

Original Article

Challenges of Korea's Aid Framework for Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations (FCAS): A Comparative Analysis with the UK

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Abstract

This study aims to assess the effectiveness of South Korea's Official Development Assistance (ODA) policy in addressing Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations (FCAS). It offers policy recommendations for enhancing Korea's FCAS-related initiatives through a comparative analysis with the UK, a leading donor. Previous research on South Korea's engagement in FCAS contexts has primarily offered descriptive insights into the allocation of aid and support systems for major donors, without conducting in-depth comparisons based on specific criteria.

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In contrast, this study presents a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the distinct approaches taken by South Korea and the UK, utilizing clearly defined comparative criteria. Drawing on government documents and international publications, the study analyzes both countries' aid strategies within the framework of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, examining their aid systems, policies, and implementation strategies. This comparison seeks to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of resource use in FCAS. The study also notes some key findings with significant policy implications for advancing South Korea's FCAS aid. These include the need for flexible financing mechanisms, a development system tailored to FCAS environments, enhanced human resource capabilities, and innovative approaches that respond to the rapidly evolving dynamics of conflict environments.

Key words: South Korea, Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations (FCAS), Official Development Assistance (ODA), Conflict Management

I. INTRODUCTION

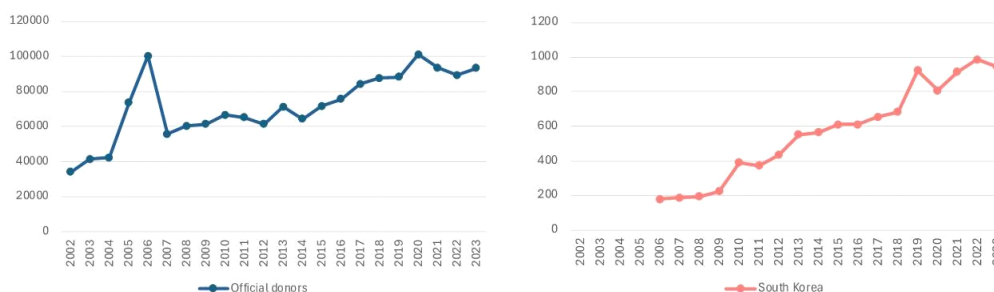
The importance of Official Development Assistance (ODA) directed towards Fragile and Conflict-affected Situations (FCAS) has been increasing globally. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), ODA provided by official donors to FCAS reached a new peak of 101.02 billion dollars in 2020, exceeding the prior peak of 100.19 billion dollars in 2005. Similarly, South Korea has also expanded its ODA commitments to FCAS, achieving its highest level of 987.46 million dollars in 2022. In the Korean government's 2024 budget proposal, funding for support programs for FCAS increased by 266% compared with the previous year. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) has justified this increase, presenting it as a response to the international community's call for more flexible and rapid intervention mechanisms. However, nearly half of the FCAS programs implemented in 2021 and 2022 were deemed to be underperforming by 2023. Moreover, the application of the two-year project feasibility process designed for conventional ODA projects highlights key deficiencies in Korea's FCAS ODA strategy, given the acknowledged need for differentiated approaches in FCAS (Special Committee on Budget and Accounts, 2023). This study aims to improve the aid effectiveness of Korea by analyzing the current status and challenges of South Korea's FCAS ODA policy and providing policy implications for its FCAS-related initiatives through a comparative analysis with the case of the UK, a key donor country.

Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and recent global shocks and crises, worldwide poverty and inequality rates have increased, and progress toward poverty eradication is anticipated to undermine achievements made over the last three decades (OECD, 2024). These challenges to global peace and security arise from shifting conflict dynamics, persistent violence beyond conventional conflict environments, the militarization of emerging technologies, growing socioeconomic disparities, restricted civic freedoms, and the urgent climate crisis (UN, 2023). The prevailing international economic and social conditions—with the changing nature of armed conflict and the increasing complexity of conflict environments—have made conflict resolution more difficult (UN, 2023), underscoring the urgent need to expand support for FCAS.

Amid the evolving global dynamics surrounding FCAS, it is imperative for donor actors—including South Korea—to prioritize high accountability in their commitments to aid FCAS, with a focus on ensuring aid effectiveness (Figure 1). For improved and effective engagement, donor actors need to reconceptualize their functions and roles in this context and collaborate with a diverse range of stakeholders from multiple levels of government. Expanding their focus beyond the central executive may foster inclusiveness and leverage the expertise of skilled and experienced actors to implement innovative approaches to FCAS (OECD, 2011). In this context, this study aims to improve the aid effectiveness of South Korea by analyzing the status and challenges of South Korea’s FCAS ODA policy and providing policy implications for its FCAS-related initiatives through a comparative analysis with the case of the UK.

