

## **National Security Affairs of South Korea**

### **I. National Purpose**

South Korea was occupied by Japan and United States many years back before they experienced the growth they're having now. Due to these colonization, South Koreans developed some values and ideals that which they acquired from the two powerful nations. Culture, for one, is a very important matter for the South Koreans. Their idea of literary art is that of emphasizing a certain level of expertise, while the cultural diversity is accepted. They view those people working in the fields as "intellectuals" through certain procedures and one's economic status may not be the same with that of an individual's social evaluation and position.

With regards to beliefs, the people of South Korea were strongly influenced by Confucianism. Its legacy remains an essential part of the Korean society that which shapes the moral system, way of life, social relations, high culture, and legal system of South Korea. They believe that Confucianism is a practical way of keeping a nation united without having civil wars.

The issue of human rights has continuously been the concern of the South Koreans. They believe that human rights are a reasonable concern of the international community, and thus, should be upheld as a balanced whole.

Alternating periods of democratic and autocratic rule marked South Korea's succeeding history. From its first to the sixth republic, South Korea experienced a different type of ruling, which depended on what each republic's leader would like to his government to be.

In 1960s, South Korea has finally experienced a positive change in education, economy, and culture. The country evolved from being one of Asia's poorest countries to one

of the continent's most well off. However, South Korea's growth could be considered a classic example of late industrialization.

South Koreans are also considered one of the most industrious people in Asia (The Economist. South Koreans Like Work.1974). During their struggling years, Koreans worked 6 days a week, in about 10-12 hours a day. It just means to say that South Koreans sincerely want to liberate their country from poverty and slow economic development.

**Major Adversary:**

The possible surprise attack of North Korea or its connivance with other Soviet Unions to destroy the peace and security in South Korea would be some of the major challengers of this factor.

**Minor Adversary:**

The possible minor challenge for this is the never-ending demand of the South Korean people for their human rights policy.

**United States Involvement:**

The United States greatly influenced South Korea's attitudes towards progress and development. In fact, when they acquired South Korea from Japanese invasion, they immediately focused on the reopening of schools in Korea to help educate the citizens there.

**II. Ideology**

In June of 1950, a so-called Korean War occurred in the state of Korea. There was a civil war between the states of North and South Korea that which started due to the post - World War II Soviet and American occupation zones in Korea (Millett, A.R. The Korean

War. March 2001). In August of 1945, the United States and the Soviet Union both agreed to divide Korea along the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. The two powerful parties agreed that all the Japanese forces situated in the north of the said line would surrender to the Soviet Union, while those positioned in the south will submit to the United States. Thus, Korea was divided into two separate countries: the North Korea and the South Korea. Prior to the war, the North and South Korea used to be a single and united nation. The people speak same languages, however, they acquired different ideologies after the separation (Jung-Bin & Jung, H. ([http://econc10.bu.edu/economic\\_systems?Country\\_comparison/Korea\\_North\\_South.htm](http://econc10.bu.edu/economic_systems?Country_comparison/Korea_North_South.htm)),1996). Suffice it to say that Korea was divided into two nations because of different ideologies. While North Korea believes in communism, South Korea strongly believes in democracy.

The people of South Korea fought so hard to be a democratic country. Even with a lot of adverse events that happened along the way as they experienced six different republics, still the main point of the uprisings in South Korea was the people's cry for democracy.

**Major Adversary:**

Possible uprising in just a little suppression of human rights or democracy might be one of the major problems of this factor since the people from South Korea value their democracy a lot.

**Minor Adversary:**

If the people of South Korea would be very idealistic in their desire for democratic nation, they might be completely devastated when possible threats of authoritarian leader might come in.

**U.S. Involvement:**

United States contributed a lot to the achievement of South Korea of the democratic government that they've long been wishing for. US served as an instrument in achieving that goal.

**III. National Interest**

The president or head of state establishes all the major foreign policy objectives of South Korea. The prime minister, on the other hand, is the one advising the president whether or not that policy will be beneficial for South Korea. The prime minister also heads the cabinet and the minister of foreign affairs.

In 1987, Seoul stated the main focus of its foreign policy would be primarily structured for further expansion, liberalization, and diversification (Library of Congress Country Studies). South Korea had no other choice but to rely on international trade for its development due to scarcity of natural resources and traditionally small domestic market. Furthermore, South Korea sought to broaden its horizons among its trading partners in order to relieve their dependence on few specific markets and to resolve imbalances in the present tendency to bilateral trade.

Thus, the nation's economic growth and the fundamental benefits that they could get from doing international trade are what guide the decision-makers of South Korea in handing out and creating foreign policies.

