

## South Korea, Foreign Aid, and UN Peacekeeping: Contributing to International Peace and Security as a Middle Power\*

*Terence Roehrig\*\**

For many years, South Korea was largely a consumer of security, protected and supported by the United States and others to ensure peace and stability on the peninsula. South Korea's economic take-off and ascent as a rising middle power has changed these circumstances and as the years progressed, the Republic of Korea increased its contributions to international peace and security becoming more of a provider of global security than solely a consumer. Two areas

---

\*This work was supported by the Academy of Korean Studies (KSPS) Grant funded by the Korean Government (MEST) (AKS-2012-AAZ-2101). The views expressed in this paper are the author's alone and do not represent the official position of the Department of the Navy, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. government.

\*\*Terence Roehrig is Professor in National Security Affairs and the Director of the Asia-Pacific Studies Group at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. He is also a Research Fellow at the Kennedy School at Harvard University in the International Security Program and the Project on Managing the Atom. He has published articles and book chapters on North Korea's nuclear weapons program, Korean and East Asian security issues, the U.S.-South Korea alliance, the Northern Limit Line dispute, deterrence, human rights, and transitional justice. He is the author of two forthcoming books: *Japan, South Korea, and the U.S. Nuclear Umbrella: Extended Deterrence and Nuclear Weapons in the Post-Cold War World* (Columbia University Press) and *South Korea's Rise in World Affairs: Power, Economic Development and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge University Press, coauthored with Uk Heo). E-mail: [terence.roehrig@usnwc.edu](mailto:terence.roehrig@usnwc.edu).

where South Korea has made particularly important contributions have been in international development assistance and peace keeping operations. Though these contributions are significant, South Korea continues to lag behind other foreign assistance donors relative to the size of its economy. Yet, South Korea's increases to development assistance have been substantial and larger than most in the midst of the global economic turmoil, and it remains a staunch supporter of peacekeeping operations.

**Key Words:** South Korea, Foreign Aid, International Development Assistance, Peace Keeping, Organization of Economic Development and Cooperation, Development Assistance Committee, Official Development Assistance, World Friends Korea

---

## I. Introduction

South Korea's economic rise has been nothing short of phenomenal. It has grown from a country with a per capita gross national income of under US\$ 100 in the 1950s to the world's 12<sup>th</sup> largest economy. Economic development, in turn, has had a significant impact on the foreign policy of the Republic of Korea (ROK). Five decades of economic growth generated a broader set of interests, increased involvement in international institutions, and a more capable and diverse set of tools to pursue those interests. As a result, South Korea's role in the international system has grown and it has been a more active player in global affairs. Thus, economic growth has increased ROK power and influence while bringing important changes to its foreign policy (Heo and Roehrig, 2014 forthcoming).

For years, South Korea was largely a consumer of security, a country that was protected and supported by the United States and others to ensure peace and stability on the peninsula and in the region. South Korea's economic take-off and ascent as a rising middle power has changed these circumstances and as the years progressed,

the ROK increased its contributions to international peace and security becoming more of a provider of global security than solely a consumer. Two areas where South Korea has made particularly important contributions have been in international development assistance and peace keeping operations (PKO). South Korea is a major foreign aid donor and a member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC). The ROK government has also made considerable contributions to UN peacekeeping missions, with the most extensive participation over the past two decades in Lebanon, Haiti, and South Sudan. Yet how do these efforts compare with others who contribute to foreign assistance and support for peacekeeping? Should South Korea's contribution be greater given the size of its economy? South Korea has made important contributions in these areas to ensure sustainable economic development along with global peace and stability, but it lags behind other foreign assistance donors relative to the size of its economy. Yet, South Korea continues to increase its contributions to development assistance and UN PKO, despite the recent global economic turmoil and pressing security needs that many other contributors do not have. More can be done but South Korea is making progress to match its position as a rising middle power.

This remainder of this paper will examine South Korea's actions in foreign assistance and peacekeeping with comparisons to the contributions of other states, an assessment of its actions to date, and recommendations for the future.

## II. Contributions to Foreign Aid and Development Assistance

South Korea has had a unique experience with foreign assistance. After World War II and the devastation of the Korean War, South Korea was a major beneficiary of international aid. Over the four decades after World War II, South Korea received US\$ 13 billion in economic development aid from the United States, multilateral devel-

opment and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other foreign aid donors (Reed, 2012: 210). Though the country struggled throughout the 1950s, beginning in 1961, South Korea began its economic takeoff that eventually moved it into the ranks of one of the rising economic powers in Asia (Heo and Roehrig, 2010: 78-128). International economic assistance provided an important boost for South Korea's stellar and rapid economic growth over the next thirty years. In 2009, South Korea's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Oh Joon mused: "half a century ago, Korea was one of the poorest nations in the world, endeavouring to emerge from the ashes of the Korean War to rebuild itself. Making good use of this assistance we worked hard to overcome poverty and achieve development. For many Koreans, including myself, it happened in our own lifetime" (OECD, November 25, 2009).