This study selects the UK as the target, given that the country is recognized as a key donor actor in FCAS based on the following background factors. As noted in the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) peer review report, the UK has a well-established conflict risk analysis system and responds comprehensively to crises by committing to providing essential humanitarian assistance even to the states in which it is deemed necessary but which are excluded from ODA-eligible countries according to their own and their partners’ assessments (OECD, 2020). The UK government’s strategies to support FCAS serve as adequate examples of direction on approaching assistance related to the universal goals of international develop-

〈Figure 1〉 ODA flows to FCAS by official donors and South Korea



Source: OECD CRS database (2025) (Assessed February 18, 2025).

Note: 1) Official donors are identified by OECD and include 31 DAC and 19 non-DAC countries and 6 multilateral organizations.

2) ODA, Official Development Assistance; FCAS, Fragile and Conflict-affected Situations; DAC, Development Assistance Committee.

ment cooperation. Regarding the Humanitarian–Development–Peace (HDP) nexus—which provides directions for increasing aid effectiveness in FCAS—the UK serves as a leader in implementing the nexus as recommended by the DAC (Dalrymple, 2019; OECD, 2020).

Most existing studies on South Korea’s FCAS aid have focused on case studies that provide descriptive insights into the aid systems of major donors instead of focusing on a direct comparison based on specific criteria. This study provides additional value by surpassing the scope of earlier studies. It aims to offer a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the distinctive approaches of South Korea and the UK to FCAS through clearly defined comparative criteria. Drawing on government documents and international organization publications, this study compares South Korea’s and the UK’s approaches to FCAS aid in the context of the HDP nexus and aid systems, strategies, and policies. It identifies lessons for South Korea based on more advanced practices in the UK.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The second section provides a brief overview of the FCAS aid and the HDP nexus, which aims to enhance aid effectiveness through the OECD DAC framework. The third section examines the two donor countries’ FCAS aid by comparing their approaches to FCAS in the context of the HDP nexus, aid systems, strategies, and policies. The fourth section concludes with a summary and key implications for South Korea’s FCAS aid.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations Definition

Support for the FCAS differs significantly from that of other low- and middle-income countries because of their inherent heterogeneity in the progress of reform initiatives. FCAS are often impeded by persistent challenges, including limited administrative capabilities, difficulties in ensuring security and the rule of law, insufficient disaster-response systems, inadequate infrastructure and public services, and deeply rooted social polarization (IMF, 2022). Given these considerations, support for FCAS requires aid strategies that are distinct from those applied to other developing countries. Donor countries must design policies that consider the

unique political, social, and domestic dynamics of each FCAS.

Although a universal definition and standardized list of FCAS do not exist (IMF, 2022), various donor countries and international organizations have developed their own definitions. These definitions often highlight unstable governance and a limited capacity to respond to crises. The OECD definition, which underscores the dimensions of legitimacy, welfare, and security, serves as the basis for this study. The OECD identifies FCAS as those with institutional fragility, an inability to deliver equitable development, and frequent exposure to crises, conflicts, or disasters (OECD, 2015).

South Korea's 2017 Fragile State Assistance Strategy defines the fragile state concerning international organisations and other countries, such as OECD, World Bank, and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), as where it is difficult to implement the essential state functions since a corrupted or poorly established system for protecting the citizens' safety and human rights from disputes, disasters, poverty, and other issues. The Strategy features the fragile states mainly in four aspects: continuing chronic fragile status due to weakened resilience of the states and deteriorated fragile, poverty, and crises impeding development; presenting poor performance to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and eradicate poverty compared to other developing countries; presenting high poverty rate with rapid growth; and accelerating the vicious cycle between fragility, poverty, and crisis due to the shock from that the worse the poverty, the weaker the ability to respond to disputes or disasters (MOEF & MOFA, 2017).

2. The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus for Effective Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations Aid

In response to the challenges posed by conflict and natural disasters in these regions, the international community emphasizes the importance of the HDP nexus—also acknowledged as the triple nexus—to contribute to the efficient recovery and improvement of FCAS (Kim et al., 2020) consisting of three pillars: coordination, programming, and financing. It is a framework of principles that serves as an essential foundation for DAC and non-DAC members with the aim of providing a comprehensive framework designed to promote and facilitate greater collabora-

ration and complementarity among humanitarian, development, and peace initiatives within FCAS, endeavoring to strengthen coordination, programming, and financing for the OECD DAC to better address risks and vulnerabilities. Implementing the HDP nexus can enhance FCAS aid effectiveness and enable these regions to manage existing risks and future challenges by strengthening resilience and capacity (Kwon et al., 2020) (<Table 1>).

