The Crisis of South Korean Conservatism and Implications for Russia

Georgy D. Toloraya

Georgy D. Toloraya, Doctor of Economics, Professor
Institute of China and Contemporary Asia, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia
Center for World Politics and Strategic Analysis
Chief Research Fellow

SPIN-RSCI: 8123-9148
ORCID: 0000-0002-3685-2120
Scopus Author ID: 25961092700

Tel.: +7 (499) 129-08-01
E-mail: info@nkibrics.ru
Address: 13, Bldg. 2 Krzhizhanovsky Str., Moscow 117285, Russia

DOI: 10.31278/1810-6374-2025-23-2-180-203

Abstract
The deep crisis engulfing South Korea's conservative elites may bring opposition forces to power and potentially change Seoul's foreign policy. This article traces the domestic and international sources of the crisis, which have exacerbated internal political contradictions during Yoon Suk Yeol's rule. This article also analyzes the current state of Russia-South Korea relations, as well as the most sensitive and promising areas for building dialogue with the forces that may replace the conservatives. The contours of the dialogue will depend on the two countries' ability to align their national interests, and also on Chinese and U.S. involvement in Korean and regional security matters. The author proposes concrete diplomatic steps to restore a constructive relationship between Russia and the Republic of Korea.

Keywords: Republic of Korea, conservatism, Yoon Suk Yeol, dictatorship, quasi-democracy, foreign policy, Russia, dialogue.

The situation on the Korean Peninsula has been alarming since WWII. For decades, publics in the West—and after the 1990s, in Russia—have been persuaded that it was North Korea that was unpredictable, its regime might collapse, and it could start a war anytime, for which reason it was building up forbidden nuclear missile capabilities in defiance of international law and the 'will of the international community.' Today, more and more experts think that a crisis on the Korean Peninsula may emanate from the South rather than from the North. If such a crisis breaks out, Seoul's overseas patron, and therefore the opponents of that patron, will inevitably interfere.

Unlike in the 1990s-2010s, the challenge for Russia today is not posed by North Korea, with which Russia has smoothed over most differences—nuclear missiles and related sanctions, debt, limited possibilities for economic cooperation, and general mistrust—and which today seeks, like Russia, to revise the "rules-based world order."

Having restored relations with Pyongyang, Moscow should seek for a chance to normalize relations with Seoul as well.

Let us consider the situation in South Korea and our relations with it in more detail from the point of view of Russia's interests and political priorities.

SOUTH KOREAN CONSERVATISM 101

The events that began in Seoul in December 2024 are not just another episode of internal political struggle. The confrontation between conservatives and "democrats" (i.e., the progressives aligned with the Toburo Democratic Party) reflects the long-term division of Korean society over the domestic and foreign policy agendas. It is no coincidence that conservative demonstrators carry Korean and American flags and accuse the democrats of pro-Chinese and pro-North-Korean views. This has led to a systemic crisis in South Korea's conservative political ideology and power system, i.e., the power of the heirs to those who built the "Korean miracle" since the 1960s, under "father of the nation" Park Chung Hee, albeit not without repression, bloodshed, exploitation, and oppression.

After the 1961 military coup, Park Chung Hee in 1963 founded the conservative Democratic Republican Party, subsequently called the Democratic Liberal Party, New Korea Party (1990-1997), Grand National Party (1997-2012), Saenuri (2012-2017), and People Power Party (since 2020). Despite ongoing factional struggles, scandals, splits, and unifications, the South Korean ruling class remains fundamentally unchanged (Oberdorfer, 2001; Kim and Vogel, 2011; Asmolov, 2017).

South Korea's political class, and economic and scientific elites, formed and are still being formed on the basis of localism, nepotism, and cronyism, which run deep in Korean society, bringing together classmates from university or military academy (Asmolov, 2003a, 2023b). The core of the conservative ruling class hails from the southeast (Yeongnam, which includes the North and South Gyeongsang provinces and the cities of Busan and Daegu). The liberal opposition is based mainly in the less developed southwest (Honam, which includes the provinces of North and South Jeolla). Most voters in Jeolla and Gyeongsang still vote as a regional bloc, although this has become less pronounced in other parts of the country (Chernetskii, 2022, 67).

The ruling class's ideology began to take shape immediately after the Korean War, and crystallized under Park Chung Hee as a bizarre mix of nationalism, traditional Confucianism (which, alongside local shamanism, served as the basis of statehood in monarchical Korea), declarative American liberalism (even as its values were suppressed in reality), classical "democratism," American Protestantism (various churches and sects remain influential to this day), anti-communism, confrontation with the DPRK, pro-Americanism, pro-Western foreign policy, and dirigisme (Henderson, 1978; Oberdorfer, 2001). The economy during the conservatives' "economic miracle" in the 1960s-1980s developed under state regulation, but with a decisive role played by private capital, especially large politically-connected conglomerates called chaebols. Park and his spiritual heirs pursued "Centralization of power to achieve economic growth, human well-being, and industrial development; a strong nationalist world-class democracy based on the revival of national identity and on complete

national independence achieved through stable economic growth" (Malevich, 2006, p. 380).

The main tenets of the conservatives' ideology:

• *Prioritizing national security and countering communism.* Confronting and ultimately destroying the "evil regime" of North Korea, and uniting the country under the Republic of Korea. Pending proper conditions for this, building up military capabilities in close collaboration with the United States, while using sanctions and diplomatic pressure against the DPRK.

• *Building an anti-populist and anti-liberal domestic political agenda.* Accusing opponents of communism and pro-North-Korean sentiment if they advance economic or social initiatives that could resemble "socialist principles".

• *Pursuing a pro-Western foreign policy.* Forging a strategic alliance with the United States as a guarantee of the country's security and prosperity. Participating in international organizations. Acting in accordance with the "rules-based order" and in the interests of developed countries. Opposing "revisionist states."

• *Korean nationalism.* Adhering to Korean national identity. Pride in the country's achievements and cultural heritage. Generally anti-Japanese and anti-colonial attitude.

• *Economic liberalism*. Supporting a market economy and the chaebols as the basis of the Miracle on the Han River. Commitment to globalization and support for an export-oriented economy.

• *Commitment to stability and authority per the Confucian natural order.* Emphasis on the importance of stable governance. Support for strong presidential leadership and authoritarianism.

