

Notes for a Presentation

by Paul Heinbecker on

Korea and Canada: Middle Powers or Constructive Powers

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Check Against Delivery

Ambassador Cho

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am honoured to participate in the “Embassy Speakers Series”.

And I am happy to play my own small part in commemorating the 50th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between Korea and Canada.

and the 60th Anniversary of the Korean War Armistice.

Relations between our two countries were literally forged in fire 60 years ago in facing a common foe.

Consequently our relations have the strength of tempered steel.

May the friendship between Koreans and Canadians long endure.

Middle Power or Constructive Power?

There is much talk these days of Korea and Canada as Middle Powers.

In my judgment, “Middle power” sounds too much like “little power”.

Neither Korea nor Canada is a “Little Power” or a “Middle Power”, in fact or in theory.

In 1945, the United Nations (UN) had 51 members.

To be a Middle Power then meant something.

In 2013, the UN has 194 members

To be a Middle Power now means little.

And is even an excuse for shirking responsibility and off-loading it onto Washington.

According to the United Nations, the World Bank, the IMF and the CIA Factbook, the median power country in economic terms is either Gabon, Cameroon, Cyprus or Tanzania,

each with GDPs of approximately \$25 billion.

- Canada's GDP is estimated at about \$1.7 trillion, more than 75 times larger than any of the median country's GDPs,
- and Korea's GDP is about \$1.2 trillion.
- Overall, Canada ranks 11th and Korea ranks 15th in the world.
- There are about 180 countries smaller than either of us economically.

According to the Swedish International Peace Research Institute, the median country in terms of **military expenditures** is Kenya at \$594 million.

- Korea ranks 12th at \$28 billion—27 times more than Kenya-- and Canada ranks 14th at \$23 billion

In terms of **educational achievement**, according to the OECD, our countries also rank very highly.

For example, Korea ranks first in the percentage of population that has attained tertiary education.

Canada ranks third.

In terms of the percentage of young adults who have achieved tertiary education, Canada ranks first and Korea is third.

According to the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (2009 test scores), Korea students ranked second in reading, fourth in math and sixth in science.

Canada ranked sixth, tenth and eighth respectively

Our two countries stand toward the upper end of the range between Middle Powers and Super Powers.

But although we are not Middle Powers, a glance around our respective neighbourhoods is enough to understand that we are not super powers either.

We are *Constructive Powers*, about which I will say more in a few minutes.

Canada has the easier neighbourhood to live in

—happily for us—

but Canada and Korea both can and do make their ways successfully in the world .

To do so we both need a world governed as much as possible by law and norms of behaviour,

not just power.

Global governance matters crucially to both countries.

The Importance of Global Governance in the 21st Century

The UN Charter is the global governance rulebook that, despite its imperfections,

notably the veto enjoyed by the five permanent members of the Council,

the vast majority of countries see it as in their interests to respect.

The UN has become a kind of motherboard of global governance

That brings greater order, predictability and purpose to world affairs

and greater security, dignity and progress to people's lives.

The UN fulfills its allocated roles and, together with its "apps",

an extensive body of international laws, treaties, norms, practices, innovations and institutions,

that help states govern most facets of relations between them.

In the process the UN makes it possible for ideas such as the Millennium Development Goals to drive international policy-making

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and for other organizations notably NATO and the G-8 and the G-20,

as well as civil society

to contribute to progress.

Imagine how much friction and resistance the G20, for example, would generate if the 174 countries excluded countries did not have access to the inclusive and legitimate UN.

As the world progressively integrates, there will be no legitimate or effective substitute for multilateral governance.

And as long as the UN is the only organization that can convene the entire world under one roof

and can sustain the norms that let the world live largely in peace,

the vast majority of its members will want it to endure,

Whatever the ideological right in Canada might like.

The UN is 68 years old and has the problems associated with age.

Obviously the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council need reforming—reforming, not abandoning.

Good global governance is a Canadian—and Korean—interest.

A reformed UN is essential to good global governance but it is not sufficient.

Our world is transforming itself at a rate never before seen.

How well countries cope with the pace and extent of contemporary change depends,

as the experience of the financial crisis makes clear,

on how effectively they govern themselves,

and how well they cooperate with others.

