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The Role of State Institutions, Organizational Culture and Policy Perception in South Korea's International Security Policymaking Process: 1998-Present

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Abstract

In understanding foreign-policy outcome, institutional context, information-gathering and processing trajectory, perceptual preference, and policy dynamics are key variables. In particular bureaucratic context, information gathering/processing dynamics, the competitive policy deliberation process, and the holistic *Weltanschauung* of the decision-makers in South Korea in the executive branch and the following bureaucracy are analyzed as crucial: National Security Council (NSC), Ministry of National Defence (MND), National Intelligence Service (NIS), Ministry of Unification (MOU), and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT).

Key Words: information-processing, policy preference, President, NSC, MND

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to identify, conceptualize, and dissect in a very preliminary manner the general institutional context, information-gathering and processing trajectory, perceptual preference,

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and policy dynamics underlying international security policy-making process in the Republic of Korea (ROK).

Given the preliminary scope of this research note, the purview of analysis will only entail the identification and conceptual outline of the noted bureaucratic context, the information gathering/processing dynamics, the competitive policy deliberation process, and, very briefly, the holistic *Weltanschauung* of the decision-makers in South Korea in the executive branch and bureaucracy: the National Security Council (NSC), the Ministry of National Defence (MND), the National Intelligence Service (NIS), the Ministry of Unification (MOU), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT) as opposed to the parliament, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), media, industry, and other actors making up civil society (which would deserve a separate, lengthy analysis and indeed is worthy of study on its own merits).[1]

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[1] See, for example, David Steinberg, "The New Political Paradigm in South Korea: Social Change and the Elite Structure," paper presented at International Conference, "New Paradigms for Transpacific Collaboration," organized by the Korea Economic Institute at University of Washington at Seattle, October 16-18, 2005; David Steinberg and Myung Shin, "From Entourage to Ideology? Tensions in South Korean Political Parties in Transition," manuscript (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2005); Chaibong Hahm, "*Kaeguk* v. *Swaeguk*: Two Nationalisms in South Korea," paper presented at Georgetown Conference on Korean Society, December 7-8, 2005, Georgetown Conference Center, Washington, DC; Shinyoung Kim, "Korean Pension Reform—the Return of Domestic Politics," paper presented at Georgetown Conference on Korean Society, December 7-8, 2005, Georgetown Conference Center, Washington, DC; Jin-Young Chung, "Society against Market: Globalization and Korean Political Economy in Transition," paper presented at Georgetown Conference on Korean Society, December 7-8, 2005, Georgetown Conference Center, Washington, DC; Myung-Lim Park, "Configurative Features, Transformation, and Prospects of Korea's Social and Political Landscape: Viewing from the Macro and Micro Perspective," paper presented at Georgetown Conference on Korean Society, December 7-8, 2005, Georgetown Conference Center, Washington, DC; Kimberly Marten, "Bases for Reflection: The History and Politics of US Military Bases in South Korea," paper delivered at the 100th Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, September 2004; Alexander Cooley, "Democratization and the Contested Politics of US Military Bases in Korea: Towards A Comprehensive Understanding," manuscript (NY: Barnard College, 2005).

The explanatory significance on the domestic dimension of the international security policymaking process has been prompted by this author's view that while the bureaucratic/organizational environment has remained relatively constant throughout the 1980s and the 1990s, South Korea's new elite's inclination since 1998 began to overturn existing ideological platforms. It did so by attempting to bypass, penetrate, and, if feasible, control as much as possible the bureaucracy and to mobilize public opinion (broadcast media, internet, NGOs) by keying on its stated principles of foreign policy: namely, autonomy and nationalism, including correction of the past, based as it is on a discourse of victimization.[2] By analyzing the bureaucratic process, one can understand one important institutional basis of the foreign policymaking establishment under pressures for change generated from the international system as well as the domestic political environment.

For the limited sake of analysis, this paper will restrict its scope to the contemporary period during the presidential tenures of Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo-hyun (1998-). Due to systematic research constraints, including available sources, access to individuals involved in the policy debate, and raw data, the objective of this study is to stimulate, inform, and point to further directions for research, rather than constituting a definitive argument.

The actors' perceptions, institutional culture, information gathering/processing, and the deliberative policy process will include those who work in the international security/foreign policy field. The policy elite in South Korea of relevance are, therefore, those operating in the following areas; the Presidential Secretariat/the National Security Council (President, Senior Presidential Secretary for Foreign Affairs and National Security during the Kim Dae Jung presidency

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[2] For the best work on this subject—along with Japan, Russia and China, see Gilbert Rozman, *Northeast Asia's Stunted Regionalism: Bilateral Distrusts in the Shadow of Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), especially chapter 1.

and Senior Adviser for National Security, Deputy Secretary-General for National Security Council, Foreign Policy Adviser and Defence Policy Adviser in the current Roh Moo-hyun Administration), Prime Minister's Office (Prime Minister, Chief of Staff and Special Assistant for National Security and Foreign Affairs) and Ministries (Ministers and Vice Ministers) of National Defence, Foreign Affairs, and Trade, and Unification and National Intelligence Service. Additionally, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), mass media, and the National Assembly have become increasingly influential in the Roh Moo-hyun foreign policymaking establishment (2003-present).

