries that share common goals related to the Indo-Pacific strategy and the promotion of democracy within the region.

IV. Enhancing the Accountability of Korea's Development Assistance for Democracy Promotion

In the pursuit of a diplomacy characterized by contributions to promoting global democracy, South Korea should prioritize reinforcing its involvement in fostering democratic governance, peace, and the advancement of human rights, rather than adhering to a predominantly commercial approach in its ODA policy. Departing from the historical trajectory wherein Korean ODA predominantly emphasized economic development and facilitating corporate entry into foreign markets, it is vital to chart a new course for South Korea's IDC policy. This new direction should align with the principles of the global pivotal state approach, emphasizing the active expansion and systematic administration of democracy support initiatives as a means to elevate South Korea's national prestige on the global stage.

Finally, South Korea must be adequately prepared to address a range of challenges that could emerge as it intensifies its commitment to advancing global democracy through IDC. One of the primary hurdles revolves around the concept of sovereignty, whereby partner governments may view development cooperation initiatives aimed at democratic reform as politically sensitive matters. Without a robust consultation process with partner states, there exists a significant risk that such endeavors could be unfavorably construed as undue political interference intended to propagate a Korean-style democracy. Hence, in the execution of development cooperation projects designed to promote democracy abroad, strict adherence to the “Do No Harm” principle becomes imperative, and proactive efforts to introduce an accountability mechanism for democracy aid should be regarded as a pressing need to secure the aid effectiveness of democracy promotion. ■

■ **Tae Kyoan Kim**_ Professor of international development at the Graduate School of International Studies (GSIS) at Seoul National University.

■ Typeset by Juncheol Oh, EAI Research Assistant

For inquiries: 02-2277-1683 (ext. 205) jcoh@eai.or.kr

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The East Asia Institute
1, Sajik-ro 7-gil, Jongro-gu
Seoul 03028, South Korea
Tel. 82 2 2277 1683 Fax 82 2 2277 1684