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## Political space for South Korea in the UN Security Council?

### *Abstract*

Since there are different opinions on the importance of the UN Security Council, the paper analyses three issues: how South Korea secured non-permanent membership from 1996-1997 and 2013-2014, what it did as Council member and whether it could exert influence on the Council's work or not. When becoming UN member in 1991, Korean scholars predicted that by serving in the Security Council South Korea could exert influence on its work. This prediction will be assessed on the basis of South Korea's work in the Council and how power politics affected the Council's work. The study critically assesses existing evaluations of membership and emphasizes lessons learnt.

Park Heung-Soon (2010) holds a favourable view by recording five reasons why UN member states wish to become non-permanent members in the Security Council: a) to display or strengthen national prestige and power by working as one of ten non-permanent members in the powerful Council, b) to have an opportunity to exert influence on international affairs, c) to implement overall national foreign policy objectives, d) to strengthen their position within the UN and e) to strengthen their relationship with, or sometimes get economic assistance from, the five permanent members. In contrast, Trudy Fraser (2015) argues that the current structure of the Security Council in addition to claims of financial coercion leaves non-permanent members subject to intense and conflicting pressures from the permanent members at times of international tension. Non-permanent members have expressed doubts about the usefulness of a non-permanent seat in promoting either their own specific interests or being able to in a meaningful way affect the outcomes of the Council in general.

### *Introduction*

Since the Security Council is the UNs most powerful organ and there are different opinions on the usefulness of being non-permanent member, analysing South Korea's two periods of membership is important to assess the country's global position. With this background, the paper analyses three issues: how South Korea secured non-permanent membership from 1996-1997 and from 2013-2014, what it did as Council member and whether it could exert influence on the Council's work or not. Given tense inter-Korean relations, whether its membership had any impact on relations or not is one main issue. The prediction made at the time of UN admission in 1991 that by serving in the Council South Korea could exert influence on world affairs is assessed. The impact of power politics on how the Council works is included. The paper concludes by critically assessing existing evaluations on membership and emphasizing lessons learnt through work in the Council.

### *South Korea is elected member of the UN Security Council from 1996-1997*

The UN Charter's Chapter VII: Actions with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression, Article 39 states: 'The Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression'. Coercion to fight any would-be aggressors would include military force, economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation. Since member states are bound by resolutions adopted by the Council to, for instance, dispatch troops to implement its decisions, it is the centre of power within the UN system. Other UN bodies such as the General Assembly that comprises all member states and is the central forum for global dialogue can only make "recommendations". The permanent Council members comprising the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, China and France have veto power.

The Security Council is the core of the global security system and the primary legitimizer of actions dealing with threats to peace and security. At the same time, it is extremely difficult to ensure compliance with global governance referring to 'those procedures and practices that exist at the world or regional level for the management of political, economic and social affairs'. There are simply no ways to enforce decisions and no mechanisms to compel states to comply with decisions in the area of international peace and security.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret P. Karns and Karen A. Mingst, *International Organizations: The Politics and Processes of Global Governance* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010),

Following the policy declaration by the South Korean government in February 1993 to contribute more to the international community through the UN as a way to benefit the country, Seoul decided to seek non-permanent membership in the Security Council for 1996-1997. At a time when the role and the importance of the UN had risen owing to the end of the Cold War, the government set up as one of its principal diplomatic targets to raise its contributions to the international community, through the UN. At a South Korea-Sri Lanka summit held in March 1993, President Kim Young Sam (1993-1998) gathered opinions on a single Asian candidacy creating a breakthrough on the issue. The Korean scholar Park Heung-soon (2010) argues that election as non-permanent member in the Council is a main policy agenda for most UN member states since it provides an opportunity to exercise binding power over international peace and security under the UN Charter.

