

The Diplomacy of Programme Boundaries: The Republic of Korea and the Colombo Plan

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The appointment of the South Korean economist, Kim Hak-su, as the first Secretary-General of the *Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific* in 1995, demonstrated the country's emergence as an Asia tiger. The appointment was also indicative of Seoul's desire to use the Plan to channel development aid and technical expertise to the less developed countries in the region. Whereas the Republic of Korea's participation and contribution to the Colombo Plan is well documented, there is little in the extant literature that provides insights into the diplomatic processes through which it gained membership in a programme that was originally restricted to only the Commonwealth and non-communist states in South and Southeast Asia. Using archival sources, the article explores the politics and diplomacy of Seoul's bid for membership in the Colombo Plan Consultative Committee. It also explores the reasons why Seoul led the effort to rejuvenate the Plan in the 1990s.

Key Word: Republic of Korea, Colombo plan, Asia Pacific, economic development, KOICA, ODA

Introduction

In 1995, the South Korean economist, Kim Hak-su, was appointed the first Secretary-General of the *Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific*. The Plan was established in 1951 to promote economic development in South and Southeast Asia through mutual aid. It was designed to provide a platform through which western aid and technical assistance could be used to counteract the growing attraction of communism to the poverty-stricken populations of the non-Communist states in the region (Adeleke, 2004; Oakman, 2004; Lowe, 2010).

The Republic of Korea (henceforth RoK), an East Asian country located outside the geopolitical orbit of the Plan, became a member in 1962, and in the 1990s, led the effort to rejuvenate the programme. This raises a rather intriguing question: how did the RoK become a participant in a programme designed with a different geopolitical focus? The vast literature of the Colombo Plan is silent on this. In fact, Korean scholars, writing in English, appear to have ignored the subject as well.¹ There is little in the extant literature explaining how the RoK gained membership in a programme that was originally designed for the Commonwealth and non-Communists states in South and Southeast Asia.

The article seeks to fill this gap. Using diplomatic dispatches from Canadian and British officials attending the meetings of the Consultative Committee where the issue was deliberated upon, the article explores the politics and diplomacy of the RoK's bid to participate in the Colombo Plan. It also

explains why the RoK decided to spearhead the effort to rejuvenate the Plan in the early 1990s, culminating in the appointment of Kim Hak-su in 1995.

The Origins of the Colombo Plan

Initial discussions to establish the aid programme began at the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers Conference held in Colombo, Sri Lanka,² in January 1950. Delegates expressed concern about the threat which communism posed to the stability of the Asian Commonwealth States and their non-Communist neighbours. These states were all located in South and Southeast Asia, making the region of vital security importance to the Commonwealth.

Communism had triumphed in China in October 1949, a few months before the Commonwealth Ministers met in Colombo. Australia, which was a strong promoter of the Colombo Plan concept, shared the same strategic and security orbit with Communist China. Communism's destabilising potential to the Southeast Asian region was therefore a major foreign policy issue to Canberra, and to the Asia Commonwealth states; just as its global reach within the ambit of the cold war was a vital security issue to the United States and its western allies (Adeleke, 2003/4; Spender, 1969).

In presenting his country's memorandum to Commonwealth Foreign Ministers in Colombo, Percy Spender, the Australian external affairs minister, drew the attention of delegates to "the consolidation of communism in China and the evident threat of its emergence as a growing force

throughout Southeast Asia.” The threat “underline[d] the urgency of international efforts to stabilize governments and to create conditions of economic life and living standards under which the ideological attractions which communism exerts will lose their force” (Commonwealth Meeting on Foreign Affairs, 1950a; Lowe, 2009). Like the Australians, other delegates were equally concerned about the dialectic between the communist threat, economic development and political stability in the region. By the end of the conference, the consensus among the Commonwealth Ministers was that an aid programme designed to promote economic development offered the best antidote to the growing influence of communism in South and Southeast Asia (Commonwealth Meeting on Foreign Affairs, 1950b; Hass, 1974: 35).

The discussions on the aid programme proposed in Colombo continued at the Sydney conference of the Commonwealth Consultative Committee in May 1950 (Adeleke, 2008) and were finalised at the London conference in September 1950. The London meeting approved the programme with the title *The Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic Development in South and Southeast Asia*, to become operational in 1951.