**Major Adversary:**

The primary challenger of this ruling about foreign policy is that of the possible confusion or strife that may happen inside the government. The National Assembly may question the prime minister just in case the Assembly don't approve of the ideas of the prime minister. Afterwards, the National Assembly may pass the recommendation for the removal from office of the prime minister or a State Council member.

**Minor Adversary:**

These policies, however beneficial for the South Koreans, might be viewed negatively and unfavorably by other nations. And thus, if ever these nations don't approve of these policies, they just might pull off their trade support from South Korea. And that's where the problem will arise. South Korea should create foreign policies that would benefit both its people and other nations.

**US Involvement:**

The 1954 Mutual Defense Treaty allies the United States and Korea. The two nation's relationship has been most extensive and intensive since 1948. It is also suffice to say that South Korea was indeed, established by the United States. US somehow saved South Korea from total devastation during the Korean War in 1950-1953, and literally helped a lot in developing the economy of South Korea. Because of the great help of US to South Korea, South Korea became dependent of the United States. In fact, United States was one of the top investors of South Korea and primarily one of the reasons why it reached its status in the world market now.

**IV. National Power**

South Korea underwent six republics before it achieved its present democratic state today. And because of these experiences from different republics, South Korean leaders saw to it that they will do their best never to let their past experiences to happen again.

South Korea committed itself to democratize its political processes. The leaders saw to it that all political proceedings will be conducted in a peaceful manner. As in any usual government structure, the president heads the state. However in South Korea, a prime minister assists the president in leading the state. If in case the president won't be able to carry out his duties well, the prime minister will take over his post. The good thing about it is that there is no limit on who can fill in the position.

South Korean leaders continuously set its vision towards a more economically developed country, with secured military and legitimized politics. The state aims to expand and further diversify its trade relations on a global scale to cope with the increasing trade protection from the United States.

South Korea had also successfully established a good diplomatic relations with 133 countries and had 138 diplomatic missions. This diplomatic missions were supported by South Korea big business establishment's worldwide market diversification programs.

**Major Adversity:**

A possible destabilization threat from North Korea

**Minor Adversity:**

Basically, in the kind of government of South Korea, a minor adversity might be that the ruling parties might manipulate the whole executive, legislative, and judicial bodies of the government. It could eventually lead to the diplomatic state if it will prosper.

**US Involvement:**

The United States somehow saved South Korea from total devastation during the Korean War and the Japanese invasion. In those six republics in South Korea, United States was present.

## **V. Threats**

Perhaps, one of the major threats in the economy and political stabilization of South Korea will be that of North Korea's. Since the Korean War that occurred in 1950, the two Korean countries have never been united. The two Koreas are still engaged in an arms competition. North Korea continuously aims to take military advantage at the risk of crushing its economy because of the financial burden of an arms buildup.

### **Major Adversary:**

The primary opponent of South Korea here is North Korea.

### **Minor Adversary:**

If this forever threat to South Korea's security will continue, possible confusion among the people might occur in the near future.

### **US Involvement:**

Because South Korea is not fully capable of defending itself alone, the state was prompted to have an ally with United States as its security guarantor. This ally, somehow prevented North Korea from attacking South Korea (ROK Ministry of National Defense, *Defense White Paper 1996-1997*).

## **VI. Domestic Factors**

The primary goal of South Korea's leaders was to develop a more progressive country, and yet, never forgetting their democratic mission. Trade relation is of great value for the South Koreans. Exports were one of the leading causes of South Korea's industrial expansion. Business relations with other countries across the globe is one of the great considerations of South Korea's leaders in implementing foreign policies. Aside from business-related deals, South Korea also wants to be sure that these nations would help them regarding security against military threats from North Korea or other countries who would want to destabilize the South Korean government.

Since South Korea is now a democratic nation, freedom of press is strongly allowed there. The public's opinion of views on certain issues is of great consideration before they would promulgate a policy.

#### **Major Adversity:**

The fluctuation of economic trade is a great enemy of South Korea's growing trade industry.

#### **Minor Adversity:**

Any wrong move or decision done by the head of the state could wreak havoc to South Korea's trade and Industry.

#### **US Involvement:**

United States play a very important role in the foreign policy of South Korea. For the longest time, South Korea's foreign policies was based primarily on the desires of United States.

### **VII. Commitments**



In protection of the state, South Korea signed a treaty with the United States, also known as the Mutual Defense Treaty, wherein US agreed to help South Korea defend itself against external aggression or oppression. United States vowed to defend South Korea against its mortal enemy, which is North Korea.

**Major Adversity:**

Some South Korean activists believe this agreement is a traitorous deal since it somehow looked like South Korean traitors sold South Korea to United States via the treaty.