Park records five reasons why states wish to become non-permanent members: a) to display or strengthen national prestige and power by being one of only ten non-permanent members and the considerable power of the Council, b) to have an opportunity to exert influence on international affairs, c) to realize overall national foreign policy objectives through the work, d) to strengthen their position within the UN by serving in the Council and e) to strengthen their relationship with, or sometimes get economic assistance, from the five permanent members. The reasons imply that vanity is also an important motive to seek membership. In contrast, the British scholar Trudy Fraser (2015) writes that the current structure of the Security Council, in addition to claims of financial coercion, leaves non-permanent members subject to intense and conflicting pressures from the permanent members at times of international tension. Non-permanent members have expressed doubts about the usefulness of a non-permanent seat in promoting either their own specific interests or being able to affect the outcomes of the Council in a mea-

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pp. 95, 97, 98; Figure 4.1, 110; Jean E. Krasno, 'The UN Landscape: An Overview', in Jean E. Krasno (ed.), *The United Nations: Confronting the Challenges of a Global Society* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), pp. 3-5; John E. Trent, *Modernizing the United Nations System: Civil Society's Role in Moving from International Relations to Global Governance* (Opladen & Farmington Hills: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2007), p. 20; Thomas G. Weiss and Ramesh Thakur, *Global Governance and the UN: An Unfinished Journey* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), p. 21. The second and third quotations have original quotation marks.

ningful way, in general.<sup>2</sup>

On 29 September 1993, Foreign Minister-turned scholar Han Sung-joo declared at the UN General Assembly that South Korea would seek an opportunity to serve in the Security Council in the near future to better contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security. The statement reflects his argument (1991) that UN membership would mean the opportunity to participate more actively in international decision-making. In March 1994, South Korea notified all member states through all diplomatic missions abroad and the UN Representative of its candidacy for the Security Council requesting their support. Subsequently, the government dispatched 14 special representatives of the president to 44 countries and mobilized various joint committees and policy associations to acquire support. In May 1994, Asia-Pacific nations recommended South Korea as regional candidate. Owing to the government's active efforts, on 19 May 1995 rival Sri Lanka withdrew its candidacy for the non-permanent seat for Asia at the meeting of the Asian group. Park (2010) records the interpretation that Sri Lanka withdrew its candidacy owing to serious domestic instability caused by civil conflicts and that South Korea persuaded them behind the scenes for compromise.

Additionally, at the special summit held on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN from 21-25 October 1995, President Kim Young Sam (1993-1998) requested support from leaders of each country. On 7 November 1995, South Korea was elected by the General Assembly to the Security Council along with Chile, Poland, Egypt and Guinea-Bissau having received votes from 156 of 177 countries. Thus, South Korea had been elected to the two main organs of the UN: the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) from 1993-1995 and the Security Council from 1996-1997. Sri Lanka's withdrawal was a key factor in the selection to the Security Council, which was a great diplomatic success for South Korea only four years after UN admission. The Korean university student Jeon Young Ju (2002) records the opinion that South Korea's participation in

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<sup>2</sup> Trudy Fraser, *Maintaining Peace and Security? The United Nations in a Changing World* (London: Palgrave, 2015), p. 144; Kim, Hyeong Ju, *Han'gug-üi tae Yuen wegyo chôngch'aeg-üi kaesôn panghyang* (Seoul: Han'guk wegugô taehakkyo, 2008), p. 37; Mo, Sang Jip, *Han'gug-üi Yuen kaip-gwa Yuen wegyo chôngch'aeg-üi panghyang-gwa kwaje-e kwanhan yôn'gu* (Kwangju: Chosôn taehakkyo chôngch'aek taehakwôn, 1998), p. 42; Park, Heung-soon, 'The UN Security Council and Role of the Non-permanent Members - Implications for the Republic of Korea', *Korean Observations on Foreign Relations*, vol. 12, no. 1 (April 2010), pp. 109-110, 120-122.