The Domestic Institutional Setting and International Security: The Macro Dimension

Major Actors and Policy Process, 1998–Present: Overview

The most important foreign policy actors in the South Korean political system are the President and, as noted earlier during Kim Dae Jung's presidency, the Senior Presidential Secretary for Foreign Affairs and National Security (the Secretary-General of the National Security Council). Today they are the Senior Adviser for National Security (the Secretary-General of the National Security Council), Deputy Secretary-General of the National Security Council (NSC), Foreign Policy Adviser, and Defence Policy Adviser as well as the head of the Presidential Secretariat, the Prime Minister, the Director of National Intelligence Service, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Minister of Unification, the Minister of National Defence, and occasionally a trusted lieutenant of the President who serves as either special or secret envoy on a special foreign policy assignment. Even within this circle, it has been customarily the Senior Presidential Secretary for Foreign Affairs and National Security or the Senior

Adviser for National Security/the Deputy Secretary-General of the NSC and the National Intelligence Service Director who have been the real power wielders in the formulation of foreign and national security policy.

The National Security Council has staff in the Presidential Secretariat which is organizationally managed by the Senior Presidential Secretary for Foreign Affairs and National Security—or the Senior Adviser for National Security as its Secretary-General. Executive Committee members include the aforementioned Ministers, the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff and the Director of the National Intelligence Service. In the current Roh Moo-hyun Administration the Executive Committee of the National Security Council is chaired by the Minister of Unification. All other actors below this rank, such as those at the Vice or Deputy Ministerial level in the various security-responsible ministries, are implementers of decisions taken by their respective bosses, to which one can add the chairmen of the National Assembly committees responsible for security and foreign policy, namely, the Foreign Affairs, Reunification and Trade, Defence, and Intelligence Committees.

While the weight of policymaking with respect to both the domestic and international arenas has certainly shifted toward the National Assembly—lately it has been playing an increasingly important role by delaying and moderating the policy initiatives of the President and the security-responsible ministries. On the whole it does not constitute a policy maker in terms of the basic direction of a given policy. Rather, the National Assembly constitutes a facilitator, executioner, and rationalizer of foreign policy in a fractured policy environment. In fact, as one can witness the policy process with respect to South Korea's decision to send troops to Iraq, the National Assembly Committees were at most critics, even as they, more often than not, ultimately supported the executive branch's foreign and national security policy initiatives. Because the chairmanships of

these important Committees are usually held by the party enjoying a working majority in parliament, currently the President's party, the prevailing political dynamic makes it that much more difficult for them to oppose a given policy—although this is not entirely impossible, as rank-and file party members have shown.

In recent years, due to the ongoing pluralization of South Korean politics and, subsequently, the politicization of foreign and national security policy—especially towards North Korea and the United States—the chairman of the opposition Grand National Party has become increasingly influential. (During Kim Dae Jung's presidency, the chairman of the United Liberal Democrats, a party in coalition with Kim's own party, was also influential.) However, once again, for the reasons stated above, these organs are important not so much in terms of a given policy's planning, formulation, and initial execution, as in their sustenance, moderation, and legitimization of policies and, sometimes, in the withdrawal of an unpopular policy. President Kim Dae Jung's ability to push through his policy of engagement towards Pyongyang[3] and President Roh Moo-hyun's "Policy of Peace and Prosperity" towards North Korea[4] despite much resistance from the opposition camp, are a clear illustration of such a state of affairs.

Other actors, such as the mass media and private corporations, have only marginal impact; in fact, they have sometimes been forced by the regime to mobilize support for its policies. Examples include Hyundai Corporation as well as some newspaper companies whose dire financial condition makes them dependent on a continuous flow of bank credit tacitly controlled by the regime. Such organizations are, therefore, amenable to presidential pressure, at least to the extent of

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[3] See, for example, Chung-in Moon and David Steinberg (eds.), *Kim Dae Jung Government and Sunshine Policy: Promises and Challenges* (Washington, DC and Seoul: Georgetown and Yonsei University Press, 1999).

[4] See, for example, In-Duk Kang (ed.), *Peace and Prosperity Policy and Peace Regime on the Korean Peninsula: The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Seoul: Institute for East Asian Studies, 2005).

not opposing the president's evolving foreign and national security policy line.

The National Security Council (NSC) Executive Committee: The Senior Advisor for National Security (Secretary-General), Foreign Policy Advisor, Defence Policy Advisor and Deputy Secretary-General

Accordingly, one can argue that most foreign policy decision-making power in South Korea customarily resides with the President, the Senior Presidential Secretary for Foreign Affairs and National Security (or the Senior Adviser for National Security), the Minister of Unification (as Executive Chairman of the NSC) and the Director of the National Intelligence Service. Here I state that such has been customarily the case. This is because, although there is a formal, organizational division of labour in the formulation and execution of foreign policy and national security affairs along the institutional or ministerial lines that I have outlined thus far and, thus, the evolving significance of individual organizational input varies with the nature of the given policy stake at hand, the empowerment of the key actor(s) in this policy deliberation process has been conditioned equally, if not primarily by, the degree of president's political trust in his lieutenant (i.e., Lim Dong Won during Kim Dae Jung's presidency, and Lee Jong-Seok under Roh Moo-hyun).

