



The Yoon Suk-Yeol administration's Indo-Pacific strategy and its implications for South Korea democracy

Heegyeo Kim¹

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Abstract

In the wake of the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy, a strategic rivalry has emerged between the United States and China. This competition has sparked a crisis in the multilateral Kissinger system, which was previously founded on a consensus between the two nations. To address the challenges posed by the post-war system crisis, South Korea's conservative Yoon administration opted to align itself with the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy. The Yoon government aimed to return to the San Francisco system by broadening trilateral cooperation amongst the United States, South Korea, and Japan, evolving it into a trilateral alliance. Additionally, it pursued economic divergence from the Kissinger system through initiatives aimed at decoupling from China.

The problem with the Indo-Pacific strategy implemented by Yoon Seok-yeol's government is that it is damaging Korea's multifaceted democracy, which thrived under the Kissinger system. In terms of human rights, which have always been valued within Korean democracy, there are ongoing threats to the right to survival, a decline in the right to development, damage to labor rights, and reduction of human rights. Additionally, in terms of inter-state sovereignty, there is a decline in sovereignty and escalating inequality in inter-state systems. Moreover, due to an increasing disregard for the global democratic agenda and growing acceptance of globally undemocratic views such as racism, Korea's democracy is retreating to the era of the San Francisco system.

Keywords Indo-Pacific strategy · The San Francisco system · The Kissinger system · Yoon Seok-yeol · Korean democracy

✉ Heegyeo Kim
hgkim@kw.ac.kr

¹ Division of Northeast Asia Cultural Industries, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Kwangwoon University Seoul, 20 Kwangwoon-Ro, Nowon-Gu, Seoul 01897, Korea

1 The structure of the post-war system and the duplicity of Korean democracy

Following the House of Councillors election in July 2020, former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe referenced the concept of the “post-war regime.” Specifically, he used this term to describe the post-World War II East Asian political structure. According to Abe, this regime is comprised of three main pillars: the Peace Constitution, the San Francisco Peace Treaty, and the Japan–U.S. Security Treaty.

The cornerstone of the post-war regime, as emphasized by Abe, is the San Francisco Peace Treaty. Since World War II, it has underpinned the fundamental structure of international relations, extending beyond Japan into East Asia. The treaty, inked in 1951 under U.S. leadership and endorsed by 49 countries in San Francisco, represented a basic agreement on the post-war order in East Asia. It was established amidst the global Cold War, decolonization wars, and the situation in the Korean Peninsula.

For South Korea, the San Francisco regime, as Bruce Cumings argued, was a hierarchical system commanded by the U.S. State Department, under which nations were semi-sovereign states (Cumings 1997). The relationship between South Korea and the United States exhibited the characteristics of 1) economic dependency, 2) a hierarchical alliance system, 3) the establishment of hegemonic cultural dominance and mechanisms of voluntary submission, and 4) a neo-colonial regime constructed through collusion between the dominant country and colonial elites (Calder 2004, 136, 138–139). To South Korea, the San Francisco regime represented a liberal order that provided liberation yet created an incomplete sovereignty and an unequal interstate system. This constituted somewhat of a neo-colonial regime. Despite its best intentions, South Korea found itself perpetually opposed to the hostile bloc system. Treaty agreements between nations required direct or indirect approval from the United States. With the ongoing U.S. military presence, South Korea not only had to contend with nuclear weapons, but also with missile ranges under U.S. control. Its sovereignty was compromised to the extent that even concluding a war required U.S. approval. The neo-colonial structure extended into everyday life. Persistent internal political disagreements and factional ideological conflicts were the norm. The pervasive fear of war became normalized, and the populace suffered under the military dictatorship’s violence, which arose from the militaristic authoritarianism created by a system of division.

