

Submitted on 5/8/09

[Final Draft: Not for Citation]

Political and Security Developments in South Korea

A paper submitted to the 8th India-Korea Dialogue

On

India and Korea in the Midst of Global Financial Crisis: Cooperation and Responses

New Delhi, India

May 19-21, 2009

Kyudok Hong

(Dean, College of Social Sciences, Sookmyung University, Seoul, Korea)

Mobile 010-4870-8886 Fax:02-710-9648 E-mail: kdhong@sm.ac.kr

Key Words

Global Korea, Lee Myung-bak, New Asian Initiative, human security, Korean nationalism, ROK-U.S. relations, alliance management, India-Korea relations

Short Bio

Dr. Hong is currently Dean of the College of Social Sciences at the Sookmyung Women's University in Seoul, Korea. He is now serving as policy advisor to the Chief of Staff, ROK Army, the Ministry of National Defense, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. He is also a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum's Experts/Eminent Persons (EEP) and Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific(CSCAP)-Korea. He has assisted President Lee Myung-bak to shape his foreign and security policy as a member of the campaign advisors group and joined a presidential transition committee as a senior advisor in the field of foreign affairs, unification, and security during January and February 2008. He received his Ph.D. from the University of South Carolina in 1991. He is the author of many articles and book chapters, and one of the active participants in international conferences and workshops on security issues.

Introduction

The Lee Myung-bak Government's foreign and security policy is geared towards the creation of a genuine "Global Korea" which can interact dynamically with global partners with corresponding visions and policy means. After being nominated as the presidential candidate of Grand National Party (GNP) he made his first visit to India and the United

Emirates of the Arab to find a way in April 2007 to learn from their unique successful experiences of developing new industries for the 21st century. During the past 15 months after inauguration, President Lee mainly focused on two areas: cultivating the relationship with key Asian partners along the line of his New Asian Initiative and reconstruction of the alliance relationship with the United States. President Lee made his first meeting with Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh at the G-8 summit in Toyako, Japan and agreed with him to find a way for signing the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) as early as possible. However, Lee's main focus has been to mend fences with neighboring powers such as China and Japan. Lee finally extended his outreach efforts to include Australia, New Zealand and Indonesia in March 2009. He is now planning to visit Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan during the May 10th through 14th.

There exists a consensus shared by both Seoul and Washington that the alliance relationship needs to be revitalized. President Lee strongly wished to upgrade bilateral relations with the United States by calling for a strategic alliance for the 21st century when he met with President Bush at Camp David on April 19, 2008. However, Lee Myung-bak's efforts were frustrated by the left-leaning progressives of Korean society who were largely dissatisfied with President Lee's decision to lift the ban on importing U.S. beef. Starting on May 1, 2008, it took three and a half months for him to fully recover from the so-called anti-government beef protests and candle light vigils. As soon as he escaped from the fiasco by reorganizing the staff members at the Presidential office, he was facing the global financial crisis. Despite such difficulties, he expressed his willingness to carry out a reform agenda and he is now determined to engage his original plans and mobilize the energies of the country behind large and sustained drives toward advancing Korea into the rank of world's superior states.

President Lee wishes to strengthen Korea's regional networks and is determined to take a leadership role in creating a focal point of discussion, debate, and action on the human security agenda in East Asia. Yet, he learned a hard lesson from the beef incident that gaining support from the people at home is a necessary condition for conducting a successful foreign policy. The question is how can he transform people's passion and energy into a driving force for solving regional and global challenges of the future. To transform a mindset of anti-global/nationalist forces at home requires his leadership skills and sound strategy. He believes that there is much room for strategic cooperation among key partners and well-coordinated skills and strategies of alliance management is very much needed. This study introduces the Korea's efforts to be a constructive player in the region and evaluate how the Lee government has managed to transform its vision into an operational concept.

Perils of public anxiety at home

Lee's presidency has been crippled by street demonstrations against the purported mad cow dangers of imported U.S. beef. It is very important to investigate the case of South Korean left-wing extremists and progressive NGOs and their strong influence on the ROK-US alliance. This study addresses the serious problems they have caused and identifies the most appropriate problem-solving mechanisms for preventing a general loosening of the

alliance ties and pre-empting the disintegration of the alliance.