Such a case is not surprising given the fact that even in a relatively open and pluralistic state such as the United States, there are only two or three personnel within the power elite who wield the authority to plan, formulate, and execute foreign and national security policy.[5] We are accordingly interested in those actors who significantly

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[5] Professor Lincoln Bloomfield, formerly of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, noted this point more than 25 years ago in one of his classics. See his *Foreign Policy Making: An Introduction* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1979), p. ix.

influence or shape the overall international security policymaking process—namely the President, his chief lieutenant, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Unification, and the Director of the National Intelligence Service.

The President receives foreign policy briefings daily from his Senior Secretary for Foreign Affairs and National Security (or the Senior Advisor for National Security). He receives weekly briefings from the Director of the National Intelligence Service. The Senior Presidential Secretary—along with the Deputy Secretary-General of the NSC–receives analyzed information from the President's Foreign Policy Adviser, an office occupied by a career Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade official, and the President's Defence Adviser, an office occupied by a career official from the Ministry of National Defence (the latter office was de facto eliminated two years ago when Admiral Yoon Kwang Ung left the office to become Minister of National Defence). Both the Senior Adviser for National Security (the Secretary-General) and the Deputy Secretary-General of the NSC daily collect information, briefings, analysis, and policy recommendations on major power relations, North Korea, defence, security, intelligence and foreign policy issues from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Reunification and National Defence and the National Intelligence Service. These, in turn—with the exception of Unification Ministry which has embassy representatives in only four countries–collect and analyze intelligence from their embassy representatives in over 128 countries.[6]

There are 185 countries with which South Korea enjoys diplomatic relations; of these Seoul maintains 128 embassies for reasons of budget and national interest. In terms of geographic setting, there are 23 embassies in Asia, 17 in the Americas, 28 in Europe, 12

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[6] This figure is as of March 2006. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Seoul, www.mofat.or.kr.

in the Middle East, and 14 in Africa. To this one can add the 91 international organizations to which South Korea belongs,[7] including 16 under the United Nations (UN), 3 that are independent and 67 that fall under the category of International Governmental Organizations (IGOs).[8]

In terms of the quantity of information with respect to foreign affairs and national security, the National Intelligence Service (which focuses on political intelligence and North Korea) possesses the most, followed by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Trade (diplomatic intelligence), National Defence (military intelligence, defence industry), and Unification (North Korea). These four agencies have both formal and informal agreements on information; since the Ministry of Unification does not have direct access to first hand information except on an ad hoc or informal basis (other than from its embassy representatives in four countries through which it collects information on North Korea and major power relations), the intelligence which it receives may be viewed as pre-digested or second-hand, and thus liable to bias, especially from the perspective of those providing it. Given the increasing political weight attached to relations with North Korea in recent years, the evolving role of the Ministry of Unification as the lead agency and the practice of naming a political heavy weight to head the Ministry of Unification (Lim Dong Won during the Kim Dae Jung presidency, and Chung Dong Young and Lee Jong-Seok during the Roh Moo-hyun presidency) have significantly eased some of the prior constraints on the Ministry of Reunification in terms of processing information obtained from other actors.

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[7] This figure is as of March 2006. United Nations Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Seoul (I am indebted to Major Kim Duk-Hyun on this point).

[8] *Alkishioon Pukhan* [Easy to Understand North Korea] (Seoul: Ministry of Reunification, 2006) in www.unikorea.go.kr.index-jp.

Information Aggregation, Analysis and Deliberation

At Korean embassies abroad, information consisting of documents, press reports, and communicated messages from human sources, which are initially extracted in their original language, are translated into Korean, reviewed, and contextualized in a given policy format.

This content is then cabled to the respective Ministries in Seoul for further review, analysis, and policy contextualization. The packaged briefings for the Director of the National Intelligence Service and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Trade, National Defence, and Unification are then reassembled to be sent to the relevant Senior Directors in the NSC as well as to the President's Defence and Foreign Policy Advisers, the Deputy Secretary-General of the NSC, and the Senior Presidential Secretary for Foreign Affairs and National Security, who then, by himself or with the relevant minister or director, reports to the President. The President then takes this information into account as he deems warranted before formulating major foreign and national security policy initiatives with his key advisers—either the Senior Adviser for National Security, the Deputy Secretary-General of the NSC, or the head of the NSC, i.e., the Minister of Unification or his alter ego in the NSC. Because the Director of the National Intelligence Service is responsible only to the President, he usually briefs the President alone.[9]

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[9] According to one confidential source, as a result of the financial crisis which hit South Korea in 1997, about 60% of the weekly intelligence briefings for the President during Kim Dae Jung's presidency was devoted to economic, industrial and trade issues. The fact that the former Research Institute on International Affairs under the National Intelligence Service in 1998 split into the Research Institute on International Economic Affairs, headed by a former Vice-Minister of Economic Planning Board with a PhD, and the Institute of National Security seems to offer support for the trend that economic issues have become much more important than they were in the past. For a useful work in a comparative light, consult, Jin Hyun Kim and Chung In Moon (eds.), *Post-Cold War, Democratization, and National Intelligence: A Comparative Perspective*, Yonsei Monograph Series on International Studies No. 1 (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1996). See also *Kookminjungboosidae Kookajeongbokikwaneui Yeokhalkwa Kwaje* [The Role

The content of the information which is collected, translated, and interpreted may be important in itself. However, what is more significant is why any given information is collected and analysed in a certain manner, cabled at a specific time and addressed to the chosen Minister, Director, the Senior Presidential Secretary, or the Deputy Secretary-General of the National Security Council, with an eye to informing and influencing the President. Since there is far more daily information flowing in from the international arena than the ministries or the intelligence service could possibly cover and digest for the President, a reporting institution tends to select information that supports its bureaucratic interests in the competition for the President's ear on high policy priorities, i.e., North Korea, proliferation, the Six-Party Talks etc. Indeed, this competition can be considered as a primary variable in information selection, content modification, timing of delivery, and choice of targeted actor.

