

The Path Ahead for Yoon

How Korea's New President Can Recover from His First 100 Days of Struggles

"I voted for Yoon Suk-Yeol because I just couldn't vote for Lee Jae-Myung. Do you think Yoon will be a good president?"

"Well, it's only been a month since he entered office. We should wait at least a year to see how he does."

When I visited Korea this June, I had this exchange while speaking with friends. Like these friends, there are many Koreans who cast their ballot for Yoon to oust the Democratic Party of Korea (DPK) from power, even though they did not necessarily approve of Yoon. They achieved their goal, and the conservatives regained the presidency. However, these voters looked upon the Yoon administration with a mixture of hope and trepidation.

Their fears were realized only a month later, in late July. The ruling People Power Party (PPP) became paralyzed by an internal power struggle. A mere two months after entering office, Yoon's approval ratings plummeted

in Democratic circles openly voice their fears about losing both the House and the Senate in November's midterms.

Just as in Korea, there have been polls in the United States that show that more Americans would vote for Trump than Biden if the election were to be held today. The former president is poised to make another run for the White House in 2024, as the FBI continues its investigation into his potential mishandling of classified documents.

Biden and Yoon could not be more different in terms of ideological orientation or political experience. Nonetheless, they find themselves in a similar political predicament. How can we explain this state of affairs? Some would emphasize the effect of catastrophic events beyond any leader's control, like the COVID-19 pandemic. Others stress the role of structural factors, including political polarization. Critics in Korea and the United States

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below 30%. Some polls even indicate that over half of voters would choose Lee Jae-Myung if the election were to be held again.

There is an uncanny resemblance to the early days of the Biden administration. The conversations I had with my Korean friends in June are reminiscent of those I had with friends in the United States soon after Biden entered the White House. They confessed that they voted for Biden because they could not support Trump, and they were both worried and hopeful about the new administration. Their concerns began to materialize during Biden's first year in office. Despite a slight rebound in the past two months, Biden's approval rating remains in the 40s. Those

point to policy failures and shortcomings of political leadership, while both Biden and Yoon insist that their respective predecessors left behind daunting challenges. This essay examines each of these factors as it explores the path ahead for President Yoon Suk-Yeol, who recently marked his 100th day in office.

IS YOON KOREA'S TRUMP?

Before comparing Yoon with Biden, however, it is necessary to first address another frequently mentioned comparison—that of Yoon with Trump. In the months leading up to Korea's presidential election this March, foreign journalists and observers often asked if Yoon

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could be understood as a Trump-like figure in Korean politics. To be sure, there is an overlap: a lack of political experience, strong anti-China rhetoric, and anti-feminist attitudes. Yoon's unwillingness to foster diversity calls to mind Trump's white supremacist rhetoric.¹ Both are perceived as "strongmen" who forcefully achieve their goals by any means, not skilled politicians who foster compromise through negotiation. Moreover, both are known for their blunt manner of speaking and their anti-pluralist rhetoric.²

However, the differences between the two are arguably more salient. Trump's doctrine of "America First" rejected an international order built on multilateral cooperation. He showed no hesitation in openly pressuring longstanding allies like Japan and Korea. In contrast, Yoon has voiced support for the liberal international order and has emphasized the importance of the U.S.-Korea alliance. Furthermore, Trump has shown little regard for the rule of law. Instead of condemning those who attacked the Capitol on January 6, 2021, Trump still claims that the election was fraudulent. Yoon, who was trained as a lawyer, has consistently emphasized the rule of law.

Trump was rejected by the Republican establishment as a political maverick. Yoon, on the other hand, is the embodiment of Korea's elite. He graduated from the Department of Law at Seoul National University, which is regarded as Korea's most prestigious university. He then became a prosecutor and rose to the position of prosecutor general, overseeing one of Korea's most powerful institutions. If anything, Yoon brings to mind a different Republican president: George W. Bush.

YOON AND GEORGE W. BUSH: STRIKING SIMILARITIES

Bush and Yoon both grew up in upper-middle-class households and graduated from prestigious universities. Bush's father served as president from 1988 to 1992, while Yoon's father taught at Yonsei University as a professor of applied

statistics.³ Despite their affluent backgrounds, both faced troubles during their youth. Bush struggled with alcohol and was once arrested for a DUI violation. He also suffered defeat in his first attempt to run for Congress in 1978. Yoon failed the state bar exam eight times and succeeded on his ninth attempt, only to be relegated to less important positions multiple times in his prosecutorial career for his uncompromising stance in politically sensitive investigations.⁴ Bush and Yoon have both overcome difficulties, and they also cultivated down-to-earth, approachable personas as politicians.