• *Patriarchy.* Respect for elders. Nepotism. Paternalism and the patriarchal structure of society. Skepticism of the neoliberal agenda: LGBT rights, gender equality, and non-traditional families (Hamutaeva, 2016).

The conservative ideology has changed little despite tectonic shifts in the world, and the core support for conservatives remained generally unchanged, although societal attitudes have changed along with generations and technology. Dictatorship gave way to quasi-democracy

in 1987-1993, when the democrats, led by Kim Dae-jung (who, despite hailing from Jeolla, managed to draw support from the central regions), gained power and held it under his successor Roh Moo-hyun until 2008.

However, the democrats' internal agenda proved to be not much different from the conservatives' one, except it paid more attention to people's rights. But the focus on social programs and meeting workers' demands prevented the "Asian Tiger" from maintaining its previous economic dynamics. And the democrats' political tactics, according to my long-term observations, differed little from those of a dictatorship. (For instance, the conservatives accused President Moon Jae In of "settling the scores" with his opponents and using legislative measures (such as May 18 Distortion Punishment Act to "stifle free speech during his presidency, which criminalized "perceived distortions" of the events related to the 1980 Gwangju Democratic Uprising (Denney and Green, 2018; Lee and Yi, 2024).) South Korea's foreign policy remained dependent on the U.S. and under its tight military-political control, which prevented the democrats from consistently pursuing their policy of reconciliation with the North. The policy sought to "hug the North to death" and was, accordingly, short-lived.

In 2008, the conservatives took back power, bringing genuine paleoconservatives with them (Vorontsov, 2021), although President Lee Myung-bak himself was considered a technocrat. They redoubled a pro-American and anti-North-Korean policy and firmly believed in the DPRK's imminent collapse (especially after Kim Jong Il's stroke in 2008 and sudden death in 2011). President Park Geun-hye (daughter of Park Chung Hee) believed her personal shaman's predictions that North Korea would collapse imminently and Seoul would achieve spontaneous unification. Her policy caused not the usual outrage in Pyongyang, but rather a sort of disgust. Her father's conservative ideology seemed to have run out of steam and stultified, its initial determination, perseverance, and discipline for the sake of development having been eroded by corruption, nepotism, inflexibility, and recklessness.

After Park Geun-hye was essentially overthrown by the people and impeached in 2016, the democrats led by Moon Jae-in regained power.

But the conservative- and Yeongnam-linked political and economic elites retained their dominant positions and bided their time. However, like the rest of the U.S.-aligned world, South Korea had run out of strong political leaders and ended up with a random conservative candidate for president in 2022: Yoon Suk Yeol.

A NEW SHERIFF IN TOWN

Unlike some Koreanologists, I did not expect anything good from the new president. His service record and biography speak for themselves. In the prosecutor's office and in politics, he remained a quarrelsome loner, a "black sheep." His appointment as Prosecutor General by democratic President Moon Jae-in (in order to jail former conservative Presidents Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye) did not make him any more inclined to compromise, and scandals and conflicts accompanied him until his resignation as PG in 2021. His presidential campaign featured controversial statements (such as praise for South Korean ex-dictator Chun Doo-hwan (Joo, 2021)), but the voters elected him with a 0.7% margin (Portyakova, 2022). (Some argue that the start of Russia's Special Military Operation in Ukraine played a role in pushing the electorate rightward, that is, the global agenda intervened).

Yoon, initially called an "atypical" conservative who had come into politics accidentally, undertook a truly atypical policy that "proved to be…tougher than the conservative 'standard,' while his hawkish foreign policy harkened back to the darkest periods of the Cold War" (Dyachkov, 2024). Having won by a razor-thin majority, he did not try to seek compromise with the democratic opposition, but instead challenged it everywhere he could.

The administration, made up of Yoon's cronies and associates from his days as PG, was constantly shaken by scandals (Kiryanov, 2023). Kim Keon-hee, his wife since 2012, was the cause of serious image problems (Lee, 2024a; Berk, 2022), as she was accused of alleged market manipulation before 2012, academic plagiarism, and lies about her education (Tsukanova, 2024). Kim Keon-hee also found herself in a scandal regarding her receipt of a $2,200 Dior bag as a gift, although

Seoul prosecutors eventually concluded that it had not been related to her official duties (Kwak, 2024). She used her power as First Lady to appoint unqualified protégés to important positions, and interfered in state affairs. The presidential couple was surrounded by prophets, shamans, and fortune-tellers. In 2024, the country was rocked by a new scandal involving political broker Myung Tae-kyun (who also claimed to be a prophet), who used his ties with the First Lady to promote his clients to senior government positions.

Yoon was an extremely convenient figure for the U.S. (Yoshida and Morgan, 2024). South Korea had probably not seen such a pro-American president since Syngman Rhee, who was put in office by the Americans after the ROK's founding. Yoon never ceased praising "liberal democracy" and Western values and strengthened the ROK-U.S. alliance by expanding its scope "beyond security to incorporate industry, science and technology, and culture" (Yoon, 2022). Washington and Seoul significantly intensified military-political cooperation and created the Nuclear Consultative Group (NCG) (TASS, 2024a), which Seoul interprets as effectively constituting participation in regional nuclear deterrence.

The Biden administration highly appreciated Yoon's hatred of North Korea. He considered the DPRK a threat not only to South Korea, but also to the entire "free world" and sought to pressure and ultimately dismantle North Korean statehood. In August 2024, Yoon presented a doctrine of "freedom-based unification" (Kim, 2024a), which called for unifying Korea on the basis of a South-Korean-style liberal democratic system, changing the DPRK's regime and de facto occupying it, and, in fact, creating a "greater Republic of Korea." With Yoon's unprecedentedly fierce and incendiary policy towards the North, international pressure on the DPRK increased significantly, and extremely provocative military maneuvers (shore landings, strikes on decision-making centers, and decapitating operations) became typical during the conservatives' rule. "Some top South Korean officers wanted to provoke a tough response from the DPRK as a pretext for carrying out their own political plans and imposing a state of emergency" (Kiryanov, 2025).

