



South Korea's Presidential Election: Obstacles and Opportunities for the Yoon Administration

The following is a transcription of Asia in Washington's podcast episode "South Korea's Presidential Election: Obstacles and Opportunities for the Yoon Administration" featuring Mr. Scott Snyder. It was created using a speech recognition program with edits made by hosts and Reischauer Policy Research Fellows, Jada Fraser and Adriana Reinecke, sound editor, Lauren Mosely, and, Producer, Neave Denny. You can find us on [Apple Podcasts](#), [Google Podcasts](#), and [Soundcloud](#). To keep up to date with upcoming Reischauer Center events and programs, please follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#).

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Jada Fraser

Welcome to Asia in Washington, the podcast examining key questions animating debate in DC on the Indo-Pacific region. I'm Jada Fraser, here with my co host Adri Reinecke, recording in Washington D.C. at the Edwin O. Reischauer Center for East Asian Studies at Johns Hopkins SAIS. You can find a transcript of today's episode on the Reischauer Center website at www.reischauercenter.org/podcasts.

Adriana Reinecke

Today we're joined by Mr. Scott Snyder, senior fellow for Korea studies and director of the program on U.S.-Korea policy at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). His program examines South Korea's efforts to contribute on the international stage; its potential influence and contributions as a middle power in East Asia; and the peninsular, regional, and global implications of North Korean instability. Mr. Snyder is the author of *South Korea at the Crossroads: Autonomy and Alliance in an Era of Rival Powers* and coauthor of *The Japan-South Korea Identity Clash: East Asian Security and the United States* with Brad Glosserman. He is also the co-editor of *North Korea in Transition: Politics, Economy, and Society*, and the editor of *Global Korea: South Korea's Contributions to International Security* as well as *The U.S.-South Korea Alliance: Meeting New Security Challenges*. Mr.



Snyder served as the project director for CFR's Independent Task Force on policy toward the Korean Peninsula. He currently writes for the blog Asia Unbound.

Jada Fraser

Today we'll be speaking with Mr. Snyder about the recent South Korean presidential election and the new President-elect, Yoon Seok-youl. We'll be focusing on domestic implications for Korean society as well as the implications for the U.S.-ROK Alliance, South Korea's relationship with Japan, inter-Korean relations, and broader regional implications, including the South Korea-China relationship. Mr. Snyder, we're really excited to have you on the Asia in Washington podcast today. As I mentioned, both Adri and I are longtime followers of your work, so it's really an honor to have the chance to talk with you about a really important regional power in Asia.

Scott Snyder

Thank you, Jada. And thank you, Adri. Glad to be here.

Adriana Reinecke

To begin, last week saw the election of President-elect Yoon Seok-youl, the conservative candidate from the People Power Party in what many observers have deemed the closest race in recent history. To begin, can you summarize for our listeners some of the defining debates of the election and where the President-elect falls on some of those issues?

Scott Snyder

Sure, in some ways, the debates competed with the scandals, actually. There was a lot of mudslinging in the debate. But I think that the major issue really on South Koreans' minds in the election was related to real estate policy and economic policy in particular. There were also pretty dramatic differences between the two candidates in their foreign policy platforms, and gender issues became a spotlight and a flashpoint during the campaign. Just to go into a little bit of detail with regard to the differences between the two candidates, basically, it ended up being a kind of contest between Yoon as a conservative, and Lee as a progressive. And the salient differences in my view between the progressive and conservative campaign platforms really focus, at the most general level, on preferences for government to try to solve problems versus a preference for the market as the vehicle by which to try to solve policy problems. Then also, I think that, with regard to foreign policy, the progressive view is one that prizes autonomy and prioritizes peace, whereas the conservative approach prioritizes the alliance and focuses on deterrence as a vehicle by which to maintain peace.



Jada Fraser

Thank you, Mr. Snyder, for that really excellent overview on some of the main issues that were driving the debate in the election season and that are going to continue shaping South Korean domestic and foreign policy and a lot of those issues we'll pick up in a little bit more detail later in the episode. But, given Russia's ongoing brutal invasion of Ukraine, I think we'd be remiss not to mention the role that South Korea has played. And I think what we've seen really kind of stands in stark contrast to South Korea's more subdued response back in 2014 to Russia's invasion of Crimea then. Now, South Korea has joined international sanctions regimes. They have blocked some Russian banks from SWIFT, and they're blocking exports of strategic items as well as sending aid to Ukraine. So, my question for you is what can this about-face be attributed to, and should we be viewing this as a reflection of South Korea's role as a regional democratic power in Asia that's increasingly trying to tie its foreign policy to human rights and democracy?