The similarities do not end there. As president, Bush and Yoon both relied heavily on well-established figures in the conservative mainstream when making appointments to key positions. Bush chose Dick Cheney, who served as secretary of defense during his father's administration, to be his running mate. Donald Rumsfeld, who led the Pentagon under President Ford, was once again appointed to the same position. Key figures from the Republican national security establishment, including Condoleezza Rice, played a significant role in shaping the Bush administration's foreign policy.

The Bush administration followed the traditional Republican stance of emphasizing alliances in foreign policy. It pursued market-friendly policies at home and abroad, lowering taxes and entering into free trade agreements with Korea and other countries. Moreover, it pushed ahead with the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq and labeled North Korea as part of the "axis of evil," along with Iraq and Iran. In doing so, the Bush administration raised political tensions by pursuing a so-called ABC policy ("anything but Clinton"), seeking to overturn its predecessor's legacy.

There are striking similarities in the composition and policy orientation of the Yoon administration. Consider its foreign policy team, for instance. Park Jin, a legislator with extensive foreign policy credentials, was appointed as foreign minister. Kwon Young-Se, a former

1 See, for example, the discussion about the composition of Yoon's Cabinet in Gi-Wook Shin, "[Beyond Representation: How Diversity Can Unleash Korea's Innovation](#)," Shorenstein APARC, June 30, 2022.

2 This section and the following section expand on a previous discussion of this comparison in Gi-Wook Shin and Kelsi Caywood, "[Which Yoon Should Biden Expect at the Upcoming South Korea-US Summit?](#)," *The Diplomat*, May 17, 2022. .

3 Together with Seoul National University and Korea University, Yonsei University is widely regarded as one of the most prestigious universities in Korea.

4 The state bar exam was abolished in 2017, as Korea transitioned to a U.S.-style system of law schools. Before 2017, individuals underwent training at the Judicial Research & Training Institute (JRTI) upon passing the bar exam. Only those with the highest grades during this training process could become judges or prosecutors. Although Korean culture stresses seniority by age, the Prosecutors' Office has an organizational culture that emphasizes the year in which a prosecutor entered the JRTI. Having failed the bar exam eight times, Yoon essentially fell eight years behind his peers and entered the JRTI with individuals who were much younger than him. He also worked under prosecutors who were younger than him. His subsequent demotions set him back even further, until the Moon Jae-In administration appointed him as the head of the Seoul Central District Prosecutors' Office in 2017 and then as prosecutor general in 2019. The latter appointment was highly unusual, as it skipped five classes at once. Yoon belonged to the JRTI's 23rd class, while his predecessor as prosecutor general belonged to the 18th class.

National Assembly member who was the Park Geun-Hye administration's first ambassador to Beijing, now leads the Ministry of Unification. Kim Sung-Han, a professor at Korea University who was a vice foreign minister

and a society riven by ever-worsening political and economic polarization. Both leaders also have to contend with a ruling party that is far from cohesive. Examining the path that the Biden administration has taken over the

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during the conservative Lee Myung-Bak administration, is Yoon's national security advisor. Kim Tae-Hyo, who played a key role in shaping Lee Myung-Bak's national security policy and subsequently taught political science at Sungkyunkwan University, has returned to government as Yoon's deputy national security advisor.

Some observers have noted that this team bears a resemblance to the neoconservatives of the Bush administration. The Yoon administration is expected to stress the U.S.-Korea alliance and adopt a hardline stance against Pyongyang. Some expect Yoon to pursue a policy of “anything but Moon,” just as Bush proceeded with “anything but Clinton.”

In assembling his economic team, Yoon has drawn from well-established career civil servants. His prime minister, Han Duck-Soo, entered the civil service in 1970 and later served as minister of finance and prime minister under President Roh Moo-Hyun. Choo Kyung-Ho, who serves as deputy prime minister and the minister of economy and finance, has nearly three decades of experience in economic and financial policy. The Yoon administration has rolled out a package of market-friendly economic policies focused on eliminating red tape, stimulating innovation, and lowering corporate taxes.