Among his achievements, Yoon names the creation of the U.S.-Japan-ROK trilateral pact, which provoked popular opposition, and even violated one of Korean conservatism's key tenets by abandoning grievances against Japan's colonial crimes. (In fairness, by so doing he acted similarly to Park Chung Hee, who moderated some of Korea's claims for the sake of Japanese investment.—Ed.) Formalized at Camp David in August 2023, the military-political trilateral alliance was further strengthened in 2024 when cooperation mechanisms, including regarding nuclear issues, were set up, joint military exercises were held, and the U.S.-ROK Guidelines for Nuclear Deterrence and Nuclear Operations on the Korean Peninsula were signed in July 2024. The latest trilateral summit, on the sidelines of the G20 meeting in November 2024, reaffirmed the parties' intention to further institutionalize the alliance. Despite the real threat of impeachment, Yoon's minions hurried to cement the deal (Korea Times, 2024) in order to "bind" Trump (Lee, 2024b).

All this was justified by the "increased threat" from the DPRK, especially given Russian-North Korean cooperation, and even by fictions about the "northern military alliance between China, Russia, and the DPRK."

Yoon sided completely with the West on Ukraine and, in 2023, agreed to strengthen sanctions against Russia and start indirect arms supplies to Ukraine. The DPRK's June 2024 treaty with Russia, and claims of its support for Moscow with arms and soldiers, shocked Seoul. Yoon decided to "punish" Moscow with new sanctions (Logirus, 2024) and the threat of directly arming Ukraine. Nevertheless, he immediately stated that this would depend on "the level and substance of military cooperation between Russia and North Korea," and that the future of Russia-ROK relations "depends entirely on Russia's actions") (Son, 2024).

South Korean business has undergone a costly downsizing in Russia (Lim, 2024). Trade fell from $27.3b in 2021, to $15.0b in 2023, and to $11.4b in 2024. South Korea has exited the Russian automotive market, of which it held 23.8% in 2021, and lost its leading positions in mobile phones and household appliances (Kostina, 2025). Russian exports to

South Korea have fallen to 2.2% of Russian exports and 1.4% of South Korean imports, respectively one-third and one-half of pre-2022 levels (ITC, 2025).

Relations with China have also deteriorated. China is worried by THAAD deployments in South Korea, which have precipitated economic sanctions in the past. China is also frustrated by the growing military-political ties between South Korea and the United States, frequent military exercises, and Seoul's hostility towards the DPRK. Yoon's claims of Chinese support for the opposition have clearly gone too far. But these accusations resonated well with the actual attitude of many Koreans towards China that will likely have the lengthiest effect on the two countries.

However, the conservative government's weakening was caused less by foreign than by domestic issues, including unpopular proposed labor reforms and a crippling of the national healthcare system (ROK e-government, 2023). The people gave their verdict in the April 2024 parliamentary elections, in which the opposition took 192 of 300 seats, just short of the 200 needed to override presidential vetoes. This created a stalemate, as the president vetoed bills and the parliament tried to impeach his ministers and officials (BBC News, 2024). The opposition initiated 29 motions of no confidence against various government officials, 23 motions for investigation by the special prosecutor, 38 requests for a revision of bills, and numerous hearings on abuse of authority, budget cuts, etc., effectively paralyzing the government. The conservatives called this an attack on South Korea's three pillars of liberal democracy, market economy, and alliance with the U.S. (Kwon, 2025).

THE COUP THAT WASN'T

Yoon Suk Yeol and his inner circle blamed their poor electoral performance on vote rigging orchestrated by "pro-North-Korean forces" or even China. Discovering the 'truth," by seizing the National Election Commission, was one of the purposes of declaring martial law (Kwon, 2025).

In a televised address late on 3 December 2024, Yoon Suk Yeol unexpectedly declared martial law, accusing the Democratic Party of

sympathizing with the DPRK and engaging in anti-state activities. He claimed that "anti-state forces"—the opposition and "pro-North Korean forces"—were "paralyzing state affairs" by trying to impeach high-ranking government officials. Although troops and police were ordered to prevent lawmakers from entering the National Assembly building, 190 parliamentarians were able to break through and unanimously vote to lift the martial law, forcing the president to cancel it six hours later.

The failed coup attempt exposed an ideological, professional, and organizational crisis in the ruling conservative establishment, or at least within the group that it had brought to power (Parry, 2025). The preparation and introduction of martial law resembles a B-class Korean action movie featuring a bizarre mixture of sorcerers, fortune-tellers, and shadow advisers. A plan to justify martial law, by provoking a North Korean military response in the disputed part of the Yellow Sea, has also become public. There are suspicions that the military was also ordered to send a drone into North Korea in October 2024 in order to provoke a crisis (Xinhua, 2024; Kiryanov, 2024a).

The affair has seriously undermined the conservatives' position, and many observers view it as evidence of the right's moral and ideological bankruptcy. In fact, Yoon's conservative predecessor, Park Geun-hye, was also deposed and imprisoned partly because of her connection with a "shaman," Choi Sun-sil. All this has boosted cynical views that South Korea's democracy is just a smokescreen for an unrestrained struggle between unprincipled politicians and rival cliques. Anything that interferes with this fighting is dismissed as "populism." Many analysts believe that the Republic of Korea has a lot of serious work to do to update and cleanse its political system (Delury, 2025).

The crisis remains unresolved, as evidenced by the desire of Yoon and his team to keep power through legal chicanery, armed resistance to arrest, media manipulation, and fairly successful mobilization of the country's most reactionary and marginal elements—from elderly opponents of communism to the young ultra-right (the so-called "white helmets squad," the Anti-Communist Youth Corps) (Kim, 2025). The clergy and the far right continue to sponsor pro-Yoon rallies, where demonstrators carry Korean and American flags and

call for the arrest of current Democratic Party leader Lee Jae-myung and of former President Moon Jae-in, and urge South Korea to develop its own nuclear weapons.

This swell of support for the conservatives (Seonwoo Yunho, 2025), after their protégé's disastrous fiasco, raises several interesting points.

Firstly, the developments in South Korea are linked to global trends and, above all, the China factor. Yoon and right-wing conservatists' arguments reflect the Koreans' inherent historical fear of and enmity towards China, which they believe backs South Korean opposition seeking to "undermine liberal democracy." Yoon's adherents' faith in America makes them see support of Yoon as support for the U.S.-led world order.

Secondly, young male supporters of Yoon see him as an opponent of neoliberal gender ideology, which appears especially artificial in patriarchal South Korea. Yoon is also supported by right-wing Christian churches/sects, which fulfill a social-consolidation function in South Korea.