However, contrary to Abe’s perception, the post-war regime cannot be solely defined by the neo-colonial San Francisco regime. Within the San Francisco regime, the growth of Asian countries like China and Korea harbored enough power to potentially overturn the basic structure of this system. The 1972 “Shanghai Communiqué” between the United States and China was a result of the growth of Asian countries. This communiqué paved the way for the dismantling of the Cold War and led to peaceful diplomatic relations between the United States and China, China and Japan, and China and Korea.

The Shanghai Communiqué is a collaborative effort born out of the United States’ strategy to contain the Soviet Union and expand into new markets in

China. Concurrently, it aligns with China's reform and opening-up policy, which aimed to realize Chinese-style socialism and help the country to integrate into the global economy. This agreement, which dismantled the Cold War paradigm, paved the way for the normalization of relations between the U.S. and China, China and Japan, and China and South Korea, ultimately leading to China's accession to the WTO. This accession served as a pivotal moment in establishing a multilateral, global supply chain network, and fostering a more pluralistic global economic system. I would like to refer to this as the "Kissinger System." The post-war regime can be seen as a blend of two systems; the San Francisco regime, formed out of the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951, and the Kissinger System, developed from the Shanghai Communique in 1972.

The dual system of the post-war era was its most defining characteristic, consisting of two contradictory relationship axes. Much like a fault line destined for an earthquake, this system was inevitably headed towards a fracture. The neo-colonial San Francisco regime and the reciprocal and multilateral Kissinger system, which was completed when China joined the WTO, had contradictory characteristics that ultimately led to inevitable conflict with each other. Due to the hostile alliance structure of the San Francisco regime and the multilateral approach of the Kissinger system, South Korea's policy of 'the United States for politics and China for economy', was bound to lead to a confrontation at some point.

For South Korean conservatism, the establishment of diplomatic relations with China marked a turning point. South Korea embraced the Kissinger System while maintaining the hierarchical alliance system. Capitalizing on the opportunity spurred by its economic desires, South Korea established diplomatic relations with China even as it maintained its hostile alliance system against China. Consequently, within the post-war regime, South Koreans viewed China from a divisive perspective. The contradiction between the collapse of socialist China and the perceived threat that a rising China posed to neighboring countries could not coexist. However, under the banner of economic pragmatism, which sought to harness the Chinese market, these opposing realities managed to coexist without significant conflict. The dual approach of security with the United States and economy with China emerged under this context.

Contrary to the expectations of South Korean conservatism, Sino-Korean relations rapidly progressed under the Kissinger System. China surpassed the United States to become South Korea's largest trading partner, resulting in the largest trade surplus for South Korea with China. China's ascent as the largest trading partner also served as a springboard for growth for South Korean conservatism. It fulfilled their core ideology of economic pragmatism.

However, deepening relations with China through the establishment of diplomatic ties posed both an opportunity and a crisis for South Korean conservatism. China's rise shook the worldview of South Korean conservatism. Firstly, anti-communism sentiment began to weaken. The anti-communism stance, which was based on hostile relations, was undermined by multidimensional exchanges between the two countries. The logic that socialist China was bound to collapse crumbled, and the assumption that socialist China would inevitably Westernize also collapsed. Pro-American sentiment was also shaken. Persistent trade surpluses created situations

where South Korea did not necessarily have to side with the United States economically, leading to frequent occurrences where South Korea could not politically side solely with the United States due to economic interests. As a result, while economic pragmatism gained ground through the establishment of diplomatic relations with China, pro-American sentiment and anti-communism were diluted.

The fact that proponents of South Korean conservatism took to the streets, waving the American flag alongside the flag of the Republic of Korea, signified an internal crisis. These flags embodied the post-war regime they had constructed. The success of the 'Candlelight Revolution' that ousted the Park Geun-hye administration, the nullification of the military information exchange agreement between South Korea and Japan, which was pursued as part of enhanced military cooperation between the two countries, the delay in the deployment of THAAD due to the emergence of the Moon Jae-in administration, and the near fruition of peace negotiations between North Korea and the United States were events significant enough to shake the worldview of South Korean conservatism to its core.