People's Action for Preventing Mad Cow Dangers, a coalition group of more than 24 leftwing extremists and progressive NGOs, was hurriedly set up by the usual suspects. Among the prominent ones, Park Suk-woon and Pastor Han Sang-yol are key members of Solidarity of Unification (SOU: Tongilyondae in Korean) and they continued to obstruct the transfer of U.S. bases to Osan-Pyeongtaek area, opposed the signing of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the U.S. and demanded an early transfer of wartime Operational Control (OPCON) to South Korea. The SOU was formed in 2001 in order to facilitate the implementation process of agreement reached at the inter-Korean summit meeting on June 15, 2000. Pastor Han and Park basically share pro-North Korean and anti-American positions in their principles. For the first time in 10 years, clear evidence was provided by the Korean authorities that these NGO leaders have actually received instruction from the North. However, the previous government has never arrested anyone from those left-leaning NGOs although they copied the statements made by Pyongyang's Committee for Fatherland's Peaceful Unification (Jopyongtong in Korean) and acted in accordance with arguments stated in the editorial or the opinion section of Rodong Shinmun, North Korea's major newspaper.

Particularly, the National Teachers Union (Jungyojo in Korean) successfully rallied boys and girls at the middle and high schools to participate in the street protest. KBS, MBC, Hankyoreh, and Kyunghyang were prominent among the broadcasting and newspaper companies. They did not waste time to criticize the Lee government's handling of the beef import issue and encouraged people to join the demonstrations to express the Korean pride and protect food security. They claimed that participation was a manifestation of maturing citizenship and also emphasized that expression of people's will is necessary for promoting democracy. At the same time, the Korean Democratic Labor Union (Minjunochong in Korean) began to jump on the bandwagon of protesting against the Lee government. It is an irony that the members of opposition parties are also joining the leftwing extremists to take the streets by showing a condoning attitude against their use of violence against the authorities.

No one in the Blue House really anticipated that the health fears in Korea would be easily compounded by such fervent nationalism and would virtually paralyze the Lee government which had won the election with the largest margin of votes in history. President Lee, elected with a promise to mend fences with Washington, failed to quell his critics and underestimated the anxiety level of those who worried about losing their privileges. After election, President Lee never passed a single day without emphasizing the need for transformation of the Korean society. He strongly chastised the civil servants and demanded higher standards and work ethics. His enthusiasm went too far and announced no holiday principle when he started his official duties at the presidential transition commission. The level of frustration was sharply increased among people after the election. Those who supported him throughout the campaign were beginning to complain since Lee did not really want them to engage in the politics. On the other hand, there was no way for satisfying public expectation for better life when the national economy was going downward with the global economic crisis.

The beef issue provided the momentum for those left-wing extremists, labor union members, and former Uri Party members to unite together to stage a coup against an infant

conservative government. There is no way to keep their interests without curtailing Lee's ambitious reform agenda. Considering the fact that 2.37 million from the age of 19 to 34 were jobless in Korea at the time it was rather easy for them to ignite the flame of public disgruntlement over widening aspiration gap.

The anti-government forces attacked President Lee by describing him as a defender of the wealthy and privileged. President Lee's good will gesture at the Camp David meeting with President Bush in April 2008 was exaggerated as a form of tribute to a foreign power. The critics fed paranoia through internet and TV shows and overly exaggerated the danger of a mad-cow disease in an American herd. It easily sparked public anger at the alleged weakness of the Lee government when they thought that the Lee government did not stand up vigorously enough to American pressure. The critics blamed the Lee government for giving up its sovereignty and hurting people's pride by providing a concession to the U.S. at the expense of public safety.

The collective sense of grievances among people on the street degenerated into a form of collective hysteria and united various dissident groups together with bystanders who were also dissatisfied with the Lee government's style, priority setting of policy agenda, and tempo of pushing things forward.

His North Korean policy was getting less support from both fronts

On the other hand, his tough line policy orientation toward North Korea conditioning aid on nuclear disarmament and improved human rights has chilled ties with Pyongyang and angered both the leadership in the North and the pro-North Korean elements in the South. Former President Kim Dae-jung frequently refuted President Lee's idea that South Korea suffered a great loss during the past 10 years due to sunshine policy. Former President Roh Moo-hyun did not hesitate to criticize the Lee government by accusing that the new administration did not abide by the so-called October 4th agreement he made hurriedly with Kim Jong-il just before he left his presidency in February 2008.

However, President Lee also failed to garner strong support from the conservatives who demanded a complete reversal of the sunshine policy. Strangely, President Lee called upon Kim Ha-jung to become his first Minister of Unification. Kim Ha-jung is Kim Dae-Jung's former national security advisor and worked as the longest serving Korean ambassador to China under President Roh. Once Kim Ha-jung initiated the adoption of a new policy based on mutual benefits and prosperity, those conservatives who originally supported Lee were infuriated because the new policy contains the basic element of sunshine policy. This raised the question of who moved the President Lee's policy orientation further to the left.

