

Yoon Suk-yeol to Take Power in South Korea: Asia Pacific Set for Continuing Arms Buildup

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Yoon Suk-yeol, a conservative from the People’s Power Party has won the South Korean Presidency by the narrowest edge in the country’s history. In an election marred by several spectacular scandals, extreme voter apathy, and young voters representing the decisive margin, the outcome has given the U.S. a new hawkish partner in the region.

The foreign policy stances of the two candidates have been described in essence as the opposite from whatever the opposition party feels, and Yoon Suk-yeol is no exception, taking the contrary stances on China, Japan, the North, and the U.S. to his opponent Lee.

As such, Yoon is set to join in the chorus of the Pentagon’s “Pivot to Asia” which was going swimmingly until the character of U.S.-Russia relations changed from December on to the [war in Ukraine](#). Biden [has already congratulated](#) Yoon over the phone, and emphasized cooperation for security in the Indo-Pacific.

In the 2018 National Security Posture review, the Trump Administration sought to decouple from unpopular “forever wars” in the Middle-East, and “Pivot to Asia” with the [Pacific Deterrence Initiative](#)—a massive new spending project to pepper the seas around allied island nations with bases, airfields, missile batteries, and surveillance stations in order to antagonize China.

At that same time however, attempts to hold summits with North Korea saw and suspension in the “longstanding practice of sending strategic bombers and carrier striker groups to the Korean Peninsula” as well as a “dramatically downsized scale and public profile of its combined military exercises with South Korea in an effort to create conditions for diplomatic negotiations,” [reports CNA](#).

Yoon’s election will almost certainly mean a return to old deployment schedules, placing more weapons and American personal on the Peninsula, ballooning military budgets during the highest period of American inflation of money and credit since the 1970s, and the worst

energy crisis since 2008.

An eye for an eye makes a few men very rich

Throughout the campaign Yoon [slammed](#) the incumbent Democrat Moon Jae-in's North Korea policy as "subservient" and vowed he would keep up sanctions and dismiss all peace agreements until the North "makes active efforts in complete and verifiable denuclearization," the [same demand which killed off the 2019 summit](#) organized by the Trump Administration.

Totally in the American spirit of "for thee and not for me," Yoon's advisors desire the return of American tactical nuclear missiles and other weapons to South Korea along the NATO-sharing lines, as well as potentially a South Korean-made nuclear deterrent, and even the greenlight to instantly use them in the face of kinetic Northern provocations.

During the campaign, Yoon stated "You can only prevent war when you have the capability for preemptive strikes and have the intent to do so," [according to translations](#) from the Center for a New American Security fellow, Duyeon Kim.

This enhanced deterrence/sanctions policy without any meaningful reassurances, as Senior Fellow at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft [writes](#), "has failed to stop North Korea's nuclear armament and increased North Korea's desire for nuclear weapons as a security guarantee.

Indeed, when Trump's spur of the moment North Korean peace plan saw him opt out of re-authorizing another round of sanctions on humanitarian grounds, the opposition was that his "soft" stance would see Korea would allow the subsequent economic growth arm up even more; previous decades of stockpiling and weapons tests during the sanctions regime obviously didn't count.

Late in December, incumbent President Moon Jae-in's foreign minister stated that [a draft agreement](#) to formally end the Korean War had been reached along with the U.S., to which the North responded favorably. Time is not on Moon's side however, and even if there were a draft agreement, it would take a Periclean effort to implement it.

Indo-Pacific policy is peppered with some of the most expensive items in the defense budget, and the 2023 NDAA, as well as future arms sales to Korea, should see many additional billions of printed dollars flow into the hands of weapons manufacturers.

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