There is more than a passing similarity between the composition and policy objectives of the Yoon and George W. Bush administrations. That said, the political trajectory of Yoon's presidency seems likely to follow that of Biden, not Bush. Unlike Biden, whose approval ratings have steadily declined after entering office, Bush's ratings soared to 90% following 9/11 and stayed relatively high during the early days of the War on Terror. Bush was re-elected in 2004, but it remains to be seen whether Biden can do the same.

Yoon faces many of the same challenges as Biden: the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, high inflation,

past 18 months can thus yield important lessons for the political future of the Yoon administration.

AN EARLY LOSS OF SUPPORT

During Trump's presidency in the United States and Moon Jae-In's presidency in Korea, commentators often spoke about a crisis of democracy. The conversation has now shifted to focusing on a crisis of political leadership. Those in the United States and in Korea have sought to understand why Biden and Yoon, who each entered office after a hard-won electoral victory, faced difficulties early on in their terms.

As I noted in a previous essay, both presidents won narrow victories in bruising election campaigns marked by unprecedented levels of mudslinging.⁵ In both countries, the ruling parties won important victories shortly after the presidential election. Raphael Warnock won a Senate seat in Georgia for the Democratic Party in January 2021, while the PPP swept Korea's local elections in June 2022. However, those in the United States and Korea who hoped that the new president would overcome the crisis of democracy and return the country to normalcy have so far been disappointed.

Let us first look at the United States. According to a RealClearPolitics average of multiple polls conducted in July and August, nearly 70% of respondents believe that the country is going in the wrong direction. Only 23.2% stated that the country is headed in the right direction.⁶ In its own analysis, FiveThirtyEight notes that Biden had the lowest approval rating (38.6%) of any president 18 months after entering office. (By comparison, Trump recorded 42.1% at the same point in his term.) Biden's ratings have fallen even among African Americans and Latino Americans, who traditionally make up the Democratic Party's base. Among youth, who overwhelmingly voted

5 Gi-Wook Shin, “[In Troubled Waters: South Korea's Democracy in Crisis](#),” Shorenstein APARC, May 3, 2022.

6 “[Direction of Country](#),” RealClearPolitics, accessed September 2, 2022.

for Biden in 2020 (over 60%), the level of support has fallen by half.⁷

A similar trend is now evident in Korea. In terms of the speed and magnitude of the decline, Yoon has fared much worse than Biden. According to a poll of 1,000 respondents conducted by Gallup Korea from July 26 to 28, only 28% expressed support for Yoon's job performance. In terms of age groups, those in their 30s and 40s showed the lowest level of support at 17%. Even among respondents in the city of Daegu and North Gyeongsang Province, which are conservative strongholds, negative responses exceeded positive responses by 7 percentage points.⁸ If there was a difference between Biden and Yoon in this regard, it was in the main reason for the loss in support. Economic troubles created difficulties for Biden, whereas Yoon went against prevailing public opinion by appointing controversial individuals to key posts.

How might we understand the causes of Biden's political troubles? In the July 20 *New Statesman*, Adam Tooze writes that "a combination of bad luck, ineptitude, internal divisions, the structures of U.S. politics and the ruthlessness of their enemies has put not only the future of the Biden administration but the republic itself in danger."⁹ One could reasonably classify the pandemic and high inflation as "bad luck." Beyond this, Tooze largely points to two causes. Political polarization and "the ruthlessness of. . . enemies" are structural factors. On the other hand, "ineptitude" and "internal divisions" pertain to questions of political leadership. It is debatable whether Biden has already "failed," as Tooze concludes. However, his frame of analysis provides a useful lens for diagnosing the current political situation in Korea.

EXTREME POLITICAL POLARIZATION

Structural factors have played an important role in the United States. Trump was skilled in using "divide and conquer" to his political advantage. Political polarization in the United States reached unprecedented levels during Trump's term in office. The 2020 election came down to the wire, with Arizona, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania playing a decisive role in the electoral college vote. Trump, along with certain segments of the Republican Party, still refuses to concede defeat.

