

## KOREA CHAIR PLATFORM

## From Defense to Deterrence: The Core of Defense Reform Plan 307

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There is a great deal of interest in both the scholarly and policy communities with regard to the defense reform plans of the Republic of Korea (ROK). In no small part, this interest stems from concerns about how the ROK has sought to enhance its conventional deterrence capabilities in the aftermath of the 2010 armed provocations by the DPRK. This short paper provides a brief history of recent defense reform plans in the ROK.

In 2005, the ROK finalized Defense Reform Plan (DRP) 2020. DRP 2020 aimed at a significant reduction of the size of the ROK armed forces (ROKAF). The Plan was guided by the directives from the then President Roh Moo-Hyun. A key premise of the force reduction plan was that a large number of ROK forces would not be necessary given the increasing absence of the military threat of war from North Korea in the future.

In December 2009, President Lee Myung-bak commissioned fifteen experts to reexamine and redesign DRP 2020 in order to rectify any unrealistic programs adopted under the assumptions about the future geostrategic environment made by President Roh. On December 6, 2010, the Presidential Committee for Defense Reform (PCDR) submitted to President Lee the "proposals for reform plan" that demanded modifications on 71 reform projects.

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Based on the PCDR proposals, the Ministry of National Defense (MND) made a revised DRP, and President Lee approved the revised DRP on March 7, 2011. This is known as DRP 307. Upon completion of the necessary legislative process, the Plan will become effective under the title of DRP 11-30. The Plan also reflects the recommendations proposed by the Presidential National Security Review Board, organized following the sinking of Cheonan on March 26, 2010. This event strongly urged South Korea to restructure the command and control structure of the ROKAF in order to enhance cooperation between the services and the field commanders in joint operations.

DRP 307 focused on 1) doctrinal change to cope with the North Korean threat, and 2) reorganization of the command and control structure and the force structure. The core ideas underlying the reform suggested by DRP 307 are outlined below.

### The Doctrine of Proactive Deterrence

#### (1) Necessary Measures to Stop North Korea's Incessant Provocations

South Koreans have been extremely patient in the face of North Korean incursions. They restrained themselves from taking any retaliatory measures; instead, Seoul has focused more on maintaining peaceful inter-Korean relations by upholding the doctrine of "Defense by Denial." Whenever North Korea made provocations, the ROKAF tried to contain the provocation to prevent further escalation. This doctrine is a typical passive military strategy. Even with maximum success, this strategy only restores the status-quo ante. This approach not only constrains the ability of the South Korean forces to shape a more favorable battlefield environment, but also allows the North Korean forces to enjoy operational freedom by choosing the location and timing of attacks. Under this scenario, the ROKAF will be drawn into combat against its will, and at a strategic disadvantage.

DRP 307 proposes a new doctrine of "Proactive Deterrence" to improve the situation. Under the new doctrine, the ROKAF makes prompt, focused and proportional retaliation against North Korea's attacks. Here, the ROKAF takes a resolute counteraction strong enough to prevent any more provocations. In explaining the new posture, ROK Minister of National Defense Kim Kwan-Jin stated that "[i]f the enemy attacks our people and territory, I will use force to punish the enemy to make sure it doesn't even dare to think about it again. The enemy should be punished thoroughly until the source of hostility is eliminated."

Theoretically, the doctrine precludes an actual war engagement. Rather, the aim of the new doctrine lies in dissuading the adversary from planning provocations in the first place. Credible intimidation lies at the core of "Proactive Deterrence". As Sun Tzu emphasized, to subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill. The ROKAF will abide with Sun Tzu's wisdom.

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### (2) For A Democratic Unified Korea

Popular consensus that a unified Korea should be a democratic republic allows Seoul to play a leading role in the unification process. So far as North Korea clings to its autocratic system and remains mired in anachronistic thinking, it will be impossible to negotiate with North Korea for a democratic unified Korea. As the citizens of a democratic state, South Koreans will not tolerate totalitarian dictatorship prevailing in North Korea. South Koreans are very proud of what they have achieved as the citizens of the Republic of Korea. In the short period of sixty years since the Korean War, they have successfully consolidated a stable democracy and a strong economic foundation for sustainable growth. Looking into the future, South Koreans envisage a more prosperous nation with a matured democracy. Although they wish to see a unified Korea, they will not seek unification at the cost of prosperity or democratic values. To the majority of South Koreans, the values of prosperity and democracy outweigh that of unification. As a result, they urge South Korea to administer the unification process in a way that guarantees a unified Korea will be democratic.

Hence, considering the popular demand to build a democratic unified Korea, South Korea should maintain military superiority to North Korea so that North Korea shall not be able to resist South Korea's endeavor for reunification. DRP 307 reflects this demand. The plan aims to build strong deterrence capabilities sufficient to convince the North Korean leaders that they should give up their belligerent design of disrupting South Korea's approach towards peaceful unification.

#### Reorganization of the Command Structure

In 2015, the ROKAF HQ will retrieve the wartime operational control (Op-Con) from the Combined Forces Command (CFC). In order to guarantee an effective exercise of command and control of the entire South Korean armed forces, the ROKAF need a unified command for joint operation among the fighting units of army, navy, air force and marine corps. DRP 307 includes the plan for the reorganization of the upper command structure of the ROKAF to meet the foregoing requirement.

According to DRP 307, the role of the commander of the CFC will be taken by the Chairman of the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (ROK JCS). The Plan will also rearrange the position of the service chiefs of staff of army, navy and air force to fit the chain of command under the CJCS. The current operation commands of the three services will be dissolved and absorbed by the respective service headquarters. In this way, one layer of commanding echelon will be eliminated. Simplicity, slimness, quick decision and maximum jointness are the guiding directives of the reform. The reform aims at enhancing the efficiency of command and control. It improves the chain of command by clearly delineating the combatant commanders' responsibilities, their authorities and the role of the CJCS. These reforms will vastly improve

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cooperation between the services and the combatant commanders in the execution of joint operations.

### Conclusion

DRP 307 aims at inducing North Korea to take non-belligerent policy options. If North Korea realizes that it is not possible to achieve national unification by belligerent means, then it will seriously and sincerely consider non-belligerent alternatives. In order to induce North Korea to take the right course of nation building, South Korea should choose a firm military doctrine of proactive deterrence.

At the news conference after President Lee Myong-bak approved DRP 307, in explaining the goal of this plan, ROK Defense Minister Kim Kwan-Jin quoted a phrase from Sun Tzu, saying that "...not to presume that the enemy will not attack, but rather to make one's self invincible." In thinking about the strategy of proactive deterrence, we should once again remember the old dictum: "si vis pacem, para bellum (if you want peace, prepare for war)."

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