Although President Lee made it clear that sending food aid for humanitarian purposes will be continued, pro-North Korean NGOs and left-wing extremists did not believe him. On the contrary, they demanded an increased contact with North Korea by giving up such ambiguous stance based on 'benign neglect'. The influence of the Roh Moo-hyun and Kim Dae Jung supporters remained intact even after Lee Myung-bak became the President. They were well-positioned throughout the government, the media and academia. There existed no systematic efforts to tame the political influence of pro-North Korean power elites mushroomed throughout the past 10 years. Those pro-North Korean intellectuals and activists certainly felt threatened when the new government attempted to discard the Ministry

of Unification and began to investigate the misuse of funds among key NGOs by controlling the usual practice of funneling funds to the DPRK.

They particularly questioned the utility of Lee government's vision of "Denuclearization-Openness 3000." They complained that the Lee government lacks willingness to continue the negotiation with Pyongyang. They continued to criticize that demanding a complete denuclearization and verification is unobtainable. The critics insisted that policy of continuing cooperation must be continued as long as Pyongyang stands ready to cooperate with the U.S. and other partners in denuclearization process based on the February 13 agreement. From the perspective of the critics, American flexibility of the previous Bush administration shown during the process of nuclear negotiation proves that Lee's hard line policy stance is anachronistic and therefore needs to be reformulated.

Ironically, making the same voice with Americans did not protect President Lee from criticism, either. When President Bush suggested that he would send 500,000 tons of food aid to Pyongyang at the Camp David meeting on April 20, 2008, President Lee welcomed the idea of supporting people in North Korea who will face the most difficult time in coming months. However, the U.S. decision to provide food aid emboldened Pyongyang to turn down the similar offer from the Lee government. It increased the chance of isolating the Lee government's position by allowing Pyongyang to play a wedge between Seoul and Washington.

It created two different reactions in the domestic politics: It made conservatives suspect that the U.S. did not mind Seoul's strategic position, while making the pro-North Korean progressives convinced that Lee's hard line policy had lost its legitimacy.

Political winds are finally turning around

People's Action staged the 100th demonstration near Gwanhwamoon street in Seoul on August 15, 2008. However, their momentum did not last forever. The killing of a Korean tourist by the North Korean guard at Mt. Geumgang and the outstanding performances of Korean athletes at the Beijing Olympic Games beginning on August 8, 2008 provided rare breathing room for President Lee. Since then, President Lee has taken this opportunity to prepare for fighting off bouts of radical demonstrations at home and a series of provocation from the North. President Lee's approval rating--once plunged to 15 percent--has bounced back to 26 percent. However, his supporting rate is somehow stuck around 26-28% due to increasing economic uncertainty coming out of the U.S. financial crisis. President Lee proposed a tax cut and announced a series of public sector reform measures to boost the economy. Also he began to talk to the public through radio addresses to dissipate public anxiety on the economic difficulty. His efforts were generally appreciated but did not necessarily restore people's confidence in such a worrisome economic situation.

However, one still wonders whether the massive demonstration that frustrated the Lee government in 2008 can be repeated. It seems that three elements are now working positively for the Lee government and it is highly unlikely that such demonstrations happen again.

First, the sagging economy is expanding slowly to everyone's surprise. The Lee government successfully managed to avoid a recession and South Korea is currently rated among OECD countries as the front runner that escapes from the global financial crisis. The supporting rate of the President Lee is rising up to 40% mainly due to his efforts to prevent

the Korean economy from falling into recession; second, Lee's opponents are beginning to lose influence as former President Roh's financial scandal breaks out. President Roh has portrayed himself an image of a clean and reform-minded leader who hated the old fashioned way of doing politics. Roh and his followers did not mind to stage a coup against the conservatives through the internet and other tools of new media even after retiring from the politics; third, North Korea made a series of strategic blunders and failed to take advantage of leadership change in the United States. The continuing use of brinkmanship against the Obama Administration and the Lee Government makes people get tired and hardly sympathetic to Pyongyang's rhetoric. It also makes the pro-North Korean element of the society lose its appeal to the public.

Several labor unions are currently withdrawing from the membership of radical Korean Democratic Labor Union that not only requires militant struggles against the government but also encourages to join the pro-North Korean political rallies. Student activism is also declining rapidly on campus due to the difficulties of finding jobs on the market. The National Teachers Union leaders are on the defensive when their leadership was reported to be involved in covering up the sexual harassment cases. The number of membership was reduced by 30,000 from 100,000 over past twelve months. Those TV producers who exaggerated the danger of mad cow disease and ignited a violent demonstration against the government in 2008 were also indicted and will be prosecuted. The Munwha Broadcasting Company, the Hankyoreh, the Kyunghyang newspapers are now facing a serious financial problem since their anti-market orientation and tendency to rely on sensationalism hardly attracts major sponsors like Samsung and LG.

Slow start for achieving the vision of Global Korea

Despite rhetoric of full commitment, no specific efforts have been made to deploy more peacekeepers abroad, to respond more quickly to crises, and to allocate additional resources to help carry out its core responsibilities during the first year.