The choice of nomenclature reflected the programme’s geopolitical focus. The Colombo Plan was restricted to the Commonwealth and non-communist states in South and Southeast Asia. The United Kingdom and its dependent territories (Malaya, North Borneo, Sarawak and Singapore) the white Dominions—Australia, Canada and New Zealand—together with the South Asian Commonwealth countries, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, were the original members.

The Korean War, which broke out in June 1950, was undoubtedly the primary motivation for the Truman administration’s decision to buy into the Colombo Plan in November 1950. The war compelled the administration to review its policies towards South and Southeast Asia and to decide, subsequently, to use the Colombo Plan to channel aid to the countries threatened by communism (Adeleke, 2004). The Colombo Plan offered Washington yet another medium to advance its cold war strategies in the Asia-Pacific region. Over the next few years, participation was extended to the non-communist states. Myanmar (Burma) and Nepal joined in 1952; Indonesia in 1953; the Philippines and Thailand in 1954.

Both Japan and the Republic of Korea are in East Asia and neither was expected to join the Colombo Plan. Japan, like the Western members, joined as a donor in 1954 (Adeleke, 2002).

The RoK did not fit this model. Its level of economic development at the time, which placed the country almost “at the bottom of the international income scale,” (Hasan, 1976: 3) made it impossible for Seoul to promote its candidature as a donor. It

was itself a recipient of foreign assistance, principally from the United States. Between 1954 and 1964, it received aid from the United States totalling US\$2.1 billion plus an additional US\$427.7 million under the Public Law 480 (United States Food for Peace) programme (Park, 2005: Table 1, 668). Nevertheless, Seoul sustained its bid to gain membership in the programme, and it finally succeeded in 1962.

The RoK’s Bid for Membership

The government of President Syngman Rhee initiated the process to secure RoK membership in the Colombo Plan Consultative Committee. This was in August 1957 when Foreign Minister Chung–Whan Cho suddenly raised the issue (“broached the subject without warning”) at a meeting with the British ambassador to Korea, H. J. Evans. In a clear demonstration of a mastery of his brief, the minister anticipated the question associated with the regional boundaries of the programme. When the ambassador raised this, he had a ready answer: “[Since] Canada and Pakistan were original members he supposed that the ‘region’ was never among the criteria for membership even from the start.” What he wanted, the minister asserted, was advice on the appropriate “channel of approach” (Evans, 1959).

In Washington, the Korean ambassador was also making contact with his British counterpart. In the course of a discussion, he revealed that the Asian members of the Plan were urging the RoK to participate in the programme. Even Sri Lanka had offered to sponsor his country’s application. The State Department had also promised support. His government, the ambassador explained, “was not so much interested in the material benefits of membership as in the goodwill which her presence would engender.” It was prepared to participate as a donor; if Japan could contribute so could Korea. In view of the excellent relations between Korea and the United Kingdom, would Her Majesty’s government, as “the founder of the Colombo Plan,” agree to sponsor Korea’s application? As is usual in such situations the British ambassador merely promised to refer the issue to the Foreign Office (Garran, 1957).

The United States did indeed favour participation by the RoK. According to the State Department, the Koreans “tended to suffer somewhat from a sense of isolation.” It was therefore necessary to associate them more closely with other friendly countries, especially Asian. Participation in the Colombo Plan would “make the Koreans feel that they were members of the free world club” (British Embassy, Washington, 1957).

The RoK’s sense of isolation, as the Americans described it, could not be divorced from its recent history, the Japanese occupation, the war

with North Korea and its political system. There was no formal diplomatic relations between the RoK and Japan for much of the 1950s and early 1960s. Various compensation claims, which Seoul made against Tokyo, complicated and stalled normalisation talks. In fact, it was not until the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the RoK was signed in June 1965 that Seoul dropped its demands for war reparations, in return for economic aid.

Furthermore, Seoul had no formal diplomatic relations with most of the countries in the Asia-Pacific region. With the exception of the United States, the United Kingdom and the Philippines, it had no relations with any of the Commonwealth and non-communist members of the Colombo Plan Consultative Committee. It was not even a member of the United Nations Organisation³. In the light of this diplomatic isolation, there is little doubt that the RoK ambassador to Washington was right when he emphasised the goodwill his country would gain from participation in the Colombo Plan. Membership in the Consultative Committee offered Seoul a palliative against its sense of isolation.