The Report on the Implementation of the DAC Recommendation on the HDP nexus—published five years after the HDP nexus—was adopted details achievements and prevailing challenges to adopting the HDP nexus. It offers crucial insights, emphasizing the need for organizational reforms during planning to shift from an or-

<Table 1> Policy recommendations of the DAC on HDP nexus

No.	Pillars for implementation of HDP Nexus		
	Coordination	Programming	Financing
1	Undertake joint risk-informed, gender-sensitive analysis of the root causes and structural drivers of conflict, as well as positive factors of resilience and collective outcomes incorporating HDP action.	Prioritize prevention, mediation and peacebuilding, investing in development whenever possible, while ensuring immediate humanitarian needs are met.	Develop evidence-based HDP financing strategies at multiple levels, with effective layering and sequencing of the most appropriate financing flows.
2	Provide appropriate resources to empower leadership for cost-effective co-ordination across the HDP architecture.	Put people at the center, tackling exclusion and promoting gender equality.	Use predictable, flexible, multi-year financing whenever possible.
3	Utilize political engagement and other tools, instruments and approaches at all levels to prevent crises, resolve conflicts and build peace.	Ensure that activities do no harm, are conflict-sensitive to avoid unintended negative consequences and maximize positive effects across HDP actions.	
4		Align joined-up programming with the risk environment.	
5		Strengthen national and local capacities.	
6		Invest in learning and evidence across HDP actions.	

Source: OECD (2019).

Note: DAC, Development Assistance Committee; HDP, Humanitarian-Development-Peace.

ganization-centered model to a collaborative, integrated system that aligns with national development and response plans. A lack of political will, under-prioritization of peace initiatives, and limited commitment to the HDP nexus are significant obstacles to the focused pursuit of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Additionally, insufficient human resources, expertise, and funding hinder effective coordination and conflict-sensitive implementation. Donor priorities focus on immediate crisis responses, neglecting preventive actions and institutional stability. Owing to the challenges in evaluating their impact on conflict prevention and sustainable development, peacebuilding and prevention efforts are often considered less significant. Rigid financing mechanisms and political considerations restrict aid effectiveness and limit ODA for peacebuilding, affecting timely responses to conflicts. Fragility-focused analyses, including conflict sensitivity monitoring, often lack flexibility and adaptability, limiting their effectiveness in risk management.

This study examines the divergent approaches of South Korea and the UK—recognized for its advanced application of the HDP nexus—in delivering ODA to FCAS. The purpose is to identify key determinants of FCAS aid and to offer policy recommendations for strengthening South Korea’s support framework. The comparative analysis is organized around three core dependent variables—contribution to the HDP nexus, FCAS aid policies, and FCAS aid systems. These are assessed in relation to independent variables encompassing each country’s governance structures, institutional arrangements, and policy frameworks. The independent variables are further evaluated through indicators aligned with the three pillars of the HDP nexus implementation—coordination, programming, and financing (⟨Figure 2⟩).

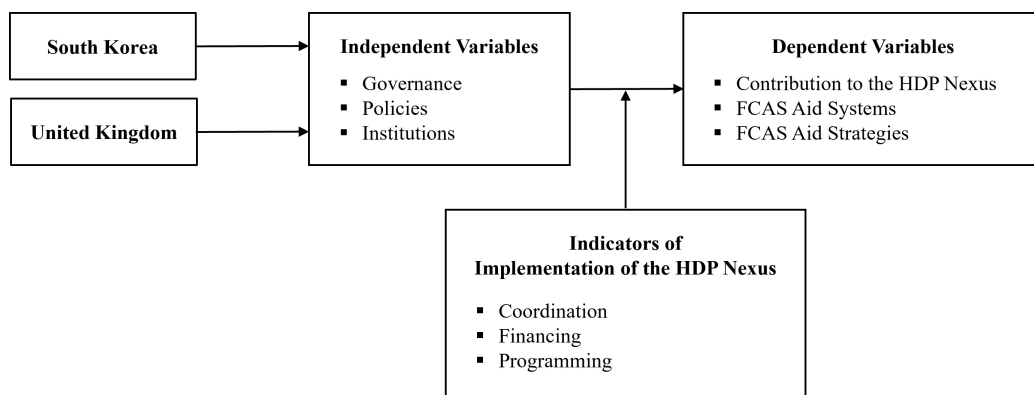
By comparing these dimensions, this study aims to reveal structural, operational, and strategic gaps between the two countries and to propose policy improvements for South Korea that correspond to globally recognized principles for effective support in FCAS.

III. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SOUTH KOREA AND THE UK

1. Contributions to the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus

The UK is regarded as a leader in the HDP nexus because of its innovative and

〈Figure 2〉 Comparative analysis framework



Note: HDP, Humanitarian–Development–Peace; FCAS, Fragile and Conflict–Affected Situations.

context-specific programs tailored to the needs of each country and its active role in driving policy discussions on the nexus (Dalrymple, 2019). The Department for International Development (DFID)¹⁾, which oversees most aspects of the UK’s international development agenda, allocates country budgets but does not distinguish between humanitarian assistance and international development budgets. This system implies that teams of country programs can hold country-level flexibility by planning the blending of short-term emergency responses and longer-term or structural programs as the situation evolves (OECD, 2020).

The Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF)²⁾, which serves as a cross-government fund established to support developing countries in crisis or at risk of instability, has advanced projects with flexibility and predictability, and by managing the funds through diverse channels including multilateral donors and NGOs, they have contributed to the implementation of the HDP nexus (Dalrymple, 2019; Kim et al., 2020). The Fund has reached milestones in four divisions—conflict and instability, state threats, transnational threats, and women, peace and security—and has been programmed to center around four major principles—integration through the utilization of expertise from various government departments and agencies,

1) The Department for International Development (DFID) merged with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), a ministerial department from October 1968 to September 2020, and has since been replaced by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).

2) The CSSF currently merges with other funds to establish the Integrated Security Fund with the aim of creating expanded coherence between the UK’s international and domestic work to address national security challenges.

catalyzing further activities by coordinating smaller-scale activities with a view to scaling up, thereby establishing the foundation and evidence base for longer-term programs, tolerating significant risk by allowing CSSF programs to operate in unstable or uncertain conditions, and adopting an agile approach that is responsive to evolving circumstances (UK Government, 2022, 2024; UK Parliament, 2023).

In this context of a flexible and predictable financing framework, the UK's interventions in Somalia have been regarded as significant in promoting conflict reduction and facilitating state-building initiatives. The UK initiated a comprehensive government effort to establish the Somalia Stability Fund, which was instrumental in addressing major challenges in the country. The Fund supported the establishment of new federal states and helped them become viable governments by facilitating political and developmental progress (UK Government, 2015a). Beyond merely focusing on the crises, the UK has attempted to solve the various problems derived from these crises. In response to the conflicts in Syria and Iraq, the UK government allocated over £1.1 billion to assist the victims of these crises and strengthen conflict resilience not only within the affected states but also in the surrounding regions, including neighboring countries (UK Government, 2015a). Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the UK government restructured its existing CSSF programs in Ukraine to address the outbreak and allocated £20 million to the Partnership Fund for a Resilient Ukraine—a UK-led and multi-donor stabilization mechanism designed to enhance Ukraine's capacity against Russia's aggressive hybrid tactics (UK Government, 2024). The CSSF has significant implications as the UK belongs to the small number of DAC members that possess such a blended instrument on peace and stability and the integration of ODA and non-ODA resources, giving much flexibility to its involvement in the context of FCAS (OECD, 2020).

South Korea articulates the pursuit of the HDP nexus by providing a comprehensive implementation plan through a strategy established in 2019, known as the *Amended Humanitarian Aid Strategy of the Korean Government*. The Korean government highlights the need to address the fundamental factors of the humanitarian crisis beyond merely focusing on mitigating the current visible issues and enhancing the effectiveness of aid. South Korea has sought to address widespread violence and has focused on enhancing conflict-resolution mechanisms, reinforc-

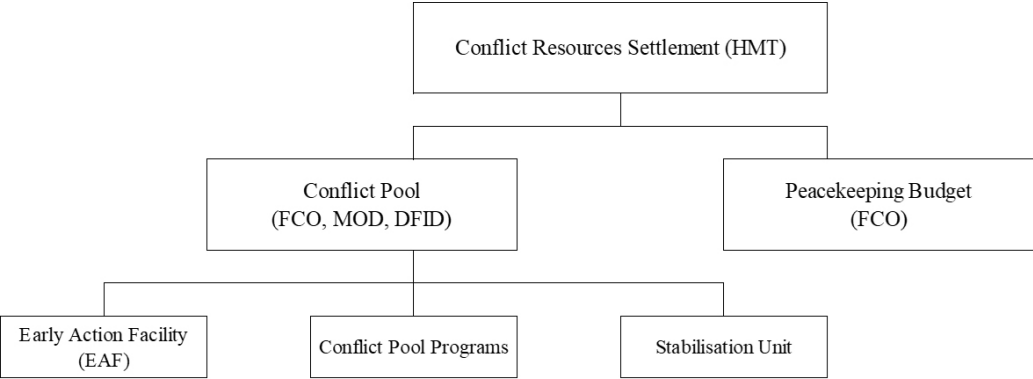
ing institutional frameworks, and fostering greater social integration through interdependence among local communities (Kim, 2023). In addition, the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) initiated new programs to support over 20 FCAS in response to the significantly expanded funding scale of FCAS assistance in 2024 (KOICA, 2024). To address issues related to conflict and vulnerability, the agency has attempted to leverage the comparative advantages and expertise of international organizations by establishing partnerships with eight such organizations (KOICA, 2024). While existing KOICA programs for FCAS have operated as short-term and stand-alone projects, making it difficult to fundamentally prevent and resolve structural conflicts and vulnerabilities, these new programs aim to implement long-term support initiatives over ten-year periods, targeting regional units rather than individual countries, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of responses to transnational crises (KOICA, 2024).

2. Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations Aid Systems

The UK has operated the Conflict Pool—the predecessor to the CSSF—since 2009 as a primary system for supporting and responding to FCAS (〈Figure 3〉). The Conflict Pool was managed by three government departments—the DFID, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), and the Ministry of Defense (MOD)—and other departments engaged in collaborative analyses. By adopting an integrated approach to diplomacy, development, and defense, these three departments have enabled them to leverage their unique skills and perspectives in practical ways beyond simple policy alignment and strategic agreements (UK Government, 2013). The governance structure of the Conflict Pool facilitates the integration of the government’s approach.

The Conflict Pool funded initial-stage interventions, technical assistance aimed at short-term recovery efforts in the aftermath of instability, initiatives designed to foster stability during elections and politically sensitive activities, the promotion of inclusivity through civil society organizations, and support toward peace negotiations or political processes (UK Government, 2015b). The Conflict Pool provided the comparative advantages of flexibility and speed with a blend of ODA and non-ODA resources, being used in a wide range of situations such as rapid re-

〈Figure 3〉 UK’s conflict pool financing under the conflict resources settlement



Source: UK Government (2013).
Note: HMT, HM Treasury; FCO, Foreign and Commonwealth Office; MOD, Ministry of Defense; DFID, Department for International Development.

spense, and scope for innovation and risk-taking (UK Government, 2013). The UK government established the Conflict Pool based on government strategies—the 2011 National Security Strategy, the 2010 Strategic Defense and Security Review, and the 2011 Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS) (UK Government, 2015b). Each type of governance functions according to its specific strategic framework (〈Figure 4〉).

The National Security Council (NSC) has been responsible for overseeing the

〈Figure 4〉 UK’s conflict pool governance and strategic framework

Strategic Framework				Governance	
National Security Strategy				National Security Council (NSC)	
Building Stability Oversea Strategy				Building Stability Overseas Board (BSOS)	
Conflict Pool Strategy				Conflict Pool Secretariat	

Conflict Pool Programs					
Regional Program					Thematic program
Afghanistan	Africa	Middle East and North Africa	South Asia	Wider Europe	Strengthening Alliances and Partnerships (SAP)

Individual Program Boards					
Afghanistan	Africa	Middle East and North Africa	South Asia	Wider Europe	SAP Program Board

Source: UK Government (2013).

policy and management of the Conflict Pool aligned with the National Security Strategy and has played a role in approving the allocation of its resources and providing collective strategic leadership for national security and crisis situations (UK Government, 2015a). The Building Stability Overseas Board (BSOB), comprising director-level representatives of the three departments—DFID, FCO, and MOD—has been instrumental in implementing the conflict prevention initiatives outlined in the BSOS with the charge of recommending Conflict Pool allocations to the NSC. The Conflict Pool Secretariat plays a crucial role in assisting the BSOB by providing central policy development, financial oversight, administrative management, and communication responsibilities. To manage the impact of conflicts, the UK government has developed regional programs specific to Afghanistan, Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, and Wider Europe (UK Government, 2013). Each Conflict Pool program was organized in different ways, according to what worked best in each area, and was overseen by a tri-departmental program board that consisted of program managers and members in charge of the program and its budget management with significant flexibility to manage their resources (UK Government, 2013).

The Conflict Pool was replaced by the CSSF in 2015. The CSSF has a larger budget than the formal Conflict Pool through multiple departments that bid for funds (UK Government, 2015c). Under the NSC's direction, it has been invested in by twelve governmental departments and agencies, expanding the potential for managing the biggest threats to its security in an integrated manner (UK Government, 2024).

Korea's ODA system is controlled by its Prime Minister. Plans, strategies, policies, and other major matters of ODA are deliberated upon and established by the Committee for International Development Cooperation (CIDC), which consists of up to 30 members, including heads of central administrative agencies and other related agencies (MOFA, 2024a) (<Figure 5>). The International Development Cooperation Headquarters, acting as the administrative organization for the CIDC, is responsible for the designation and management of priority countries and oversees the formulation and coordination of strategies (ODA Korea, 2024). The Headquarters plays a central role in the overall management, coordination, and evaluation of ODA efforts. The Ministry of Economy and Finance (MOEF) and MOFA, which act as supervising agencies, prepare a comprehensive im-

〈Figure 5〉 South Korea's ODA organizational structure



Source: ODA Korea (2023).
Note: ODA, Official Development Assistance; KEXIM, The Export–Import Bank of Korea; KOICA, Korea International Cooperation Agency.

plementation plan for international development cooperation and midterm assistance strategy for priority countries (MOFA, 2020).