Scott Snyder

Well, it's interesting the contrast between the South Korean response to Crimea and the response this time with the Russian invasion of the Ukraine. And I've been looking at that primarily as kind of a Rorschach test for how South Koreans view themselves in the world. And, in fact, I think that what we see is that the Moon Administration was actually a half-step behind until the invasion began. And then South Korea quickly brought itself into line with the United States and Europe and its response on sanctions. And it really is interesting that they've taken this step, because, in the case of Crimea, I think the South Korean basic response was to keep your head down and preserve your own very specific economic interests. But this time, they're being challenged to really meet the obligations of a global leader as the 10th largest economy in the world, and to move in lockstep and kind of stand in the vanguards in the context of this egregious violation of international norms. And so, I think that South Korea is sensitive to criticisms. In the South Korean media there was great sensitivity to the way that the Moon Administration's response was being categorized by the United States: was South Korea listed among the coalition that was engaged with sanctions, et cetera? And of course, South Koreans are following this closely. And there have even been comparisons, understandably so, since South Korea is also on a geopolitical fault line between Ukraine and Korea. So, in that aspect, I think that there is a resonance, but also, hopefully, I think, confidence in the fact that South Korea occupies a different position as a direct treaty ally of the United States.

Adriana Reinecke

Thank you so much. So, just bringing things back over to the election. We mentioned earlier what a close race this was. And I read that President-elect Yoon won by a 0.8% margin. Just [a] quick background for those listening who may not already be familiar:



unlike the US, which operates under an electoral system, Korean voters elect their president directly. South Korea also has a much higher average voter turnout than the US. For this election, it was projected to be over 77%. But what that means is that nearly half of the South Korean electorate voted *against* Yoon. So, I'm wondering what implications do you think that holds for the future of South Korean domestic and foreign policy? And also, given that the South Korean presidency is limited to one term, do approval ratings mean less than maybe in places like the United States where the President would be concerned with re-election? Or does lack of widespread support potentially mean difficulties in terms of the Yoon Administration's effectiveness going forward?

Scott Snyder

Well, I think that public opinion does matter in South Korea. And I think that the election did reveal a disturbing degree of polarization within South Korean society. But before focusing on that, in the global context of democratic retrenchment, I think we also have to acknowledge that South Korea conducted, successfully, an election that was not contested, despite the fact that it was won by a razor thin margin. And you mentioned some of the features of the South Korean electoral process that enabled that to be the case. But it wasn't necessarily foreordained that that *would* be the case. There were, I think, elements of disinformation in the campaign, and certainly the polarized background could have led, I think, to a different outcome, but South Korea successfully avoided that.

So, because we're facing an environment of polarization in South Korea — and Yoon, in particular, is facing a divided electorate as President-elect — we have to also acknowledge that he has some enormous obstacles that he needs to overcome in terms of hitting a note of national unity. And those divisions are only underscored by the fact that the South Korean National Assembly is going to remain under the control of the opposition party in a pretty decisive fashion. And so, in a way, just like his predecessor, Moon, he hit the right notes in his initial remarks about the need to pull the country together. I think that Yoon has a greater necessity to follow through on those remarks, because the degree of polarization is perhaps even greater in 2022 than it was when Moon won the election in 2017. And so, I do think that the watchword for South Korean politics — at least in the initial phase of Yoon's term — is going to have to be 'political compromise,' and the need to try to take a middle ground that also recognizes that so many people did not vote for him. But, ultimately, I think that what South Koreans are going to be most impressed by is the question of whether or not he has answers to South Korea's problems. So, performance is obviously going to play an important role. And there's nothing like good performance to win over a divided electorate.