2 Yoon Suk-yeol's government's Indo-Pacific strategy

On July 21 2020, the United States closed the Chinese Consulate General in Houston. The Chinese Consulate General in Houston once stood as a symbol of the Kissinger system. The Chinese Consulate General in Houston, being the first exchange platform established between the two countries at the inception of U.S.–China relations, held significant importance. Upon taking office, The Trump administration began to expand the Obama administration's Asia Pivot policy into a containment policy against China. In essence, The Trump administration's foreign policy in East Asia represented a departure from the Kissinger system, which had been in place for approximately 50 years (Pompeo 2020).

The Trump administration's containment policy against China began with challenging the 'One China' policy, the fundamental tenet of the Kissinger system. It began treating Taiwan as an independent country and stirred up independence sentiments in Hong Kong. According to Kissinger, the 'One China' policy was China's first demand upon agreeing to establish diplomatic relations with the United States (Global Times 2021). Starting from undermining the 'One China' principle, the administration pursued economic containment policies against China. It initiated the U.S.–China trade war, constructed the Economic Prosperity Network (EPN) as an anti-China economic bloc, imposed sanctions on Chinese technology companies, promoted the Clean Network initiative, regulated major Chinese apps like WeChat, and expelled Chinese students, among other measures.

In conjunction with the departure from the Kissinger system, consistent efforts were made to strengthen San Francisco system. This included forming the Quad, Japan's military exercises in the South China Sea, enhancing the China containment function of the G7, the entry of U.S. warships into the South China Sea, the passage of the Hong Kong Autonomy Act, stripping Hong Kong of its special status, and the passage of the Uyghur Human Rights Act.

The Biden administration, in line with Trump's policies, continued the Indo-Pacific strategy, bolstering the San Francisco system while diminishing the influence the Kissinger system. The core of the Biden administration's Indo-Pacific strategy was to contain China by engaging India, Australia, Japan, and South Korea. A key strategy was to promote a trilateral military alliance among South Korea, Japan and US while pursuing economic decoupling from China. The crisis of the post-war system arose as the two axes of the post-war system inevitably collided.

In response to the crisis of the post-war system, the Yoon Suk-yeol administration adopted a straightforward approach. The core ideologues within the Yoon government believed that if a strategic competition between the United States and China began, they would have to side with the United States because the United States would win (Kim 2021). It abandoned South Korea's strategic ambiguity and aligned with the United States' Indo-Pacific strategy. Since taking office, the administration has expanded the US–South Korea alliance into a US–South Korea–Japan trilateral alliance and shifted its stance from a pro-China in economy to a pro-US totally. The Biden administration's Indo-Pacific strategy was thus concretized as the Yoon Suk-yeol administration's Indo-Pacific strategy.

The forces driving the Yoon Suk-yeol administration's Indo-Pacific strategy were rooted in South Korea's conservatism. Since the Yoon Suk-yeol administration, South Korea's conservatism has been divided into three factions. One is security-focused conservatism. The most powerful entities under the San Francisco system, including the media, prosecution, judiciary, major churches, veterans' associations, and military-interest groups, formed a cartel and established security-focused conservatism as the central force. They prioritized national security based on pro-US and anti-communist sentiments. The crisis response of South Korea's security-focused conservatism to the post-war system marked a return to the San Francisco system. They played a pivotal role as the strongest supporters of the Trump administration's neo-Cold War strategy.

Another faction is economic conservatism, which advocates for a free market order, prioritizes the role of capital over the state, and seeks to build a capital-centric world from the perspective of capitalists rather than laborers. Their core ideology is economic neoliberalism. During the San Francisco regime, they collaborated with pro-US and anti-communist forces to pursue their economic interests. However, the advent of the Yoon Suk-yeol administration presented them with their greatest dilemma yet. This is mainly due to the Yoon administration's Indo-Pacific strategy, which politically forms an antagonistic camp against China and Russia while seeking economic decoupling from these nations.