In addition to the challenges that the RoK's diplomatic isolation posed to its request to participate in the Colombo Plan, everyone had to contend with the problem of regional boundary. It was not feasible within the existing framework of the Plan. Japan had breached the geopolitical barrier by posing as a donor. However, Seoul could not follow this precedent since it was a major recipient of aid. Such a move, as the British and the Americans characterised it, was "unrealistic" and, in fact, ridiculous. Extending participation to Seoul would therefore require a re-definition of the Colombo Plan area although this could "raise problem of China [sic] and would make it difficult to resist applications from other countries in Middle East and Africa and perhaps even in Latin America" (De la Mare, 1957; Curson, 1957).

The Korean application presented Britain and other western members of the Consultative Committee with the diplomatic equivalent of a Catch-22 situation. It was desirable in principle but its possible consequences made everyone uncomfortable. If the RoK were admitted how would the members deal with potentially more embarrassing applications from communist and other unwanted countries? The State Department tried to wriggle out of the dilemma with a proposal to transfer responsibility for resolving the issue to the Asian members. Whitehall found it more desirable "to take active steps to counter the candidature of South Korea." However, from his vantage point in Washington, Her Majesty's ambassador warned that such a decision would place all the blame for the failure of the application on the United Kingdom while the Americans, who shared British concerns, would come out unscathed

by maintaining the line that *other* countries blocked it (De la Mare, 1957).

Like the dithering Anglo-Americans, there was little enthusiasm for the RoK's membership among the Asian members either. India opposed it on the same principle of regional boundary, as did Sri Lanka. They felt that it could open the way for the Republic of China and North Vietnam (United Kingdom Delegation to Colombo Plan Meeting in Saigon, 1957). In any case, they had no formal relations with the RoK and could therefore not see any potential diplomatic benefit in promoting its candidature. India was, moreover, a very strong member of the Nonaligned Movement, while the RoK was at the epicentre of the cold war in Asia. There was therefore no incentive in New Delhi to advance the interest of Seoul.

For Sri Lanka, moreover, it was essential, for domestic political stability, to avoid offending the communist bloc by appearing to take sides in the struggle between North and South Korea. Marxist parties were legitimate political organisations in Sri Lanka. At independence in 1947, three such parties existed in the country, the Lanka Sama Samaya Party (LSSP), the Bolshevik-Leninist Party (BLP) and the Ceylon Communist Party. The largest of the three, the LSSP, was in fact a junior partner in the coalition government formed by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP,) which won the general election of 1956. The two parties would form another coalition government in 1964. Domestic politics made it imperative for the government to avoid creating the impression that it was supporting South Korea against North Korea. Supporting the latter's application to join the Consultative Committee could lend itself to such interpretation and therefore had to be avoided (Anderson, 1962a).

In the prevailing circumstances, a retreat was in everyone's best interest. However, Seoul did not see it that way. Shortly after assuming power in May 1961, the military regime led by Park Chung Hee, resuscitated the country's drive for membership with the expectation that it would be consummated at the forthcoming Consultative Committee meeting due to hold in Kuala Lumpur in October. The regime was on the threshold of launching the first of the five-year plans to industrialise the country and must have pursued membership of the Consultative Committee as part of this transformation process. This time Seoul was determined more than ever before to attend the meeting and could not be dissuaded by what had by now become known as the 'unanimity convention', i.e., that each application should be supported by *all* the members.

In the diplomatic arena, the RoK was not as isolated as it was when it first raised the subject in 1957. It had established diplomatic relations with Thailand in 1958, the Federation of Malaya (as it then was) in 1960 and with Australia in 1961. It would establish relations with another Consultative

Committee member, New Zealand, in 1962. The diplomatic environment was therefore more favourable in 1961 since its new friends were likely to be more sympathetic and more favourably disposed to the application.

The government of the Federation of Malaya, one of Seoul's newfound friends, was hosting the Consultative Committee meeting in 1961. The Malayan government accepted the RoK's application without first ascertaining if any member was opposed to it. Since it had the responsibility to prepare the draft agenda, Kuala Lumpur could choose to list the application thereby forcing a discussion in Committee. If this were to happen it was possible, to quote the Commonwealth Relations Office's frantic telegram to the British delegation, that the "application might be opposed by Indonesia and defended by Thailand and the Philippines on purely ideological grounds." This could precipitate "a cold war debate in the hitherto harmonious forum of the Colombo Plan." It was therefore necessary to avoid it at all cost. The delegation, "in the last resort," should propose that discussion should be left in abeyance until agreement could be reached through normal diplomatic channels (Lansdowne, 1961).