The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon acknowledged how frustrated he was when the government failed to support his request for additional funds for pursuing an active public diplomacy program. At an interview with local reporters on July 5, 2008, he expressed his unusual tone of disappointment by saying that Korea's contribution was too tiny and it needs to be expanded further in order to become a stakeholder in the international society.¹

Although President Lee made it clear that his government will increase its contributions to developing countries and seek a greater role in international peacekeeping and environmental protection efforts during his meeting with Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on July 4, 2008,² the Lee government failed to seize the momentum of the Secretary General's visiting home to turn things around. It might be wonderful if the Lee government was able to announce that Korea wants to engage further to prevent and mitigate spill-over conflicts from border

¹ Secretary General Ban said that "Frankly I was shamed since Korea was not up to the expectation of the international society," *Joong-Ang Sunday*, July 06, 2008. www.joins.com. (accessed date: July 10, 2008).

² "Lee pledges greater Korean role in int'l society." *Korean Herald*, July 6, 2008 (accessed date: July 10, 2008).

disputes and ethnic tensions, to control and roll back nuclear proliferation and address a range of urgent human security challenges as a true partner of the United Nations.

During the G-8 Conference in Toyako, Japan on July 8-9, President Lee also made a much stronger commitment to the environment and alleviating poverty. He repeated his willingness to play a bridging role between the advanced and developing countries in reducing the technological divide and sharing South Korea's experiences with international society in seeking solutions. He continued to express that South Korea would be an 'early mover' for achieving the goals of climate change and conserving energy.³ Calling for establishing the 'East Asia Climate Partnership', he confirmed that South Korea is now ready for continuing a dialogue with the global partners on how South Korea can be a valued and valuable player in the world affairs. Unfortunately, his voice did not reach to the people and they still do not understand why they need to go beyond myopic national interest.

As the former CEO of Hyundai, President Lee fully understands why South Korea needs to be globally active and how it can be a valuable player in world affairs. President Lee wishes to strengthen Korea's regional networks and wants to upgrade Korea's branding and standing in the world community. However, it is still difficult for persuading people why they need "New Look," and why it is so important to earn respect from the rest of the world.

Lee needs a creative approach for cementing the ROK-US relations

South Korea's priorities include the management of its relations with the United States, which has been the backbone of the security and prosperity of Korea. However, South Korea's partnership with the United States must continue to be expanded beyond bilateral security arrangements. As he announced the new era for strategic alliance at the meeting with President Bush at the Camp David on April 22, 2008, President Lee has tried hard to make a common voice with the Bush administration in dealing with the nuclear issue of North Korea while sticking with his original decision to open the beef market even though he suffered a severe political damage at home. By reciprocating Lee's courageous efforts, President Bush assisted Lee by allowing additional negotiation for voluntary limitations of beef over 30 months and ordered to reverse the United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN)'s action on Dokdo territorial designation. He also included Korea on the list of 23 visa waiver states by making it possible for Korean tourists to travel without U.S. visa. He also provided Korea with the won-dollar currency swap that prevented the deteriorating financial situation of Korea in 2008. He also invited President Lee to G-20 summit meeting in Washington, DC to play an important role to discuss the financial crisis with world leaders.

Maintaining personal confidence between two leaders is very crucial. In April 2, 2009, President Lee has met with President Obama at the G-20 meeting in London for the first time and returned home with a good impression of him. Koreans generally welcomed the election of Barrack Obama and are sympathetic to him. The fact that he grew up in the back streets of Jakarta, Indonesia and having an unusual background of understanding poverty in Africa made people in Korea believe that he would understand the Asian minds better than any of his predecessors.

³ "Cooperation for Paradigm Change," Remarks by President Lee Myung-bak on the occasion of the G-8 Summit in Toyako.

Yet, there are many who are still concerned over the possibility of Obama Administration to compromise with Pyongyang due to its inability to force Pyongyang to give up its nuclear option. At least four reasons can be addressed why the Obama Administration will not be able to use force against Pyongyang.

First, North Korea's sudden collapse would create a dangerous power vacuum and it would give rise to fierce rivalries among regional powers. Second, uncontrolled stockpiles of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction in North Korea that might become available to other states or rogue groups would also threaten to undermine the efforts for global non-proliferation. Third, a surge of cross-border refugees would force enormous socioeconomic strains on adjacent countries including China. Fourth, stabilization and reconstruction of the northern Korean peninsula would require a large investment of resources from international society and therefore military strikes or invasion would jeopardize the chances for potential economic collaborations among concerned parties.