The last faction is the far-right group. Taking advantage of the crisis in the system, some conglomerates, conservative media, conservative Christianity, and some military factions nostalgic for the Park Chung-hee era militarism joined forces. This alliance highlighted how global right-wing extremism has become a unified force. Their most significant feature is their preference for militarism over dialogue or negotiation. They sought to preserve their privileges through militarism by reinforcing economic neoliberalism, anti-communism, pro-US sentiment, and even xenophobia.

The driving forces behind the Yoon Suk-yeol administration's Indo-Pacific strategy comprised security-oriented conservatism and far-right ideologies. The Yoon administration embraced security-focused conservatism's anti-communism and pro-US sentiment. Furthermore, by adopting a far-right military authoritarian approach, it aimed to establish a Korean Indo-Pacific strategy that prioritized order through force rather than dialogue or negotiation. This strategy also saw the pursuit of a US–South Korea–Japan trilateral military alliance. It escalated into an extreme confrontation with North Korea and moved towards forming an antagonistic camp against China and Russia.

3 The Indo-Pacific strategy and the crisis of democracy in South Korea

In Korea, a president with merely a year of political experience managed to dismantle a political system that had been in place for the past 30 years. The fundamental issue here is a crisis in representative democracy, which seems incapable of advocating for the interests of the majority. Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, from the United States, have diagnosed the current democracy, which fails to represent the interests of the majority, as "democracies die" (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018, 10–11). Jason Brennan argues the necessity to discard the current democracy, which is hitting its limits without bringing about an improvement in people's lives, and to usher in a new form of democracy (Brennan 2016, 7).

However, the crisis of representative democracy in the West expands the need not only for the emergence of new democracies but also for a redefinition of the concept of democracy itself. The rise of China, once considered a failed socialist state, also calls for a new definition of democracy. In light of this, Cui Zhiyuan insist that democracy should be evaluated by outcomes, not institutions (Cui 2014, 186). Wang Hui also argues that democracy is possible even in a one-party state as long as there is intra-party democracy (Wang 2014, 217–224).

Unlike Western countries or China, which have secured independent sovereignty, South Korea has a completely different form of democracy. South Korea's democracy, which has not dismantled its hierarchical alliance system, has a multi-faceted democratic structure where the incomplete sovereignty and intergovernmental inequality system can undermine domestic democracy at any time. The crisis in South Korean democracy during the brief tenure of the Yoon Suk-yeol administration was also rooted in the imperfect sovereignty structure of South Korean democracy.

In South Korea, democracy cannot be interpreted solely as an aspect of human rights, as advocated by liberalism, where property rights are absolute and singular, but rather as "a bundle of rights," as expressed by Hardt and Negri (2017, 169–171). Since the establishment of the Kissinger system, South Korean democracy has been composed of a multifaceted a bundle of democracy, where domestic democracy is intertwined with sovereignty and intergovernmental issues. The democracy

espoused by the West, which champions freedom from intergovernmental inequality systems, represents only one aspect of democracy.

From the perspective of multifaceted democracy, Korea's current democracy can be examined from 4 unique aspects. The first aspect is human rights, which encompasses freedom of speech, press, assembly, and association, as well as the right to life, labor, development, and suffrage. The second aspect is the sovereignty, which reflects the rights and power a country can exercise over other countries or organizations. This aspect can be further segmented into political, military, and economic sovereignty. The third aspect examines the problem of the inter-state system, which can refer to international normative organizations such as the UN, a dominant-subordinate relationship such as India-Britain during the colonial period, a vertical alliance system such as the US–Japan alliance or the ROK-US alliance, or a multilateral cooperation system such as ASEAN or the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). It may be a multilateral relationship like the EU. Finally, the fourth aspect concerns the global system. This includes problems regarding labor issues under the unequal exchange system, relationship issues between global capital and individual countries, environmental issues under the global division of labor system, and immigration due to the globalized labor movement.