In the descriptive phrase of Richard Haass of the US Council on Foreign Relations, we live in a world of “messy multilateralism”,

Governing this world requires multilateral, minilateral and bilateral cooperation between governments.

It also requires collaboration among governments, civil society and private and state-owned enterprise in multi-stakeholder arrangements—

like the internet, and to some extent, Climate Change.

No country, not the US, not China, not the two together in a G2 will control world affairs.

If the United States,
now and for years to come the leading global military power,
is to continue to wield decisive influence,
it will need to fix its myriad governance and economic problems.

But, even then, a return to the dominant *status quo ante* is not in the cards;

others can and will assert legitimate claims to participation in global leadership.

There will be more hands on the global steering wheel and more feet on the global accelerator and brake, both.

The United States --and China too--will likely find it advantageous

— even necessary —

to share authority.

They will also find it useful to lead from behind, or not to lead at all sometimes, letting other capable constructive countries work without them.

As the complexity and integration of the world accelerates,

new forms of "minilateralism,"

will take shape.

The G20 is one obvious example, although it is not clear whether the G20 will become a maxi G8 or a mini UN in its capacity to act.

Other forms of cooperation,

notably multi-stakeholder governance,

comprising governments, industry and civil society,

also seem likely to materialize in response to global challenges,

such as the Internet and Climate Change,

that defy conventional, state-based management.

The Constructive Powers

As the invitation to this event mentioned, there is also an emerging need for cooperation and new partnerships among capable, concerned, and constructive countries.

These are countries that are not themselves "great powers" by the traditional definition,

but that nonetheless have compelling strategic interests,

and sufficient diplomatic acumen, economic strength and political disposition and, sometimes, military capacity, to advance global governance.

Countries that share these attributes include Australia, Brazil, Germany, Japan, Indonesia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Sweden, South Africa Switzerland, and Turkey.

As well as Korea and Canada,

The foreign policies of these constructive powers are derived from democratic principles, including free economies, and proficient diplomatic establishments

which lend them the credibility and capacity to promote a more secure, more prosperous and more just world based on the rule of law.

Global governance is too important to leave exclusively to the five permanent members of the Security Council, who are manifestly not succeeding in solving many of the issues that plague international affairs.

The idea is not to try to supplant the P5,

but to bring new thinking and resources to the challenges that affect us all.

The Constructive Powers Initiative

The Centre for International Governance (CIGI) in Waterloo has taken the lead in launching a process to ascertain whether Constructive Powers are like-minded enough to address issues cooperatively and successfully

—through variable geometries of coalitions of the policy willing.

The core countries have been Turkey, Mexico, Korea and Canada, which have fielded academic experts and current and former practitioners to address the mega-issues involved in improved global governance,

and to examine security issues of particular interest to partner countries.

The objective has been to ascertain whether there is sufficient commonality of interest to warrant cooperation among think-tanks and ultimately governments.

There have been three sessions thus far.

The first was

in Istanbul where the security issues raised by the Arab spring were addressed,

The second was in Mexico City where the issue examined was transnational organized crime,

especially the illegal drug trade and its multifarious impacts, especially in Mexico, the Caribbean and Central America

The third was in Toronto where the focus was on internet governance, cyber security and digital diplomacy.

A potentially important innovation in Toronto, that should help focus the Initiative and inform its research was the participation of policy planning staff from 11 Constructive Powers.

The next gathering will be in Seoul in the fall of 2013 under the leadership of the Institute of Foreign Affairs, of the Korea National Diplomatic Academy.

Conclusion

The world is transforming itself at a rate never before seen.

A return to the status quo ante is not in the cards.

The UN is necessary to global governance in these fast changing times but not sufficient.

As the complexity and integration of the world accelerates, new forms of governance are being found to complement the UN.

These include new forms of multilateralism, pluralism, minilateralism, bilateralism, and multi-stakeholderism.

This rapidly developing world offers great opportunity
and commensurate responsibility
to countries that have the economic strength, military capacity
and diplomatic expertise
to make a significant difference.

Canada and Korea,
Historic partners and constructive powers,

have much to contribute—

Because, while we are not super-powers, we are super countries.

Thank You