Many experts in South Korea have worried over the Obama Administration's losing interest in early ratification of KORUS FTA. Fortunately, there exists a possibility of change on the American position on this matter and it helps that the Lee government hurriedly passed the legislation at home on April 22, 2009, fully expecting that the U.S. would not oppose the original agreement. After observing the first 100 days of the Obama Administration, people in the Blue House are cautiously optimistic about the future. Thus far, the close cooperation between two governments is successfully deterring Pyongyang's strenuous efforts to drive a wedge against Seoul and Washington, D.C. The Secretary of State Hilary Clinton made it very clear from the beginning that the United States would not give in to Pyongyang and her position was again confirmed in her recent statement before the Hearings of the House on April 23, 2009. President Obama also made it clear that North Korea's violation must be punished when he made a speech in Prague, Czech Republic on April 5, 2009.

However, one needs to recognize the fact that the Obama Administration does not seem to have an alternative but to yield more concessions to Pyongyang's demands. It seems that North Korea will keep testing the Obama Administration by escalating further with the possibility of second nuclear test after firing a long-range rocket on April 5, 2009. Pyongyang already announced that it will begin reprocessing the spent fuel rods to make an additional nuclear bomb. Pyongyang also threatened to test the ICBM and expressed its willingness to build light-water reactors by implying that they will no longer hide their intention to produce the highly-enriched uranium for making additional bombs. It remains to be seen how long the United States can be persistent and patient enough to maintain its principles.

Secretary Clinton fully understands that the DPRK would never give up its nuclear option now. However, the Hilary team may believe that the United States can prevent them from further derailing from the course by providing an incentive that Pyongyang cannot refuse. They may want to apply its own salami tactics by matching Pyongyang to counter their usual attempts to slice demands with various stages in order to maximize the benefits.

The questions need to be posed here are: can the United States fully discuss with South Korea before they make any move? And more importantly, how should the United States do if North Korea wants to keep crossing the red lines to obtain further concessions?

Against this backdrop, managing the transition period is very crucial for both Washington and Seoul. Seoul and Washington's close cooperation will become very important from now on particularly in dealing with backsliding North Korea that has threatened us to reverse the denuclearization process. Specific questions are highly likely to emerge on how to establish the effective verification regime to satisfy concerned parties and how to penalize them if they are not going to return to the denuclearization process.

At the same time, it is very important for President Lee to convey a very clear message to President Obama in the upcoming summit meeting to be held on June 15 2009 in Washington, D.C. on what kind of vision he has for the enlargement of the alliance in line with South Korea's growing national capabilities and how he can be a strategic asset to the U.S. interest in the face of the changing nature of the North Korean threat and regional security dynamics.

Thus far, President Lee has taken a cautious approach in the process of alliance consolidation. President Lee committed himself to a "Global Korea" but operationalizing this goal in the context of the alliance is likely to result in great political friction at home. There still are some sore spots: burden-sharing, relocation of USFK base, and transfer of wartime OPCON can easily be political targets for the progressive sector of the society.

It seems that President Lee needs a more creative approach to send more PKOs to assist the Obama Administration's new foci of stabilization and reconstruction in Afghanistan and strengthen the relationship with regional partners on enhancing the capacities to deal with human insecurities throughout the region. The Lee Government recently decided to dispatch a KDX-II type destroyer with 298 sailors to the Bay of Somalia to participate in the "Operations Enduring Freedom" organized by the U.S. Fifth Fleet. They could be a starting point for building strategic partnership with many other regional powers.

Ocean peacekeeping is a new area for Korea. By working together by combining their strengths, Korea and the United States (perhaps together with India), can provide renewed leadership to resolve a host of challenges, from the need to improve energy efficiency, protect the environment and foster the economic development of the world's poorest countries to enhancing peace and security in East Asia and regions beyond East Asia.

Particularly, there is a real need to translate Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principles into East Asia as in the serious human sufferings from the recent disasters of Myanmar and China. Although the ASEAN and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) are beginning to embrace peacekeeping and peace-building, they are doing this in a limited and hesitant way.⁴ With this as a backdrop, South Korea can take a leadership role and create a focal point of discussion, debate and action on R2P and the Human Security agenda in East Asia.

President Lee's commitment to respond to humanitarian crises has been most recently on display in China. President Lee visited for the first time as the foreign leader to the site of the earthquake stricken region of China. His gesture of goodwill attracted a wide range of support and brought attention to the need for establishing a crisis response mechanism among the concerned parties in the region. He also encouraged the members of the Korean disaster response team who came to rescue survivors at the site of the earthquake in Sichuan Province.

⁴ Pierre P. Lizee, "Peacekeeping, Post-Conflict Reconstruction, and Regional Security: Next Steps and Challenges for Asia," *CSCAP Regional Security Outlook* (2007): 29.

The Korean Air Force also provided a disaster relief operation by dispatching three C-130s cargo planes full of emergency items. It was the first time that Korean military cargo planes were allowed to land on the Chinese soil and this would certainly help to build confidence between two states.

