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Session VI: Regional Formats of Military and Security Cooperation

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Sino-South Korean Military Relations: Moving towards Strategic Cooperative Partnership

I. Introduction

After establishing diplomatic relations in 1992, South Korea and China have found that the development they brought is worthy of watching eagerly in the areas of politics, economy, culture, and many other areas. Economically both countries have trade relations beyond the scope of \$140 billion; culturally the Korean wave and Chinese fever have obtained big agreements in each respective country. In the aspect of security on the Korean peninsula both countries regard highly of their mutual constructive roles. Without it having to be said, this kind of relations between the countries becomes important to the contribution to the peace and prosperity of Northeast Asia.

Gradually, the bilateral relationship has one by one been upgraded, the relationship that started in 1992 through the Friendship and Cooperative Relationship elevated to ROK-China Collaborative Partnership for the 21st Century in 1998, Comprehensive Cooperative Partnership in 2003, and in 2008 through a visit to China by Korean President Myung Bak Lee, he and President Hu Jintao released an external joint proclamation regarding the Strategic Cooperative Partnership. This event can be seen as one of the greatest level of achievement considering the efforts to establish a sound relationship every 5 years for both countries.

However, it can be said that progress in the Sino-South Korean military relationship is insufficient in the aspect of politics, economy, society and culture. Additionally, strategic cooperative partnership is on the premise of the national security defense cooperative aspect. This paper will discuss South Korea's military diplomacy relations with China that is considered most important after the United States. Next Section will explain South Korea's military diplomacy goals towards China, while Section III will overview the bilateral military relations during 1992 to 2008. Section IV will evaluate the current address of the military relations between the two countries. Lastly, Section V will provide South Korea's military defense policy stance towards China to improve the military relationship between the two countries.

II. South Korea's military diplomacy goals regarding China

South Korea's national security goals are maintaining the security and peace on the peninsula, improving and building peaceful coexistence between the North and the South, establishing basis for national prosperity. Furthermore, national defense

goals, from the establishment of peaceful unification, are defending the state from military threats and invasions and contributing to regional security and world peace.

Within these grand goals, Seoul's military diplomacy goals are to deter North Korea's invasion of the South under any circumstances on the one hand and to lead the creation of given conditions for peaceful unification. Also, building tight knit military relations with foreign countries in times of peace not only secures the basis for support for the South, during emergencies from the international society, but also contributes to the promotion of national interests.

China has gone into a very important strategic phase on this kind of ROK military diplomacy. China, in the security aspect, has direct influence on the security of South Korea. Also, China exercises great influence over North Korean issues and has influence over development and unification of the Korean peninsula.

The goals of ROK's military diplomacy with China are deepening the "strategic cooperative partnership," increasing cooperation on exchange in various fields for development, securing continual support from the Chinese military for South Korea's policies on the North, inducing positive Chinese role regarding important pending issues in security, and inviting China to play a positive role for peaceful unification in preparing for unification through building friendly relations.

III. Overview of Sino-South Korean military relations (1992-2008)

After the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992 overview of the Sino-South Korean military relations is as follows; Sino-South Korean military relations has steadily developed since the establishment of Korean military attaché stationed in China in 1993 and Chinese attaché stationed in South Korea in 1994. When the Sino-South Korean military relationship is studied, it goes through three levels of exchange: high level personnel exchange, working level exchange, and research-educational exchange and others.