UN peacekeeping operations contributed greatly to the election. According to the Canadian scholars Alec Lalonde and Jane Boulden (2011), becoming Security Council member could ‘...be seen as symbolic affirmation on the part of the international community of South Korea’s standing as an independent sovereign state’. In contrast, many member countries have never been elected to the Security Council or if they have contested to become member it has taken, on average, more than ten years.<sup>3</sup>

As Council member, in January 1996, South Korea attended all of eight formal and 20 informal meetings and took a clear position on various [non-exemplified] issues under consideration. On 4 April, North Korea claimed in a letter to the UN Command that it would no longer continue its responsibilities according to the Armistice Agreement for the maintenance and administration of the Military Demarcation Line and the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) since the “South Korean puppets” had violated the armistice’s provisions: these measures were taken in self-defence. Heavily armed North Korean troops entered the DMZ from 5-7 April. In order to bring the pressure of world opinion on North Korea, on 11 April, the Security Council President issued a press release statement criticizing North Korea’s attempt to scrap the Armistice Agreement.<sup>4</sup> South Korea had urged the Council to adopt a strong resolution containing a warning to North Korea but China rejected this move. As realists argue, power politics matter in the UN.

The statement expressed their concern over the present intrusion by North Korean troops into the DMZ, reaffirmed that the 1953 Armistice Agreement should remain in effect, urged North Korea to refrain from

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<sup>3</sup> Han, Sung-Joo, ‘The Republic of Korea as a U.N. Member’, *Korea and World Affairs*, vol. 15, no. 3 (Fall 1991), p. 391; Han’guk wegyobu, *Han’guk wegyo 6onyôn* (Seoul: Han’guk wegyobu, 2009), p. 184; Jeon, Young Ju, *Han’gug-ûi Yuen p’yônghwa yuji hwaltong (PKO)-e kwanhân yôn’gu - ch’amyô silt’ae-rûl chung-sim-ûro* (Taegu: Keimyung taehakkyo, June 2002), p. 74; Kang, Sung-Hack, ‘South Korea’s Policy toward the United Nations - How the Icon was Buried and What New Challenge Lies before South Korea in the World Organization’, *Korea Journal*, vol. 35, no. 1 (Spring 1995), p. 21; Kim, *ibid.*, pp. 37-8; Alec Lalonde and Jane Boulden, ‘South Korea on the United Nations Security Council’, *Peace Forum*, vol. 27, issue 2, no. 36 (December 2011), p. 27; Mo, *ibid.*, pp. 41-2; Pak, Chi Young, ‘Korea and the United Nations - The First 50 Years’, *Korea and World Affairs*, vol. 19, no. 4 (Winter 1995), pp. 623, 628, 629; Park, *ibid.*, 2010, p. 131: fn. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Among the UN Security Council’s official documents, member states are only legally bound to follow resolutions, not presidential statements or press statements that have less weight. A presidential statement is close to a ‘political act’, and since all 15 member states stand behind it, the statement has a binding effect on Security Council members. From Rim, Kap-soo and Moon, Duk Ho, *Yuen anbori chejae-ûi kukche chôngch’ihak* (P’aju: Tosô ch’ulp’an Hanul, 2013), pp. 29-30. Original quotation marks.

making any unilateral actions to undermine the agreement and noted that such acts by North Korea were a great threat to peace and stability on the Korean peninsula which had been maintained by the Armistice Agreement since 1953.<sup>5</sup>

Later, on 18 September 1996, an armed North Korean espionage submarine with 26 armed commandos on board infiltrated and ran aground at Kangnûng on the eastern coast of South Korea. The only man captured revealed that their mission was to test South Korea's defence. Among the others, eleven had been executed with their own consent to avoid being captured. In shoot-outs with South Korean soldiers over the next two weeks, eleven commandos were killed but two others held out for 48 days before being killed. Another commando may have found his way back home. As the commandos fled across the South, they killed five soldiers and four civilians. The Security Council President tried to convey the Council's serious concerns over the incident to North Korea's UN ambassador but he refused to see the president and ignored the summons, which amounted to an act of challenging the Council's authority. On 15 October, a formal Security Council presidential statement expressed the Council's serious concern, called for continued adherence to the Armistice Agreement which remained effective until a new peace arrangement would be established, urged all to refrain from any act creating tensions and called on the parties concerned to resolve the problem peacefully to strengthen peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. In spite of tense relations following the submarine incident, in October 1996 the Council unanimously adopted a resolution stating that the Armistice Agreement should remain in force until it is replaced by a special peace mechanism, indicating the wish of the UN that peace should be maintained on the Korean peninsula.