President Lee finds that building democracy is not exactly a science and can hardly be transferable from abroad.⁵ Of course, there was a time when the culture of South Korea was incapable of sustaining democratic values. But Lee and his supporters strongly believe that South Korea's unique experience can certainly be regarded as a hope and pointer for those who wish to overcome their roadblocks.⁶ Currently, the Lee Myung-bak government is considering to expand the size of Provisional Reconstruction Team (PRT) to Afghanistan from 24 to 90 personnel and will increase the amount of ODA. Although he has not yet made a final decision on dispatching military units, the debate is still going on within the policy circle on how much will be enough if the Lee government decides to send its forces.

But those who have reservations on the Korea's increasing regional role warn that Afghanistan is different from northern Iraq, given its ethnic and religious divisions and lack of administrative structure. There is no blue print, magic formula or mechanically transferable models for enhancing capacities of weak regime like the Karzai government in Afghanistan even if new leadership will soon take power after August election. The critics argue that Korea's contribution would not be a factor and despite rhetoric of full support from the international society, the Obama Administration will never make a difference.

Nationalism dies hard but young generation looks for a new role

There has never been a clear consensus about how much will be enough for Seoul's contribution to the international society. Moreover, people are still heavily occupied with the threat from the North and can hardly escape from the emotional appeal that national unification must be obtained at any cost. The appeal for increasing ODA for poor people in developing world can easily be criticized when it is interpreted as an indifference to the hardship and suffering of North Korean sisters and brothers living under the harsh rule of the Kim Jong-il regime. In this context, the North Korean factor has always been a major road block for increasing funds for international charity.

Preparing for reconstructing North Korea can be an ideal goal for strengthening trilateral cooperation among the United States, Japan and Korea. However, the pro-North Korean fundamentalists have condemned those who call for trilateral cooperation and brand them as internationalists to obstruct the inter-Korean efforts to heal the wounds of the Korean War. Nevertheless, it is not always easy for South Koreans to overcome totally the psychological wounds from the past. The false image of "the weak, helpless, suffering Korea," dies hard and the nationalist sentiments are relentlessly reproduced by the progressive teacher's union members at every school. In the midst of the information age, it is important to note that

⁵ Tom Zeller, "Building Democracy Is Not a Science," *New York Times*, April 27, 2003 <http://www.nytimes.com>. (Accessed date: April 27, 2003).

⁶ Aidan Foster-Carter, "The Myth of South Korea," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (1989): 46-47.

Koreans are easily manipulated by propaganda through the internet and some media journals. It is very difficult to upgrade Korea's image abroad if the country is still haunted by a memory of being abused by neighboring forces.

President Lee strongly believes that the active involvement of civilian experts in the peace keeping and peace building operations is a linchpin for conducting a successful policy. Korea now sends large numbers of volunteers to virtually every corner of the world. However, they need to be organized and better educated for enhancing its efficiency. The Lee government also needs to protect those civilian forces by providing better guidance and to strengthen its regional networks. It is imperative for South Korea to prevent such unfortunate incidents such as the kidnapping and murdering of Korean volunteers by the Taliban forces in Kabul, Afghanistan in 2007.

Fortunately, the young generation in Korea also wants to dispel old images and looks for a different role for the 21st Century. It is President Lee's responsibility to offer a vision and guiding principle for action. South Korea's role of pride and influence in the world should only be guaranteed when Koreans are to play as global citizens. The question is how President Lee can persuade them to look beyond such a narrow sense of nationalism and protectionism.

Complex emergencies of today's world have taught us that not only must civilian and military instruments work closely together but also that we must have a more effective working relationship among our civilian instruments. The issue is that emerging and powerful NGOs in Korea have never fully exercised their capacity to coordinate to protect people's right comprehensively beyond the realm of national interest and patriotism.⁷

Transforming Korean's passion and energy into a global challenge

It is President Lee's full responsibility to channel the passion and energies of the Korean people into a driving force for solving global challenges of the future. The Lee government now seeks to expand its official development assistance to 0.2 percent of its gross national income by 2012, from the current 0.1 percent to increase its participation in PKO activities during his tenure.

In January 2008, the Presidential Transition Committee recommended that the Ministry of National Defense expands its PKO forces to the size of 5,000 soldiers and creates a PKO center that can provide professional training for both civilian and military personnel. The transition team also planned to launch the "global leader program." It was supposed to dispatch 20,000 young volunteers to virtually every corner of the world to assist local efforts to improve their living standard and promote the idea of sustainable development. Considering the fact that only 4,700 personnel were sent abroad by Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) during the past 17 years, the new plan was ambitious enough to worry government officials who are supposed to be involved in the project. Ironically, the project was suspended when the idea of Reforming English Education System received harsh criticism from the media and public. The ruling Grand National Party also wanted to stop the

⁷ Kyudok Hong, "The Impact of NGOs on South Korea's Decision to Dispatch Troops to Iraq," *Journal of International and Area Studies* 12, no. 2 (2005): 31-46.

project before ruining their chance at the coming general election in April 2008.