In 1987, South Korea made the transition to democracy, a landmark achievement in ROK political history. That same year, after years of receiving international assistance South Korea began to reverse this pattern starting a slow but steady rise in its contribution of Official Development Assistance (ODA). Using OECD data, Table 1 shows South Korea's ODA contributions from 1987 to 2012. In 1987, South Korean ODA was US\$ 24 million and by 2009 reached US\$ 816 million. In 1996, South Korea joined the OECD, and in November 2009, received word that it was selected to join the highly regarded Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD. DAC members are a select group of OECD aid providers that work to increase and improve the delivery of development assistance. Nisha Desai Biswal, Assistant Administrator for Asia with U.S. AID remarked on South Korea's selection that "DAC membership marks the only time since the OECD was established in 1961 that a country has joined the 'advanced nations' assistance club' after transitioning from an aid recipient to a donor" (Biswal, 2011). DAC Chair Eckhard Deutscher welcomed South Korea to the group exclaiming "we have had many opportunities to observe Korea's great progress, as a nation, as an economy and as a provider of aid to the world's poorest countries. Korea's joining us today has paved the way for a more open and

Table 1. South Korean Official Development Assistance (ODA): 1987-2012

Year	ODA	Percentage Increase/Decrease from the Previous Year
1987	24	-
1988	34	42
1989	34	0
1990	61	79
1991	57	-7
1992	77	35
1993	112	45
1994	140	25
1995	116	-17
1996	159	37
1997	186	17
1998	183	-2
1999	317	73
2000	212	-33
2001	265	25
2002	279	5
2003	366	31
2004	423	16
2005	752	78
2006	455	-40
2007	696	53
2008	802	15
2009	816	2
2010	1,174	44
2011	1,328	6
2012	1,551	17

\* Source: OECD, April 3, 2013.

inclusive Development Assistance Committee" (OECD, November 25, 2009).

In the years that followed DAC membership, South Korea's ODA allotments continued to grow. As shown in Table 1, ROK ODA climbed to US\$ 1.174 billion in 2010, the first time its ODA budget surpassed US\$ 1 billion. It is important to note that these aid figures do not

include assistance provided to North Korea. If these amounts were included, annual totals would have been much higher. Upon joining the OECD-DAC, ROK officials pledged to increase ODA from 0.12 percent of gross national income (GNI) to 0.25 percent by 2015. These increases would result in a tripling of ROK ODA from current amounts to approximately US\$ 3 billion (H. Lee, 2011). As of 2012, South Korea was slightly more than half way to this goal at US\$ 1.551 billion.

Table 2. OECD-DAC Members – 2012 Total Contributions

(USD million)

Rank	DAC Member	Total Contribution	Percent Change from 2011
1	United States	30,460	-1.0
2	United Kingdom	13,659	-1.3
3	Germany	13,108	-7.0
4	France	12,106	-6.9
5	Japan	10,494	-3.1
6	Canada	5,678	4.0
7	Netherlands	5,524	-12.9
8	Australia	5,440	9.2
9	Sweden	5,242	-6.4
10	Norway	4,754	0.0
11	Switzerland	3,022	-1.0
12	Denmark	2,718	-7.3
13	Italy	2,639	-39.0
14	Belgium	2,303	-18.0
15	Spain	1,948	-53.3
16	Korea	1,551	17.0
17	Finland	1,320	-6.1
18	Austria	1,112	0.0 <sup>†</sup>
19	Ireland	809	-11.5
20	Portugal	567	-19.9
21	New Zealand	455	7.3
22	Luxembourg	432	5.6
23	Greece	324	-23.8

\* Source: OECD, April 3, 2013.

\*\* Note: Iceland and the Czech Republic became DAC members in 2013 and are not included here.

<sup>†</sup> less than 0.1 percent increase.

Over the years, South Korea's ODA budget has shown a steady increase. From 1987 to 2012, ODA increased every year but six with increases as large as 79, 78, and 73 percent. Including the six years of negative or no growth, the average ODA increase over this time span was 21.8 percent. Despite these regular and sometimes hefty increases, when compared to other OECD-DAC countries, Seoul lags behind these states both in total contributions and as a percentage of GNI. In 2012, table 2 shows that among the 23 OECD-DAC states, South Korea's contribution of US\$ 1.551 billion ranked 16th in total contributions ahead of Finland (US\$ 1.320 billion) and Austria (US\$ 1.112 billion) and behind Spain (US\$ 1.948 billion) and Belgium (US\$ 2.303 billion). Excluding Spain, these countries with similar contribution levels have economies smaller than South Korea.