Although North Korea, the United States, the People's Republic of China (PRC), Japan, the Russian Federation, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the European Union (EU), and Mexico are all of major importance to South Korean security and trade, some are more important than others—namely, the DPRK, the US, the PRC, and Japan. However, these external actors or forces that shape—or, more often than not, reinforce the prevailing institutional culture and policy preferences of a given agency in relation to the President are significant to the degree that they also constitute information which is sifted by official institutions and actors. In this process, the foreign/domestic press and media and NGOs play a secondary role in providing alternative sources of information to the President—often in more or less continuing conflict and cooperation with official channels of information aggregation, analysis, provision,

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and Tasks of the National Intelligence Service in the Era of Civilian Government] (Seoul: Research Institute on Peace, April 30, 1998).

and deliverance.

In this respect, external sources of information by themselves do not come to the attention of major foreign policy makers. On the contrary, they are often sought after by the decision makers when he or she needs to engage in a given policy, such as in periodic meetings and negotiations on security and trade with the US, Japan, and the PRC and in dealings with North Korea, whose dynamic platform is usually germane to the given President's domestic political support. Such policy nesting by the South Korean state—or the bureaucracies in our case–requires a continuous and stable flow of information, organizational adaptation and learning in order to enable maximum policy and ministerial input into the often turbulent and shock-ridden policy process.

Traditionally, the National Intelligence Service (NIS), together with the Ministries of National Defence (MND), Unification (MOU), and Foreign, Affairs and Trade (MOFAT), have been concerned with the long-term development of a strategically independent South Korea enjoying the primary support of not only the United States and Japan —Seoul's major allies and trade partners—but also the understanding and confidence of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Russian Federation, and the European Union (EU) in the overall context of managing more normalized relations with Pyongyang.[10] While the traditional role of these security, foreign affairs, intelligence-responsible agencies and ministries has remained quite robust up to the present day, the emphasis of Presidents Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo-hyun on accelerating integration with North Korea at the socio-economic—as opposed to military-political–level has given at least a political lead to the MOU and the NIS in North Korea policy over the traditional role and initiative of others in the overall international

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[10] For a recent view, see Haksoon Paik, "Strategic Visions of South Korea," manuscript (Seoul: Sejong Institute, 2005).

security policy process. The result has been a sharp delineation of inter-agency differences over policies towards Pyongyang and alliance management, including open clashes during the initial years of the respective presidencies.

The Domestic Institutional Setting and International Security: The Micro Dimension

National Intelligence Service (NIS)

The NIS has been pre-occupied with the political security of the South Korean regime in power (read: the President and his loyal faction) and with the directly related problems of moderating and engaging North Korea, Japan, the US, Russia, and the PRC, in ensuring this political security. Accordingly, for the National Intelligence Service, the overriding agenda is not whether to contain or integrate North Korea, but how best Pyongyang can be utilized in maximally enhancing the staying power of the South Korean President and his supporters with the further enlistment of other major powers more or less at the covert level. Such a mission for the NIS under the Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo-hyun presidencies meant the opening of confidential relations with Pyongyang at the highest level (the summit meeting on June 2, 2000). These contacts were intended to provide intelligence to the President in support of this mission as well as to sustain and accelerate proactive socio-cultural, humanitarian, and economic engagement with Pyongyang on an array of projects at multiple levels (the inter-Korean railroads, the Kaesong industrial zone, the Mt. Kumkang tourism project, reunions of divided families, sports exchanges, and energy assistance to the North[11]) and to search

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[11] For a study on Northeast Asian energy, consult, Selig S. Harrison (ed.), *Seabed Petroleum in Northeast Asia: Conflict or Cooperation?* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars Asia Program, 2005).

for opportunities to address conventional/non-conventional security threats (i.e., chemical, biological, nuclear weapons, long-range artillery).[12]

The NIS, unlike other ministries, has the mission of providing intelligence not only regarding its traditional responsibilities, such as terrorism, industrial espionage, drug smuggling, human trafficking, and currency counterfeiting, but also, as noted earlier, has the unique role of preserving and defending presidential power. Such duty entails, among others, providing intelligence estimates not only on the North Korean political and military leadership to enable maximum socio-economic integration with Pyongyang, as has been the case for the past seven years, but also on its military capabilities as well as the evolving military and political trends of its key ally, i.e., Washington, and of cooperative partners, i.e., Tokyo, Beijing, and Moscow, to minimize any major international disruptions to the President's stated objectives.

The Service, aside from its operatives in embassies and international organizations around the globe, has intelligence agreements with other foreign agencies through which it shares information. When there are major crises, such as in the aftermath of the Korean-Russian diplomatic rupture in June of 1998, a major revision of the analytical framework comes into being. The Service, along with other Ministries, then advises the President as to the alternatively desirable direction in which a given foreign policy should steer.