The conflicting responses the application was likely to elicit, as expressed in the British telegram, reflected the pattern of relations, which the RoK had with the members of the Consultative Committee. The Republic of the Philippines was one of the oldest friends the RoK had in Southeast Asia. Relations between the two countries began in March 1949, when the government of the Philippines recognised the RoK, the fifth country to do so. During the Korean War, the Philippines deployed the Philippine Expeditionary Force to Korea (PEFTOK) to defend the RoK. Thailand had also become a friend in 1958. On the other hand, the RoK had no diplomatic relations with Indonesia until 1973. Hence, as the British feared, while Malaya, the Philippines and Thailand were willing to support the application it was mostly likely to be opposed by Indonesia, a situation which could generate unnecessary acrimony within the Consultative Committee.

Of even greater concern to Whitehall, as the following extract from the New Zealand Department of External Affairs' reaction to a British note on the subject makes clear, was the fact that the acrimony, which a debate on the application could engender, would threaten the attempt to underplay the cold war underpinnings of the Colombo Plan:

The question of South Korean candidature should probably be considered in relation to the implication of extending the existing Colombo Plan area. This Department is inclined to doubt the wisdom of raising so broad a subject in the Consultative Committee...A formal discussion of

such a subject would raise many awkward problems—for example, political problems involving the possible membership of Taiwan and the... discussion would tend to bring out the essentially *anti-Communist aspect of the Colombo Plan which it has so far been possible to keep so far submerged from the view that the Colombo Plan is regarded as an outstanding example of non-political activity in the aid field* (United Kingdom Embassy Wellington, 1961).

With little regard to the nuances of diplomacy or the concerns of the western members of the Colombo Plan, the RoK ambassador to Thailand appeared in Kuala Lumpur "uninvited" with instructions to wait there "unofficially" for a decision on his country's application. When he was informed of the unanimity convention, he decided to wait nevertheless for the arrival of ministers in order to lobby them for support. With one newspaper already reporting that the Koreans were "trying to gatecrash the meeting," the situation had become, without doubt, a diplomatic faux pas; a situation from which the ambassador found it difficult to extricate himself with dignity (United Kingdom Delegation to Colombo Plan Meeting Kuala Lumpur, 1961a).

On the second day of the meeting of officials (1 November 1961) the Malayan representative announced that the RoK government had clarified its position. It wanted to participate in the meeting as an observer and did not expect this to "constitute a step in the procedure towards full membership." The Indonesian representative then read a prepared statement in which he poured undiplomatic invectives on the RoK for its deplorable behaviour and for causing embarrassment to the host government. Then, in a more nuanced tone, he proposed that the government of Malaya, as host, should use its discretion to decide whether the RoK should attend the meeting, as long as it was clearly understood that this was not a precedent for future participation in the Consultative Committee (United Kingdom Delegation to Colombo Plan Meeting Kuala Lumpur, 1961b). In the absence of further opposition, the RoK took its seat at the 13th meeting of the Colombo Plan Consultative Committee as an observer. Although the Foreign Office took umbrage at the Indonesian delegate's "needlessly offensive statement," there was relief in Whitehall that Her Majesty's government had been spared the unpleasant task of taking action that was liable to offend the RoK (Foreign Office, 1961).

The 1962 meeting of the Consultative Committee was hosted by Australia, a country with which the RoK had established relations a year earlier. In March 1962, the RoK established consular relations with India, which turned New Delhi into another ally in the Consultative Committee. In April, Seoul again applied to attend

the Melbourne meeting as an observer. In line with the unanimity convention, the Australian government circulated the application around Colombo Plan capitals. Since Indonesia and Sri Lanka were the two countries still opposing the application, Canberra decided to approach their governments to persuade them to abstain. The Canadian High Commissioner and the American ambassador in Colombo were similarly instructed by their home governments to intercede in behalf of Seoul. The RoK government also decided to play a more proactive diplomatic game. It dispatched its ambassador to Thailand on a goodwill and cultural mission to Asian capitals to canvass support for its application (Australian High Commission London, 1962; Anderson, 1962a).