In such a polarized environment, it is difficult for even the most skilled politician to obtain an approval rating exceeding 50%. Major initiatives that require a broad national consensus, such as FDR's New Deal and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, have become virtually

impossible. Biden initially pitched "Build Back Better" as a New Deal for the 21st century, but it encountered significant opposition in Congress. Conflicts over the so-called culture war issues, including abortion rights, have further intensified. Edward Luce, the U.S. national editor of the *Financial Times*, recently warned that "America is two nations barely on speaking terms."¹⁰

Second, critics have raised doubts about the effectiveness of Biden's political leadership at home. While Biden successfully led the Democratic Party to victory in its battle against Trump in 2020, voters did not necessarily see him as the most attractive candidate at the outset. Even though they did not secure the nomination, candidates such as Sanders and Warren, who openly advocated for progressive policies, drew a great deal of support during the primaries. Once Trump had been defeated, the intra-party alliance loosened. It became a daunting challenge to bring together different factions of the Democratic Party into a cohesive whole. I also raised this point in an interview with the Korean press, noting that Biden could face a lame duck period much sooner than expected. In perhaps the most well-known example, the Build Back Better initiative failed to pass Congress not only because of opposition from Republicans, but also because of pushback from Democratic senators Manchin and Sinema.

Although the recently passed Inflation Reduction Act takes meaningful steps related to climate change, many progressive Democrats were deeply unhappy with Biden for failing to keep his promise to act on the issue. Biden's loss of support among young voters is partly due to economic difficulties, but it is also related to his reluctance to wholeheartedly adopt key elements of the progressive agenda. On the other side, centrist and conservative-leaning figures in the Democratic establishment, including Larry Summers, are criticizing Biden's economic policies as being too far to the left. Moreover, Biden met with Mohammed bin Salman in July, despite his strong condemnation of the Saudi prince's human rights record. This meeting was ostensibly for the purpose of persuading Saudi Arabia to increase its oil production. Biden received criticism from both sides of the aisle after failing to achieve this goal.

The United States is experiencing its worst inflation since the 1980s, with persistent concerns about an impending recession. Furthermore, the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan and the ongoing war in Ukraine have raised doubts about the effectiveness of

7 Geoffrey Skelley, "What's Behind Biden's Record-Low Approval Rating?," *FiveThirtyEight*, July 14, 2022.

8 "Daily Opinion no. 505 (4th Week of July 2022)" [in Korean], Gallup Korea, July 28, 2022.

9 Adam Tooze, "Why Joe Biden Failed," *New Statesman*, July 20, 2022.

10 Edward Luce, "America is Two Nations Barely on Speaking Terms," *Financial Times*, June 8, 2022.

U.S. leadership on the world stage. Biden's response to Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan also raised doubts in some quarters. All of these events have led to growing dismay and disappointment among the American public. It is certainly too early to pronounce Biden as a failed president, as Tooze claims in the *New Statesman*. If anything, the Dobbs decision and the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act appear to have created momentum among core supporters of the Democratic Party ahead of this year's midterms.

However, the Democratic Party still faces an uphill battle in its bid to retain the White House. The outcome of several ongoing criminal investigations involving the former president remains an open question, but Trump is all but certain to run again in 2024. If Biden fails, then Trump may well return—with profound consequences for America and the international community.

Tooze's analysis of Biden's first 18 months has significant implications for Korea. Both the United States and Korea are exposed to external shocks, including the

In several respects, Yoon finds himself in a much more difficult situation than Biden. With decades of political experience, Biden can rely on a team of trusted aides and advisors with whom he has worked since at least the Obama administration. His party also controls both houses of Congress. Yoon, however, is still a newcomer to politics, and the opposition party commands a powerful majority in the National Assembly. The PPP and the DPK only recently agreed on the division of standing committee chairs, which is required to proceed with a session of the National Assembly.¹² This delay has cost the Yoon administration, which urgently needs support for its legislative priorities.

An approval rating in the 20s only two months into office is a serious warning sign. Every country in the world is being battered by external shocks, but smaller countries like Korea sway more violently when struck by the same wave. President Yoon has rightly said that policies should not waver with every fluctuation in public opinion, but a democratically elected leader must heed

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pandemic and high inflation. The two countries also share structural problems, including political polarization and the lack of toleration and compromise among political actors.¹¹ Far from steering Korea's democracy out of troubled waters, Yoon is in danger of losing political momentum altogether due to intra-party strife and incompetence.

IS THERE A WAY OUT FOR YOON?

Just as Biden has to contend with Trump's legacy, Yoon also has to deal with everything that Moon Jae-In has left behind. Missteps and complications in economic and foreign policy have surely created a challenge for Yoon, but one cannot keep blaming the Moon administration for ongoing difficulties. The people rendered their judgment when they voted the DPK out of power. Yoon will be judged on his own merits.

the people's warning. Popular support is a sine qua non for any president.