Notably, it was the first Council presidential statement referring to observing the Armistice Agreement, but it did not include infiltration of the South and a warning against such an act. By using the word "incident"

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<sup>5</sup> Kenneth W. Abbott and Duncan Snidal, 'Why States Act Through Formal International Organizations', in Paul F. Diehl and Brian Frederking (eds.), *The Politics of Global Governance: International Organizations in an Interdependent World* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010), pp. 32-3; Gabriel Jonsson, *Peacekeeping in the Korean Peninsula: The Role of Commissions* (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2009), pp. 440, 646-7; Pak, Chi Young, 'South Korea and the United Nations Security Council', *Korea Observer*, vol. 27, no. 2 (Summer 1996), p. 264; *Korea and the United Nations* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2000), pp. 86, 157. Original quotation marks.

instead of “infiltration”, the statement did not entirely exclude North Korea’s claim that the submarine had drifted due to engine trouble. It did not point out the violation of the Armistice Agreement and did not inquire about North Korea’s responsibility. According to the Korean scholar Sung-Hack Kang (2002), South Korea played an important role in adopting the Security Council president’s statement, both in April and in September 1996. This opinion concurs with the prediction of Han (1991) that UN membership would enable South Korea to more actively participate in international policy decision-making. However, it contradicts the notion recorded by Park (2010) that it is no exaggeration to cynically call the non-permanent members as a “rubber stamp” or “tourists” in the Council. A difficulty in assessing decision-making is that 95 per cent of the Council’s work is conducted in the corridors or through informal consultations, meaning that formal meetings only publically confirm what already has been decided without official records. It is impossible to negotiate at formal meetings since it is hard to reach consensus in opinions.

Regardless of the difficulties, according to the Korean scholar Chi Young Pak (2000), South Korea’s membership in the Council had a restraining influence on North Korea, which found it increasingly difficult to pursue a policy of confrontation; the security situation on the Korean peninsula improved. Eventually, on 29 December, North Korea made an official apology for the submarine incident to South Korea and then informed the Security Council of this gesture. The Council had played some role in putting pressure on the world opinion on North Korea to respect the Armistice Agreement.<sup>6</sup>

When South Korea assumed chairmanship in May 1997, the Council’s first open debate on the refugee issue that was serious in Afghanistan and Zaire was held on 21 May with participants from 40 countries as presenters, which was the highest numbers ever. A chairman statement on protection of refugees was adopted in June raising the Council’s interest

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<sup>6</sup> Jonsson, *ibid.*, pp. 402, 443-4, 448; Kang, Sung-Hack, ‘The United Nations and Korean Foreign Policy - A Fox and a Hedgehog?’, *Korea and World Affairs*, vol. 26, no. 1 (Spring 2002), p. 88; Minjok t’ongil yôn’gu-wôn, *T’ongil hwangyông-gwa Nambukhan kwangye: 1996-1997* (Seoul: Minjok t’ongil yôn’guwôn, 1996), p. 103: fn. 16; Pak, *ibid.*, 2000, pp. 27, 86, 157; Park, Jae-Young, *Yuen-gwa kukche kigu* (P’aju: Bobmunsa, 2007), pp. 473, 477; Park, *op. cit.*, 2010, p. 118; Song, Sûng-chong, *Yuen p’yônghwa yuji hwaltong-ûi ihae: modu-rûl wihan hana, hana-rûl wihan modu* (Seoul: Yôngyông munhwasa, 2006), p. 111. Kang (*ibid.*, p. 88) does not explain how South Korea contributed to the adoption of the Security Council president’s statements. Data on the Council’s decision-making are from Park (*ibid.*, pp. 473, 477) and Song (*ibid.*, p. 111), but the author has found no later data contradicting them.

in the urgent issue. Since the statement also requested follow-up measures by the UN Secretary-General, the action was highly evaluated by the global community. As Council member, the South Korean delegation put more efforts on the long and torturous Angolan peace process than any other issue owing to their contribution of troops there since autumn 1995, which had been one of the major ones. According to Lalonde and Boulden (2011), the troop contribution, generous financial support towards Angola's reconstruction and rehabilitation and, above all, the persistent focus on Angola in the Security Council showed what an elected member of the Council can accomplish with adequate resources and attention.