After the MOFA determines the provision of assistance, type of relief, scale, and content, the KOICA performs its activities (MOFA, 2024b) to deliver humanitarian assistance to states in crisis through four methods: financial support, delivery of relief items, relief team deployment, and the Humanitarian Partnership Program (KOICA, 2022). The government helps these states by arranging and deploying the Korea Disaster Relief Team (KDRT)—a relief team of experts and experienced personnel in several relevant fields trained for preparedness activities and dispatched to crisis locations to mitigate and recover damage and rescue lives (KOICA, 2022). The KDRT is the official governmental overseas emergency relief team comprising three secondary groups—the rescue, secretariat, and medical groups. Multiple organizations and governmental agencies in South Korea have joined its deployment. When large-scale overseas disasters occur, the MOFA may mobilize the Private–Public Joint Council for Overseas Emergency Relief, which

aims to provide emergency support to affected countries at the governmental level. The council determines the methods of cooperation and decides whether to provide overseas emergency relief and the details, scale, and basic measures of relief (MOFA, 2024b). As the head of the council, the MOFA holds the power to take necessary measures to promptly execute resolutions until relief activities are completed.

3. Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations Aid Strategies

With the *Conflict Pool Strategic Guidance* in 2013, the UK presents distinctive approaches towards FCAS by the Conflict Pool in cooperation with the FCO, DFID, and MOD. This guideline states that the Conflict Pool endeavors to support FCAS differently by delivering fast responses in terms of rapid changes in conflict dynamics, implementing effective risk management considering high levels of institutional and programmatic risks, and operating flexibility with a diverse range of work and activities. To manage FCAS, the Conflict Pool reflects conflict sensitivity to achieve the best balance between short- and long-term positive impacts by fully understanding the specific conflict context and possible unintended consequences and reducing potential harm while maximizing positive outcomes.

The UK's support in FCAS is deeply rooted in its commitment to securing national security and the safety of its citizens, highlighting conflict prevention as a vital component of safeguarding both the UK and its interests abroad (UK Government, 2015a). In the *National Security Strategy* (2015), the UK government prioritizes the formulation of policies and the strengthening of capacities to ensure prompt responses to overseas crises, including terrorist attacks, natural disasters, outbreaks of conflict, and public disorder (UK Government, 2015a). It identified deterring state-based threats and ensuring rapid and effective crisis responses as key priorities, reflecting the intention to address conflicts in a timely and effective manner. It acknowledges the greater urgency of investing in disaster preparedness and resilience over responding to conflict post-occurrence. Consequently, the UK government established specific objectives related to FCAS aid allocation to mitigate potential threats: spending 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) on ODA.

UK aid: tackling global challenges in the national interest in 2015 emphasizes

the need to respond to crises overseas by establishing an enormous scale of ODA and settles that 50% of the DFID's budget allocation will be directed towards fragile state regions every year (UK Government, 2015c). Governments are willing to strengthen the resilience of poor and fragile countries to disasters, shocks, and climate change. While its 2015 aid strategy prominently highlighted support for the FCAS, the strategy for 2022, *The UK Government's Strategy for International Development*, places greater emphasis on humanitarian assistance. While tackling conflict and peace became less central to the development policy after 2015 (Walton & Johnstone, 2024), it continues to channel its initiatives into the FCAS to tackle the root causes and drivers of crises. According to the 2022 Strategy, the UK government intends to harness innovative financial and insurance solutions to improve the forecasting and management of humanitarian emergencies by striving for a diverse approach to humanitarian efforts beyond aid spending. By focusing on addressing new threats, such as disinformation and cyberattacks, the 2022 strategy underscores the UK's international role in conflict prevention and reduction. In comparison to the 2015 strategy, it is noteworthy that factors such as disinformation, cyberattacks, and migration are identified as potential causes of conflict. It aims to confront the causes and impacts of forced migration and to create a new hub for conflict and atrocity prevention that integrates the full range of its capabilities.

South Korea highlights the provision of customized support to FCAS depending on each state's level and type of fragility—fragile states with disputes and violence, disasters, and inadequate or corrupt systems—through the *Aid Strategies for Fragile States* (MOEF & MOFA, 2017). South Korea emphasizes the provision of comprehensive assistance, including vulnerable victims and highly fragile situations that have not received enough attention from donor actors. For continuous and long-term development, the government suggests establishing sustainable policies for states through the development of infrastructure and a public system that provides an easy approach for victims. It aims to aid effectively through customized support, such as adequately designed projects and assistance programs regarding the conditions of each state and through cooperation with international organizations, NGOs, and other donor entities, sharing experiences and knowledge about the capabilities of governance and infrastructure to design aid projects for FCAS.