However, table 2 shows that for 2012, total South Korea ODA increased by 17 percent from the previous year, the largest increase among all OECD-DAC members. In fact, most DAC members decreased their ODA for 2012. Indeed, South Korea has steadily increased its foreign assistance levels over the past few years, one of the few states to do so in spite of the global financial crisis. South Korea's ODA from 2009 to 2012 increased over 90 percent; only Australia at 97 percent had a larger percentage increase during that period. Another important distinction is that South Korea carries a far heavier security burden than many of the DAC countries, a crucial priority that consumes state resources.

When comparing other donors based on 2011 ODA as a percentage of GNI, South Korea ranks last among the 23 OECD-DAC members at 0.12 percent. In Table 3, Italy (0.20 percent) and Greece (0.15 percent), two troubled European economies, rank slightly ahead of South Korea's 0.12 percent of GNI (OECD, Table 13, 2012). In 1970, a UN General Assembly resolution first set 0.7 percent of GNI as the target for government commitments to ODA, a benchmark that has been reaffirmed at subsequent international meetings to advance UN development goals. Only five states have reached that threshold — Sweden, Norway, Luxembourg, Denmark, and the Netherlands. A number of large economies including the United States and Japan fall

Table 3. OECD-DAC Members – 2011 Contributions as Percent of GNI

Rank	DAC Member	ODA as Percent of GNI
1	Sweden	1.02
2	Norway	1.00
3	Luxembourg	0.97
4	Denmark	0.85
5	Netherlands	0.75
6	United Kingdom	0.56
7	Belgium	0.54
8	Finland	0.53
9	Ireland	0.51
10	France	0.46
11	Switzerland	0.45
12	Germany	0.39
13	Australia	0.34
14	Canada	0.32
15	Portugal	0.31
16	Spain	0.29
17	New Zealand	0.28
18	Austria	0.27
19	Italy	0.20
20	United States	0.20
21	Japan	0.18
22	Greece	0.15
23	Korea	0.12

\* Source: OECD (2012), Table 13: Comparison of Flows by Type in 2011.

short of that mark. South Korea continues to work toward achieving the 0.7 percent and has made important strides over the past decade but further progress is needed. The statistics for 2012 were not available at the time of this writing and perhaps with South Korea's 17 percent increase in ODA for 2012 and the decrease of other states, Seoul may move up in this ranking.

Most of South Korea's ODA is in the form of bilateral, government-to-government assistance. In 2010, bilateral ODA accounted for US\$ 901 million or approximately 77 percent of its ODA. Table 4

Table 4. South Korea — 2011 Top Ten Recipients of Bilateral ODA

(USD millions)		
Rank	Country	ODA Totals
1	Vietnam	143.68
2	Bangladesh	80.51
3	Cambodia	57.78
4	Sri Lanka	45.72
5	Laos	30.74
6	Jordan	29.74
7	Mongolia	29.58
8	Indonesia	29.11
9	Afghanistan	27.84
10	Philippines	26.21

\* Source: OECD (<http://www.oecd-berlin.de/charts/aid-statistics/donors-by-country.php?cr=kor>).

shows the top ten recipients of ROK foreign assistance in 2011 with Vietnam and Bangladesh at the top with ODA amounts of US\$ 143.68 million and US\$ 80.51 million respectively. Almost all of the recipients are in Asia and most of these in Southeast Asia including Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

The remaining 23 percent or US\$ 273 million for 2011 was given to multilateral organizations such as the United Nations, European Union, the World Bank's International Development Association, and other regional development banks for distribution. South Korea has also contributed assistance under another heading known as "Other Official Flows" (OOF) in OECD reports, and in 2010 OOF totaled US\$ 1.895 billion, a substantial amount. However, OOF is not included as ODA by the OECD because these items are not directed primarily at development activities or have a grant element that is less than 25 percent (OECD, April 4, 2012). Similar to its support for North Korea, exclusion of these amounts may also underrepresent South Korea's contributions to development assistance. South Korea favors the use of loans, according to one scholar, because it believes "such aid engenders responsible investment and disciplined accounting, both critical to long-term development success" (Reed, 2012: 214).

### A. World Friends Korea

South Korea also contributes to development assistance through several volunteer programs that are known collectively as “World Friends Korea” (WFK). Each year, WFK sends more than 3,000 volunteers around the globe where they contribute to global economic development efforts. South Korea is one of only six countries that has a similar volunteer program with the others being Belgium, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, and the United States. South Korea’s program is the second largest behind only the U.S. Peace Corps (Oh, 2010).