South Korea also participated in discussions on the Cambodian question, the coup d'état in Sierra Leone, the escalation of the civil war in Afghanistan, Libya's violation of sanctions and the collapse of the Mobutu regime in Zaire, etc. A presidential statement requesting to hold free elections and accepting a UN investigation of alleged massacres of Hutu refugees was adopted. Kang (2002) is of the opinion that these experiences were regarded as a first-hand opportunity to learn about genuine globalization. According to Pak (2000), since South Korea's past efforts to gain UN membership had been frustrated in the Security Council that had debated such issues as the Soviet Union's shooting down of a Korean Air Lines Flight 007 in 1983 and North Korea's terror activities in Burma in 1983 and the terrorist explosion of a Korean Air Lines aeroplane in the Indian Ocean in 1987, Council membership had special significance. Pak writes: 'It may not be an exaggeration to say that South Korea attained the status of an important member state as a result of being elected to the Security Council, which allowed it to act as one of the important players in UN politics and diplomacy'.

Pak also claims that South Korea's membership in the Security Council was important by first enhancing the country's position in the UN. Both Council members, states involved in disputes and many other states had increasingly requested consultation with South Korea. Second, the security situation on the Korean peninsula improved during 1996-1997, which was considered the most critical period in establishing the peace system. Third, by being a Council member, understanding of UN activities among the South Korean general public was promoted. Park (2010) argues that membership and activities in the Council significantly contributed to national interests by providing a big momentum to strengthen diplomacy towards the UN and a valuable opportunity to exert influence



internationally.<sup>7</sup>

In 1999, the South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs concluded in its report that Seoul had acquired significant previously unknown experiences as Security Council member by experiencing the work, the capacity and the limitations of the Council and by becoming familiar with its operation system, the dynamics among the permanent members and decision-making processes. In other words, South Korea could cultivate considerable diplomatic capability through practical experiences in dealing with major issues involving peace and security. South Korea was also able to promote real cooperation through direct consultation with the permanent members and Japan, as well as enhance systematic collaboration with the Council's non-aligned members. Later, on 18 October 2012, the General Assembly re-elected South Korea as non-permanent member of the Council. South Korea won against Cambodia by receiving 149 votes against 43 (the third candidate Bhutan withdrew). In line with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' opinions in the 1999 report, re-election to the Council reflected an assessment of South Korea's objective capability and its accumulated track record for the international community, which created expectations that Seoul would implement its tasks successfully.

After the South Korean government had made an official declaration in January 2007 to bid for the seat of non-permanent membership for 2013-2014, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the UN Representative Office and diplomatic missions abroad pursued a comprehensive and solid campaign for five years. However, a disadvantage was that South Korea was regarded as member of the Western advanced group whereas rivals Bhutan and Cambodia belonged to the non-allied and developing nations. Such nations originally favoured Bhutan and Cambodia more. In the campaign, the disadvantages for South Korea were that: a) a member must receive two-thirds of votes, b) the country, unlike Bhutan and Cambodia, was not member of a regional group, c) the country had the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the Head of the World Bank, American-born Kim Yong, and the Head of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Song Sang-hyôn, creating jealousy and d) the negative propaganda it would bring as a member and the inter-Korean tensions in the Security Council would make it complicated for them to conduct their normal work. Pro-