The degree to which external sources of information impact upon internal perceptions is, moreover, a function of the existing level of political, diplomatic, economic, military, and cultural exchanges between South Korea and the concerned countries. The National Intelligence Service has a number of qualified specialists in the US,

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[12] For a salient analysis, consult, Bruce Bechtol, manuscript (Quantico: Marine Staff and Command College, forthcoming).

China, Russia, Japan, North Korea, the EU, and major international organizations, not to mention those covering private firms, media (domestic and foreign), NGOs, and the domestic political community (although the latter activity has been legally banned by the current President). The sources of information which are collected are quite comprehensive, i.e., the scientific, and technological, political, economic, cultural, and foreign policy and military affairs of the major and relevant powers. However, the most determinative information for the National Intelligence Service concerns high-level political information which would be most useful to the President for both his own domestic political standing.

During the Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo-hyun presidencies, this information included detection of signs of positive market reforms in North Korea and the initial failure of its market to resort to WMD development and other black market activities as a *defensive* means of survival. This information would include such reportage as the standing political influence of the US President, Congressional climate, and varying political disposition of the so-called power bureaucracies—i.e., US Department of Defence, US Central Intelligence Agency, US State Department, and Office of the US Trade Representative–towards the South Korean President and North Korea. Accordingly, press evaluations, articulated views of high-ranking politicians (Senators, Congressmen, Russian Duma members, Japanese Diet members, members of China's Supreme People's Assembly etc.), press reports, analysis by think-tanks, and public opinion polls figure crucially in its directives of NIS information processing and delivery.

The Ministry of National Defence (MND)

The Ministry of National Defence (MND) oversees the military alliance with the United States and increasingly cooperative security relations with Japan, China, Russia and North Korea. With its main

goal of deterring and stabilizing the North Korean military—characterized by unprovoked attacks, terrorism, and continuing proliferation problems–the Ministry has prioritized and continues to emphasize mutual security commitments and cooperation with Washington and Tokyo despite the increasing tensions in Seoul's political relations with its erstwhile partners as a result of elite generational turnover, historical issues over Japan's colonialism (textbook controversy, Yasukuni visits, comfort women etc.), territorial dispute, perceived US unilateralism, and related divergence in threat perceptions towards North Korea.[13] While the North Korean force structure has evolved from one primarily geared to conventional to unconventional warfare due to declining economic and social bases in

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[13] For the best work on Korea-Japan relations dealing with perceptions, culture and politics, see Corrado Letta, *Moving Forward Not Tallying with Yesterday*, draft monograph (Rome, 2005); on illustrative analyses on Korea-US relations, especially since the Roh Moo-hyun presidency, see Tae-Shik Lee, opening remarks, International Conference, "Sustaining the Alliance: US-Korean Relations in the New Era," co-organized by American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy (AEI) and Maeil Business Newspaper at AEI, February 1, 2006; James A. Leach, remarks delivered at CSIS-Chosun Ilbo Conference on "Prospects for US Policy toward the Korean Peninsula in the Second Bush Administration," May 17, 2005, Washington, DC; Norman D. Levine, *Do the Ties Still Bind? The US-ROK Security Relationship After 9/11* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2005); Paul F. Chamberlin, "ROK-US Interests and Alliance in a New Era: A Prescription for Change," *Korea and World Affairs* (Winter 2005): pp. 504-532; Korea Society Working Group on Korea-US-Relations Report, *The Status of the US-ROK Alliance* (New York: Korea Society, 2005); Donald P. Gregg, "The Pyongyang Summit in Perspective—Five Years Later," manuscript (New York: Korea Society, June 3, 2005); idem, "South Korea Most Significant US Ally," *The Korea Times*, February 20, 2005; Donald Gregg and Don Oberdofer, "A Moment to Seize With North Korea," *The Washington Post*, June 22, 2005, p. A21; Chung-In Moon, "After Beijing Breakthrough, What Next?" *The Korea Times*, September 23, 2005, p. 5; idem, "S. Korea—US Alliance Faces Challenges," *Ibid*, October 31, 2005, p. 14; idem, "Direct Food Aid: Why Seoul Helps the North," *International Herald Tribune*, October 1-2, 2005; Hyug Baeg Lim, "Some Thoughts on the Future of ROK-US Relations," paper presented at International Conference, "New Era—New Alliance," Marriott Conference Center, Georgetown University, November 2-3, 2005; William M. Drennan, "Altered States: The Future of US—ROK Cooperation," manuscript (Washington, DC, 2005); Young-Ho Park, "Building a Solid Partnership: The ROK-US Policy Coordination on Pyongyang," manuscript (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2005).

relation to Seoul, the decisive ability of Pyongyang's armed forces to threaten and, by extension, extort Seoul has presented twin challenges to the MND: to maximize anti-air defence and counter-battery operation capability in light of the United States Forces in Korea (USFK) force restructuring and to stabilize Korea-US Combined Force Command's budgetary, organizational, acquisition, and doctrinal process.

