

Habituated Importance of the United States¹

The Case of South Korea

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I. Introduction

In democracies, it is difficult to reach political elite consensus on foreign security policy because public competition induces the opposition to criticize and undermine government policy, even if they may prefer the policy privately,² unless there is direct threat³, institutionalized processes of cooperation⁴, or wide public support.⁵ It is also likely that political parties have different policy preferences, both publicly and privately, due to differences in ideology, worldview, and threat perceptions.⁶ In South Korea, however, one can observe political elite consensus on government plans to commit significant number of troops to the controversial U.S. led mission in Iraq (2003-2008). The conservative opposition gave solid support for the

¹ This is part of my dissertation project, advised by Prof. Iain Johnston, Stephen Rosen, and Matthew Baum,

² Schultz, Kenneth A. "Domestic opposition and signaling in international crises." *American Political Science Review* 92, no.4 (1998): 829-844.

³ Howell, William and Jon Rogowski. "War, the Presidency, and Legislative Voting Behavior." *American Journal of Political Science* 57, no.1 (2013): 150-166; Fearon, James D. "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (1995): 379-414; Siverson, Randolph M. and Harvey Starr. "Opportunity, willingness, and the diffusion of war." *The American Political Science Review* 84, no.1 (1990): 47-67; Bennett, Andrew, Joseph Leppgold, and Danny Unger. "Burden-sharing in the Persian Gulf War." *International Organization* 48, no.1 (1994): 39-75; Davidson, Jason W. *America's allies and war: Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

⁴ Kreps, Sarah. "Elite Consensus as a Determinant of Alliance Cohesion: Why Public Opinion Hardly Matters for NATO-led Operations in Afghanistan." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 6, Issue 3 (2010): 187-275; Tago, Atsushi. "Why Do States Join US-led Military Coalitions?: The Compulsion of the Coalition's Missions and Legitimacy." *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 7, no. 2 (2007): 379-398.

⁵ Sobel, Richard. Peter Furia, and Bethany Barratt ed., *Public Opinion and International Intervention* (Washington DC: Potomac Books). 2012; Chan, Steven and William Safran. "Public Opinion as a Constraint against War: Democracies' Responses to Operation Iraqi Freedom". *Foreign Policy Analysis* 2 (2006): 137-156.

⁶ Rathbun, Brian. *Partisan Interventions: European Party Politics and Peace Enforcement in the Balkans* (Cornell University Press, 2004); Rathbun, Brian. "Does One Right Make a Realist?: Conservatism, Neoconservatism and Isolationism in the Foreign Policy Ideology of American Elites," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 123, No. 2 (2008), pp. 271-299.

progressive government's motion to send noncombat troops to Iraq, while then President Roh Moohyun had a hard time convincing his own party members to vote for the motion.

The South Korean conservative opposition's behavior is puzzling, because there was no direct terrorist threat in the country, South Korea is not a member of multilateral alliance such as NATO, and domestic public was sharply divided on the salient issue of deploying troops abroad.⁷ As the standard materialist incentives (responding to national security concerns, institutionalized processes of security cooperation, and electoral prospects) fail to account for the puzzling behavior of the conservative opposition, I draw on the ideational variable, identity, as well as the logics of habit.⁸

Specifically, I argue that factors such as partisan understandings of the United States and the degree of contestation over such identity understandings explain South Korean political elite behavior. For conservatives, the uncontested understanding of the United States as an indispensable security partner may lead them to unreflectively and automatically take government motions to militarily support U.S. led missions for granted, even if the motions come from a progressive government. Fixated national security understanding precludes not only uncertainty but also partisan impulses, primarily due to the public nature of the political elites' positions. On the other hand, for the progressives, contestation over the identity understanding of the United States maintains uncertainties, forcing them to be more reflective and think in terms of consequences and appropriateness. I turn to the logics of habit,⁹ because habit's taken-for-grantedness offers a plausible explanation to why conservative opposition shows support for the progressive government plans to meet U.S. requests, even if it contradicts their own material interests (political capital, electoral gains, etc.).

⁷ From my readings of parliamentary debates on government motions to send noncombat troops to Iraq in April 2003 and February 2004, the MP understandings on public opinion were the following: 1) 80% of the public is opposed to Iraq War; 2) the public is sharply divided on the issue of deploying noncombat troops to Iraq; 3) some civil society organizations are running campaigns to punish those MPs who vote in favor of government motions at the next general elections scheduled on April 15th 2004; and 4) protests against government plans were being held right outside of National Assembly.