The genesis of WFK began in 1990 with the formation of the Korean Overseas Volunteer Program where participants volunteered for two-year assignments. The program was managed the following year by the newly created Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and came under the authority of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Other volunteer programs followed including the Korea Internet Volunteers where participants taught about technology in programs that lasted from one month to one year. This program was under the Ministry of Public Administration and Security. The Ministry of Science, Education, and Technology ran two other programs, Korea University Volunteers, a short-term program for university students to offer service opportunities of a few weeks to five months, and the Korea Techno Peace Corps that had one-year assignments.

In 2009, the Lee Myung-bak administration combined these programs and a few others into one to form “World Friends Korea.” Volunteers give a two-year service commitment in close to 100 countries, largely in Asia but also Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and Latin America. According to one assessment (Reed, 2012: 212), the program “has become one of the most visible and popular aspects of [South Korea’s] international cooperation programs.” By 2013, WFK is expected to have sent over 20,000 volunteers since its formation in 2009.

The WFK website notes that the program has three objectives:

– **To improve the quality of life of people in partner countries**

: To contribute to the eradication of poverty and promotion of sustainable development in partner countries by sharing expertise and know-how with local residents to improve their quality of life

– **To strengthen the friendship and mutual understanding between Korea and partner countries**

: To foster a cooperative relationship between Korea and partner countries through a variety of cultural exchanges

– **To help volunteers fulfill their potential through volunteering**

: To cultivate mature global citizens who, being open-minded about multiculturalism and aware of the importance of poverty reduction, contribute to the co-prosperity of mankind.

WFK volunteers work in the areas of health care, education, information technology, and sustainable rural development. Programs focus on the world’s poorest countries and are aligned with ROK aid initiatives for achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals (World Friends Korea). On the third anniversary of WFK, President Lee Myung-bak remarked about the destinations of South Korea’s volunteers, “we need to learn from them, rather than thinking we teach them” (Kim, 2012). WFK continues to be another way South Korea contributes to international economic development that in turn promotes global peace and security.

### III. United Nations and UN Peacekeeping Operations

South Korea’s history with the United Nations began with the country’s founding. The Republic of Korea came into being under UN auspices on 15 August 1948 following a UN resolution passed in November 1947 that authorized elections to reunite the two Koreas. North Korea refused to comply with the resolution, and on 25 June 1950 invaded the South to reunify the peninsula through force. The United Nations responded with the creation of the United Nations

Command (UNC), a U.S.-led coalition of 16 states that came to South Korea's aid (Roehrig, 2011). When the war ended, the UNC remained and as a signatory of the armistice, continues to be one of the entities that implements the Korean War armistice. Despite this long involvement with the United Nations, for the next several decades, South Korea was not permitted to join the organization.

After repeated attempts, in 1991, South Korea became a member of the UN. Beijing and Moscow vetoed earlier ROK efforts based on resistance from Pyongyang. With the end of the Cold War and their interest in normalizing relations with the South, Chinese and Russian opposition ended. With China and Russia no longer disposed to blocking South Korean membership, Pyongyang relented and both were admitted in August 1991.

Since that time, South Korea's involvement in UN organizations and activities has grown significantly with two terms on the Security Council, membership on many UN committees and becoming an active contributor to peacekeeping operations. Furthermore, the current UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is a former ROK foreign minister. Though South Korea's involvement in UN activities is extensive, this section will focus on its participation in UN peacekeeping operations.

South Korea began its involvement in UN peacekeeping with the 1993 operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II). Seoul sent a battalion 504 personnel known as the *Evergreen Unit* to repair roads and provide other types of humanitarian assistance (Groves, 2007: 44). Since that time, South Korea has sent approximately 11,000 peacekeeping personnel to seventeen different countries. At this time, South Korea has approximately 1,440 service personnel deployed to over 30 countries and regions for UN peacekeeping, multinational peace operations, and security cooperation activities (ROK Ministry of National Defense, 2012: 110).

The UN is currently conducting 15 peacekeeping operations, and South Korea is a part of eight of these including five missions in Africa and one each in Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, as shown in Table 5. South Korea provides a total of 615 peacekeeping personnel with 599 as peacekeeping troops and the remainder serving as

Table 5. Republic of Korea - Current UN Peacekeeping Operations — August 31, 2013

Operation	Location (start year)	Police	UNMEM	Troops	Total
UNMOGIP	India & Pakistan (1949)		7		7
UNIFIL	Lebanon (1978)			321	321
MINURSO	W. Sahara (1991)		4		4
UNMIL	Liberia (2003)		1	1	2
UNOCI	Cote d'Ivoire (2004)		2		2
MINUSTAH	Haiti (2004)			2	2
UNAMID	Darfur (2007)			2	2
UNMISS	S. Sudan (2011)		2	273	275
TOTAL			16	599	615

\* Source: UN Peacekeeping ([http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2013/aug13\\_3.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2013/aug13_3.pdf)).

military observers and advisors (UNMEM – UN Military Experts on Mission). South Korean officers have also held leadership positions in these operations. For example, in June 2012, a ROK Army General was made head of the UNMOGIP mission for India and Pakistan, the third time a South Korean has held this post.