The social base of South Korean conservatism, especially its pro-Western anti-communist component (which makes no distinction between China of the 1950s and today, or between the USSR and Russia), will endure for many years to come. But the conservatives' electoral base is likely to shrink, although regional-bloc voting will limit this trend.

Forecasting in such a difficult situation is thankless. Yoon Suk Yeol's trial is still in progress, and the conservatives' ratings are not much lower than those of Democratic Party leader Lee Jae-myung (Yang, 2025). At this point, it seems inevitable that the democrats will take both legislative and executive power for the next presidential term (or even two terms), albeit after a period of chaos and great political upheavals.

PROSPECTS FOR DIALOGUE: SEOUL'S POSITION

How should Russia build relations with South Korea once it gets new leadership? With the democrats in power, Russia will have the chance to blame the problems that arose since 2015, and particularly under

Yoon Suk Yeol, on the conservatives. However, Russia should not delude itself. The democrats are unlikely to be able to dramatically improve bilateral relations, even if they wanted to.

Their leaders believe that the initiative for normalization should come from Russia. They name the following prerequisites for such normalization:

1. Improvement of relations between Russia and the U.S. (including renewed negotiations on strategic armaments, sanctions relief, etc.). In this case, they say, South Korea will not hesitate to follow suit.

2. End of the war in Ukraine.

3. Termination of military and military-technological cooperation between Russia and the DPRK. (Although other areas of cooperation may annoy Seoul, they may not be such insurmountable obstacles for the democrats.)

4. Russia's return to the agenda of North Korea denuclearization. Russia's position, that "the issue of denuclearization is closed," (Interfax, 2024b) is unacceptable for any South Korean leadership, as this is a very sensitive issue in South Korea's domestic politics. Almost all conservative leaders—and 74% of the population—think that South Korea should have its own nuclear weapons. These views began spreading when the DPRK increased its nuclear missile capabilities and acquired a second-strike capability intended to deter a U.S. nuclear attack in defense of the South (Singh, 2024). The Democratic Party opposes the development of nuclear weapons (although many members in truth support it). But if Russia continues to insist that the Korean Peninsula's denuclearization is impossible, and the Trump administration maintains ambiguity on whether the U.S. nuclear umbrella covers the ROK, then the democrats will have to change their position.

5. Russia's recognition of Seoul's position on the reunification of Korea. This is an emotional issue for a significant part of the electorate. Although the democrats, unlike the conservatives, advocate cooperation with the North, they still see this as a way to reunification. (Even though people in South Korea are gradually losing interest in reunification.) If Russia does not support unification, this will anger the South Koreans.

The first three conditions are interconnected and can hopefully be met, although this depends less on Russia than on its opponents.

Russia is also interested in maintaining the non-proliferation regime; it does not recognize the DPRK as a nuclear state but does take a realistic stance, taking into account the military-political situation on the Korean Peninsula.

As for Pyongyang's new approach to reunification (or lack thereof), the co-existence of two internationally-recognized states seems more realistic than their hypothetical reunification, but Russia's official position is that this issue must be resolved by the Korean people and the two Korean states themselves, and Russia will support their choice.

In practice, Russia views relations with the two Koreas separately from each other. Yet North Korea remains the main irritant in the Moscow-Seoul relationship, no matter how much Russia opposes such a linkage. Russia's rapprochement with Pyongyang, and its involvement in the Ukraine conflict, have prompted a sharp reaction from South Korea that is emotionally and ideologically charged.

PROSPECTS FOR DIALOGUE: MOSCOW'S POSITION

Russia's vision of the situation on the Korean Peninsula needs to be explained in detail, given that, since the beginning of 2024, the DPRK has officially considered unification with the South to be undesirable and futile, and its relations with the South to be those of two states at war.

In December 2023, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said that the use of terms implying national unity was misleading and suggested amending the national constitution to remove its provisions concerning reunification and reconciliation (Kiryanov, 2024b). This may open up prospects for an equal dialogue between the two countries, reducing the tensions between them by accounting for their respective concerns, and making a transition from the Cold War to a cold peace.

However, this should not be said out loud, as a fundamental aspect of the average South Korean's identity is the (often deeply-hidden) belief that sooner or later South Korea, by some miracle and likely with America's help, will ultimately defeat the "North Korean

communist bandits." Skeptics of this are ostracized. More recently, this issue has been addressed in a more realistic manner: in 2024, ex-President Moon Jae-in and his former Chief of Staff Lim Jong-seok publicly suggested a shift towards accepting the reality of two separate states. However, at a Cabinet meeting on 24 September 2024, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol dismissed these proposals as "unconstitutional" (Newsis, 2024; Kim, 2024b). In short, the period of internal disputes is not yet over, and foreigners, especially those whom South Koreans hold responsible for the division of Korea, better keep their advice to themselves.

Seoul has been particularly enraged by claims of North Korean troops fighting against Kiev's forces. South Korean leaders reject the argument that Article 4 of the Russia-DPRK agreement (on military assistance) has not formally been activated, and thus that the participation of North Korean citizens in the conflict, even if it were proved, would not fundamentally differ from thousands of foreigners' fighting for Kiev. South Koreans see the use of "slaves" from their worst enemy as the gravest of sins, after which no one should do any business with the "sinner." There are also concerns that the North Koreans may later turn Russian technology and combat experience against the South. Russia does not take these concerns seriously (McBride, 2024) but should be ready to discuss them and to prove that Russia-DPRK military cooperation does not threaten South Korea's security and never will unless Seoul takes unfriendly steps against Russia.

Russia's position is that the existence of the two Korean states is a historically predetermined political reality, and it intends to cooperate with each of them separately. Restoring ties with the DPRK, Russia's neighbor and closest ally in the "far abroad," is natural and should not raise concerns. Undermining or attacking the DPRK is therefore completely unacceptable, and Russia would welcome a change of approach by South Korea's democrats, which should finally recognize reality and distance themselves from the conservatives' program of absorbing the North.

It would be important to convince South Korea's political circles and public that the conservatives' policy towards Russia and Russia-

DPRK relations failed because it prioritized the U.S.'s interests over South Korea's. It is also good that the Yoon regime has not supplied lethal weapons to Ukraine, which would have prompted Russia to share military technologies with the DPRK. Sober-minded South Koreans are ready to acknowledge that the Ukraine conflict is not their own: the war is being fought on Russia's border, not in Asia or the Americas.