To find a way out of the current crisis, Yoon must demonstrate leadership as a politician, not as a lawyer or a prosecutor. He must make it a priority to defuse internal strife within the PPP. Like Biden, Yoon was elected as the best candidate to achieve a transfer of power. He was seen, first and foremost, as a leader of disparate political forces who opposed Lee Jae-Myung. There are multiple factions within the PPP that seek to protect their own interests. Yoon's supporters were united in their opposition to Lee, but it was unclear what they stood in favor of, with no clear goal to coalesce around once the election was over.

The ongoing struggle between Lee Jun-Seok, the suspended chairman of the PPP, and pro-Yoon politicians has taken no one by surprise. President Yoon could have fostered dialogue and compromise, but instead left this

¹¹ See Shin, "In Troubled Waters."

¹² In Korea's National Assembly, the ruling party and the main opposition party typically divide the appointment of standing committee chairs. For instance, under the agreement between the PPP and the DPK in late July, the PPP appointed the chair of seven standing committees, while the DPK appointed 11.

Faulty policies must, of course, be corrected. Those who were involved in corrupt or illegal activities should be held to account. However, it is excessive and unnecessary to punish those who made a good faith effort to formulate reasonable policies based on the information that was available at the time.

conflict to fester. His actions have sometimes exacerbated the situation. One journalist wrote that “Yoon is his own worst enemy.” Yoon must honestly reflect on his role in the ruling party’s crisis and show himself to be a responsible leader with integrity.

Yoon became a politician with a vow to restore fairness and common sense to politics. He also repeatedly emphasized the importance of freedom in his inaugural address. However, it still remains unclear to the Korean people what this means in practice. How does he intend to apply fairness and common sense to his administration’s policies? What concrete steps is he taking to restore and defend liberal democracy in Korea? Even if Yoon and his aides already have something in mind, the Korean people are still waiting for the answers to these questions.

In particular, polls repeatedly indicate that controversial personnel appointments are the main reason behind unfavorable views of Yoon. Put differently, the public believes that Yoon is violating his pledge to apply fairness and common sense when choosing individuals to appoint to key government positions. In the same vein, only criticizing the failures of the Moon administration is not enough to restore and renew Korea’s damaged democracy. The Korean people still await the Yoon administration’s vision for the country, one which would be based on fairness, common sense, and freedom.

HOW YOON CAN REBUILD POPULAR SUPPORT

Another way out of the current crisis would be to pursue policies that align with the political center. Due to political polarization, no president can hope for approval ratings in the 70s or 80s anymore. For simplicity, let us assume that roughly one-third of Korea’s electorate leans left, a third consists of moderates, and the remaining third is conservative. The most feasible strategy to regain popular support would be to attract around two-thirds of the moderates (22%) in addition to his conservative base (33%), which would yield an approval rating in the mid-50s.

Political polarization is a structural problem that cannot be resolved overnight. Nonetheless, certain steps can be taken to bolster support among moderates. The Yoon administration would do well to keep this in mind as it seeks to implement reforms in education, pensions, and labor policy. The experiences of past governments are instructive in this respect. Kim Dae-Jung entered office in 1998 with a legislative minority, but he joined forces with Kim Jong-Pil’s United Liberal Democrats to build political momentum.¹³ Lee Myung-Bak faced a domestic political crisis early on in office, but he was able to regain support by enacting centrist policies that addressed the needs of ordinary citizens.

Yoon must resist the temptation to pursue “anything but Moon.” The Moon administration openly vowed to “eradicate deep-rooted evils,” rejecting and punishing the policies of its predecessor. Faulty policies must, of course, be corrected. Those who were involved in corrupt or illegal activities should be held to account. However, it is excessive and unnecessary to punish those who made a good faith effort to formulate reasonable policies based on the information that was available at the time. Doing so would make civil servants even more reluctant to do their jobs.

The Moon administration created a task force within every key government agency to pursue its “eradication” agenda. While using the judicial apparatus, it was a politically motivated act to punish those who were involved in the previous conservative administrations’ policy decisions. Yoon must avoid repeating this mistake. He would know better than anyone the pitfalls of going down such a path. Although Yoon was initially part of this effort as a prosecutor, he later became the target of such a political campaign during his time as prosecutor general.