The most significant issue with the Indo-Pacific strategy under Yoon Suk-yeol's administration is that it is rapidly eroding South Korea's democracy. By dismantling the Kissinger system and reverting to the San Francisco Alliance System, the growth of democracy established by the Kissinger system is being severely undermined on all fronts. This is because the core of the Indo-Pacific strategy lies in militarization. Militarization entails an attitude that values military solutions, such as obedience to hierarchy and belief in the use of force. However, this attitude undermines freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and association in South Korean society to the level of authoritarianism (Enloe 2007, 25) The Swedish Institute for Democracy and Diversity's classification of the Yoon Suk-yeol administration as a country transitioning from democracy to authoritarianism serves as vivid evidence of this phenomena.

The most profound issue within democracy concerning human rights was the threat to the right to life. The militarized Yoon administration has been pursuing the trilateral alliance with the United States and Japan, engaging in constant confrontation with North Korea. North Korea abandoned its longstanding strategy for peace and reunification on the Korean Peninsula, declaring South Korea as its primary hostile nation. By embracing diplomatic initiatives such as the "Peace in the Taiwan Strait" proposed by the Biden administration, South Korea has positioned itself to intervene in issues concerning the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea, potentially involving itself in these different conflicts.

The right to development has also suffered a decline. Since the onset of the administration, efforts to economically decouple from China resulted in South Korea facing an economic deficit for the first time in three decades. This was primarily due to the reversal from surplus to deficit in economic gains from China. Under the Yoon government, the economic growth rate decreased by over 2% compared to the previous administration. The policy of decoupling from China persisted for 2 years

under the Yoon Suk-yeol administration, resulting in an annual decrease of approximately 20% in exports to China. Exports from the top ten conglomerates to China decreased to about 50% of their peak levels. The number of South Korean residents in China decreased to about one-fifth of its previous level. South Korea faced the risk of losing its core market in China, which was pivotal for its main industry, semiconductors. Moreover, a key emerging industry for the country, the battery sector, faced difficulties in procuring raw materials from China due to pressure from the United States.

To address the plummeting economic deficit, the adopted strategy involved diminishing labor rights. Taxes for the wealthy decreased, while income taxes for workers increased. Labor rights were weakened while managerial rights were expanded. The United States' reshoring policy has accelerated the construction of semiconductor and battery manufacturing plants domestically. This has further exacerbated the phenomenon of deindustrialization and globalization in South Korea, leading to job cuts for their workers.

The issue of democracy concerning sovereignty was even more serious than its collapse in terms of human rights. In order to pursue its own interests, the United States took advantage of the unequal relationship between countries and placed Korea at the forefront of the anti-China movement. Korea's political autonomy has diminished to the point where even the expansion of Korean semiconductor production facilities in China requires approval from the United States. Economic autonomy has disappeared to the extent that even battery raw materials cannot be purchased from China. The issue fully restoring military sovereignty, such as reclaiming wartime operational command authority promoted under the Kissinger system, has become even more distant.

The problem of democracy in inter-state relations has also become a serious concern. The most critical among these is the potential risk we face when continuing to promote the triangular military alliance between Korea, the United States and Japan. There's a possibility that we could be relegated to a subordinate status to Japan, the United States' foremost partner in Asia. The current goal of the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan, which seeks to break the peace constitution of the San Francisco system and break away from the Kissinger system, is to return to revert to the colonial-era framework of an unequal inter-state system, rather than progressing towards a more equitable future inter-state system. Militarists essentially use hostile methods against all opponents to protect their own political interests and mortgage the lives of future generations for the sake of present interests. In addition, militarists are indifferent to or excluded from global agendas such as the climate crisis or regional inequality. In particular, the immigration issue that arises under a globalized system is representative global democracy issue. The Yoon Suk-yeol administration has adopted a comprehensive approach to effectively implement the Indo-Pacific strategy, which, unfortunately, appears to embrace Western racial prejudices against China. Since the normalization of relations between South Korea and China, a significant number of ethnic Koreans living in northeastern China immigrated to South Korea, participating in labor and trade activities. From the early days of Yoon's administration, racially discriminatory remarks and policies targeting ethnic Koreans were proliferated, portraying them as sacrificial pawns for the Indo-Pacific