KOICA established a *Mid-term Implementation Strategy for Support to Fragile*

States (2017–2019). To promote the sustainable development of the FCAS, it proposes three objectives in terms of social, political, economic, and environmental risk response and management capacities: ensuring sustainability by strengthening resilience, enhancing institutions and public services, and establishing an economic foundation for vulnerable populations within those countries (KOICA, 2016). KOICA emphasizes the importance of assistance to affected people as well as supporting civil society activities to enhance local community capacities. To bolster institutional frameworks and public services, it proposes implementing projects that promote anti-corruption measures, enhance the rule of law, improve the effectiveness of governance and administrative systems, and advance citizen rights. The Agency presents five principles for supporting FCAS. One of them, ‘country-specific relevance’, highlights the importance of analyzing the unique environment, vulnerabilities, and risks of each fragile country to develop assistance strategies that align with the specific circumstances of each country. The principle of ‘country ownership’ highlights the recipient countries’ sense of ownership through efforts to coordinate aid for FCAS’s institutional capacities and underlines utilizing their systems. The other principles underscore the ‘harmonization of aid instruments,’ which especially means a balance between short- and long-term humanitarian assistance, ‘non-discrimination’, and ‘do no harm’ to prevent unintentional damage in support of FCAS.

South Korea’s Humanitarian Assistance Strategy in 2019, the *Amended Humanitarian Aid Strategy of the Korean Government*, which was established to respond to the growing demand for humanitarian aid and contribute to the international community being commensurate with its national standing, provides directions for approaches to fragile states by classifying the level of fragility in detail—chronic disaster, emergency disaster, and preventive approaches. The amended Strategy offers a way for a more comprehensive and cross-governmental response to crises compared to the 2015 Humanitarian Assistance Strategy (OECD, 2024). The Korean government decides the avenues and extent of support for fragile states, considering the extent of the humanitarian crisis, fragility, and urgency. The government is willing to follow and cooperate with major donor agencies and countries that demonstrate high performance in supporting the FCAS and tries to implement aid activities aligning with the latest and ongoing contexts of international discussions. Additionally, it emphasizes managing and advancing the workforce of governmental

organizations and humanitarian aid experts, including private experts and NGOs. South Korea is attempting to refine the monitoring and evolution system of aid performance to reflect the attributes of fragile state assistance. *The 4th Basic Plan for Sustainable Development: 2021–2040* emphasizes expanding support for FCAS, aiming to take a proactive approach to conflict prevention and transformation and to promote peacebuilding in FCAS by exploring bilateral and multilateral assistance with a focus on establishing governance in the countries.

South Korea ensures a range of cases in demand for humanitarian assistance by defining overseas disasters through the *Overseas Emergency Relief Act*. The most recent version of the Act enables an HDP nexus approach to be legally binding across governments by enlarging the scope beyond emergency relief (OECD, 2024). Compared with the past version of the Act, the amended Act comprehensively details the situation and includes disasters caused by earthquakes, floods, typhoons, and other similar natural phenomena and political and social crises such as war, conflict, terrorism, and infectious diseases, resulting in the exposure of large populations to death, disease, and destruction of their living environment. The fact that the government presents specific situations corresponding to overseas disasters indicates that South Korea perceives the assistance needs of various types of FCAS. In the *KOICA Business Plan Overview 2024*, the government aims to strengthen its humanitarian assistance programs through the advancement of aid methods and systems following the 2019 Humanitarian Assistance Strategy. KOICA has outlined strategic directions with strategic tasks and detailed implementation actions. It focuses on increasing its capacity and expertise across all phases of humanitarian assistance with the goal of establishing itself as a specialized organization in the field of humanitarian assistance. Moreover, for projects targeting FCAS, KOICA aims to establish recovery and reconstruction projects centered on affected people and support peacebuilding efforts by ensuring their effectiveness and actively implementing integrated resilience-building projects.

4. Results

The rationale underlying the UK's approach to supporting FCAS is predominantly centered on national security. Consequently, the MOD plays a leading role in the UK's FCAS aid activities, in contrast to South Korea, where the MOFA takes

the lead. The UK underscores the significance of FCAS support by focusing on national security, safeguarding state interests, and ensuring the safety of citizens. By contrast, South Korea approaches FCAS support as a strategic tool to strengthen its performance in international development cooperation and elevate its status within the global community as an advanced donor country.

The UK's CSSF serves as a significant example of the implementation of the financing pillar of the HDP nexus, requiring flexible, predictable, and multi-year financing. This study provides critical insights and guidance for South Korea to enhance its implementation of the nexus, particularly in adjusting its financing mechanisms. In two pillars of the HDP nexus—programming and coordination—South Korea demonstrates notable progress in coordinating the nexus; however, within the pillar of financing, specific progress is lacking. South Korea could make substantial progress in its FCAS aid framework by drawing lessons from the UK's approaches to the nexus. The UK's unique focus on creating integrated funds enables flexible and immediate support for various purposes during FCAS occurrences and addresses a wide range of challenges arising from FCAS, such as impacts on neighboring countries and refugee crises. In doing so, it facilitates the provision of effective assistance aimed at resolving the root causes of FCAS and the multifaceted problems stemming from these situations. This result has significant implications for South Korea's project-based approaches, which focus on specific aspects of problems while neglecting multidimensional considerations.