The RoK mission appeared to have played a key role in effecting a change of attitude in Colombo. As it happened, a delegation from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) had come to Colombo to establish a trade office shortly before the arrival of the goodwill mission from Seoul. The North Koreans had behaved in "an inflexible, hard and uncouth manner." Naturally, their host expected a similar attitude from the RoK delegation. To their surprise, the latter demonstrated "urbanity and reasonableness." In the event, the hosts were impressed sufficiently to soften their attitude towards the RoK. The result was that Sri Lanka pledged not to block the RoK application if there was no opposition from any other country (Anderson, 1962b). Since there were clear indications that Indonesia might also respond favourably, Seoul's application appeared to have met the requirements of the unanimity convention. The RoK went to Melbourne in November 1962 as an observer and was granted full membership.

By getting itself admitted, the RoK breached the Colombo Plan's restrictive boundaries. This paved the way for countries like Bhutan in Central Asia, Iran in Southwest Asia, and Fiji and Papua New Guinea in the Southwest Pacific. Most countries were now potential members. The Federal Republic of Germany sent observers to the New Delhi (1972), Wellington (1973), Singapore (1974) and Colombo (1975) meetings but in the end decided against membership. At the Singapore meeting the government of Sri Lanka, which was to host the 1975 meeting, was mandated to invite the European Economic Community (EEC), Denmark, Iraq, Kuwait, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, and the United Arab Emirates to attend as observers. Only the EEC and Iraq accepted the invitation although neither subsequently sought membership in the Consultative Committee. In 1977, members adopted a new constitution and changed the programme's name to the *Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific* to reflect the new regional coverage.

RoK and the Rejuvenation of the Colombo Plan

By the time the cold war ended in 1990, the Colombo Plan had served its purposes and was little more than an institutional relic of a receding order. Two founding members, the United Kingdom and Canada, withdrew from the programme in 1991 and 1992 respectively. The cold war was over, and for London and Ottawa, the Colombo Plan was no longer a feasible or utilitarian platform for the promotion of their foreign policies in the Asia-Pacific region.

The cold war ended at a time when the locus of international economic and financial power was shifting to the Asia-Pacific region. The so-called Asia tigers—Hong Kong, Republic of Korea, Singapore and Republic of China (Taiwan), and latterly China, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia—joined Japan as the dominant economic actors in East Asia. So dramatic and unprecedented was the development of the first four tiger economies that in 1993 the World Bank produced a study of the phenomenon with the title "The East Asian Miracle."

The termination of the cold war also provided a spur for the acceleration of globalisation, the formation of trading blocs and regional integration movements. In Asia, the private sector and market forces drove the process. While the Japanese were proposing the formation of an Asian economic circle, the South Koreans proposed the establishment of a Yellow Sea economic circle.

Measured against the efflorescence of globalisation, economic blocs and market-oriented economic transformation taking place in Asia, the Colombo Plan's model of development assistance looked rather outdated. The programme's continued existence was at best precarious, if not superfluous. Incidentally, this was the import of the statement made by His Excellency, Hang-Kyung Kim, the RoK's Ambassador to Myanmar, and Head of his country's delegation to the 34th Consultative Committee meeting of the Colombo Plan held in Yangon, Myanmar, in November 1992. "The Colombo Plan," the Ambassador noted with characteristic diplomatic understatement, "ha[d] become somewhat weakened, owing partly to the relatively restricted scope of...[its] activities in comparison with the growing role of other international agencies for cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region" (Kim, 1992).

As it happened, the Ambassador's conclusions represented the prevailing opinion in Colombo Plan circles. In fact, one of the items slated for discussion at the 34th Consultative Committee meeting was the programme's future. Towards this end, the Colombo Plan Council, the association of heads of diplomatic missions of member governments resident in Colombo, had conducted a study on the subject from 1919 to 1992. The Council's report, *The Future of the Colombo Plan*,

provided the basis for discussions at the Yangon meeting (Colombo Plan Council, 1992).

In 1991, the RoK had established the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade with a mandate to implement the government's grant aid and technical cooperation programmes with developing countries. In the beginning, the development cooperation efforts focused on "meeting the Basic Human Needs (BHNs) of developing countries and on fostering their Human Resources Development (HRD)" (KOICA, 2012).