strategy. Even during the 22nd general elections, Han Dong-hoon, chairman of the ruling party, the People Power Party, advocated for the disenfranchisement of 100,000 ethnic Koreans from China. The ruling party has continually tried to introduce legislation that reduces healthcare benefits for ethnic Koreans. This importation of non-democratic global agendas into domestic politics is undermining domestic democracy.

In conclusion, the Yoon Seok-yeol government's Indo-Pacific strategy is pushing back on the San Francisco regime. This shift demonstrates a retreat from the domestically nurtured democracy that grew under the Kissinger system and exacerbating the problem of inequality in the interstate system. It has contributed to the worsening problem of racism and a marked indifference to climate change issues. Korea's systemic defects in its inability to realize its sovereignty are creating a crisis in domestic democracy. This crisis is proliferating in all directions due to the Indo-Pacific strategy of the Yoon Seok-yeol government.

4 The future of South Korea's Indo-Pacific strategy

The Yoon Suk-yeol administration's Indo-Pacific strategy has yet to reach the stage of establishing a new Cold War-like order. However, it is already introducing a period of instability by undermining the democratic structure nurtured by the Kissinger system. Daniel W. Drezner, a professor of international politics at Tufts University, along with his colleagues, asserts that the dynamics of global politics have significantly transformed from what they once were. Everything from a state's capacity to exercise power, the manner in which power is exercised, the purposes for which power is conferred, to who holds power has fundamentally changed, resulting in the assertion that there is "an emerging of world of nonpolarity and disorder" (Drezner et al. 2020).

The Indo-Pacific strategy of the Yoon Suk-yeol government, which emulates the United States' Indo-Pacific strategy, has become a potent force exacerbating the crisis of the post-war order. This strategy aims to undermine the Kissinger system, which has fostered democracy in Korea for the past 30 years, and seeks a return to the San Francisco system of the Cold War era. However, whether the Yoon Suk-yeol administration's Indo-Pacific strategy can establish a new order remains uncertain.

The diplomatic strategy of the Yoon Suk-yeol government, which seeks a return to the San Francisco system, faces significant resistance from three major domestic forces. Included among these is the country's progressive democratic powers. Under the Kissinger system, democratic powers in Korea have grown into a formidable entity, as evidenced by their role in ousting the Park Geun-hye administration through the Candlelight Revolution. Since assuming power, the Yoon administration has consistently faced opposition at levels around 60%. This is a result of the combined dissatisfaction of progressive powers, who oppose the retreat of democracy in Korea being brought about by his policies, and centrist forces who are discontent with his approach.

The second force is the power of economic conservatism. Traditionally, this group has been a core constituency of conservatism in Korea. However, they are starting to

splinter from the alliance of security-oriented conservatism and far-right forces that form the foundation of the Yoon Suk-yeol government. As the Yoon administration has operated the Indo-Pacific strategy for over 2 years, public opposition is surfacing from the economic conservative camp. This emergence highlights the significance of this shift. Tae-won Choi, the chairman of SK Group and the Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has come forward to argue that decoupling from China is not only impossible but also unwise (Pressian 2023). Seok-hyun Hong, the owner of the prominent economic conservative newspaper, JoongAng Ilbo, has begun emphasizing the importance of the Chinese market (JoongAng Ilbo 2023). Even Chosun Ilbo, which represents Korea's security-oriented conservatism, has started advocating for a change in the Yoon administration's foreign and security policy in its editorials (Chosun Ilbo 2023).