⁸ Rawi Abdelal, Yoshiko Herrera, Alastair Iain Johnston, and Rose McDermott "Identity as a Variable." *Perspectives on Politics* 4, no.4 (2006): 695-711; Hopf, Ted and Bentley B. Allan. ed., *Making Identity Count: Building a National Identity Database*. Oxford University Press. 2016; Kinder, Donald R. and Cindy D. Kam. *Us Against Them: Ethnocentric Foundations of American Opinion*. Chicago University Press. 2010; Hopf, Ted. "The logic of habit in International Relations." *European Journal of International Relations* 16, no.4 (2010): 539-561.

⁹ Hopf, Ted. "The logic of habit in International Relations." *European Journal of International Relations* 16, no.4 (2010): 539-561; Hayes, Jarrod. "Nuclear Disarmament and Stability in the Logic of Habit." *The Nonproliferation Review* 22 (2015): 505-515.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Section II illustrates the observed puzzle. Section III develops the theory and Section IV discusses the research design. Section V presents the empirics and Section VI concludes.

II. The Puzzle

In this section, I present the South Korean political elite stance on government plans to commit noncombat troops to the U.S. led mission in Iraq. I measure political elites' policy preference with MP (Member of Parliament) votes on government motions submitted to National Assembly. In South Korea, government motions on deploying troops abroad need a majority of MP votes to pass. Thus, South Korean political elites are important decision-makers in foreign security policy processes involving troop deployments. The vote choice of each MP present during parliamentary sessions are published and accessible online.¹⁰

As there are multiple parties in South Korea and they frequently change party labels over cycles of general elections, I group conservative parties as “conservatives” and progressive parties as “progressives,” instead of confusing the reader with constantly changing names of Korean political parties. I group all other minority parties, including independents, as “others.” Thus, I report the breakdown of votes by three groups: 1) conservatives, 2) progressives, and 3) others.

For South Korea, there were two phases of deployments of noncombat troops to Iraq. **Table 1** below reports the votes on government motion outlining plans of first deployment in April 2003, which is prior to the passage of relevant UN Security Council resolutions.¹¹ Most conservatives voted yes to the progressive government motion, while there was a split among the progressives. Overall, the executive motion to contribute troops to the U.S. led Iraq War passed by 179:68.

¹⁰ <http://likms.assembly.go.kr/record/mhs-60-010.do>

¹¹ Carney, Stephen A. *Allied Participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom*. Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army. 2012.

Table 1. Breakdown of Votes on Government Motion to Send Army Engineers and Medics to Iraq (Date: April 2nd, 2003)

	Yes	No	Abstain
Conservatives	130	24	5
Progressives	48	43	4
Others	1	1	
Total	179	68	9

Following the U.S. requests to further increase troop contributions, then President Roh Moohyun and his administration planned to send 3,000 additional noncombat troops to Iraq, making ROK contingents the third largest in number, just after the United States and United Kingdom¹². This issue of additional troop deployment was much more salient than the initial deployment to Iraq in April 2003. **Table 2** reports the MP votes on the government motion outlining this second phase of troop deployment. While the conservative opposition almost unanimously voted yes, a sharp divide among the progressives shows up again. This second government motion to deploy additional troops to Iraq passed by 155:50.

Table 2. Breakdown of Votes on Government Motion to Send Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) to Iraq (Date: February 13th, 2004)

	Yes	No	Abstain
Conservatives	115	4	4
Progressives	40	44	2
Others		2	1
Total	155	50	7

Although this issue of additional troop deployment in February 2004 was much more salient than the initial deployment in April 2003, there was a significant change in the international context between the two decision-making points in time. From May-August 2003, then U.S. President, George W. Bush, declared the war over and the UN Security Council adopted two relevant resolutions seeking member nations' contributions to post-war reconstruction efforts in Iraq. Following the adoption of UN resolutions, other countries in the Asia-Pacific, including Japan, New Zealand, and the Philippines, made military contributions to the U.S. led reconstruction efforts in Iraq. Thus, the institutionalized processes of security cooperation may account for the conservative opposition's supportive behavior in February

