Jeju Peace Institute 제주평화연구원

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A Study on How Koreans View Peace

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The Jeju Peace Institute, jointly with the Korean Social Science Data Center (KSDC), conducted a survey concerning how Koreans view peace, for three days from July 9, 2010. The survey focused on Koreans' view of the country's foreign policy. It also examined changes in their views concerning national security, peace, and human rights in the wake of the ROKS Cheonan (PCC-772) Incident.

Concerning the question as to what they regarded as the most important issue, Koreans pointed to the prevention of crime (28%), economic matters (24.9%), human rights and democracy (24.3%), and the country's foreign policy (22.8%), which tends to suggest that Koreans think that safety from crime and economic affluence are the most important issues, and place democracy before the country's foreign policy.

As a survey concerning the way Koreans felt toward their country's relations with neighboring countries, including North Korea, following the the ROKS Cheonan (PCC-772) Incident, it threw up an interesting result concerning how South Koreans feel about the country's policy towards North Korea. With regard to the country's provision of economic support to North Korea, 48.8% of the respondents said that they were opposed to it and only 29.4% expressed their approval, with 20% abstaining. As regards the need for a response in kind by South Korea to the North's nuclear program, 53.5% of the respondents answered positively, while 27.5% answered negatively, with 14% abstaining. Their negative opinion on the provision of economic support to the North and their support for the South's hard-line response to the North's nuclear program indicates their criticism of the

North's provocative actions, as characterized by the ROKS Cheonan (PCC-772) Incident.

The people's response to questions on national security was not much different from what is generally perceived: 58.3% of them expressed approval concerning the need to increase the South's national defense expenditure, while only 12.5% of them were opposed to such a need. Concerning the question on the immediate transfer of wartime operational control back to South Korea, 43.7% of them expressed approval, while 28.6% were opposed, with 20% abstaining. This shows that South Koreans want their military to take a firm stance against the North's hostility and that they have a sense of confidence in their country's defensive capability.

The results of the survey also show that South Koreans demonstrate a resolute position in matters concerning territorial sovereignty. As for the territorial dispute over Dokdo with Japan, 91.7% of them pointed to the need to take a hard-line position, while only 7.5% expressed opposition or neutrality to such a need. Concerning China's Northeastern Project (which is viewed as an attempt to distort history based on the position that all of Manchuria was and is inherently Chinese territory), 83.3% of the respondents expressed approval of the need for a hard-line response, while only 3.1% expressed opposition to such a need, with 10.7% abstaining. The foregoing results show that South Koreans maintain a more adamant attitude concerning the territorial dispute with Japan over Dokdo than in the dispute with China over China's Northeastern Project. It appears that such an attitude on the part of South Koreans is associated with the way they feel towards Korea's shared history with China and Japan.

To the question regarding the Government's policies for regulating free trade, 45% of the respondents expressed approval while 14% expressed their opposition, with 28% abstaining. However, 12.5% of the respondents chose to reply "I don't know" or "No answer," which is interpreted as an indication of the general public's lack of accurate knowledge about economic issues.

The survey also asked questions concerning the country's contribution to the international community. The questions covered the provision of support for developing countries, international organizations, and the dispatch of peacekeeping forces. Concerning the need to provide humanitarian support to developing countries, 71.1% were for it while 7.1% were against it. As for the need to provide support to international organizations, 63.5% were for it while 6.7% were against it. With regard to the country's dispatch of peacekeeping forces upon the UN's request, 65.1% were for it and 8.8% were against it. The foregoing shows that South Koreans maintain a degree of open-mindedness and think that their country should contribute to the international community. As for collaboration with undemocratic countries in connection with the need to secure natural resources, 54.2% expressed approval, while 17% indicated opposition. The 54.2% was divided into "very strong

approval" (18.2%) and "lukewarm approval" (36%), indicating a not-so-strong resource nationalism.

With regard to the need to have universal values reflected in the country's foreign policy, the respondents gave complicated responses. In connection with the need for the country to play a positive role in issues related to climate change, 83.2% of them were for it and 12.1% were against it, with 14% abstaining. Concerning the need to provide medical insurance to migrant workers within the country, 81% of them were for it and 6.3% against it, with 10.7% abstaining. This result indicates that the respondents are favorable to the country's adoption of universalism-based policy on the international front. Regarding the need to grant Korean nationality to a foreigner married to a Korean, 58.9% of the respondents were for it and 18.2% against it, with 20.1% abstaining. As for the need to allow Koreans to hold dual nationality, which is associated with military service obligations, 53.2% of the respondents expressed their opposition while 22.5% were in favor of it. The foregoing shows that South Koreans are open-minded concerning universal values, such as issues concerning climate change and the provision of medical insurance benefits to migrant workers, but that they have a conservative attitude in matters associated with the legal system, such as dual nationality or obligation of the country's citizens.

Finally, the survey was conducted concerning priority on collaboration with neighboring countries, with weighted value granted. The respondents appear to view the U.S. as the country most important to the country's national security (57.04%) and economy (47.5%), followed by China (national security: 24.4% economy: 36%). The foregoing shows that South Koreans regard the U.S. and China as very important countries in matters of national security and economy, and that they regard China as an important partner in terms of economy rather than national security. The U.S. and China were followed by Japan (national security: 12.7% economy: 11.7%) and by Russia (national security: 5.78% economy: 4.14%).

This survey was conducted based on Proportionate Quota Sampling on people aged 19 or over with their age, gender and region taken into account. Error range: ±3.10% / Reliability level: 95%.

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