

Paper Abstracts

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Session 2

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Is Global Korea Really Global? Assessing South Korean Contributions to International Security

November 30, 2011

- Date: November 30, 2011
- Venue: Kukdo Hotel, Seoul

Session 1. Post-Conflict Stabilization and International Peacekeeping

“Global Korea: the ROK PRT in Afghanistan”

John Hemmings, Pacific Forum, CSIS

The ROK has contributed far more towards global security and stability operations than it often receives credit for, having deployed more than 325,000 Korean troops in total to 22 troubled spots in support of a variety of U.S., UN, and other international missions, like PRT to Afghanistan. The deployment of the South Korean PRT to Afghanistan is a watershed in Korean military and development history. The event is remarkable in a number of different ways: first, it is another milestone marking South Korea's arrival as a global provider of security. Second, the PRT deployment is remarkable because it testifies to South Korea's growing expeditionary capabilities. Finally, the deployment of the Charika PRT is also remarkable because it is the first time that an East Asian nation has worked with a civil-military structure.

South Korean activities in PKO have included humanitarian and medical assistance, maintenance of public order, election supervision, and reconstruction of nations suffering from civil war, genocide and famine, rebuild-

ing public facilities, patrol, inspection, and mediation. And while the ROK's ranking in terms of personnel deployment may only be 33rd, it was the 10th largest donor to the UN peacekeeping budget (2011-2012), contributing nearly 2.7 percent of the annual cost.

Furthermore, the Republic of Korea's close security ties with the US, its arrival as a medium-sized power, and its unique development history made it an inevitable partner in carrying out stabilization activities alongside the US there. Despite this, the ROK's lack of a direct national interest in Afghanistan, its divided public opinion, and the challenging nature of the mission have seen ROK efforts take a less-than-smooth approach.

As the United States enters into a new and difficult time of budgetary austerity, the cutting of excess expenditure is offset by a shift of diplomatic and military resources to the Asian Pacific. Working closely together with allies like South Korea in expeditionary capabilities and in complex operations helps the US maintain its commitments abroad, but also encourages South Korea to view itself as a security player.

Yet, it has been said that Korean PRT at Charikar is hierarchical, yet civilian-lead, disciplined, yet passionate about its goals, as a model of Korea itself. Korean desire to shift to a provider of security pushes it beyond its comfort zone in some ways, but in other ways, this is precisely what is needed for growth. Also, it is still not clear how the Korean will fare in regard to longer-term local needs, contracting out to

local workers, and carefully managing funding so as to avoid corruption or indifference.

While South Korea is currently working closely with the US to understand how the US PRTs behave in Afghanistan; its answer will differentiate from American answers. Korean development model, its unique history, and its culture give these problems a different twist that the US military and development policy-makers might do to study.

“Korea and PKO: Is Korea Contributing to Global Peace?”

Balbina Hwang, Georgetown University

South Korea’s “Global Korea” strategy is embracing international responsibilities and actively contributing to resolve global challenges, and one of the most visible and tangible examples has been peacekeeping activities. Likewise, the ROK’s active participation in PKO started more recently, beginning with an engineering battalion dispatched to Somalia in 1993. The active increase in PKO participation was a direct result of concerted actions taken in recent years by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT) and National Defense (MND), and the National Assembly, under the leadership of the Blue House. Also, the law also authorizes the ROK government to make “provisional” agreements with the United Nations on force scales for dispatch, as well as the location of PKO and duration of service, which all require final approval by the National Assembly.

The important development that has significantly improved the ROK’s capacity to participate more robustly in UN-led PKOs is the creation of “standing Units” for overseas deployment of troops. In addition, in July 2010, the International Peace Support Force (Onnuri Unit) was created, resulting in an even stronger readiness posture for troop deployment. In addition to activities explicitly organized under a UN command the ROK has been an active participant in operations coordinated under multi-national forces (MNF), which have included direct involvement in the settlement of conflicts and reconstruction efforts. But even as the ROK has the sixth largest military worldwide, its contributions to international peacekeeping and stabili-

zation operations still remains comparatively limited.

South Korea has a unique opportunity within North-east Asia to present itself as responsible member of the international community, and the only power from North-east Asia that is able to demonstrate its stated values-based policies of promoting peace, stability, and prosperity into positive action. In addition, current ROK investments in global PKO increase the likelihood of future reciprocity by the international community in the advent of Korean reunification which will most likely require tremendous foreign assistance. Also, it could be more practical in nature, such as gaining valuable training and operational exercise for the ROK military and defense personnel.

Beyond active deployments, the ROK has expanded international cooperation and training exercises, dispatching a platoon of marines to participate for the first time in a multinational peacekeeping exercise held in Mongolia in August 2009. South Korea’s experience with PKOs have been largely successful and considered valuable and worthy activities by ROK officials. However, The Korean public has been less enthusiastic for lower-profile PKO missions such as in Lebanon and Sudan and this may be less inclined to support active Korean participation.