¹² See "Appendix - Force Contributions by Nations" in Stephen A. Carney, *Allied Participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2012).
http://www.history.army.mil/html/books/059/59-3-1/cmh_59-3-1.pdf

2004. The remainder of this paper will focus on the puzzling behavior of the conservative opposition in early 2003.

III. Partisan Understandings of the United States and Logics of Habit

I argue that the content and contestation over the identity understanding of United States best explain the puzzling behavior of conservative opposition. The South Korean state is officially in armistice with the North, which has not ceased to threaten South Korea both verbally and physically since the end of the Korean War. Following the approval and enactment of the mutual defense treaty with the United States in 1953, upholding the alliance with the United States has become the dominant national security strategy of the South Korean state. Given such recent historical path of the South Korean state, identifying North Korea as primary enemy and United States as indispensable security partner are related understandings of significant others in the international system. Such understandings of significant others cause the South Korean state to mistrust and heighten security against North Korea, while cooperating with the United States in security affairs.

For the South Korean political elites, there is a difference in the degree of contestation over these identity understandings across political parties. While the conservatives hold uncontested understanding of the United States as an indispensable security partner, the progressives hold multiple views of the United States. Although some progressives share the view of the United States as an indispensable security partner, others view North Korea, and not the United States, as the primary security partner for ensuring peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula. In fact, some progressives argue that ROK should reestablish relations with the United States, because the current relations harm ROK's autonomy and independence.

One might wonder why political parties within a single country hold different understandings of significant others in the international system. Here, I presume that different number of understandings by political parties stem from recent historical experiences. By recent historical experiences, I do not mean powerful exogenous events,¹³ as these physical shocks need

¹³ Hopf, Ted. "The logic of habit in International Relations." *European Journal of International Relations* 16, no.4 (2010): 543-544; Levy, Jack S. "Learning and foreign policy: sweeping a conceptual minefield." *International Organization* 48, no.2 (1994): 279-312; Legro, Jeffrey W. "The Transformation of Policy Ideas." *American Journal of Political Science* 44, no.3 (2000): 419-432.

also be interpreted and comprehended. Instead, I speculate that leaders' identity *discourses* matter; specifically, presidential statements, explanations, and communication of his/her foreign policy views and goals can either perpetuate the status quo or produce a new, competing identity discourse, and such presidential effects may depend on the party affiliation of the president. If a conservative president offers a new identity discourse, then the conservative party will have divergent identity discourses, while the number of identity discourses among the progressives may not change. Such different effects may hold, because one tends to follow one's own leader and accept the leader's views, while one refuses to follow another's leader and dismisses another's leader's views.

Indeed, conservative presidents of South Korea have described and treated North Korea as primary enemy and United States as indispensable security partner. Such conservative presidents' adherence to predominant understandings of North Korea and United States could have contributed to the perpetuation of conservative understandings of North Korea and United States. On the other hand, past progressive President Kim Daejung offered a new, viable discourse on the identity of North Korea. According to Kim, following the fall of the Berlin Wall, collapse of USSR, and end of the Cold War, North Korea should not be regarded as primary enemy of South Korea but rather as a partner, deserving of peaceful coexistence and cooperation.¹⁴ Hence, the profound effect of Kim Daejung's Sunshine Policy discourses may be the conception of a new, viable identity discourses on North Korea and United States, chiefly among the progressives.

In contrast, Kim Daejung's novel identity discourse could have worked to only reinforce the conservatives' traditional understandings of North Korea and United States. I deduce that different degrees of contestation over understandings of significant others in the international system lead to different logics of choice. Because the absence of contestation produces certainty, conservatives may automatically and unreflectively support cooperation with the United States, even if such policy may contradict their material interests (e.g. higher security and domestic political costs). Conservatives may not even imagine not cooperating with the United States. Thus, the logic of habit may play out only in the absence of multiple, competing views.

¹⁴ Levin, Norman D. and Yong-Sup Han. *Sunshine in Korea: The South Korean Debate over Policies Toward North Korea*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2002.