Over the past two decades, South Korean participation has been the most significant in three specific missions: UNIFIL in Lebanon; MINUSTAH in Haiti; and most recently UNMISS in South Sudan. In July 2007, South Korea sent its first contingent, the *Dongmyeong Unit*, to Lebanon with a deployment of 350. The *Dongmyeong Unit* helps to oversee a ceasefire and maintain a buffer zone between Lebanon and Israel while providing a number of services to the local population including medical care, building and repairing roads, and school construction (ROK Ministry of National Defense, 2012: 111-112).

In January 2010, Haiti was rocked by a magnitude 7.0 earthquake that destroyed the capital, Port-au-Prince and much of the surrounding area. UN peacekeepers had already been deployed to Haiti since 2004 to control domestic political violence but the earthquake brought an outpouring of international support for a country that was already one of the poorest in the world. In response, South Korea sent the *Danbi Unit* in February 2010, a 240-person engineering unit to assist in clean-up efforts, road repair, aid to refugees and orphanages, and

clearing waterways along with providing medical care, education, and vocational training (*Ibid.*: 112-113). In addition to peacekeepers, the South Korean government provided close to US\$ 13 million in emergency aid to help Haiti recover from this tragedy (*Chosun Ilbo*, April 16, 2010). In 2012, the UN modified the number of peacekeepers in Haiti leading to the withdrawal of all but two of the ROK contingent.

Finally, South Korea's most recent contribution to UN peacekeeping is ongoing in South Sudan. After several years of bloody conflict, the South broke away from Sudan and became independent on 9 July 2011. Soon after, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon sent a plea to UN member states for peacekeeping support to preserve the fragile peace between the two countries. The Lee Myung-bak administration committed to sending a PKO unit but the deployments were slow to arrive due to what one report called "dissonance between government agencies" (Kim and Jeong, 2012). In 2013, South Korea began sending a group of 275 peacekeepers as members of the *Hanbit* unit. The group was composed chiefly of engineers in addition to medical personnel to assist in rebuilding the war-torn country. Peacekeeper personnel have assisted in refurbishing the main airport, expanding city infrastructure, constructing landfills, and providing medical services (Kang, 2013).

Compared to other states that contribute to UN peacekeeping South Korea's 2012 contingent of 615 ranks them 34<sup>th</sup> on the list. The top four contributors to UN peacekeeping in 2012 were Pakistan (8,262), Bangladesh (7,931), India (7,858), and Ethiopia (6,467). For many countries, UN peacekeeping is not only providing assistance to international peace but also a source of revenue. Countries that provide peacekeepers are reimbursed at a rate of US\$ 1,028 per soldier per month (United Nations "Financing Peacekeeping"). Units deployed for peacekeeping also gain improved capabilities and equipment through these international operations, making UN peacekeeping appealing to many developing countries.

South Korea has also contributed to other multinational stability operations, most notably in Iraq and Afghanistan that the ROK military reports under peacekeeping in its Defense White Paper. ROK units

first deployed to Iraq in 2003 providing medical care and humanitarian assistance while also doing construction projects such as rebuilding roads and schools. In 2004, South Korea sent more personnel, the *Zaytun* Unit, to Irbil in the Kurdish northern sector of Iraq with a total of 3,600 personnel making its contingent the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest contributor to the international coalition ranking behind only the United States and the United Kingdom. Given its location in the north, the *Zaytun* Unit was relatively free from the violence that plagued reconstruction efforts throughout much of Iraq. One of 13 countries operating in Iraq under the UN mandate, South Korean troops left the country in December 2008 after completing its five-year mission (Carter, 2008).

South Korea's participation in the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan came in two phases (Jung, 2010; Hemmings, 2012). The first deployment began in February 2002 with 60 medics from the *Dong-Eui* Medical Unit who set up a field hospital at the Bagram Airbase. In 2003, Seoul sent an additional 150 from the *Dasan* Engineering Unit to assist in construction at Bagram. These units remained until December 2007 when they were withdrawn as part of a deal in the wake of a tragic incident with the Taliban. In July 2007, the Taliban had seized 23 Koreans who were working as Christian missionaries in Afghanistan. Two of the missionaries were executed before Seoul could obtain release of the other 21 and agreeing to withdraw South Korean units from Afghanistan. In December 2007, the 210 contingent of ROK medical and engineering personnel left the country.