Until recently, there was a prevalent view that South Korean participation in PKOs has been that doing so will help to maintain and enhance the U.S.-ROK alliance or that achievement of South Korean national interests was secondary to the primary goal of preserving the alliance relationship with the United States like a tool of alliance management. Recently, however, this attitude has begun to change. Koreans have increasingly begun to openly embrace the notion that as an advanced country that benefitted from the help of the international community during its difficult history, it now has a duty to respond to global problems.

Session 2. Maritime Security and Counter-Proliferation

“South Korea’s counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden”

Terence Roehrig, US Naval War College

Counter-piracy operations are one part of a solution to address the problem of piracy that is rooted in the lack of effective governance and poverty. These dimensions of the problem will need to be addressed as well for any hope of a more permanent solution to the problem. Increasingly, global challenges like piracy that are transnational in nature will require multilateral solutions such as CTF-151 (the U.S.-led Combined Task Force).

South Korea has been a regular participant in CTF-151 with the contribution of a destroyer, helicopter, and special operations personnel making an important contribution to counter-piracy efforts in the Gulf of Aden, the Arabian Sea, and the Indian Ocean. As a rising middle power with increasing economic and political clout, South Korean participation has made an important contribution to a multilateral effort of the world’s chief naval powers to address the challenge of piracy. On top of that, participation in CTF-151 and other international security initiatives helps to further elevate the ROK’s status and reputation in the international community.

After several attacks of piracy to South Korean vessels, near Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden, ROK officials at the end decided to act and approved a plan to send a naval unit, which is named “Cheonghae” to participate in international counter-piracy operations, and the National Assembly approved the motion in early March 2009. It was the first time for South Korea to deploy naval forces away from the Korean Peninsula in its history. Since then, ROK vessels like Munmu the Great, Daejoyoung, Chungmugong Yi Sunshin have worked for the mutual goal, and now Munmu the Great is sent from the ROK again.

South Korea’s participation in CTF-151 has produced a number of benefits for ROK interests as well. Firstly, the presence of the Cheonghae unit has contributed to the pro-

tection of ROK commercial interests in the Gulf of Aden and Arabian Sea while also protecting its citizens that are involved here in maritime commerce. Secondly, as a rising middle power that is heavily dependent on the oceans to maintain its export-driven economy, South Korea bears some responsibility to help protect the global maritime commons. South Korea’s assistance in these efforts provides an important boost to its international standing and willingness to assist in important multilateral operations. Finally, CTF-151 operations also have provided South Korea with a chance to share its operational experience gained through its preparation for North Korean actions while also gaining from participating in and leading multilateral operations.

“Counter-Proliferation and Korea: Moving from Local to Global”

Scott Bruce, Nautilus Institute

South Korea’s contribution to the global counter-proliferation effort stemmed from as a matter of fact a local need to support US-sponsored, multilateral efforts at counter-proliferation and to respond to North Korea’s second nuclear test. South Korea’s role in the PSI (The Proliferation Security Initiative) has changed along with the development of the DPRK nuclear program and its relations with Washington.

The ability of United States to assess the effectiveness of the PSI, let alone the ROK’s contribution to it, is challenging. First, it is very challenging to determine if these interddictions would have happened if the PSI had not been developed. Second, it is difficult to assess what impact the deterrent aspect of the PSI has had on shipment of WMD, and how much the ROK has contributed to it. Third, government statements are inconsistent in their assessment of the success of the PSI, let alone the ROK’s contribution to its efforts. Also, we can say a few things about South Korea’s role in the Initiative. South Korea has moved from ambivalence toward the PSI to playing a leading role in this effort and the changes in South Korea’s status with regard

to the PSI were driven both by North Korean belligerence and pressure from the United States. Furthermore, North Korea is a “local problem for South Korea, so restricting North Korea’s WMD exports is a bigger domestic priority for South Korea than restricting proliferation outside of North-East Asia.

South Korea can balance the need to monitor and control exports to prevent the spread of nuclear technology. However, the ROK’s global contribution to counter-proliferation in this area is not clear. Also, while South Korea already understands the legal and institutional measures like export control system needed to adopt and enforce comprehensive controls, it has not yet begun to work with other states to bring them into line with those standards. So it is quite debatable whether ROK’s contributions to counter-proliferation are global.

Although the ROK is a positive example of adherence to counter-proliferation regimes and sets a global example of balancing economic growth with contribution to counter-proliferation efforts, the true “global” dimension of the ROK’s contribution to counter-proliferation efforts is best demonstrated in policy issues that are not related to the North Korean nuclear program and independent of the US-ROK relationship. South Korea can use its role as an exporter of nuclear energy technology and encourage adherence to international non-proliferation regimes, and marketing proliferation-resistant nuclear power systems that support the increasing global interest in nuclear power while minimizing the risk of nuclear proliferation. ■