The last opposition stems from a significant segment of the population that harbors anti-Japanese sentiments. Unlike any previous administration, The Yoon Suk-yeol government has pursued a notably strong pro-Japanese policy. It has reconciled historical issues by reversing the ruling on compensation for Comfort Women and instead arranged for Korean and Japanese conglomerates to handle restitution. Additionally, by advocating for the trilateral military alliance between the U.S., South Korea, and Japan, it has paved the way for Japan's military activities in the Indo-Pacific region. Furthermore, it has actively supported the discharge of contaminated water from Fukushima, which is in stark contrast to China's stance on the issue. These pro-Japanese policies neglect historical grievances and have alienated the majority of the Korean public, who have inherited colonial experiences and history. They perceive such policies as aligning with Japan's regressive actions, which aim to dismantle the peace constitution and steer towards conflict.

The sustainability of the Yoon Seok-yeol administration's Indo-Pacific strategy will be judged by the Korean general election in April, the U.S. presidential election in November, and the possible North Korea-US summit thereafter. The Yoon Seok-yeol government already suffered a crushing defeat in the April general election. The Democratic Party, acutely aware of the crisis in Korean democracy brought about by the Yoon Seok-yeol government's Indo-Pacific strategy, has now become the largest party. The Rebuilding Korea Party, whose members have been more active than the Democratic Party in opposing the Yoon Seok-yeol government's Indo-Pacific strategy, has emerged as the second opposition party. If the Indo-Pacific strategy of the Yoon Seok-yeol government compromises Korean democracy or damages national interests by the end of its term, the new National Assembly mount a much stronger resistance than its predecessor. The opposition party has already strongly resisted the Japanese government's attempt to extort shares of Korean companies through economic security. Ultimately, the Yoon Seok-yeol government abandoned its initial stance of supporting the Japanese government and declared that it would resist any intervention from the Japanese government.

A further reason for revising Yoon Seok-yeol government's Indo-Pacific strategy is because the outlines of the next presidential election were revealed in this general election. People Power Party Chairman Han Dong-hoon, who was leading the election on behalf of the Yoon Seok-yeol government, resigned after a crushing defeat in the general election. Given his low public approval rating, his standing as

the next presidential candidate has also significantly declined. On the other hand, Democratic Party leader Lee Jae-myung, who led the opposition party's election, led the general election to a complete victory. In addition, he further strengthened his position as the next presidential candidate by completely seizing power within the party, which had been divided so far. This means that from now on, there is an increased possibility that government officials will be lukewarm or disagree with the unreasonable policies of the Yoon Seok-yeol government. The majority of people who support the Democratic Party and the opposition party prefer the expansion of the multilateral order rather than returning to the San Francisco system. From this point forward, Korean officials are more likely to carry out foreign policy with the next president and the majority of the people in mind.

However, the direction of Korea's foreign policy is determined by the president. Congressional power has clear limits, especially when it comes to carrying out foreign policy. Ultimately, considering that the Yoon Seok-yeol government's Indo-Pacific strategy is not based on national interests but on ideology, it seems unlikely that the Yoon Seok-yeol government will revise the Indo-Pacific strategy. However, its power will likely see a significant drop. Opposition from Congress, officials, and the public has already reached a level that cannot be ignored. Therefore, it is evident that the motivation to actively intervene in matters such as the Taiwan issue, the South China Sea issue or to promote a triangular alliance between Korea, the United States, and Japan, has significantly diminished.

In the end, the remaining 3 years of the Yoon Seok-yeol government will be an era of disorder in which the fight between the Indo-Pacific strategic forces of the Yoon Seok-yeol government and Korea's democratic forces will continue. Meanwhile, the outcome of the US presidential election will play a key role in deciding the course of Korea's Indo-Pacific strategy. However, after experiencing the 2 years of Yoon Seok-yeol's government, many Koreans have already realized that the Indo-Pacific strategy, which takes blockade of China as its basic principle, poses a serious threat to Korean democracy. Therefore, no matter who becomes president of the United States, it will not be easy for Korea to accept America's Indo-Pacific strategy.

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