South Korea later returned a small group of aid workers to continue managing its field hospital in Bagram, but pressure continued to build to contribute further to the UN-mandated stabilization and rebuilding activities in Afghanistan. In February 2010, the ROK National Assembly approved the deployment of the *Ashena* Unit, a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). The PRT deployed in July 2010 along with aid workers to provide medical care, reconstruction of buildings and infrastructure, and development assistance along with close to 350 troops to provide security (ROK Ministry of National Defense, 2010: 212).

In addition to troop and personnel deployments, state backing for PKO can also be measured through financial contributions. All UN member states are responsible for funding the peacekeeping budget. UN budget resolutions allocate peacekeeping funding on a percentage basis with a greater share of the contributions coming from those states with larger economies. For the year 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014, the total approved UN budget for peacekeeping operations is US\$ 7.54 billion (United Nations, Financing Peacekeeping). The percentage allocations of the total peacekeeping budget by country are shown in Table 6. The top 15 contributors account for over 88 percent of the UN peacekeeping budget, and for 2012, South Korea ranks 12<sup>th</sup> among these contributors, providing 1.99 percent of the budget or approximately US\$ 150 million.

During his term, ROK President Lee Myung-bak made clear his intention to expand South Korea's peacekeeping commitments and capabilities as part of an effort to repay the global community for the help South Korea received during its history. In the ROK 2010

Table 6. 2013 Top 15 Financial Contributors to UN Peacekeeping Operations

Rank	Country	Percent Contribution to the UN PKO Budget
1	United States	28.38
2	Japan	10.83
3	France	7.22
4	Germany	7.14
5	United Kingdom	6.68
6	China	6.64
7	Italy	4.45
8	Russia	3.15
9	Canada	2.98
10	Spain	2.97
11	Australia	2.07
12	South Korea	1.99
13	Netherlands	1.65
14	Switzerland	1.05
15	Belgium	1.00

\* Source: United Nations (2013).

Defense White Paper (ROK Ministry of National Defense, 2010: 113), it noted that the country would “steadily expand its participation in international peacekeeping operations” and as a result, South Korea has undertaken several measures to improve its ability to respond more quickly to calls for peacekeepers. First, in 2009, the Ministry of Defense (*Ibid.*: 113-114) created standing units devoted to peacekeeping. A total of 3,000 personnel are assigned to these units with 1,000 designated as ready to deploy for overseas missions within one month, 1,000 as a reserve force, and the final 1,000 consisting of separate engineering, medical, military police, and transport units among others.

Second, on 29 December 2010, the National Assembly passed the “Law on Participation in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations” that took effect in April 2011. The law allows for more rapid response time by providing the legal authority to send up to 1,000 personnel when requested by the UN before requiring formal approval from the National Assembly (Chung, 2010: 98-102).

Finally, the government improved the functioning of PKOs by moving the Peacekeeping Operations Center from the ROK Joint Staff College to the National Defense University along with increases to its staff in 2013. The PKO center provides predeployment education and training to military and police personnel, writes up the “after action” reports to assess the effectiveness of the unit, and gathers any lessons learned for future missions. The center also participates in exchange programs with PKO military from other countries to improve training and coordination (ROK Ministry of National Defense, 2012: 120-121).

In addition to these measures, South Korea participates in other international training and exercises including the U.S.-led Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) that helps to prepare and equip peacekeepers from many countries, the Khaan Quest PKO exercise sponsored by Mongolia, and for the first time, participation in the six-country Cobra Gold exercise in February 2010 (*Ibid.*, 2010: 114-115).

Participation in international peacekeeping operations provides a number benefits for South Korea. According to Balbina Hwang

(Hwang, 2012: 20) South Korean involvement serves a number of ROK national interests including:

contributing to regional and global security by preventing further conflict and enhancing stability, raising the ROK's international profile through tangible contributions that are not only commensurate with its global economic status, but go beyond by demonstrating measurable sacrifice, repaying its debt to the international community — twenty-one countries participated in the U.S.-led UN Command to support the ROK during the Korean War — and enhancing the ROK's own security by establishing a reputation as a proactive stability force.

Throughout his term, President Lee Myung-bak has argued for South Korea to be an active and responsible player in the international community that is consistent with its stature as the world's 12<sup>th</sup> largest economy and a rising, mid-level power. In his 2011 address before the UN General Assembly, President Lee (2011) maintained:

Now, the Republic of Korea wants to give back to the international community even more than what it has ever received. The Republic of Korea stands ready to extend a helping hand to those who are in need, providing them with appropriate support and care. We are keen to closely cooperate with the UN and to play a constructive role in combating various challenges the international community faces.