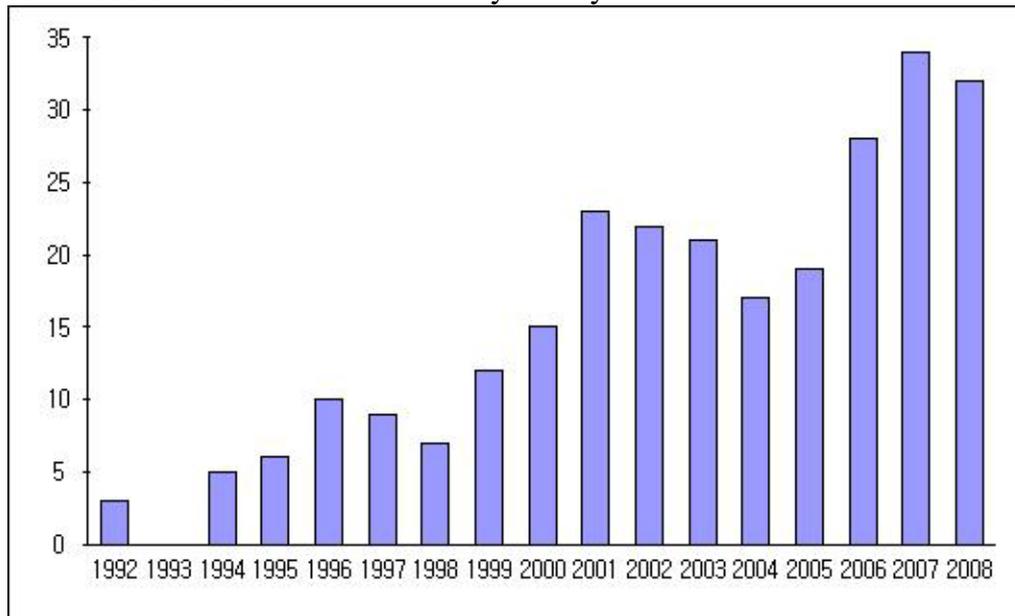
Firstly, when looking at the high level personnel exchange in the instance of South Korea in 1992 Pil-Sup Lee, Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff was the first to visit China accompanying the Korean President. Then thereafter, five minister level (Sung-Tae Cho in 1999, Dong-Shin Kim in 2001, Kwang-Woong Yoon in 2005, Jang-Soo Kim in 2007, Sang-Hee Lee in 2009), two vice minister level, five Joint Chief of Staff level, eight of army-, navy, air-chiefs of staff have so far visited China. On the side of China, starting from the visit to South Korea by External Affairs Director of the Department of Defense Luo Bin in 1996, two minister level (Chi Haotian, Cao Guangchuan), five chiefs of staff level including two vice chiefs, and six large military regional commander level personnel have been documented to visit.

There have only been a few policy cooperative exchanges among Korea's Ministry of National Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff and each armed forces with China. For the National Defense Policy Working Meeting major general (or lieutenant general) becomes the representative, introducing bilateral national defense policy and military exchange, as well as the overall mediation of military diplomacy. For the Intelligence Exchange Meeting, major general (or lieutenant general) becomes the representative and shares intelligence. Exchange sessions between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and respective army forces are done irregularly depending on the situation.

In regards to other exchanges, after 1999 South Korea has dispatched trainees to Luoyang Foreign Languages University, short courses at China's National Defense University. China has dispatched Chinese military education and research delegations. For example, there is an annual 'Korea-China Defense' Forum, between the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses and China Institute for International Strategic Studies.

Comprehensively, the situation with the military relationship for both countries is that after the visit to China by South Korea's Minister of Defense in 1999, working rank, research and education, and other exchanges have increased. Entering the year 2000, mutual exchange has rapidly increased. Although high rank official's exchange does not occur regularly, with the combination of reciprocity and equality there has been an increasing trend. When looking at the statistics regarding high rank level visitations from 1992 until 2008, it indicates that South Korea visited China 24 times and China visited South Korea 18 times that it appears to shown improvement. However, comparing from personal exchanges the many types of military exchanges, such as mutual visits of military sites and trainings, aircraft and naval vessel exchange visits are still in the beginning stages. Overall, from 1992 to 2008 within the total of 263 times of exchange, South Korea visited China 165 times and China visited South Korea a total of 98 times. When compared, at a ratio of 6:4, South Korea still visits China significantly more.

* 1992-2008 Sino-South Korea Military Yearly Total Visits



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IV. Assessment of the Present Sino-South Korea Military Relations

Theoretically, usually military relations are classified into military exchange, military cooperation and military alliance.

Military exchange level includes the exchange of personnel, visits of mutual exercises, aircraft and naval vessel visits, military education and research exchanges. These activities that are less regarded as politically sensitive can occur relatively easily.

Next, military cooperation level includes information and intelligence exchange, defense industry cooperation, joint military exercises, providing military base. It is a stage of a close military relationship based on mutual trust that aims to achieve mutual security goals.

Military alliance, the top level of military relationship, means the level of building a permanent security regime amongst bilateral or multilateral, establishment of multilateral security regime within region, and mutual assistance for common threats.

In conclusion, military cooperation is a superior concept in military exchange where through negotiations with the other country and military areas the needed military capacity is supplemented for the achievement of national defense and security. Military relationship can become from the start alliances according to need, but usually the relationship progresses in the order of military exchange, military cooperation, and military alliance.