**Minor Adversary:**

Since South Korea agreed with this pact, the state is committed to support United States whichever way they could. And thus, it would probably and possibly lead to United States' abusing of this agreement.

**US Involvement:**

United States is obviously involve in this agreement since they are they ones who vowed to defend South Korea against its attackers.

**VIII. Military Strategy**

The main defense objectives of South Korea are preventing military threats and defending the state during wartime. Since the primary threat to South Korea's security is a surprise attack from North Korea, South Korea embarked on an alliance with the United States to prevent North Korea's military threats. The core of its strategy dissuading strategy against North Korea or other possible security threats is nuclear and conventional deterrence via the bilateral alliance with the United States.

South Korea strengthened its defense by not allowing North Korea to come near its territory, even an inch away. The state also imposed a restraint on military

manpower and has adopted a defensive strategy that requires a smaller manpower and number of weapons compared to North Korea.

**Major Adversity:**

The major challenger of this strategy is obviously the strong and much strategic defense of North Korea. There's a big possibility that North Korea is cooking up something big in defense against the United States and South Korea.

**Minor Adversity:**

Since the leadership of South Korea's Roh Moo-hyun, it seemed like South Korea and United States are no longer going along well. It was also reported that the two presidents barely communicate with each other. Thus, South Korea is in the verge of possible losing the military defense support of United States. And seriously, it is something that South Korea should be prepared of.

**US Involvement:**

United States influenced South Korea a lot in terms of defense. South Korea got US style from Planning-Programming, Budgeting Systems to weapon systems. South Korea depends on the military force and strategy of United States a lot. Its military presence has been crucial in putting off a possible North Korean attack.

**IX. International strategy and foreign policy**

As South Korea looks forward to a more progressive and independent state, it has continuously been implementing foreign policies that would make it an even more stronger and developed state.

For one, South Korea has been very active in the United Nations. It had taken several vigorous parts in the activities of specialized UN agencies and other international

organizations. South Korea has successfully positioned itself as one of the world's developing nations. The state has been constantly looking for ways to improve its relationships with other nations, even those nonaligned nations, based on the principles of good sociability. South Korea likewise established the Economic Development Cooperation Fund in 1987, which aims to promote economic assistance and expand trade. Its president progressively conducted state visits, too, to be able to promote good trade relations among neighboring countries.

Economy holds a high priority factor in the Korean foreign policy. The R.O.K aims to establish and further develop the economic accomplishments of South Korea to increase its regional and global role. South Korea's economy has successfully moved away from the centrally planned and government-directed investment model en route for a more market-oriented one (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2800.htm>. September 2006).

#### **Major Adversity:**

The major problem of this factor is that of United States' fully withdrawing its support to South Korea. If this will pursue, South Korea might have future problems with regards to their military security against possible attackers.

#### **Minor Adversity:**

Some of United States ally might be influenced by US to pull out their investments in South Korea, and thus, might lead to fluctuation in the economy of Korea.

#### **US Involvement:**

United States play a very important role in this since it is considered as the world's most powerful state. United States could possibly do something about the foreign trade that could lead to South Korea's dwindling of security and economy.

### **X. Conclusion**

Since the Japanese and United States' invasion of Korea some years back, Korea had already experienced a lot of struggles, difficulties, and eventually, developments along the way. It underwent six republics, experiencing the pains of military and autocratic ruling. There was also the unforgettable Korean War in 1950 that which eventually lead to the division of Korea into two states.

Since that Korean War, South Korea has continuously been threatened by possible surprise attacks by North Korea. This prompted them to sign a pact with United States, just so to have a security against North Korea.

South Korea has been greatly influenced by the United States. It was also stressed that United States helped a lot in the redevelopment of South Korea.

With the South Korean citizens' efforts and industriousness, South Korea emerged in the trade market as one of the fastest growing nation when it comes to trade and industry. The growth of the industrial sector was the principal stimulus to economic development. Suffice it to say that the people of South Korean as a whole contributed a lot to the progress and growth of their country. They were even considered one of the most industrious citizens of the world. The pains and struggles that their ancestors experienced during the Korean War might have contributed a lot to the urge within these Koreans to do well and improve their way of life.

Now, South Korea is facing a threat against United States' possible withdrawal of military support for them. It could be considered a possible big blow for them, especially that North Korea is still on the verge of attacking them anytime now. Perhaps, it would be better be resolved it these two nations, the South and North Korea, would forgive each other and once and for all, unite again as one nation. After

all, they used to be one before. It would be better off if these two states would forget their prides and just embraced each other to finally put a halt to their unending war. If that will happen, then South Korea will no longer need the aid of United States in their security and military matters.

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