Involvement in international peacekeeping helps to fulfill those aspirations. In addition, many situations that trigger a PKO are tragic examples of human suffering, often from natural disasters, internal political conflict, or ethnic violence, among others. In 2005, the UN initiated the "Responsibility to Protect" or R2P, a set of norms that calls on states to protect populations from mass atrocities such as genocide, rape, and ethnic cleansing. For South Korea and others, there is increasingly a call to action on humanitarian grounds to prevent these tragedies from restarting and to aid in building a more permanent solution to ensure lasting peace and alleviate human suffering.

State leaders also see that contributing to international peace-

keeping operations is in their own national interest. Conflict between states or within states can disrupt commercial flows, including access to raw materials and trade in finished goods. Failed states and intrastate conflict can lead to a host of transnational problems that spill across borders and impact neighboring states. The ROK economy is an important benefactor of a stable international security environment. Moreover, ROK participation provides important experience in multilateral operations, paying back the international community for past assistance, and improving the chances that others will assist South Korea in the event of a North Korean collapse and the anticipated high cost of subsequent Korean unification. In the past, many South Koreans viewed international peacekeeping and stabilization efforts as support for the United States and the alliance but that has begun to change as the benefits of ROK participation are appreciated by a broader segment of the public (Hwang, 2012: 20).

#### IV. Conclusion

South Korea's economic growth over the past five decades has been an amazing story. The country has transformed itself from one of the world's poorest to a global economic power. As the 12<sup>th</sup> largest economy, ROK economic growth has generated a broader array of interests, greater involvement in international institutions, and more tools to pursue its interests and contribute to maintaining international peace and security. Thus, economic development has had an important impact on ROK foreign policy.

South Korea has made valuable contributions in two key areas: international development assistance and peacekeeping operations. In 2010, South Korea became a member of the prestigious OECD – DAC, the only country ever to have progressed from an aid recipient to an aid donor. In 2012, ROK official ODA was US\$ 1.551 billion, an amount that has increased steadily over the past few years, despite the pressures of the global economic crisis. Indeed, South Korea is

one of the few DAC countries to continue these levels of growth throughout the economic downturn. Though this record is impressive, there is more to be done. Compared to other OECD – DAC members, including those with smaller economies, ROK contributions are modest. Yet if South Korea continues the steady growth in its ODA budget, it will reach the foreign assistance levels commensurate with its economic power. Despite the struggles of the global economic downturn, South Korea has been one of the few countries that continued to increase its ODA budget over the past few years. Moreover, many aid donors do not have the same security burdens that South Korea must carry making its contributions even more noteworthy.

South Korea has also made major contributions through peacekeeping, stability operations, and World Friends Korea. These are particularly important measures since commitments of people are often more difficult to make than simply sending money. South Korea is on the right track here as it continues to develop and institutionalize peacekeeping capacity and civilian volunteer programs. Few countries in the world have gone to such lengths, and Seoul should be commended for these efforts.

As one of the world's rising middle powers, South Korea has made important contributions to ensuring global peace and stability. These efforts are not only in the world's interest but South Korea's as well. South Korea is working to do its share and has shown it is committed to doing more in the future.

## References

- Biswal, Nisha Desai, "From U.S. Aid Recipient to Donor Partner: The Republic of Korea's Health Ministry Honors USAID," March 31, 2011 ([http://blog.usaid.gov/2011/03/from-u-s-aid-recipient-to-donor-partner-the-republic-of-koreas-health-ministry-honors-usaid/]).
- Carter, Chelsea J., "S. Korea Ends Iraq Deployment," *Army Times*, December 1, 2008 ([http://www.armytimes.com/news/2008/12/ap\_south\_korea\_120108/]).
- Chosun Ilbo, "Korea to Increase Aid to Haiti," April 16, 2010 ([http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html\_dir/2010/04/16/2010041601130.html]).
- Chung, Eun-sook, "Korea's Law on UNPKO and Its Role in International Peacekeeping Missions," *Korea Focus*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (2010).
- Groves, Colonel Bryan, "Republic of Korea Peacekeeping Operations—Ensuring Peace and Stability Around the World," *ARMY*, Vol. 57 (September 2007).
- Hemmings, John, "The ROK Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan," in Scott Snyder (ed.), *Global Korea: South Korea's Contributions to International Security* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2012).
- Heo, Uk and Terence Roehrig, *South Korea's Rise: Economic Development, Power, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014 forthcoming).
- \_\_\_\_\_, *South Korea since 1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
- Hwang, Balbina, "Korea and PKO: Is Korea Contributing to Global Peace?" in Scott Snyder (ed.), *Global Korea: South Korea's Contributions to International Security* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2012).
- Jung, Sang Don, "ROK's Overseas Deployment Policy in Afghanistan," *Korea Institute for Defense Analyses*, Vol. 22 (2010).
- Kang, Seung-woo, "Korea Beefing Up Presence in PKO," *The Korea Times*, July 21, 2013 ([http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2013/07/116\_139642.html]).
- Kim, Rahn, "World Friends Korea Celebrates 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary," *The Korea Times*, June 1, 2012 ([http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2012/06/205\_112228.html]).
- Kim, Su-jeong and Yong-soo Jeong, "Plan to Send Troops to Sudan Scuttled," *Korea JoongAng Daily*, May 10, 2012 ([http://korea

- joongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=2952663).
- Lee, Haye-ah, "U.S. Ambassador Hails Growing Partnership with S. Korea in Development," *Yonhap News*, December 7, 2011 ([http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2011/12/07/3/0301000000AEN20111207003100315F.HTML]).
- Lee, Myung-bak, "Address at the 66<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations," September 21, 2011 ([http://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/66/KR\_en.pdf]).
- Lee, Wang Hwi, Sang Yoon Ma, and Kun Young Park, "Korean Foreign Policy and the Rise of the BRICs Countries," *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (2007).
- OECD, "Net ODA from DAC Countries from 1950 to 2012," April 3, 2013 ([http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/data.htm]).
- \_\_\_\_\_, "Development Aid: Other Official Flows (OOF)," *Development: Key Tables from OECD*, No. 2, April 4, 2012 ([http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/development-aid-other-official-flows-oof\_20743866-table2]).
- \_\_\_\_\_, "Table 13: Comparison of Flows by Type in 2011" (2012) ([http://www.oecd.org/document/0,3746,en\_2649\_201185\_46462759\_1\_1\_1\_1,00.html]).
- \_\_\_\_\_, "OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Welcomes Korean Membership," November 25, 2009 ([http://www.oecd.org/document/50/0,3343,en\_2649\_33721\_44141618\_1\_1\_1\_1,00.html]).
- Oh, Kongdan, "Korea's Path from Poverty to Philanthropy," *The Korea Times*, June 6, 2010 ([http://koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/biz/2010/06/602\_67624.html]).
- Reed, Edward, "Development Assistance and Humanitarian Aid," in Scott Snyder (ed.), *The U.S.-South Korea Alliance: Meeting New Security Challenges* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2012).
- ROK Ministry of National Defense, *2012 Defense White Paper* (2012).
- \_\_\_\_\_, *2010 Defense White Paper* (2010) ([http://www.mnd.go.kr/cms\_file/info/mndpaper/2010/2010WhitePaperAll\_eng.

- pdf]).
- Roehrig, Terence, "Coming to South Korea's Aid: The Contributions of the UNC Coalition," *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2011).
- United Nations, "Financing Peacekeeping" (2013) ([http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/financing.shtml]).
- World Friends Korea, ([www.worldfriendskorea.or.kr/eng/firstscreen/firstscreen.jsp]).

For many years, South Korea was largely a consumer of security, protected and supported by the United States and others to ensure peace and stability on the peninsula. South Korea's economic takeoff and ascent as a rising middle power has changed these circumstances and as the years progressed, the Republic of Korea increased its contributions to international peace and security becoming more of a provider of global security than solely a consumer. Two areas where South Korea has made particularly important contributions have been in international development assistance and peace keeping. Last, peacekeeping contributions bolster China's reputation and status as a cooperative global player, blunting criticism of its defense spending and confirming its profile as a responsible power in international affairs.<sup>9</sup> Contributions. Its involvement has opened the country up to further criticism of its peace and development policies. Increases in troop contributions raise the expectation that China will further engage in the liberal international development and security landscape (e.g., reducing small arms and light weapons sales and supporting local democratic reforms). Finally, peacekeeping continues to be a valuable platform for cooperation between the United States and China. UN Peacekeeping helps countries navigate the difficult path from conflict to peace. We have unique strengths, including legitimacy, burden sharing, and an ability to deploy troops and police from around the world, integrating them with civilian peacekeepers to address a range of mandates set by the UN Security Council and General Assembly. What peacekeeping does. UN Peacekeeping helps countries navigate the difficult path from conflict to peace. We have unique strengths, including legitimacy, burden sharing, and an ability to deploy troops and police from around the world, integrating them with civilian peacekeepers to address a range of mandates set by the UN Security Council and General Assembly.