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<sup>7</sup> Han'guk wegyobu, op. cit., 2009, pp. 184-5; Kang, *ibid.*, 2002, p. 88; Kim, op. cit., p. 38; Lalonde and Boulden, op. cit., pp. 31-2; Pak, *ibid.*, 2000, pp. 156, 158; Park, op. cit., 2010, p. 132; Yi, Ch'ôl-min, 'Kukche sahoe-ûi chudo kukka-ro na sôl ttaeda', in Park, Soo-gil, *Yuen wegyo ch'oechoñsôn-esô: Park Soo-gil taesa, wegyogwan 36nyôn-ûi kirog* (Seoul: Tosô ch'ulp'an Oruem, 2014), pp. 233, 234, 235-6, 238.

North Korean states argued that if only one party of a conflict enters the Security Council, objectivity would be lost creating an unfair situation.

The advantages were: a) the growing favourable images of South Korea as a successful model of development that had overcome war and poverty and had been host country of the G-20 summit in 2010, the General Summit on Development Assistance in 2011 and the Nuclear Safety Summit in 2012, b) the assessment to have better capacity to make real contributions to peace and the fact that the country was a major contributor both to the UN budget and peacekeeping forces as well as provided official development assistance, c) the appointment of Koreans in the UN, demonstrating the Korean spirit, d) Seoul had permanent embassies in around 110 countries creating a huge diplomatic network and e) South Korea's representative to the UN had made real contributions to world politics and global security as well as sustainable development, climate changes and women issues by serving as Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the Summit on Sustainable Development and the UN Executive Committee on Women, creating a deep impression upon countries with permanent representation at the UN. In 2012, the South Korean Foreign Ministry forecasted that as Council member, Seoul would play a leading role in UN efforts to maintain world peace and that re-election to the Council would also contribute to stabilizing inter-Korean relations. By becoming a member, South Korea's position in UN diplomacy would be further raised.<sup>8</sup>

*South Korea is member of the UN Security Council from 2013-2014*

North Korea conducted its third underground nuclear test on 12 February 2013 while South Korea was chairman of the Security Council. The repeated tests confirm that there are no ways to enforce decisions and no mechanisms to compel states to comply with decisions in the area of international peace and security. The Council responded by holding an urgent meeting only eleven hours later called by South Korea. At the time of the test, the South Korean representative met almost daily with colleagues who were permanent and non-permanent members. The regular contacts became a valuable asset to quickly respond to North Korea's nuclear program, meaning that South Korea exerted strong influence by

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<sup>8</sup> Han'guk wegyobu, 2013~14nyôn imgi Yuen anbori pisangim isaguk chinch'ul, n. p., 22 October 2012 (<http://www.mofa.go.kr/webmodule/htsboard/template/read/korboardread.jsp?typeID=>); Park, op. cit., 2010, pp. 132-3; Shin, Dong-Ik, 'Han'gug-ûi Yuen anbori chinch'ur-ûi ûimi-wa kukche p'yônghwa-e kiyô', *Wegyo*, no. 105 (April 2013), pp. 146, 147-8, 153-4; fn. 5. Park refers to the 1999 report (ibid., p. 132).

leading decision-making processes. The press statement issued by Council President Kim Sung-hwan strongly condemned the test, which was a grave violation of Security Council resolutions 1718 (2006), 1874 (2009) and 2087 (2013), threatening international peace and security. Resolution 2094 unanimously adopted on 7 March expressed ‘...the gravest concern...’ over the nuclear test. The test was a challenge to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and to international efforts aimed at strengthening non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Resolution 2094 requested a complete, verifiable and irreversible disarmament of the nuclear programme.