On the other hand, various views of significant others may produce confusion, uncertainty, and contestation. Under confusion and uncertainty, progressives cannot take identity understandings of North Korea and United States as granted; instead of playing out habituated responses, they are forced to consciously reflect and evaluate competing views, claims, and policy choices. As progressives engage in active deliberation, other logics of consequences and appropriateness may take over. During conscious deliberation, progressives may reflect not only upon the validity and efficacy of their foreign policy preferences but also on other domestic political costs and benefits. This may be why consideration of public opinion and electoral prospects matter more for the progressives than for conservatives. In this sense, the logic of habit may be inapplicable when there is contestation over understanding the identities of significant others within a political party. I derive the following set of testable hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a.

If conservatives share a dominant view of United States as primary security partner, then even as opposition, they will take cooperation with the United States as granted and unreflectively support government motions to contribute troops to US led missions.

Hypothesis 1b.

If progressives have contested views of United States, then as opposition, they will engage in active deliberation over government motions to contribute troops to U.S. led missions.

IV. Research Design

To test my hypotheses 1a and 1b, I conduct research in two steps. First, I examine how conservative parties and progressive parties actually understand the United States. Although I conjecture that conservatives view United States as indispensable security partner while such understandings are contested among progressives, I have not only imposed the content of the identity understanding of the United States but also pre-theorized the degree of contestation over such understanding across political parties. In order to inductively recover the content and contestation over understandings of the United States, I will conduct discourse analysis as outlined in “Chapter 2: Recovering Discourses of National Identity” of *Making Identity Count*.

The authors' guidelines make relatively subjective discourse analysis more reliable, replicable, and falsifiable, by introducing transparent principles of text sampling, quantitative counting procedures, and standardized presentation of evidence¹⁵.

Although the authors sample documents that reflect both elite and mass discourses, I will not sample texts that reflect mass discourses because my hypotheses concern identity understandings on the elite, and specifically political elite, level. Essentially, I will try to overhear discussions on how to understand North Korea and United States in the context of everyday parliamentary life; this means that I will not be looking at statements made for Korean War memorial days, Independence day, etc., because these texts may contain explicit discussions of the identities of significant others. As well, in order to avoid the traps of tautology, I will sample texts from the period prior to the round of votes in April 2003. Below is the list of sample texts that I plan to collect:

1. **Party Leadership Speeches**

- Sample conservative & progressive party leadership speeches on United States (1988, 1997, 2002)

2. **MP Statements during Question Sessions**

- Sample conservative & progressive MP statements on United States (1988, 1997, 2002)

I look at three different periods: 1988, 1997, and 2002. The first period, year 1988, is the year right after the first free presidential elections in Korea in December 1987. The second period under examination, year 1997, is the year before past progressive President Kim Daejung (1998-2003) came into office. Finally, the third period, year 2002, is the year just before the decision was made in April 2003.

Once I inductively recover the content and degree of contestation over understandings of the United States across political parties, I proceed to the second step, which is to observe different logics of choice across political parties. To do this, I code the rationale for each MP's policy preference on the government motion to send noncombat troops to Iraq in April 2003. When logics of habit play out, consideration of other factors, and consciousness in general, are absent, and so conservatives are likely to have one straightforward, ready-made response, while progressives would consider multiple reasons and options. Thus, I expect to see a single peak in

¹⁵ Hopf, Ted and Bentley B. Allan. ed., *Making Identity Count: Building a National Identity Database*. Oxford University Press. 2016. p.31.

conservatives' reasons behind their policy preferences, while I expect to see a wider spread of reasons for the progressives.

V. Findings

In this section, I first present the final versions of the topographical tables, which cluster the identity categories of the United States and show the valence attached to each identity category across political parties. The number of valence signs mean *frequency* of the particular identity category. **Table 3** shows the topographical table for the first period. In 1988, which is the year right after the first free presidential elections in ROK, both conservative and progressive leaders view United States as a traditional ally of ROK. The discourse on traditional ally is more frequent in conservative leaders' texts than in progressive leaders' texts. Conservative MPs share this view of the United States as a traditional ally, whereas progressive MPs do not talk about United States in such terms. There is bipartisan disapproval of United States' cultural stereotypes of Korea. However, while conservative MPs view anti-Americanism as a negative phenomenon, progressive leader views it neutrally.