Thus, the primary duty of the MND, as in the past, is to evaluate as precisely as possible Pyongyang's formidable ability to threaten Seoul and to devise the most practical ways of meeting this threat by contextualizing the Korea-US alliance at budgetary, weapons system, and doctrinal levels on the one hand, while insulating negative political pressures generated as a result of democratization on civil-military relations on the other. The latter impulse on the MND has been generated as a result of the rise of anti-Americanism, NGOs, media, urbanization, and the political leadership's excessive attempt to socio-economically engage Pyongyang and overturn the formidable military threat without taking comparable steps in conventional and non-conventional confidence and security building measures (CSBMs). Therefore, the primary mission of the MND is to address Pyongyang's military threat and Washington's force-in-transformation (the latter proceeded with some alarm within the MND as a result of a lack of consultation). However, the delivery of this critical evaluation, policy analysis, and recommendation to the President may become difficult not only because of the lack of the Office of Defence Advisor to the President under the Roh Moo-hyun government since 2004, but also because of the President's priority on socio-economic engagement with Pyongyang and his core supporters in the Presidential Secretariat, who want to correct the human rights abuse, repression, and excesses of the bureaucratic-authoritarian past in South Korea by implicating the MND and its institutional memory as a target of radical reform.

Accordingly, the Ministry of National Defence, which has

working relations with—in varying degrees—its counterparts in the US, Japan, China, Russia, and the EU, is primarily interested in receiving accurate data on the military capability and intentions of Pyongyang with particular respect to its WMD capability, long-range artillery and 100,000 strong special forces, accurate intelligence on evolving US military posture in defending this threat, and correctly charting the noted actors' relations with Pyongyang with eye to any increases in North Korea's ability to threaten Seoul. Thus, information of such a nature as the US military budget, the US Congressional, Japanese Diet, Russian Duma attitudes towards their military, sustainability of the US military presence on the Korean Peninsula,[14] the state of Japanese, Chinese and Russian civil-military relations, technology transfer, and power projection capability are of utmost interest to the MND.

One caveat is in order. While the significance of the Korea-US Mutual Defence Treaty cannot be emphasized enough, and hence, the overriding priority of US forces in Korea and the supporting bureaucratic structure within the US Department of Defence, Armed Services Committee in the Senate, and the National Security Council

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[14] For pungent discussion on the role of the US forces in Northeast Asia (NEA) and the Korean Peninsula, see Edward A. Olsen, "Prospects for Regional Security Arrangements in Post-Cold War Northeast Asia: An American Perspective," in *A New World Order and the Security of the Asia-Pacific Region*, 5th KIDA—CSIS International Defence Conference (eds.), Chae-ha Pak et al. (Seoul: Korea Computer Industrial Co., Ltd., 1993), pp. 155-174; Jonathan D. Pollack, "The United States and Asia in 1996: Under Revolution, but Open for Business," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (January 1997), pp. 95-109; Daryl M. Plunk, "Time for Fundamental Changes in America's North Korea Policies: An American Perspective," L. Gordon Flake, "Dancing with the Devil: Prospects for the Normalization of US—DPRK Relations," and Richard P. Cronin, "South Korea and the United States: Towards a New Partnership," *The United States and the Two Koreas at the Crossroads: Searching for a New Passage: Korean-American Conference Proceedings* (Seoul: The Korean Political Science Association, March 26-7, 1999); Byungki Kim and Yun-Chu Kim (eds.), *Global War on Terror, Weapons of Mass Destruction and North Korea: The Future of Air Power and Korea-US Alliance*, Korea Aerospace Policy Research Institute Working Monograph Series in International Relations No. 1 (Seoul: The Institute 21 for Peace Studies of Donga Ilbo, 2004).

and so on, the South Korean Defence Ministry, it seems to this author, like the Ministry of Reunification and the National Intelligence Service, is concerned with the long-term development of a strategically autonomous South Korean armed force and defence posture. Such a long-term perspective can be thought out in the context of both the US military presence (in some combination of air, naval, and ground presence) or even in its absence—which is contingent on the evolution of both the regional and US and Korean political environment. Thus, relative to the outstanding significance of the US armed forces for the foreseeable future (and trade, investment, cultural, educational industry, common values, and robust diplomatic relations, which nest the bilateral relations as the linchpin of Korea's security with the United States), the quintessential objective of the MND in the longer run also involves planning, provision, and execution of policy designed to reintegrate North Korea at the organizational, doctrinal, budgetary, and weapons level in more or less a continuing partnership with the United States.

The Ministry of Unification (MOU)

The Ministry of Unification, whose major concern is North Korea, has been traditionally conservative in its outlook towards Pyongyang. Moreover, it has been only in recent years (1998−) that active improvement of inter-Korean relations has been pursued by the Ministry of Unification although in a manner secondary to the National Intelligence Service which played a key, spearheading role in the June Summit in 2000. Given the limited resources of the Ministry through which it can directly collect, analyze, and contextualize in a policy format relevant information from the major powers surrounding the Korean Peninsula, one must argue that the impact of external factors on the formation of the Unification Ministry's world outlook is indirect, limited, and, therefore, the weakest among the

concerned Ministries that have been examined thus-far.