Now, having said that, foreign policy is an interesting dimension of this. Because on the one hand, in the area of foreign policy, presidents are usually less constrained by their domestic political environment than they might be on domestic issues that require direct approval for action by the National Assembly. But also, foreign policy can be a quagmire if missteps lead to public disapproval. And we know that Yoon is really a novice in foreign policy. We know that the conservative team is strong, and that he has put forward a platform and a posture that is relatively clear and predictable. But he's got a steep learning curve, because, as we all know, at the international leader level, those interactions can be meaningful and potentially decisive to how foreign policy initiatives are portrayed. And just one more thing on that, I do think that South Korean foreign policy — you know, in his platform, and in his *Foreign Affairs* article, he really talked about how South Korea wants to step up on the international stage — and I do believe that that is an aspiration that many South Koreans would also agree with and respond to. So, in that respect, I think that he has space. The question is, whether his team and whether his experience — or lack of experience — will prove challenging in terms of his actual ability to carry that out.

Jada Fraser

Thank you, Mr. Snyder, you touched on a lot of things that actually connect a lot of pieces that I think get to one of the major questions that I think a lot of South Korea watchers and observers are looking at. And connecting your comment about how domestic public opinion does matter to the South Korean president and the administration and its ability to carry out its tasks, on the foreign policy side of that, something that I've noticed that I think is really striking is South Korean public opinions towards China. We've seen a lot of anti-Chinese sentiment, I think, that was especially kind of stoked and used in this election season. The Beijing Olympics had some to do with that, there's leftover anxiety and resentment from the 2017 THAAD incident, and Yoon himself has been taking quite a hard line or stance on what he thinks South Korea's stance or policy towards China should be.

So, we know that South Korea is kind of caught in this geopolitical tug-of-war between the United States and China, and for the past five years under President Moon, in order to sort of straddle the fence on US-China strategic competition, President Moon chose to diversify both economic and security relations with South and Southeast Asia under his signature foreign policy, which was called the New Southern Policy. Since Yoon has been making statements that he wants to center South Korea's foreign policy on the U.S.-ROK Alliance; he's made statements about ending South Korea's policy of “strategic ambiguity;” and he's made statements that South Korea shouldn't be beholden to this previous policy of the “three no's,” which was a tacit agreement between China and South Korea after the 2017 THAAD incident that South Korea wouldn't deploy additional THAAD batteries, that it



wouldn't join an alliance with Japan, and that it wouldn't join a US-led regional missile defense system.

So, there's a lot to unpack there. But my first question for you would be is, could you rate the success of Moon's New Southern Policy in helping to insulate South Korea from some of the second-order consequences of US-China strategic competition? And then, do you think this policy or a version of it is going to be continued under President-elect Yoon or are we going to witness a much tougher stance on China under the Yoon Administration?

Scott Synder

There is a lot there, Jada, that you have put on the table. And one question, I think, is whether the New Southern Policy really served to provide a buffer against South Korea's involvement in the Sino-US strategic rivalry, or whether there might have been some other factors that are driving South Korea's outreach to Southeast Asia. It's true that reaching out to Southeast Asia and looking for other middle powers as a way to buffer South Korea's involvement in the Sino-US rivalry is one of the strategies that is out there among South Korean foreign policy analysts. And it's actually a strategy that I associate more with conservatives than necessarily with progressives, which tend to want to unlock South Korean or Korean power by buffering, through reconciliation with North Korea, versus reaching out to Southeast Asia.

If I really go back and think about that question, it brings me to the observation that you mentioned China's unpopularity, but the flip side of that is the relationship with the United States is far more popular than either of the candidates were in the election. So, that means that, to one degree or another, the US-South Korea alliance relationship had already been de-politicized. But with Yoon, we have a candidate that has really decided to align with the United States in a much more overt way. And, you know, the challenge now that he has won the election, is managing a posture in the context of the constraints that you actually face in implementing a foreign policy.

And, in a way, this is going to be one of the most interesting areas to watch, because you also mentioned the THAAD issue and other constraints that China has tried to impose on the US-South Korea alliance relationship. And in fact, the Yoon stated policy and posture runs up against Chinese desires in a very direct fashion. And so for me, one of the most fascinating things that I was watching in the context of the election was how China would respond to Yoon's victory. And in fact, when I saw the *Global Times* front page article about Yoon's election, it was very interesting, because there was a mixture in the tone of anxiety and veiled messages attempting to try to press on Yoon, to exercise constraint. And I think the two hot button issues there that are going to be the biggest challenges for the



Yoon Administration in implementation are, one: you mentioned the “three no’s.” And Yoon, during the campaign, specifically indicated a desire for South Korea to acquire additional missile defense capabilities. And so right there, you have the potential for tension in the South Korea-China relationship, because of the way that China tried to draw a red line on acquisition of further missile defense following the THAAD imbroglio back in 2017.