With regards to bilateral relations between ROK and United States, the conservatives – both leadership and MPs – favor closer relations with the United States, while progressive leader states that hostility with the U.S. is harmful for national interest. In other words, the conservatives state it in the positive, while progressive leadership states it in the negative. Unlike the conservatives, the progressives – both leadership and MPs – emphasize on the need to reestablish autonomy and equality. Finally, the conservatives say that US military presence has a deterrence effect and that US military should continue to stay in South Korea until the threats from North Korea are eliminated, while progressive MPs are ambiguous about the effects/prospects of US military presence. Progressive MPs also worry that too much of joint military exercises may work to harm inter-Korean relations. Overall, although the frequencies and valence attached to identity categories may differ across political parties, there is bipartisan understanding of the United States as traditional ally and that bilateral relations should be maintained.

Table 3. 1988 Topographical Table

	Conservative Leader	Conservative MPs	Progressive Leader	Progressive MPs
Country				
Traditional ally	+++++	++++	++	
Anti-Americanism		-----	//	
Cultural stereotypes/misunderstandings	--	-		---
Bilateral Relations				
Closer relations	+++++	+++		
Should not be hostile			-----	
Need to reestablish autonomy/equality		+	++++	+++++
Security Related				
US military has deterrence effect	++			
US military should continue to stay	++++	+		~ ~ ~
Joint exercises harm inter-Korean relations				-----

Similarly, **Table 4** shows the topographical table for the second period. In 1997, a year before then President elect, Kim Daejung assumed office, there was a general decrease in parliamentary discussions on the United States because of the Asian Financial Crisis. Nonetheless, both the conservative and progressive leaders agreed that closer security relations with the United States was desirable.

Table 4. 1997 Topographical Table

	Conservative Leader	Conservative MPs	Progressive Leader	Progressive MPs
Country				
Advanced free market economy		+	+++++	
Cooperation needed to overcome "IMF"				+++
Economic pressures	--			
Security Related				
Combined forces is key to our security	++			
Closer security relations	++++		+++++	
Closer cooperation for "peace"			+++++	

Finally, **Table 5** shows the topographical table for 2002, which is the year prior to MP votes on the government motion to send troops to Iraq in early 2003. It is also the final year of Kim Daejung’s presidency. There are remarkable similarities from the past as well as stark differences. To begin with similarities, the conservatives – both leadership and MPs – view anti-Americanism as a negative phenomenon, whereas the progressives – both leadership and MPs – take a neutral stance towards anti-American sentiments in ROK. Both conservative and progressive leaders disapprove and worry over the anti-Korean sentiments in the United States; this is similar to the bipartisan disapproval of the United States’ cultural stereotypes of Korea in 1988. As well, both conservative and progressive MPs disapprove of George W. Bush’s Axis of Evil speech as it designated DPRK as evil, thereby elevating tensions in the Korean Peninsula. As before, the conservative leadership believes that the U.S. military presence in ROK has a deterrence effect and that the U.S. military should continue to stay in South Korea.

However, for the first time, progressive MPs do not view the United States as a favorable traditional ally. No positive attitudes were detected and instead, there were neutral and negative opinions on the alliance relations. Moreover, for the first time, progressive MPs argued against closer alliance relations with the United States. This is a significant difference even within the progressive camp because the progressives had always valued the alliance relations with the United States, albeit in negative consequences terms. The topographical table in 2002 indicates a diverging identity discourse among the progressives. On the other hand, no divergence or contestation over identity understanding of the United States is detected within the conservative texts in 2002.

Table 5. 2002 Topographical Table

	Conservative Leader	Conservative MPs	Progressive Leader	Progressive MPs
<i>Country</i>				
Traditional ally	+	+;/		/;-
Anti-Americanism	-	-	//	/
Anti-Korean sentiments in the U.S.	-----		---	
Bush's Axis of Evil Speech		-----		--
<i>Security Related</i>				
US military has deterrence effect	+++			
US military withdrawal issue	-----			
Closer alliance relations				+;~;-

From discourse analysis on speeches and statements made by political elites, I find that there is a single, predominant identity discourse on the United States among the conservatives throughout the 1988-2002 period. In contrast, diverging identity discourses on the United States have emerged among the progressives by 2002.