Nevertheless, given the institutional thrust of the Ministry towards stabilization of North Korea's socio-economic and political conditions,[15] which would enable visible improvement in inter-Korean relations at the economic, cultural, humanitarian, political and military level, the most sought-after information would concern the articulated views of North Korea and the major powers with respect to Pyongyang's leadership, socio-economic, military conditions, foreign policy, and national security on inter-Korean affairs. This information is gathered from domestic/foreign press, journalists operating in Korea, officials, think-tank specialists, and academics. Moreover, information is obtained from occasional research visits abroad by the Ministry's special team often with outside experts in their meetings with mid-level bureaucrats, academic specialists, and businessmen in the field of North Korean affairs.[16] The Ministry also has its own research arm, the Korea Institute for National Unification (KINU), which houses qualified experts on inter-Korean and major power relations through which further information is collected, analyzed, and delivered.

Given the mission of the Ministry as the major organ dealing with North Korea, it is protective of its jurisdictional integrity. This has been the particular case vis-à-vis the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which has been instrumental in leading the Basic Framework Agreement with North Korea (1994-). Accordingly, the Reunification Ministry, while emphasizing the continued significance of the United

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[15] For an assessment, consult Byungki Kim, "The Dilemma of North Korean Reform: Where Is It Going ?" *East Asian Review*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Winter 2000), pp. 105-119.

[16] This author was a member of such a research visit to a select country eight years ago wherein counterpart from the Foreign Ministry, Ministry of External Economic Relations, a Special Assistant to the Chairman of a political party who was also a businessman and a researcher partook in a highly productive policy (closed) conference.

States and the PRC in their role in bringing the peace process to the Peninsula, is inclined towards taking in information which help "re-Koreanize" inter-Korean relations. Such conditions can be brought about by a policy platform which relatively moderates the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the US, and by extension, increasing the role of North Korea, Russia, Japan, and China in the inter-Korean policy and peace process.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT)

Lastly, let us address the Ministry of Foreign Affair and Trade and the external forces that shape, or should I say reinforce and moderate, its institutional culture. The Ministry has been until the mid-1990s likened to what the Japanese have termed her Foreign Ministry, namely, the Ministry of "courtesy." This is because if major foreign policy events culminated as a success, such as diplomatic normalization, it was either the President or his close associates who received all the credit, while if something went wrong, it was the Ministry that was blamed—not always, but most of the time.

In terms of the state of foreign and national security policy being a function of domestic politics, particularly in developing and post-authoritarian political systems,[17] the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT) played a decorative role until the 1990s, as noted

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[17] See, for example, Byungki Kim, "The Evolutionary Origins of International Security in the Age of Terrorism: Implications for the Asia-Pacific Region," in *Ilmin International Relations Institute Review* Vol. 10, No. 1, (Spring 2005), pp 135-182; Young-Sun Ha, "The Historical Development of Korean Globalization: Kukchewha and Segyewa," Davis B. Bobrow and James J. Na, "Korea's Affairs with Globalization: Deconstructing Segyewa," Thomas Henriksen, "Korea's Foreign and Security Policy in an Age of Democratization and Globalization," and Jung-Hoon Lee, "Globalization, Nationalism, and Security Options for South Korea," *Democratization and Globalization in Korea: Assessments and Prospects*, Yonsei Monograph Series on International Studies No. 4 (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1999), pp. 135-246.

earlier. However, with the growing globalization of Korean foreign policy and the consequent need for diplomatic activization, particularly in relation to the expanding and often turbulent relationship with the US as a result of rapid diffusion of political authority, the Foreign Ministry's role became relatively more important vis-à-vis other organs. Such change for the Foreign Ministry was reflected in part by the downgrading of Minister of Reunification from its concurrent position as Deputy Prime Minister in the 1990s although such formal institutional lining has been redressed by renewed emphasis on North Korea since president Kim Dae Jung and the subsequent appointment of political heavy weights during the current Roh Moo-hyun presidency (in addition to the fact that the Minister of Reunification now chairs the NSC).

Given the expansion in trade, investment, cultural/educational exchange, and parallel security/trade interdependence with the United States, it is no accident that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade considers the maintenance of close and solid working relations with Washington as one of the most important corner stones of its policy. Such has been the case in the context of increased trade and security cooperation with Japan, Russia, and China during the last decade, invariably moderating the policy thrust of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade from her prior US-centric platform to some, but not a decisive, degree (which is reflected by, for instance, Korea's active role in ASEAN plus 3 framework as well as the East Asian Summit last year in which the US was not involved).[18]

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[18] However, I do not believe that East Asian intra-regionalization dynamics. See, for example, Mark E. Manyin, *South Korea—US Economic Relations: Cooperation, Friction, and Prospects for a Free Trade Agreement*, CRS Report for Congress (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, September 16, 2005); Claude Barfield and Jason Bolton, "Korea, the US, China, and Japan: The Rise of Asian Regionalism," *Pacific Focus*, Vol. XX, No. 1 (Spring 2005). pp. 179-255; Xiaming Zhang, "China and Community Building in East Asia," paper presented at Georgetown Conference on Korean Society, December 7-8, 2006 at Marriot Conference Center, Washington, DC; Dennis S. McNamara, "Commerce,

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, like all other Ministries is sensitized to her stake in the US-led policy developments with respect to inter-Korean dialogue, major power relations, and multilateral diplomacy, involving all international organizations (as was the case in US Secretary of State Madeline Albright's visit to North Korea in October 1999 and the crystallisation of the Four Party and Six-Party Talks). Thus, for MOFAT, continued activization of the US' and other international actors' role, i.e., Moscow, Beijing, Tokyo, Brussels in the inter-Korean peace process and the attendant intelligence at the aggregation stage, which tend to support such trends, will be most welcome, while signs that either weaken or derail the desired role of major international actors in such process will be either organizationally ignored, down-played, or moderated in policy analysis and its deliverance to the NSC or the President.