The Korean military did not move fast enough to adopt the recommendation from the transition committee, either. The Ministry of National Defense has a big stake in revising the 'Defense Reform 2020', designed by the previous government in 2005. The Army needs to reduce its ground troops from 47 to 24 divisions according to the plan. Under these critical circumstances, the PKO issue can hardly get appropriate attention. However, the slow pace of reformulating PKOs may undermine Seoul's voice in the United Nations and lose the momentum of the globalization drive of President Lee.

The National Assembly and NGOs will soon be engaging in the debate of making a new law in dealing with conditions of dispatching PKO units abroad. Korea is currently being requested by the United Nations to send PKO troops to Darfur, Sudan and the Obama Administration is also checking the possibility of having a Korean contribution to Afghanistan. The Lee Government needs to make it clear that it can assist the new President of the United States when General David McKiernan demanded four additional brigades for stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan by the end of summer 2009. It would be very difficult for President Lee to dispatch its ground forces to Afghanistan since it will definitely ignite serious domestic opposition against his government. However, he needs to consider seriously the option of sending back the engineering and medical units of the Korean military along with a Korean PRT that can be a replacement for the American PRT in a rotation basis in order to reduce the heavy burden for the U.S. Redeploying the Air Force's transportation squadron that has been stationed in Kuwait until the end of 2008 can be an option to help the U.S. efforts to build up its capacity to handle a large number of forces to be deployed soon.

On January 12, 2009, President Lee also pronounced in a joint communiqué that his government would find ways to contribute to International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) jointly with Japan when he had a meeting with Prime Minister Aso Taro in Seoul. It would be a good idea that if Korea and Japan can find a way to assist the supposedly cross-Atlantic security cooperation to a target country in Asia.

Although President Lee has not yet shown enough to make a meaningful contribution to the UN PKOs, the prospect is promising considering the fact that the influence of progressive NGOs to the politics has been reducing rapidly and the sign of recovery from economic wounds has been clearly identified.

However, the nationalistic fever would be a dangerous force to threaten its government, even a supposedly strong conservative government after fully overcoming such a public disgruntlement over beef issue a year ago. The negative consequences of the beef incident are two fold: First, no one is eager to be soft on foreign influence on domestic issue. Second, people are encouraged to show their dissent by venting their frustrations and expressing their critical opinions in public. However, it is an irony because the violent protesters have been so generous against the wrongdoings made by the Chinese and North Koreans. They justified their participation of the beef protest as an intellectual responsibility for public safety issue, while completely turning their eyes off to the Melamin issue that comes from the China. Moreover, in September 2008, a Korean coast guard officer was killed by mob of Chinese fisherman, who had been fishing illegally within the Korean waters. But no one from the

progressives expressed their regret against the Chinese authority in Seoul. It greatly reflects the Korean progressive's distorted ideological prejudice against the United States.

President Lee needs to develop core values that can be shared by Asian neighbors

Despite strong domestic challenges, President Lee is still determined to contribute to the making of a more "open and common regional network." He plans to implement the foreign policy objectives vis-a-vis the "creative reconstruction" of Korean diplomacy based on such a vision. He is trying to reverse the trend by expanding Korea's diplomacy of "New Asian Initiative".

President Lee Myung-bak and President Hu Jintao agreed in August 2008 to upgrade Korea-China relations into a "Strategic Cooperative Partnership." The bilateral economic relationship has continued to surge since normalization in 1992 and total trade volume has already surpassed that of the U.S. and Korea. Koreans have certainly rediscovered China after an absence of many decades as an increasing number of Chinese students, corporate leaders, and officials at all levels of government are interacting with their counterparts in Korea. About five million people are now crossing the border per year and Korean students are outnumbered others among foreign students in every school in the major cities to learn to speak Chinese.

On the other hand, it is very unfortunate that Prime Minister Fukuda of Japan failed to avoid touching the sensitive territorial issue. Japan's decision came at the worst timing. It made President Lee in a very difficult position since he spent enormous efforts to upgrade the relationship with Japan and cultivate personal confidence with Prime Minister Fukuda.

It is well known fact that President Bush's decision to de-link North Korea's inclusion in the U.S. listing of state sponsors of terrorism from the issue of Japanese abductees has elicited some grumbling from Japan. However, it is President Lee's position that the U.S. and South Korea need to find a way to address the issue because it serves no one's interests if Japan feels abandoned or even betrayed. It seems that maintaining a common voice among the U.S., Japan and South Korea would be a huge challenge.