In this regard, how can we assess the current address of Sino-South Korean military relationship? In the case that we place 3 points as the perfect score and we give 1 point for highest value of exchange, 2 points for highest value of cooperation, and 3 points for highest value of alliance, we can see that the Sino-South Korea military relationship is at a level of 0.7. In other words, as mentioned before among the different types of relations, there is a lot of personal exchange, and all other types are occurring sporadically.

In this case, the bilateral military relationship appears less developed and is difficult to be name so called strategic cooperative partnership. In the case that both countries are at the level of strategic cooperative partnership, the military relationship must reach a 2.0 or near 2.0 at a minimum. Nevertheless, in order to become a strategic cooperative partnership the institutionalization of the items of military exchange level and joint military exercise of the military cooperation stage is strongly required.

However, there are four reasons why both China and South Korea in reality are not able to go on track towards a strategic cooperative partnership coinciding with the some key factors, such as Sino-DPRK relations, ROK-US alliance, the issue of South Korea and Taiwan military officers' studying in respective countries, and unique duty and character of the Chinese PLA itself.

Firstly in regards to the Sino-North Korean relationship, in the security environment of Northeast Asia, China is focusing their approach on North Korea in the aspect of long term strategy. Military relationship with North Korea is still important for China, due to this China is only able to approach a military relationship with South Korea cautiously. Especially, although there is controversy over validity the Sino-North Korean Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance is a limiting factor to the progression of China's military relationship with South Korea.

Secondly, there is the ROK-US alliance. China does not see the military relationship with South Korea as an independent relationship, rather sees it as a dependent variable to the U.S-China military relationship. On the other hand, the United States interest in the Sino-South Korean military progression is making South Korea be cautious in pursuing their military relations with China, and in reality it functions as a brake.

The third limitation is the issue of South Korea and Taiwan military officers' studying in respective sides. According to the "One China" principle, South Korea conducts exchanges in only the economic, trade, social and other sectors with Taiwan, and is restricted to carry out official exchanges with Taiwan. Despite that the military relationship between Taiwan and South Korea is at a personal exchange level, China's discontent becomes an obstacle for improving Sino-South Korean military relations.

The fourth limitation would be the unique characteristics of the Chinese PLA. The PLA's unique characteristic, organization, and rank are different from that of the west and neighboring countries. The PLA carries a strong character of not wanting to make known their military situation through contact with foreign militaries. That is why a routine exchange and institutionalization between both militaries is more difficult.

V. Korea's Policy Direction to Develop Sino-South Korean Military Relations

Currently, South Korea has a goal of attaining the level of 1.2, and it appears this is a realistically attainable goal. However, to raise the current 0.7 to 1.2 South Korea is planning to expand military diplomacy within the seven categories.

Firstly, both countries should work to strengthen high-level bilateral exchanges overall, because bilateral, interpersonal communication channels between high-level personnel can act as a means to manage conflict. As such, there is a need to make dialogue and mutual visits amongst military leadership personnel, including the meeting between Ministers of Defense that is already in place, a regular practice. Moreover, while promoting the continuation of exchanges between high-level officials, both defense ministries should emphasize placing on substance rather than format.

Secondly, both ministries should increase and deepen in bilateral exchanges between working-level officials. In addition to working-level exchanges on policy, the working-level officials within the branches of each country's army should be strengthened so that military exchanges between the two countries can be diversified.

Thirdly, both should promote Sino-South Korean military education exchanges. An important objective of the military education exchanges is to gather young Chinese and Korean officers who will be responsible for the future of bilateral military relations in once place and promote the mutual understanding of each other.

Fourthly, both should make the mutual visit of military exercise possible. Following the promotion of an agreement for 'Mutual Visits for the Inspection of Military Exercise,' the inviting each other should take place within the scope of peaceful objectives and as long as it does not infringe upon national interests.

Fifth, both should promote mutual visits of military facilities. These visits will aid in trust-building between the two countries.

Sixth, both should support research activities that show the direction of Sino-South Korean military relations. The vitalization of national security and military studies is important. Also, there is a need for a regular exchange in military education institutions among both countries.

Lastly, both should consider joint training under the grounds of humanitarian. Some Search and rescue operations have been exhibited but it is a necessity to institutionalize this training for the progression of military relationships for both countries.

In conclusion, for both countries to achieve strategic cooperative partnership it is necessary to develop the military sector. If this is not reached it is difficult to achieve a true strategic cooperative partnership. Furthermore, if the needed areas of agreement is reached that were mentioned above it will play a certain role in gearing peace and stability in the region.

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