And then the other issue is South Korea's relationship with the Quad, which obviously is something that China is very sensitive to. I think that Yoon has put his policy onto a track that envisions eventual Quad membership and certainly alignment with many of the objectives and priorities of the Quad. And so, I think that really the key question is, during the campaign, Yoon presented his platform toward China as one based on mutual respect, and one that essentially envisaged a positive-sum relationship between the United States and China. But if China views Yoon’s alliance policy as a form of alignment, and treats it as a zero-sum policy, then the Yoon Administration is going to have real challenges. And so, I think we're going to see in the days to come an unfolding of Yoon foreign policy initiatives that is very much going to focus on Washington. But I would argue that at least as important to the future of Yoon’s foreign policy, is going to be how Yoon and his team effectively communicate with China.

Adriana Reinecke

Thank you so much. I think Korea's relationships with China and the US and how it balances that dynamic is really one of the main sort of foreign policy issues or areas for South Korea. And I think maybe the other one is obviously going to be the matter of inter-Korean relations. We’d be remiss to not talk about that. So, there seems to be a stark contrast between the progressive and conservative parties on what South Korea's policy vis-a-vis North Korea should look like. What are the implications of a North Korean policy that changes 180 degrees every five years? And since there's such polarization in South Korea around North Korea, is there any hope for consistency across administrations, do you think?

Scott Snyder

Yeah, that's an interesting question. And I think that would actually be an even more interesting question if North Korea engaged in a fashion that attempted to exploit some of those differences. But, in a way, I think the mitigating factor that kind of reduces the feeling of friction as South Korea moves from one policy alternative to another, is that the North Koreans have remained essentially on a non-engagement approach. And it's an approach that really undermined the earlier engagement through summitry that had been one of Moon's signal successes in the early part of his term. And so, I do believe that another



byproduct of Yoon's anticipated alignment with the United States and emphasis on deterrence of North Korea is that we're likely to see greater tensions in the relationship with North Korea. And that constitutes another challenge for the Yoon Administration.

The issue is that, as I suggested earlier, North Korea was going to be a problem regardless of who won. And there may have been tensions as Kim Jong Un essentially tries to challenge, or test, or socialize a new South Korean leader to the way that he thinks about the way the inter-Korean relationship should be structured. In the context of a conservative approach, you have an even more stark gap. And it is one that enables greater alignment, even trilateral US-Japan-South Korea, with an emphasis on deterrence, but it is also one that may lead to some kind of temptation for North Korea to use crisis as one of the mechanisms by which to redefine and to tame some of the challenges that it may feel that it's facing.

And so, I don't know that I necessarily have a good answer to the issue of polarization within South Korea, because it is so stark between conservatives — who, essentially, envision a path towards unification that involves North Korea's defeat — and a progressive path that envisages reconciliation through cooperation and integration. It's definitely a background factor. Maybe the thing that helps to mitigate against that is that ultimately, South Korean public opinion both recognizes the potential threat from North Korea, but also has persisted in thinking of cooperation with North Korea as desirable, if possible. And so in that sense, I think South Korean public opinion tends to take the edge off of conservatives' approaches, but it also tries to keep progressives real, in terms of their approaches. And I think that we just saw that with the Moon Administration, very much focusing on the End of War Declaration, and South Korean public opinion, showing a fair amount of skepticism after their initial hopefulness around summitry; skepticism about whether or not that approach was going to yield benefits with North Korea.

Jada Fraser

So, Mr. Snyder, you brought up trilateral cooperation in regards to North Korea with Japan and the United States, and I think recently in a phone call between the Japanese Prime Minister Kishida and then President-elect Yoon, the two agreed that they were going to ramp up three-way ties in order to deal with this increasing North Korean threat. President-elect Yoon also has made several statements on his intention to pursue greater cooperation with Japan and the recent US-Japan-ROK trilateral statement included the three countries' commitment to expand cooperation on a, and I quote, "range of regional and global security" challenges. The United States' new *Indo-Pacific Strategy*, as well, also included a whole section on the trilateral and it placed a heavy emphasis on broadening trilateral



cooperation to encompass new areas, such as critical technology and supply chain issues, as well as women's empowerment.