In its interaction with the DPRK, Russia has always acted cautiously in order not to upset the military balance and "confrontational stability" on the Korean Peninsula. Its actions will never be aimed at undermining the security of either the DPRK or the Republic of Korea. Russia always advocates the indivisibility of security and seeks to resolve all problems on the peninsula and around it by political and diplomatic means.

With new leaders in the U.S. and (hypothetically) in South Korea, Russia is ready to offer new diplomatic initiatives. It would like to prevent further damage to the non-proliferation regime but believes that conditioning negotiations on the DPRK's denuclearization will lead nowhere, to the detriment of South Korea's own interests. The U.S. has increasingly raised the subject of arms control and limiting the nuclear arms race (Asano, 2023). Russia would probably be interested in such a discussion.

Consultations on the Korean issue could begin among the U.S., Russia, and China, and then widen, based on the common understanding that complete denuclearization remains a distant goal, but dialogue is critical to addressing immediate risks and fostering long-term stability.

The current situation offers unexpected opportunities for Russia, China, and the U.S. to cooperate on the Korean issue:

- U.S.-ROK relations are unprecedentedly stressed by South Korea's political chaos, potential consequences of Trump's economic policies, uncertainty regarding Trump's commitment to U.S. alliances, and possible problems in Japan-ROK relations and in the trilateral bloc (see Lee, 2024c; Koda, 2024).
- DPRK-China relations have cooled. The political dialogue has almost stopped, North Koreans are almost openly criticizing

China for compromises with the U.S., and defiantly ignoring Chinese interest, as even China scholars admit (Radchenko, 2025). Russia should help China to maintain control of the Korean situation, rather than trying to squeeze it out, which would be ineffective and unproductive.

- The looming moment of truth in the Ukraine conflict. Russia's victory would allow Moscow and Beijing to address other complex geopolitical issues from winning positions that may never come their way again. On the Korean situation, they can face the U.S. as a united front.
- Unprecedented closeness between Moscow and Pyongyang, allowing them to make mutual concessions.

On the other hand:

- Trump's pursuit of the reputation of a peacemaker may collide with Kim Jong Un's unreadiness to make significant concessions. The inclusion of denuclearization in the agenda would be particularly poisonous (TASS, 2024b; NK Pro, 2025).
- The DPRK may prove intransigent, as it relies on strength and rejects diplomatic "tricks." However, its leadership may prove interested in the chance at recognition as the only legitimate and irreplaceable stakeholder in the Korean Peninsula's security. It should be told that the DPRK's participation—alongside the U.S., China, and Russia—is necessary and sufficient to resolving the Korean Peninsula's nuclear and security issues, and that all others will have to accept this. China probably holds the same position.
- Even South Korea's democrats abhor the idea of the DPRK strengthening from its alliance with Russia, and Seoul could disrupt the above-mentioned four-party talks. While Trump will hopefully not allow the tail to wag the dog, Russia-ROK relations may still suffer.
- Japan wishes to join the dialogue with its own agenda (namely the abductees issue), which the U.S. will find hard to ignore.

PROSPECTS FOR BILATERAL RELATIONS

In the face of Yoon's hostility, Russia has been restrained and even conciliatorily. In early June 2024, President Putin lauded Seoul for refraining from direct arms supplies to Ukraine, and expressed the hope that "the level of our relations achieved in previous decades will at least partially be preserved so that we could restore them in the future" (Interfax, 2024a). Putin's assessment that "there is no obvious Russophobic attitude in the Republic of Korea's leadership" remains valid (ibid.). In fact, South Korea has no concrete interest in "protecting democracy" in Europe or seeking the West's "strategic defeat" of Russia (Toloraya, 2024).

If the democrats listen to Russia's arguments and take concrete steps, Moscow could consider excluding South Korea from the list of unfriendly countries, and prompting Seoul to lift some of the most egregious sanctions in response. Yet, such message should not be delivered assertively—this is not the kind of diplomacy Seoul would appreciate. Some of South Korea's potential future leaders are hinting that the sanctions imposed in 2024, after the Russian-North Korean agreement, may be lifted unilaterally.

Moscow should also make use of Korean businesses' desire to restore their positions in Russia. They are currently facing two key problems: third-party financial restrictions that complicate payments to and from Russia, and South Korean restrictions on certain exports to Russia. Some South Korean and foreign companies have found ways to solve the first problem, as evidenced by the significant volumes of continuing South Korean exports. The second problem can be solved only by the South Korean authorities (Toloraya and Chernetskii, 2024).

The first and easiest step—in terms of logistics—would be lifting restrictions on the export of electronic appliances and electrical goods. They are being supplied through third countries (Central Asia and the South Caucasus) anyway. But, fearing secondary sanctions, these countries and intermediary firms have to limit shipments to Russia (Golubkin, Chernetsky and Malyutina, 2023). The situation is more complicated with the closely monitored shipments of large-sized products (construction equipment, automobiles, and ships). Its

solution requires that Russia remove the existing restrictions, create the most favorable conditions for South Korean entrepreneurs if their government changes its political approaches, and urge Seoul to lift its restrictions as well.

Small and medium-sized businesses operating in the least "toxic" areas (food, textile, and cosmetics) may lead the way in "resetting" Russia-ROK economic cooperation. It is important, however, that this reset is a two-way, not one-way, street (Leshakov and Malofeeva, 2023). Strategic projects, such as hydrocarbon sales or the production of low-carbon hydrogen in Sakhalin, could spur normalization (Finmarket, 2021).

Particular attention should be paid to restoring and boosting cultural exchanges and tourism, making South Korea a priority target of Russian soft power in Asia. The fact that over 140,000 Russian citizens visited South Korea in 2024, including 106,000 on a visa-free basis, clearly shows that there is no Russophobia in the country. Russian performers regularly tour South Korea, and their classical music and ballet are particularly popular there (Kostina, 2025). Priority should be given to resuming direct flights between the two countries, to and from Vladivostok as the first step.

Korean society as a whole, at least a significant part of it, is quite receptive to explanations regarding the causes of the ongoing international crisis and the prospects for its resolution, but it is barely aware of many historical and political aspects of Russian reality, which opens up vast opportunities for work in various areas from art to scientific exchanges.

In the future, BRICS could establish cooperation with South Korea, at least on select issues. Parts of South Korea's academic and business communities would be interested in this.