The case reflects how important it is for Japan to protect the strategic partnership with Korea from domestic politics. Fortunately, the new Prime Minister Aso Taro has made serious efforts to mend fences with Korea and Lee Myung-bak responded enthusiastically to strengthen the bilateral relationship. It was a great opportunity for Korea to make a coordinated approach in dealing with the global financial crisis and the nuclear issue of North Korea.

President Lee needs to persuade people to understand that South Korea stands ready to participate more actively in the fostering of a more secure global order and greater support towards world peace and prosperity. An abiding reality today is the fact that the world's diverse problems can only be solved through the pooling of resources and the fact that traditional conceptions of national boundaries no longer apply. He believes that his government should not miss this opportunity and should work closely with regional or global partners on such issues as global climate change and as part of a broader effort in resolving common challenges.

Although global economic situations are not favorable to him, President Lee would

incrementally increase South Korea's ODA budget and related resources. As Prime Minister Han Sung-soo announced in his address before the 63rd Session of the UN General Assembly, Korea increased its ODA three times in volume with assistance to Africa during the past three years. It also plans to triple its current ODA to reach over 3 billion US dollars by 2015 and will join the OECD DAC in 2010. It will coordinate better its development cooperation policy with the global partners.

For nearly two decades, South Korea has participated in UN peacekeeping operations and is the 10th largest contributor to the UN's PKO budget. South Korea also participates in the on-going war on terror and currently deploys contingents in Lebanon as part of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) It is worth noting that the Lee government dispatched five women peacekeepers among 359 personnel in Lebanon and they are successfully cultivating a new image of Korea by focusing on civil-military operation activities and trying to go beyond the boundaries of traditional peacekeeping.

President Lee also continues to carry out his original plan of dispatching a Korean version of a "Peace Corps" so that Koreans can contribute to alleviate poverty, disease, and other maladies. As mentioned above, the Korean government launched on May 7, 2009 the volunteer group of "World Friends Korea" and it is planning to send about 20,000 volunteers annually to every corner of the world to reach out to those who are in need.⁸ If this would be implemented as planned, it would help our young generation to widen their horizon and to transform their passion and energies for upgrading Korea's image abroad.

Building peace for the future

Building peace in the wake of war should be a very important goal for the Korean military for preparing for any future contingency. As observed in Afghanistan and Iraq, winning major battles is not sufficient for winning the peace. There are many demands that arise in the wake of conflict that are likely to involve military units as well as civilians. Currently, South Korea is not fully ready to handle post-conflict activities including transition to civil authorities, support of truce negotiations, civil affairs support to reestablish a civil government, psychological operations to foster continued peaceful relations, and continuing logistic support from engineering and transportation units.⁹ It is a huge challenge for the Korean Army to upgrade its peace keeping and peace building capabilities. It would be a great strategic asset to prepare for stabilization and reconstruction of North Korea in the future.

The high command of the Korean military must understand that President Lee would support an increasing international role for the Korean armed forces. Also, it is high time for South Korea to start discussing with the United States and Japan on how to restore trilateral cooperation. There are many avenues for cooperation and there still are challenges for moving this idea forward. However, the time is right for Korea to take a leadership role in

⁸ Song Sang-ho, "World Friends Korea Launched," *The Korea Herald* (May 8, 2009). <http://www.koreaherald.co.kr>. (accessed date: 2009-05-08).

⁹ Richard A. Lacquement Jr., "Building Peace in the Wake of War: Appropriate Roles for Armed Forces and Civilians," in *American Defense Policy*, eds. Paul J. Bolt et al., Eighth Edition. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 282-294.

helping to galvanize international support. It is better for South Korea to increase its focus on the possible and the visible. Sustainability is largely determined by the value delivered and the perception of utility.

As witnessed in the case of assisting China's Sichuan Province, joint disaster relief might be the most visible thing that invites less controversy. The good news is that the Korean military decides to participate in the ARF's disaster relief training in Luzon Islands, the Philippines during the May 4 through 8, 2009.¹⁰ And the Ministry of National Defense also decides to dispatch 300-member of combined Marine Corps and Navy personnel to join the annual Gold Cobra military exercise. Seoul also needs to explore the possibility of joint overseas PKO with Japan, Australia, and India. President Lee's new emphasis on global Korea must gain support from the people at home. Winning public support will certainly help him to direct the shape of agenda in the region and beyond. The question is how will he make people understand that global partnership is needed for dealing with a new threat and venturing for the future requires sacrifice and resources.

¹⁰ Park Young-min, "The Military enhances the capability to disaster relief," *The Defense Daily* (May 5, 2009) <http://kookbang.dema.mil.kr> (accessed date: 2009-05-04).