Instead of letting member states themselves assess whether transfer of financial assets and provision of financial services could contribute to the development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, such assistance was now prohibited. When there was intelligence on ships destined for North Korea loading prohibited items, inspection was mandatory. Individuals that were targeted for travel ban and asset freezes were Yo’n Cho’ng Nam, representative of the Korean Mining Industrial Development Company (KOMID), Ko Ch’o’l-chaе, Deputy Chief Representative of the KOMID, and Mun Cho’ng-ch’o’l, official at the Tanchon Commercial Bank. One company targeted for asset freeze was the Second Academy of Natural Sciences, which is a national organization responsible for research and development of North Korea’s advanced weapons system. Korea Complex Equipment Import Corporation was also targeted.<sup>9</sup>

As Council chairman, South Korea also presided over all meetings and mediated opinions among member states. On 12 February, South Korea organized a high-level public debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. Since it is a central issue in the areas of UN peacekeeping, protection of human rights and provision of humanitarian assistance, four foreign ministers, delegates of 74 countries and representatives from international organizations participated. By adopting a presidential statement reconfirming member states’ responsibility to protect civilians and observe related international law, the responsibility of prosecuting countries to cease non-punishment of violators of related international law, guarantee supplies of humanitarian assistance, implement the task of peacekeeping operations to protect and regularize submission of a report

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<sup>9</sup> Han’guk wegyobu, *P’yônghwaropko anjônhan chiguch’on-ûl wihayô: Taehan-mingug-ûi 2013-14 nyôn Yuen anbori pisangim isaguk hwaltong* (Seoul, May 2015), pp. 105-106, 107, 109, 111-112, 118-120; Shin, *ibid.*, pp. 150-151; United Nations Security Council, *Security Council Press Statement on Nuclear Test Conducted by Democratic People’s Republic of Korea*, SC/10912DC/3415, n. p., 12 February 2013 (<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2013/sc10912.doc.htm>).

to the Secretary-General, the outcome of the debates was enhanced. South Korea also held 13 meetings and 13 consultations.

During February, three resolutions on Burundi, Sudan and Guinea-Bissau as well as two presidential statements on the protection of civilians in military conflicts and support for political dialogue in Yemen, respectively, were adopted. The mandate of the UN office in Burundi was extended for one year, that of the Sanctions Committee for Sudan for one year whereas the peace-building office's mandate in Guinea-Bissau was prolonged for three months. Three press statements on bomb terror against the American Embassy in Turkey, North Korea's nuclear test and welcoming the signing of a framework on peace and security cooperation between the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and its neighbours were adopted. Among regular conflicts, the main issues were Syria, Mali, the DRC, Sudan and South Sudan. Numerous briefings were heard with the special representatives of the UN Secretary-General, the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

In accordance with the above forecast by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in October 2012, the Ministry assessed in March 2013 that South Korea by implementing its task successfully had elevated its capacity for multilateral diplomacy. South Korea had played the leading role in the UN response to North Korea's nuclear test. By opening public debate in the Council and adopting a press statement under the label "Protection of Civilians during Military Conflicts", the country had reconfirmed the Council's core responsibility in this field. Only one month after becoming Council member, having raised urgent issues such as the Middle East, threats from weapons of mass destruction and climate change, the Council members assessed South Korea's work during its chairmanship highly.<sup>10</sup>

When South Korea assumed chairmanship again in May 2014, it held 42 meetings. Five resolutions, four presidential statements and 13 press statements were adopted. Resolution 2155 was important since it strengthened the responsibility of the UN Mission in South Sudan to protect civilians. However, a proposed resolution to refer Syria to the ICC was

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<sup>10</sup> Han'guk wegyobu, *Yuen anbori-ûi ûijangguk hwaltong kyôlgwa*, n. p., 3 March 2013 ([http://www.mofa.go.kr/webmodule/htsboard/template/readkorb...enum=5&tableName=TYPE\\_DATABOARD&pc=&dc=&wc&lu=&vu=&lu=&du=](http://www.mofa.go.kr/webmodule/htsboard/template/readkorb...enum=5&tableName=TYPE_DATABOARD&pc=&dc=&wc&lu=&vu=&lu=&du=)), pp. 1-2; *ibid.*, 2015, pp. 17, 32; Kang, Pyông-ch'ôl, 'Anbori isaguk imgi naeju chongnyo... Han, 2028 nyôn chaechinch'ul ch'ujin', *Yonhap News*, 26 December 2014 (<http://www.yonhapnews.co.kr/dev/g601000000.html>), p. 1; Shin, *ibid.*, p. 151.