How do you view the prospects for increased trilateral cooperation? This is a perennial issue, one that plagues every US, Japan, and South Korean administration. What do you see as the prospects for improving trilateral cooperation, both in the security and these new non-security realms? And what do you see as the major obstacles or opportunities for improving Japan-South Korea relations, specifically? What should we be looking for as maybe political signaling that the two countries are willing and able to work on improving relations in some way?

Scott Snyder

You know, under the Trump Administration, we really had no effective trilateral cooperation among the US, Japan, and South Korea. And with the Biden Administration, we saw trilateralism emerge as a priority. And I think that we've seen gradual but steady success on the part of the Biden Administration in convincing Japanese and South Korean partners that trilateralism should be a part of the picture, and that the trilateral cooperation mechanism can be important for a variety of reasons. And one way in which trilateral cooperation is important is that it provides a mechanism by which bilateral interaction between Japan and South Korea can occur, even when the relationship is kind of negative. And we saw that last November — we saw a trilateral cooperation meeting held at the deputy secretary-level, even at the moment when the Japanese might have been tempted to walk away because of a South Korean police visit to the contested island between Japan and South Korea that we like to call the Liancourt Rocks. You know, that trilateral mechanism proceeded, despite the possibility that both sides could pull out. And more recently, we saw a similar dynamic just in front of the trilateral foreign ministers meeting that occurred in Hawaii last month, in the context of Japan's decision to apply for a UNESCO application related to the Sado Mines, and that's contested on the South Korean side because of forced labor issues.

And so, I think that we see that trilateralism is proving to be effective. But the question is, does it also have spillover effects either to the Japan-South Korea bilateral relationship, or to the broader multilateral project that is going on from the US side as related to the Free and Open Indo-Pacific? That's a very complicated issue, because I think the trilateral architecture structure is very helpful from a US perspective. But ultimately, we can't necessarily force Japan and South Korea to get along with each other. That's something that has to come from within. And yet, under the new administration, there's hope that we might see an improvement in the Japan-South Korea relationship. I would argue that one of the bravest things that the Yoon platform contained was a direct conscious aspiration to



restore the Japan-South Korea relationship to the level of the high-point of the relationship back in the late 1990s, when Kim Dae-jung and Keizo Obuchi made an agreement and so we have to wait and see how that plays out. But that's a remarkable aspiration, I think, that suggests that even though candidate Yoon and Prime Minister Kishida started by talking about trilateralism, there's a lot of potential for moving forward.

And then, on the broader Indo-Pacific strategy, one of the peculiarities of South Korean policy under the Moon Administration has really been to embrace the agenda of the Quad and of the Indo-Pacific, but only in the context of the bilateral alliance, not in the context of participation in any other multilateral mechanisms. And so, in that respect, I think you can make an argument that US-Japan-South Korea trilateralism is a start in the direction of South Korea being more engaged multilaterally. In some ways, it may be the communication mechanism that is most needed to ensure South Korean cooperation and participation in a whole range of broader multilateral mechanisms. As we look at the Free and Open Indo-Pacific, ultimately, that is a concept that South Koreans have in the past associated with Japan, because the concept originated from Japan. And so, how can South Korea overcome those inhibitions as related to the name? But also, for that to occur, it's going to be necessary for Japan to welcome a greater South Korean role in that multilateral context.

Even with regard to the Quad, if South Korea were to want to join, it would mean that Japan would have to accept South Korea as a member. And likewise on the economic side. There's a lot of discussion about new economic multilateral arrangements, as well as old ones. And so, we have the Indo-Pacific Economic Forum, on the one hand – we have to wait to see how that develops – but we also have CPTPP. For new members to accede – and South Korea could apply as a new member – all of the other members have to accept, and that includes Japan. And so, I think that this trilateralism really ends up serving as a kind of linchpin for both improving the bilateral relationship and for improving South Korean participation in other multilateral mechanisms.