In this respect, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade keenly watches Washington's unfolding attitude towards both Koreas, including that of the State Department, the Pentagon, the Department of Commerce, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Office of the President, the press corps, influential think-tanks, lobby groups, and academics with access to the corridors of power. The single most influential external source of this Ministry's world view in the US is the State Department, while in Korea it is the US Embassy and the USFK along with the media, NGOs, and academia which occupy

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Community, and Korea in East Asia," paper presented at Georgetown Conference on Korean Society, December 7-8, 2006 at Marriot Conference Center, Washington, DC; Byungki Kim, Hyun-Chin Lim, and Jinho Chang, "A Preliminary Analysis of the Political Economy of Asian Integration: Differences from the European Union Experiences," *The Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, Vol. 20 (Winter 2004), pp. 25-66. Should necessarily be incompatible with the sustenance and even expanded solidification of bilateral alliances in NEA, including Korea-US relations as some have argued although there is much work to be done. For an interesting prescription, see Kent E. Calder, "Regionalism, Alliance and Domestic Politics: Can the Benelux Model Travel to Northeast Asia," paper presented at Georgetown Conference on Korean Society, December 7-8, 2005, Georgetown Conference Center, Washington, DC.

increasing weight in providing an alternative opinion and thus view on Korea—US relations.

The President and the NSC Process

While I have not described what exactly constitutes the outside world view of the decision-makers as a whole in the overall international security policymaking process, it is clearly disjointed, disintegrated, compartmentalized, and even somewhat provincial when its packaged briefing gets to the President and his Senior Secretary for Foreign Affairs and National Security or the Senior Advisor for National Security. In a very rough manner, one can argue that the rudimentary basis of the President's external perception of the outside world as provided by the bureaucracies is US-centred, while the increasing significance of Japan, China, Russia, and the EU is being recognized. Of course, this is predicated in President Roh Moo-Hyun's initial emphasis and belief in reintegrating Pyongyang with Seoul, as noted earlier, socio-economically and culturally first, without instituting attendant steps in redressing outstanding political, military, and diplomatic steps that would enable North Korea's long-term integration not only with Seoul, but also the international community.

The rough paradigm of a holistic South Korean foreign policy platform (or idea) that I have hitherto provided is also fundamentally calibrated by, as noted earlier, a President whose formative and given belief system is centred on autonomy, correcting of the past, and the so called "pan-national coexistence" with Pyongyang (nationalism), which is reinforced by the institutional lead given to the Ministry of Reunification in the NSC and in the personality of his loyal lieutenant Lee Jong-Seok who is a firm believer and executioner of such *Weltanshauung*. The primordial picture that is assembled here, hence, is one of major foreign policy actors being driven in his policy and personnel based on a somewhat unreconstructed provincialism,

nationalism, emotionalism, sense of victimization, and an irresistible need to correct the past facing continuous clashes with, in the words of one distinguished journalist, the realities of international dynamics with profound domestic political implications, one of what includes the policy analysis and recommendations provided by all the security, foreign-policy, and intelligence responsible organs that we have analyzed thus-far. Moreover, these institutions are, in turn, undergoing a not-insignificant organizational, cultural, and personnel change, reflective of what is the minimal lip service that the respective heads of these organs have to give with respect to the President's ongoing directives in the field of foreign and national security policy.

Currently, South Korea has a President who is quite well sensitized intellectually—as opposed to emotionally–to the events developing in the international arena with a penchant for risk-taking and active diplomatic offensives towards the major powers. The imperative for the current President, is then, to integrate the sources of external information to his political standing, learn in both a simple and complex manner, and stylize the goal of developing long-term peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, in the NEA, and around the globe. For only a strong political initiative from the President can cut through and harmonize the inter-departmental rivalry and sectionalism which impede the development of a robust, globally sensitized mid-to-long term policy platform on which sound foreign and national security policy lies.

Conclusion

This research note has, in a very preliminary manner, examined the institutional setting of the decision-makers in South Korea in relation to the type of information which they are likely to digest, their perceptual orientations, bureaucratic interests, and interagency policy

deliberation process in international security policymaking. The modest goal of this research note is to stimulate further research in each of the areas that have been examined in a much more rigorous and systematic fashion which will serve as a constructive platform for generating policy recommendations for long-term peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. In order to do this, I recommend the following research plans: systematic analysis of external perceptions, beliefs, principles, interpretations of major events and issues, relevant elite back ground (socialization path), and policy prescriptions articulated by varying institutional actors in the international security policymaking establishment over a period of time; systematic examination of the foreign and national security policy making order in an in-depth manner by combining bureaucratic politics, coalition-building, learning, and bargaining models; and collaborative research projects with foreign academic institutions with the goal of developing systematic, hard data on which the above research areas can begin with respect to developing robust policy prescriptions for the South Korean policymaking community in the long term as is the case in the United States.