vetoed by Russia and China reflecting the impact of power politics. On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of resolution 1540 on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) by non-state actors, a high-level public debate on non-proliferation of WMDs was held on May 7. A presidential statement confirming that diffusion of WMDs was a threat to world peace and security and urging all member states to strengthen their efforts to fully implement resolution 1540 until 2021 was adopted. The statement was considered to give new momentum to the effort. During the two periods of being Council Chairman, South Korea managed to get a consensus among all member states on the meeting form on such politically sensitive issues as Syria and Ukraine. Thus, each member state praised South Korea's role as mediator.

A significant effect of Council membership was that by participating in debates, South Korea could reflect its position on issues relating to the North Korean missile, nuclear weapons and human rights. As member, South Korea could lead the response to North Korea's provocations instead of relying on intelligence from its allies. It was especially important at the time of the 12 December 2012 missile test and the 12 February 2013 nuclear test to cooperate with its allies to adopt resolutions 2087 and 2094, which were both important outcomes of membership. Another meaningful outcome of membership was when the Security Council adopted for the first time the North Korean human rights issue on its agenda on 22 December 2014. In this way, the above prediction by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2012 that Council membership would stabilize inter-Korean relations could have been fulfilled.

Since 1991, having served twice in the main decision-making UN organ, South Korea has made many contributions to maintain world peace and security. The second period of Council membership became an opportunity to strengthen diplomatic capabilities. In December 2014, the Seoul government assessed that South Korea had been active as chairman and through its work in 2013-2014 had contributed to maintaining global peace and security.<sup>11</sup>

All of Park's (2010) five reasons for wishing to become non-permanent Security Council member, including a) to display or strengthen national prestige and power, b) to have an opportunity to exert influence on international affairs, c) to realize overall national foreign policy objectives through the work and d) to strengthen their position within the UN by serving in the Council, seem to have been successfully accomplished

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<sup>11</sup> Han'guk wegyobu, *ibid.*, 2015, pp. 18-20, 27, 68, 69; Kang, *ibid.*, p. 1.

during both periods. The fifth reason – to strengthen a country's relationship, or sometimes get economic assistance, from the five permanent members – cannot be assessed from the account. Fraser's (2010) cautious opinion on the Council that its current structure, in addition to claims of financial coercion, leaves non-permanent members subject to intense and conflicting pressures from the permanent members at times of international tension is also impossible to evaluate. The author has found no occasion when South Korea has expressed doubts on the usefulness of a non-permanent seat in promoting either its own specific interests or being able to in a meaningful way affect the outcomes of the Council in general.

### *Conclusions*

Active efforts, the withdrawal by Sri Lanka as rival and participation in peacekeeping operations explain why South Korea was elected as non-permanent member of the Security Council in 1995. Since South Korea could contribute to promoting international peace and security as member of the Council from 1996-1997 by participating in decision-making processes to resolve global issues, its election as Council member was the first major success of UN membership. By contributing to the adoption of two presidential statements on North Korea's violations of the armistice, membership led to a stabilization of inter-Korean relations. South Korea acquired considerable diplomatic capability.

The first term in the Council contributed to re-election in 2012. As Chairman in February 2013, South Korea played an important role in responding to the third North Korean nuclear test. South Korea once again contributed to maintaining global peace and security. By implementing its tasks successfully from 2013-2014, the capacity for multilateral diplomacy was raised. However, South Korea had to again experience limitations in the adoption of a Council resolution due to China's, and this time also Russia's, resistance. As before, the foreign policy agenda was widened from the Korean peninsula to global issues. During both periods, South Korea could a) display or strengthen national prestige and power, b) exert influence on international affairs, c) realize overall national foreign policy objectives and d) strengthen its position within the UN. It also fulfilled its need for vanity associated with membership. Yet, given the limitations owing to power politics within the Council, the significance of being non-permanent member should not be overvalued.

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