The current volatile period gives Russia a chance to decisively move towards its policy of maintaining the closest possible relations with each of the two Koreas, separately. Russia's rapprochement with the DPRK, its overall strengthened position in Korean affairs, and the possibility of pragmatic relations with the Trump administration—at least on the Korean Peninsula—create conditions for pragmatically normalizing ties with new ROK leadership.

References

Asano, H., 2023. Arms Control with North Korea? Opportunities and Challenges. *Pacific Forum*, 15 August. Available at: https://pacforum.org/publications/pacnet-61-arms-control-with-north-korea-opportunities-and-challenges/ [Accessed 2 February 2025].

Asmolov, K.V., 2003a. Административная культура Южной Кореи. [The Administrative Culture of the Republic of Korea]. *Problemy teorii i praktiki upravleniya*, Vol. 6, pp. 37-44.

Asmolov, K.V., 2003b. Политические партии в Республике Корея [Political Parties in the Republic of Korea]. *Problemy Dalnego Vostoka*, Vol. 4, pp. 120-127.

Asmolov, K.V., 2017. *Корейская политическая культура: Традиции и трансформация* [Korean Political Culture: Traditions and Transformation]. Moscow: Russian Foundation for Promotion of Education and Science.

Asmolov, K.V., 2022. Impeachment Imminent for Yoon Suk-Yeol in 2023? *RIAC*, 1 December. Available at: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/impeachment-imminent-for-yoon-suk-yeol-in-2023/ [Accessed 13 March 2025].

BBC News, 2024. Из-за чего в Южной Корее разразился политический кризис? [Why Is There a Political Crisis in South Korea?]. *BBC News Russkaya sluzhba*, 4 December. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/russian/articles/cr4rx7155zzo?utm_source.com [Accessed 2 February 2025].

Berk, M., 2022. "Кем работала первая леди по ночам": сексуальный скандал потряс Южную Корею ["What Was the First Lady's Night Job": Sex Scandal Shocks South Korea]. *Komsomolskaya Pravda,* 1 September. Available at: https://www.kp.ru/daily/27439/4641484/ [Accessed 31 January 2025].

Chernetskii, F.M., 2024. Регионализм как ключевой фактор в электоральных процессах в Республике Корея [Regionalism as a Key Factor in Electoral Processes in the Republic of Korea]. *Vestnik rossiiskogo koreevedeniya*, 13, pp. 67-81.

Cook, C. and Seddon, M., 2024. Russia Trained Officers for Attacks on Japan and South Korea. *The Financial Times*, 31 December. Available at: https://www.ft.com/content/d345a6e7-2d72-4dcb-9c12-76d571ba75eb [Accessed 2 February 2025].

Delury, J., 2025. Can South Korea's Democracy Survive? *Foreign Affairs*, 27 January. Available at: https://www.foreignaffairs.com/south-korea/can-south-koreas-democracy-survive [Accessed 3 February 2025].

Denney, S. and Green, Ch., 2018. Righter Than You Think: National Security Conservatism and Moon Jae-in. *SinoNK*, 3 April. Available at: https://sinonk.com/2018/04/03/righter-than-you-think-national-security-conservatism-and-moon-jae-in/ [Accessed 3 February 2025].

Dyachkov, I.V., 2024. Корея: с тревогами в новый год [Korea: With Worries into the New Year]. *Portal MGIMO.* Available at: https://mgimo.ru/about/news/experts/korea-2023/?utm_source=chatgpt.com [Accessed 31 January 2025].

Finmarket, 2021. Россия надеется привлечь корейские компании в водородный проект на Сахалине и приливную энергетику в ДФО [Russia Hopes to Attract Korean Companies to Hydrogen Project on Sakhalin and Tidal Power in the Far Eastern Federal District]. *Finmarket*, 1 November. Available at: https://www.finmarket.ru/news/5580409 [Accessed 3 February 2025].

Golubkin A.V., Chernetsky F.M., and Malyutina O.M., 2023. Тенденции в торговле машиностроительной продукцией между Россией и странами Восточной Азии [Trends in Trade in Mechanical Engineering Products between Russia and East Asian Countries]. *Ekonomika stroitelstva*, 9., pp. 47-52.

Hamutaeva, S.V., 2016. Консерватизм как политическая философия в Республике Корея и Корейской Народно-Демократической Республике [Conservatism as a Political Philosophy in the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea]. *Vestnik Buryatskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, Vol. 6, pp. 120-127.

Henderson, G., 1978. *Korea: The Politics of the Vortex.* Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press.

Interfax, 2024a. РФ заинтересована в развитии отношений с Южной Кореей [Russia Is Interested in Developing Relations with South Korea]. *Interfax*, 5 June. Available at: https://www.interfax.ru/spief2024/965168 [Accessed 2 February 2025].

Interfax, 2024b. Лавров констатировал, что вопрос "денуклеаризации" КНДР закрыт [Lavrov: The Question of the DNRK's "Denuclearization" Is Closed]. *Interfax*, 26 September. Available at: https://www.interfax.ru/russia/983917 [Accessed 18 March 2025].

ITC, 2025. Trade Map, 2025. *International Trade Centre*. Available at: https://www.trademap.org/Index.aspx [Accessed 2 February 2025].

Joo, Kyung-don, 2021. Opposition Presidential Contender Causes Stir with Praise of Ex-president Chun. *Yonhap News Agency*, 20 October. Available at: https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20211020004000315 [Accessed 3 February 2025].

Kim, G., 2024b. 통일 외쳐 온 임종석 "통일 하지 말자, 두 개의 국가 수용하자"... [Im Jong-seok Decried Unification: "Let's Not Reunify, Let's Accept the Two Countries"...]. *Chosun Ilbo*, 19 September, Available at: https://www.chosun.com/politics/politics_general/2024/09/19/ACOVPBFCCJABNKBZ4DTGP5UACI/ [Accessed 2 February 2025].

Kim Eun-jung, 2024a. Yoon Unveils Vision for 'Freedom-Based Unification,' Proposes Dialogue with N. Korea. *YonhapNews*, 15 August. Available at: https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20240815002251315 [Accessed: 02.02.2025].