Next, I present the results of coding MP rationales for their policy preferences on the progressive government motion to deploy noncombat troops to the U.S. led Iraq War in April 2003. In **Table 6**, the most frequent rationale for the conservatives is that cooperation with the US is critical for national security. The count for this reason is a predominant one; 11 of 17 rationales point to such reasoning. Such dominant reasoning indicates a straightforward, unreflective, ready-made response to the issue. In contrast, there are more evenly spread frequencies in the progressive MPs' reasons for support. Although some progressives emphasize on the importance of cooperating with the United States, there are other reasons for support, such as duties of a friend, reciprocating to U.S. participation in the Korean War, and interests in the post-war reconstruction economic opportunities, among the progressives' rationales for support. It is quite remarkable to see that the emphasis on cooperation with the United States is a dominant reason among the conservatives, while it is one of the many, evenly frequent reasons for support among the progressives.

Table 6. Political Elites' Reasons for Support and Opposition to Government Motion 2003

Conservative Reasons for Support	Count	Conservative Reasons for Opposition	Count
Cooperation with US is critical	11	Humanitarian concerns	5
Friends should help out	3	Greed for Iraq oil	4
Dangers of WMD	1	Illegal war	3
Interests in post-war reconstruction	1	Cannot solve North Korean nuclear issue	3
Not an illegal war	1	Real friends should stop US	2
Progressive Reasons for Support	Count	Progressive Reasons for Opposition	Count
Friends should help out	4	Illegal war	16
Reciprocate (US Fought in Korean War)	4	Against South Korea's constitution	11
Cooperation with US is critical	3	North Korea will be next (boomerang effect)	10
Interests in post-war reconstruction	2	Unethical war (greed for Iraq oil)	9
Humanitarian aid	1	Public/International Opposition	8

To check if conservatives, in general, have straightforward, uncompromising, ready-made responses, I code and count for MP rationales for opposition to the government motion in April 2003. Here, the conservatives' reasons for opposition are more evenly spread out. The small number of conservative MPs who were opposed to the motion not only voiced their humanitarian, moral, and legal concerns but also spoke in terms of consequences and normative appropriateness. As well, the rationales of progressive MPs opposed to the government motion were fairly widely distributed. The progressives' rationales ranged from legality of war, boomerang effect (e.g. DPRK will be the next target of strike), to public/international opposition to war.

In sum, from my readings of the debates, I find different degrees of consciousness not only across political parties but within the conservative MPs. Those in support of the progressive government motion were giving a ready-made response to the issue, while those conservatives who opposed the motion to support the U.S. led mission in Iraq show signs of consciousness. Such piece of empirical finding suggests that internalization or habituation logics – and not conservative ideology or worldview – are the driving forces of the conservative opposition's puzzling behavior in 2003.

VI. Conclusion

Confirmation of my hypotheses implies that there are scope conditions for the application of logics of habit in international relations. Unreflective, automatic responses play out only in the absence of divergent views. When dominant views are challenged, confusion, uncertainty, and competition may force actors to consciously reflect and evaluate their own views against other rivaling views.

Confirmation of my hypotheses also has policy significance. The current counterterrorism campaign is evolving into a “long war,”¹⁶ but the United States has led other campaigns in the past (e.g. anti-communism, humanitarian intervention, etc.) and is expected to lead various grand strategic initiatives in the future.¹⁷ As these efforts require multiple “lines of

¹⁶ http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/24/opinion/sunday/the-long-war-on-terror.html?_r=0

¹⁷ Walt, Stephen M. “Alliances in a Unipolar World.” *World Politics* 61, no.1 (2009): 86-120.

effort,”¹⁸ from combat operations, capacity building, training, to addressing underlying causes, the participation and contribution of foreign governments increase both political capital and material capabilities. Hence, it is helpful to understand why and when foreign governments are virtually buffered from domestic politics and are thus capable of supporting U.S. efforts into the future. Foreign governments can also understand why and when they are prompted not only by the United States but also by their own domestic political elites to provide support for U.S. led missions.

ROK committed troops to the U.S. led Iraq War in early 2003, because the conservative opposition was the majority party in National Assembly, and they habitually vote in favor of government plans to meet U.S. requests. In the case of South Korea, one can predict consistent and reliable contributions to U.S. led military campaigns, when conservatives hold the majority in National Assembly. Even when the progressives hold the majority, however, as long as there is a split in their identity understanding of the United States, half of the progressives coupled with habitual conservative support may still result in ROK’s participation in and military contributions to U.S. led missions in the near future.

¹⁸ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/12/234627.htm>
<https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R44135.pdf>

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