The UK's perspective on 'Value for Money', frequently mentioned in its government documents, emphasizes how resources and funds are managed and contribute to enhancing FCAS aid effectiveness. This approach of the UK contrasts sharply with that of South Korea, which emphasizes accountability for individual processes in support of FCAS and emergency aid delivery. In the UK, the distinction between humanitarian assistance and development aid is blurred, allowing country teams managing the two to flexibly determine how the two forms of aid should be combined, underscoring the strength of its adaptable system. Unlike South Korea's rigid framework—which involves multiple government agencies and stakeholders at each stage of the process—the UK's system exhibits significant advantages in terms of adaptability and responsiveness. South Korea's humanitarian assistance system is characterized by the separation of essential activities—rescue, administration, and medical assistance—each managed by distinct command and control

agencies. As these key activities must be executed simultaneously and in an integrated manner, this fragmented support system prompts inquiries regarding its alignment with the HDP nexus framework to assist FCAS. Although South Korea's humanitarian assistance system seems well structured, a development aid system tailored for FCAS needs is absent, functioning within the general ODA framework. This underscores the UK's dedicated FCAS support framework as a noteworthy model.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study explores whether South Korea's international development cooperation has been effective in addressing the complex and evolving challenges of FCAS while the budget for FCAS aid has increased substantially. Through a comparative analysis of ODA for FCAS by South Korea and the UK, we offer policy implications for South Korea's policies and approaches in this context. Several characteristics of the UK FCAS aid have been identified as playing a key role in placing the country at the forefront in supporting FCAS. The UK's CSSF serves as a significant example of the implementation of the financing pillar of the HDP nexus, which requires flexible, predictable, and multi-year-long financing. Furthermore, in the UK, the distinction between humanitarian assistance and development aid is blurred, allowing country teams managing the two to flexibly determine how the two forms of aid should be combined. This underscores the strength of its adaptable system and contributes to implementing the programming pillar of the HDP nexus.

In conclusion, this study identifies key findings with significant policy implications for advancing South Korea's aid to FCAS. First, moving away from rigid project-based financing mechanisms toward flexible financing mechanisms that integrate humanitarian assistance and development initiatives may enhance responsiveness, enabling a more comprehensive approach to addressing the multifaceted challenges arising from FCAS. Second, Korea must develop a development assistance system specifically designed for FCAS, rather than applying the general ODA framework to these contexts. Additionally, it must identify the specific objectives and needs of FCAS aid within the Korean context. Such efforts could foster a more proactive stance, moving beyond merely adhering to the priorities set by international organizations. Third, responding to the evolving dynamics of

FCAS demand requires human resource capacities tailored to specific contexts, strengthening technical expertise and innovative approaches to respond to rapidly changing conflict environments.

This study has certain limitations. Owing to the lack of an FCAS system in South Korea, direct comparisons with the UK were challenging. Moreover, this study lacks an in-depth analysis of the 2022 changes in the UK aid strategy. Walton & Johnstone (2024) note that the 2022 aid strategy marks a notable shift by placing comparatively less emphasis on developmental issues. Rather than focusing on global crises and fragility, the latest strategy highlights a renewed commitment to economic development and investment and the importance of aligning development policies with national interests (Walton & Johnstone, 2024). In the field of development cooperation, analyzing the evolution of aid systems in advanced donor countries—such as the UK—offers critical insights for shaping South Korea’s future aid architecture. A systematic examination of the policy rationales and contextual drivers behind donor adjustments, particularly in response to FCAS, can illuminate patterns of adaptive governance and institutional learning that are relevant to emerging donors. For South Korea, such comparative analysis provides a valuable reference point for formulating context-sensitive and conflict-responsive aid strategies. Furthermore, evaluating the effectiveness of existing approaches in FCAS not only sheds light on the degree to which stated policy objectives have been achieved, but also identifies areas where strategic recalibration is necessary. This includes rethinking policy instruments and delivery mechanisms to ensure more effective and sustainable engagement in fragile contexts.

The implementation of aid in FCAS—encompassing the selection of target contexts, project design, execution, and evaluation—differs considerably across donor countries and has a direct impact on the effectiveness of assistance. To strengthen its engagement in FCAS, South Korea should not only draw policy insights from the UK’s approach, as discussed in this study, but also pursue more innovative and diversified strategies. These may include the development of cooperation mechanisms with established donor institutions that possess extensive experience and expertise in FCAS-specific aid delivery. In addition, academic research on fragile and conflict-affected states remains limited in South Korea, particularly with regard to aid policy and strategic engagement. Given the increasing importance of these contexts in global development discourse, there is a critical need to expand

research on financial support mechanisms and innovative approaches to crisis response in FCAS. Future studies should investigate the key barriers and opportunities associated with financing in fragile settings. Moreover, both theoretical and empirical analyses of innovative modalities for crisis response—tailored to the complexities of FCAS—should be recognized as vital areas for further academic inquiry.

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