Having a strong base of popular support is critical in conducting foreign policy, an area in which Korea will face formidable challenges. Yoon’s attendance at the NATO summit in Madrid in June demonstrated his resolve to strengthen the U.S.-Korea alliance and uphold the liberal international order. The overarching orientation of Yoon’s

¹³ Born in 1926, Kim Jong-Pil graduated from the Korea Military Academy and played a key role in Park Chung-Hee’s coup in May 1961. Kim established the Democratic Republican Party, which was Park’s political base of power during his time as president, and also served as the founding leader of the Korea Central Intelligence Agency. After Korea transitioned to democracy, Kim joined forces with Kim Dae-Jung in 1998 and served as prime minister. This coalition is sometimes referred to as the “DJP alliance,” based on the initials of the two leaders (DJ/Dae-Jung and JP/Jong-Pil). Kim Jong-Pil died in 2018.

foreign policy is commendable. However, managing relations with China will be a demanding task. Yoon's foreign policy team will soon be put to the test. Pyongyang could engage in a major provocation. Beijing will continue to pressure Seoul to uphold the "three noes" with respect to the THAAD missile defense system.¹⁴ A military clash between China and the United States in the Taiwan Strait is by no means an unlikely possibility. Popular support is critical in responding to any foreign policy crisis. A leader who is weak at home is also constrained abroad.

Finally, Yoon must refrain from turning to the rule of law as the solution to every problem. Respect for laws and principles is a necessary condition for democracy, but it is not a sufficient condition. We have seen all too clearly how the Moon administration weakened Korea's democracy under the guise of rule of law. Without respect for democratic norms and values and the resolve to defend them, liberal democracy cannot be sustained. To defend freedom, which President Yoon emphasized during his inaugural address, it is vital to show toleration for the other side and forbearance in the exercise of power. He must engage in a sustained dialogue to persuade the people, including the opposition.

In late July, Park Soon-Ae, the education minister, faced intense public opposition after abruptly announcing that the age of entry into elementary school would be lowered from six years to five. She resigned only ten days later. Before pursuing major policy reforms, sufficient time must first be taken to gather a wide range of views through public debate and dialogue. The Yoon administration not only faces a large opposition party, but also must contend with progressive elements of Korea's civil society. The administration must skillfully conduct negotiations, reconcile opposing views, and foster compromise. The ability to exercise political leadership will be crucial.

In doing so, the administration must acknowledge differences while pursuing shared goals and interests. It is only natural for there to be opposing views in a pluralistic, democratic society. The government must listen to a variety of voices and appoint a diverse group of individuals

to key positions. As I noted in a previous essay, ensuring diversity is critical to innovation and organizational effectiveness.¹⁵ Relying heavily on former prosecutors and career civil servants, as the Yoon administration has done, makes it much more difficult for diverse voices and experiences from the full breadth of Korean society to inform policymaking on important issues.

A GLOBAL CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP: THE PATH AHEAD FOR YOON

We are now experiencing a global crisis of leadership, perhaps as serious as the global crisis of democracy. Trump and Moon are no longer in office, but their respective successors are struggling to unite and lead their countries. In the United Kingdom, the Conservative Party experienced a prolonged leadership vacuum before choosing Liz Truss as the new prime minister. Merkel's absence is keenly felt in Germany. Macron was re-elected after a difficult election campaign in France, but the ruling party's approval rating is stalled in the mid 30s. Firm leadership and cohesion among democratic powers—including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Japan—are critical in defending the liberal international order from challenges by authoritarian powers like China or Russia. The current state of affairs is far from encouraging.

Korea is no exception. Its own crisis of leadership is unfolding much more rapidly than those in other major democracies, with serious repercussions. There are structural problems, both domestic and external, that President Yoon cannot immediately resolve. However, it is critical for him to deeply reflect on his effectiveness as a leader so far. If he honestly confronts and learns from his shortcomings and mistakes, the present political crisis could become a turning point. Amidst a global crisis of leadership, Yoon could elevate Korea as a staunch defender of democracy. The choice is his to make.

Translated by Raymond Ha

14 This refers to China's three demands: to refrain from deploying additional THAAD batteries, to not participate in the U.S. missile defense system, and to not participate in a trilateral military alliance with Japan and the United States.

15 Shin, "Beyond Representation: How Diversity Can Unleash Korea's Innovation."