Kim, So-ra, 2025. 논란의 백골단 "왜 부활했는지 납득될 것…국회로 불러낸 건 민주당" [Controversial Baekgoldan "You'll Understand Why It Was Revived… The Democratic Party Brought it to the National Assembly"]. *Seoul Shinmun*, 10 January. Available at: https://www.seoul.co.kr/news/society/accident/2025/01/10/20250110500144 [Accessed 2 February 2025].

Kim, Byung-Kook and Vogel, E.F. (eds.), 2011. *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea.* Harvard University Press.

Kiryanov, O., 2023. Жену и родственников южнокорейского президента подозревают в коррупционных схемах [The South Korean President's Wife and Relatives Are Suspected of Corruption Schemes]. *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 7 July. Available at: https://rg.ru/2023/07/07/zhenu-i-rodstvennikov-iuzhnokorejskogo-prezidenta-podozrevaiut-v-korrupcionnyh-shemah.html? [Accessed 31 January 2025].

Kiryanov, O., 2024a. Гадалки, шаманы, гамбургеры и спецназ. Расследование раскрывает невероятный паноптикум введения военного положения в Южной Корее [Fortune Tellers, Chamans, Hamburgers and Special Forces. Investigation Reveals an Unbelievable Panopticon of Martial Law in South Korea]. *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 23 December. Available at: https://rg.ru/2024/12/23/kak-v-voennom-polozhenii-v-iuzhnoj-koree-okazalis-zameshany-shamany.html [Accessed 2 February 2025].

Kiryanov, O., 2024b. Ким Чен Ын отказался от идеи объединения с Южной Кореей [Kim Jong-un Rejects the Idea of Unification with South Korea]. *Rossiiskaya gazeta,* 1 January. Available at: https://rg.ru/2024/01/01/kim-chen-yn-otkazalsia-ot-idei-obedineniia-s-iuzhnoj-koreej.html?utm_source.com [Accessed 3 February 2025].

Kiryanov, O., 2025. Несмотря на санкции, русофобии в Южной Корее нет. [Despite the Sanctions, There Is No Russophobia in South Korea]. *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 2 February. Available at: https://rg.ru/2025/02/09/nesmotria-na-sankcii-rusofobii-v-iuzhnoj-koree-net-posol-rf-v-seule-ocenil-otnosheniia-mezhdu-dvumia-stranami.html [Accessed 3 February 2025].

Koda, 2024. The "Core Problem" for Trilateral Security Cooperation: Challenges for the US-Japan- Korea Relationship. *Nippon.com*, 11 October. Available at: https://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/d01033/ [Accessed 18 March 2025].

Korea Times, 2024. Han, Japan's Ishiba Agree to Continue Trilateral Cooperation with US against N. Korea-Russia Ties. *Korea Times*, 19 December. Available at: https://koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2024/12/120_388774.html?utm_source=fl [Accessed 2 February 2025].

Kostina, A., 2025. "Единственные, кто ведет себя здесь недружественно, это западные дипломаты" ["The Only Ones Behaving Unfriendly Here Are Western Diplomats"]. *Izvestiya*, 28 January. Available at: https://iz.ru/1828985/anastasiia-kostina/edinstvennye-kto-vedet-sebia-zdes-nedruzhestvenno-eto-diplomaty-riada-zapadnykh-stran [Accessed 2 February 2025].

Kwak, Yeon-soo, 2024. Prosecution Drops Charge against First Lady over Luxury Bag Scandal. *Korea Times*, 2 October. Available at: https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2024/10/113_383506.html [Accessed 31 January 2025].

Kwon, Chan-hee, 2025. 권성동 "국정위기 유발자는 이재명 민주당… 비상계엄 이유 따져봐야" [Kwon Sung-dong: "National Crisis Provocateur Is Lee Jae-myung from the Democratic Party...]. *Newsis*, 11 February. https://www.newsis.com/view/NISX20250211_0003060529 [Accessed 2 February 2025].

Lee, Hyo-jin, 2024a. How Scandals Surrounding First Lady Contributed to Yoon's Downfall. *Korea Times*, 16 December. Available at: https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2024/12/356_388567.html?utm_source=taboola [Accessed 31 January 2025].

Lee, M., 2024b. Trilateral Cooperation to Continue Despite Shift from Multilateralism under Trump 2.0, Say Experts. *Korea JoongAng Daily,* 21 December. Available at: https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/2024-12-21/national/diplomacy/Trilateral-cooperation-to-continue-despite-shift-from-multilateralism-under-Trump-20-say-experts/2205912 [Accessed 2 February 2025].

Lee, Seong-hyon 2024c. The Asian Triad at a Crossroads: Challenges and Prospects for South Korea-Japan-China Trilateral Cooperation. *KEI*, 26 June. Available at: https://keia.org/publication/the-asian-triad-at-a-crossroads-challenges-and-prospects-for-south-korea-japan-china-trilateral-cooperation/ [Accessed 18 March 2025].

Lee, W. and Yi, J., 2024. Korea's Democracy at a Crossroads: Rhetoric, Polarization and Institutional Erosion. *The Korea Herald*, 24 December. Available at: https://www.koreaherald.com/article/10021651[Accessed 2 February 2025].

Leshakov, P.S., and Malofeeva N., 2023. Российско-южнокорейское экономическое взаимодействие на паузе [Russian-South Korean Economic Interaction on Pause]. *Koreevedenie*, 2 (3), pp. 16-28. DOI: 10.48647/ICCA.2023.30.88.002.

Lim Jeong-Won, 2024. Seoul Imposes More Sanctions on North Korean, Russian Entities, Ships and Individuals. *Korea JoongAng Daily*, 27 July. Available at: https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/2024-06-27/national/northKorea/Seoul-imposes-more-sanctions-on-North-Korean-Russian-entities-ships-and-individuals/2078486 [Accessed 2 February 2025].

Logirus, 2024. Южная Корея до конца августа существенно расширит санкционные списки [South Korea Will Significantly Expand Sanctions Lists by the End of August]. *LOGIRUS*, 1 July. Available at: https://logirus.ru/news/custom_and_ved/yuzhnaya_koreya_do_kontsa_avgusta_sushchestvenno_rasshirit_sanktsionnye_spiski.html [Accessed 2 February 2025].

Malevich, I.A., 2006. *Азиатский треугольник драконов* [The Asian Triangle of Dragons]. Moscow: AST.