Against the backdrop of KOICA's establishment and mandate, the discussion of the future of the Colombo Plan at the Yangon meeting, as Ambassador Hang-Kyung Kim noted, was "both timely and significant." Although the Colombo Plan's activities were "relatively restricted," it had nevertheless "contributed greatly to supporting the development efforts of developing countries in the Asian [sic] and Pacific region through technical assistance." The Plan had administered the Colombo Plan Staff College in Manila and the Drug Advisory Programme very successfully. Hence, as part of the drive to revitalise the Plan, the Government of the RoK, the Ambassador emphasised, was proposing that the Colombo Plan should "promote Human Resources Development (HRD) through the coordination of the training institutions of member countries." The RoK was "assuming responsibilities commensurate with its national capabilities" and was willing "to cooperate with the Colombo Plan's member countries with a view to revitalizing the Plan through KOICA." In furtherance of this and in demonstration of its determination to play "a more significant role in promoting development in the Asia-Pacific region," the RoK would host the 35th Consultative Committee Meeting in 1994 (Kim, 1992).

In essence, Seoul, now an Asian tiger, was willing to offer development assistance in the area of Human Resources Development to countries in the Asia-Pacific region. It had established KOICA for that purpose, and KOICA could pursue its mandate using the instrumentality of a revitalised Colombo Plan.

The 35th Consultative Committee meeting, which Seoul hosted in October 1994, adopted a rejuvenated plan based on the Colombo Plan Council document, *The Future of the Colombo Plan*, which was adopted with additional suggestions at the 34th meeting in Yangon.

Thenceforth, the Colombo Plan would become a co-ordination mechanism for promoting South-South cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. With the renewed vigour, the Colombo Plan Bureau became the Colombo Plan Secretariat. The South Korean economist, Kim Hak-su, was appointed the first Secretary-General, underlining the important role that Seoul envisaged for the Colombo Plan as a

vehicle through which KOICA could implement its Official Development Assistance, ODA, mandate.

Conclusion

Although the western promoters of the Colombo Plan found the RoK's membership desirable for strategic reasons, it was difficult to sell the idea to the Asian members for a number of reasons. The RoK is located in East Asia, whereas the programme was designed for the Commonwealth and non-communist states in South and Southeast Asia. Although Japan is also located in East Asia it had gained membership by promoting itself as a donor, like the other western members. The RoK could not pose as a donor since it was a major recipient of western aid at the time. It was also diplomatically isolated in the region, and did not have relations with most of the members when President Rhee initiated the process in 1957.

Nevertheless, the strategic and geopolitical factors that underpinned the Colombo Plan; the importance of the Asian-Pacific region to western security; the importance of keeping the governments in the region stable and friendly; along with the need to balance relations between Japan and the RoK and promote the latter's economic development, underlined the need to support Seoul's bid for membership.

The impulse and drive for membership emanated from Seoul. Over the five years it took to gain membership, Seoul ended its relative isolation by establishing relations with most of the Plan members, thereby creating the enabling diplomatic environment to promote its candidature. Three decades later, and as an Asian economic tiger, Seoul sat in the driving seat of the rejuvenation agenda for the Colombo Plan, desiring to use the programme's platform to actualise the Official Development Assistance mandate of the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).

Both the admission of the Republic of Korea into the Colombo Plan's Consultative Committee in 1962, and its decision two decades later to revamp an organisation that had become moribund reaffirm the primacy of national interest as the motive force in the decision making processes of state actors in the international system. The donor and recipient members of the Plan in the west and in the Asia-Pacific region ultimately came to the realisation that it was in their interest to support Seoul's membership. National interest shaped the politics and diplomacy of the RoK's pursuit of membership in the Consultative Committee. When the RoK emerged as an Asia tiger with the resources to dispense ODA the Colombo Plan platform offered a ready platform for KOICA to actualise its national mandate, once more, as defined by the country's national interest.

Notes

1. Korean scholars have worked extensively on regionalism in Asia, on KOICA and on ODA. However, the author is yet to find any work by a Korean scholar writing in English on the RoK's bid for membership in the Colombo Plan Consultative Committee.
2. Sri Lanka was known as Ceylon at the time part of the events covered in this study took place. The new name was adopted in 1972. The new name is used in this study for consistency.
3. The Republic of Korea established formal relations with Australia in 1961, Canada in 1963, India in 1973, Indonesia in 1973, Malaysia in 1960, New Zealand in 1962, Pakistan in 1983, Sri Lanka in 1977 and Thailand in 1958. It became a member of the United Nations in 1991.

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