



“Anthropogenic climate change represents a threat to the security and sustainable development of all nations.”

Park Geun-hye, President of South Korea¹



South Korea is a small, densely populated nation with a long coastline. The western Pacific is already at risk from extreme weather, and this threat is expected to grow.

Changes in agricultural productivity due to warming threatens both North and South Korea.²

Summary

Country: **South Korea**

Region: **East Asia**

ASP Assessment:

Vulnerability: **Medium**

Perception of Climate Change: **Security Threat**

Capacity: **High**

Preparedness: **High**

Overall Assessment: **Excellent**

The Climate Threats

Regional Disaster Vulnerability

- Rising sea levels
- Warming temperature
- Coastal flooding
- Increased cyclonic activity
- Change in precipitation patterns³

The Need to Adapt

- Dependence on United State for supplies and knowledge⁵
- Lack of international aid in this region
- Existing tensions distract from significant development⁶

Links Between Climate and Conflict

- Potential exploitation of severe environmental event by North Korea
- Increased regional tensions of scarce resources⁴

Direct Threats to Homeland Security

- Management of destruction and dislocation⁷
- Capacity to maintain order and security
- Potentially dislocated coastal population⁸



How is the Country Preparing for Climate Threats

Preparing for Disaster Response

“Second, it has been modifying disaster management manuals, thereby preparing for various types of disasters. In 2008, it supplemented the practical manuals, in connection with the standard crisis management manual of the government, for each of the 20 types of disasters, such as storms and floods, earthquakes and wildfires, and in 2009 modified the on-site action manual that is being used in the event of a disaster.”

- Ministry of National Defense, 2010 Defense White Paper⁹

Adapting Installations

“The implementation of adaptation measures should be made taking national socioeconomic development into account. Adaptation measures on climate change had previously been promoted fragmentarily, separately, and partially, while not being jointly considered in relation to national development methods.”

- Department of Environmental Cooperation Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade¹¹

Breaking the Link between Climate and Conflict

“Today, the world faces not only traditional military threats but also various types of security threats, including weapons of mass destruction (WMD), terror, natural calamities and disasters, climate change, and energy problems.”

- Ministry of National Defense, 2010 Defense White Paper¹⁰

Planning for Homeland Security Threats

“Large scale natural disasters such as heavy snowfalls, typhoons, and torrential rains have been occurring on a frequent basis due to extreme weather caused by global warming. As these large-scale natural disasters threaten the lives and safety of the people, a systematic response at the national level is being required. As such, the military’s role to protect the lives and property of the people from disasters is increasing. As the people’s military, the ROK military is exerting diverse efforts to ensure the safety of the people during national level disasters.”

- Ministry of National Defense, 2012 Defense White Paper¹²

Analysis

The South Korean military identifies climate change as a new type of security threat, and specifically blames the rise in natural disasters in Asia on climate change. It has begun detailed planning of humanitarian response missions, and has looked further into how climate change will threaten other aspects of security in the region. For a country that has a clear “traditional” threat to its security on its border, it is impressive how detailed the government’s planning for the climate security threat is. The South Korean Foreign Ministry has hosted a regional summit in Seoul on climate change and security in East Asia, and is positioning itself to be a global leader on this issue. For this reason, we rank the Republic of Korea as “Excellent.”

The American Security Project’s Global Security Defense Index on Climate Change is an examination of how international governments and militaries plan for and anticipate the strategic threats of climate change.

For more information and references see:

globalsecuritydefenseindex.org