McBride, J., 2024. Is Russia's Mutual Defense Pact with North Korea Truly Mutual? *Foreign Policy in Focus*, 19 December. Available at: https://fpif.org/is-russias-mutual-defense-pact-with-north-korea-truly-mutual/ [Accessed 3 February 2025].

Newsis, 2024. 윤, 야권 '체코 덤핑수주' 주장에 "정쟁은 국경선서 멈춰야…돕지는 못할망정 훼방 개탄" [Yun Responds to the Opposition's "Czech Dumping Order" Claim. "War Should Stop at the Border ...]. *Newis*, 24 September. Available at: https://www.newsis.com/view/NISX20240924_0002896810 [Accessed 3 February 2025].

NK Pro, 2025. Trump's First-Week Overtures on North Korea Are Unlikely to Entice Kim Jong Un. *NK Pro*, 29 January. Available at: https://www.nknews.org/pro/trumps-

first-week-overtures-on-north-korea-are-unlikely-to-entice-kim-jong-un/ [Accessed 3 February 2025].

Oberdorfer, D., 2001. *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History.* Basic Books.

Parry, R.L., 2025. Who Is Yoon Suk-yeol — and What Led to His Impeachment? *The Times,* 15 January. Available at: https:// https://www.thetimes.com/world/asia/article/who-south-korea-president-yoon-impeached-8f76mgd9k?utm_source&region=global [Accessed 2 February 2025].

Portyakova, N., 2022. Американ бой: чего ждать Москве от нового президента Южной Кореи [American Boy: What Moscow May Expect from the New President of South Korea]. *Izvestiya*, 10 March. Available at: https://iz.ru/1303141/nataliia-portiakova/amerikan-boi-chto-zhdat-moskve-ot-novogo-prezidenta-iuzhnoi-korei [Accessed 3 February 2025].

Radchenko, S., 2025. China Doesn't Want to Lead an Axis. *Foreign Affairs*, 18 February. Available at: https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/china-doesnt-want-lead-axis?utm_medium=newsletters&utm_source=fatoday&utm_campaign=China%20Doesn [Accessed 18 March 2025].

ROK e-government, 2023. 윤석열정부 1년 [Yoon Seok-yeol Government's First Year]. *Official website of the Republic of Korea's e-government*. Available at: https://www.korea.kr/news/policyFocusList.do?pkgId=49500791&pkgSubId=25000133& [Accessed 2 February 2025].

Seonwoo, Yunho, 2025. President Yoon Suk-yeol Approval Rating 44.6%, Opposition to Impeachment at 45.6%. *Pen & Mike,* 16 January. Available at: https://www.pennmike.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=93307 [Accessed February 2025].

Singh, L., 2024. The Strategic Imperative for South Korea's Nuclear Armament. *The Diplomat* 14 August. Available at: https://thediplomat.com/2024/08/the-strategic-imperative-for-south-koreas-nuclear-armament/ [Accessed 2 February 2025].

Son Ji-hyoung, 2024. Yoon Urges Russia to Make "Sensible" Decision over Koreas. *The Korea Herald*, 8 July. Available at: https://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20240708050571 [Accessed 2 February 2025].

TASS, 2024a. Эксперт заявил, что Вашингтон нелегально протаскивает Сеул в ядерный клуб, 2024. [Expert Says Washington Is Illegally Sneaking Seoul into the Nuclear Club]. *TASS*, 27 July. Available at: https://tass.ru/politika/21466653 [Accessed 1 February 2025].

TASS, 2024b. КНДР назвала провокацией обсуждение денуклеаризации Корейского полуострова в Сеуле [DPRK Calls Seoul's Discussion of the Korean Peninsula's Denuclearization a Provocation]. *TASS,* 27 May. Available at: https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/20912689 [Accessed 3 February 2025].

Toloraya, G. and Chernetskii, F., 2024. Надо ли России выбирать из двух Корей? [Should Russia Choose between the Two Koreas?]. *Mir peremen,* Vol. 3. Available

at: http://mirperemen.net/2024/10/nado-li-rossii-vybirat-iz-dvux-korej/ [Accessed 2 February 2025].

Toloraya, G.D., 2024. Как преодолеть кризис в отношениях с Южной Кореей? [How to Overcome the Crisis in Relations with South Korea?]. *Rossiya v globalnoi politike*, 2 July. Available at: https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/preodolet-krizis-s-koreej-toloraya/ [Accessed 2 February 2025].

Tsukanova, O., 2024. Первая леди Южной Кореи загадочно исчезла из публичной жизни [South Korea's First Lady Has Mysteriously Disappeared from Public Life]. *Mir 24*, 20 March. Available at: https://mir24.tv/news/16584395/pervaya-ledi-yuzhnoi-korei-zagadochno-ischezla-iz-publichnoi-zhizni [Accessed 31 January 2025].

Vorontsov, A., 2021. Что будет на Корейском полуострове в ближайшее десятилетие? [What Will Happen on the Korean Peninsula in the Next Decade?]. *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn'*, Vol. 1. Available at: https://interaffairs.ru/jauthor/material/2458 [Accessed 31 January 2025].

Xinhua, 2024. Senior DPRK Official Calls S. Korean Military "Main Culprit" of Drone Intrusion into Pyongyang. *Xinhua news,* 10 October. Available at: https://english.news.cn/asiapacific/20241015/f8b6ee7d92194c67bb815c87ee0674f5/c.html [Accessed 3 February 2025].

Yang Ji-ho, 2025. 이재명과 양자 대결서 吳·洪 모두 41% vs 41% [YTN·엠브레인 조사] [In a One-on-One Matchup with Lee Jae-myung, Oh and Hong Both Received 41% vs 41% [YTN·Embrain Survey]]. *Chosun Ilbo,* 25 January. Available at: https://www.chosun.com/politics/politics_general/2025/01/25/X4RDCLCNIFDM5LMV5X3F7D4HAE/ [Accessed 3 February 2025].

Yoon Suk Yeol, 2022. President of the Republic of Korea. *Official website of the Office of the President Republic of Korea.* Available at: https://eng.president.go.kr/profile [Accessed 2 February 2025].

Yoshida, K. and Morgan, J., 2024. Shifting Sands: South Korea's Future and Navigating Trump 2.0. *The American Conservative*, 27 December. Available at: https://www.theamericanconservative.com/shifting-sands-south-koreas-future-and-navigating-trump-2-0/ [Accessed 3 February 2025].