Adriana Reinecke

We've been talking quite a bit about the incoming Yoon Administration's sort of key foreign policy platform or directives, but I think one thing that you had touched on previously was the fact that one of the key criticisms aimed at Yoon as a candidate was that he really doesn't have a whole lot of experience in party politics, in foreign policy, in key state affairs. And I think, at the time, Yoon had responded that he would let experienced officials handle state affairs that require expertise. So, I guess I'm curious, if Yoon is intending to rely heavily on delegation, who are some of the main players you anticipate



will be filling those advisory roles? And also, what do you anticipate the balance will be in terms of attention to domestic versus foreign policy?

Scott Snyder

It's always hard to predict where a President's time and attention are primarily going to be directed. And especially, it's hard to predict the international sphere, because the President is uniquely qualified to manage international crises, whereas the domestic agenda often is the agenda that is most consequential and important in terms of his own success domestically. And so, on the one hand, I'm tempted to say, well, foreign policy begins at home. He has to get his domestic agenda approved and moving forward in order for South Korea to be an effective foreign policy player. But on the other hand, as crises come up, his time and attention are going to be drawn to how South Korea can play a role in those crises.

And, in this situation, undoubtedly Yoon is going to rely on a core set of foreign policy specialists. And I would focus on three, although I think there are a number of people on Yoon's team; it's pretty deep, from what I can tell, based on contacts and interactions that I've had with the Yoon campaign. The first one that I would point to is National Assembly's Park Jin, who has been very visible in the campaign and also is likely to be an active player in the context of the US-South Korea relationship, in particular, in the initial stages of the unfolding of South Korea's foreign policy.

Another key advisor and, really, the center of the campaign team, is Korea University Professor Kim Sung-han, former Vice Foreign Minister, who has a very clear stance and direction on a number of these issues, and also, I understand, goes way back with President-elect Yoon. And so, he'll play a major role, and has been playing a major role, both in formulating and explicating the Yoon foreign policy approach. And then, the third one that I would name is former Foreign Ministry official and current National Assemblyman Cho Tae Yong. And Cho also has been visible in a number of the meetings that candidate Yoon has had, and has had a wide range of expertise in implementation of South Korean foreign policy. He's worked in the Blue House, he's been ambassador to Australia, he has been an active and visible player in South Korean foreign policy prior to entering the National Assembly.

Jada Fraser

We will keep our eyes out on these key players and see how their influence impacts the direction of South Korean foreign policy. I think that's really interesting – we've seen kind of maybe a good stark contrast between another president that didn't have prior foreign policy experience — our last president — who decided not to dictate foreign policy to



experts. But now, we're seeing the opposite happen in South Korea. So, I'll have my fingers crossed that we see some good outcomes of that decision.

So, we just have two more short questions; one having to do with something that the now President-elect Yoon pledged during his campaign, which was to abolish the Gender Ministry, and his use of rhetoric that discriminated against women. He used this in order to mobilize support among many young men — there's a growing antifeminist movement in South Korea that really gained a high level of attention because of its politicization during this election season. So, I wanted to ask: has his strategy further intensified this gender division in South Korea, and what challenges does such a division pose for his administration?

Scott Snyder

Yeah, I do believe that this election really spotlighted and exacerbated gender divisions in South Korea in a major way. The really interesting question, maybe at this point, is how much of this ended up being related to a political strategy, and how much of it is actually going to carry over into implementation? And so, I think that we'll have to wait and see exactly how that plays out. It's not uncommon for South Korean ministries to be renamed and reconstituted under new administrations. But I think that there has been a very good case made that there are specific functions that were handled by the Ministry of Gender Equality that really need to be perpetuated, simply in the context of the South Korean government providing appropriate service to its constituencies, and, in particular, in addressing problems related to South Korean women's role in society.

And then, if I step back and address the issue of gender as a campaign issue, well, the way I would do that is to look at the voting results of especially men and women in their 20s, which I think were most affected by this as a campaign issue. And, yes, Yoon won 58.7% of male votes in their 20s. But in the course of doing that, I think that what is most interesting and notable is that he succeeded in alienating 58% of women in their 20s, who decided to vote for Lee Jae-myung. And this is a really interesting result, from my perspective, because, in January, there was a Gallup poll that was run after this issue had already broken and begun to gain focus. And, at that time, what it showed is that Lee had the support of about 30% of Korean women in their 20s. But 42% of Korean women in their 20s were completely alienated from what was going on in terms of the political debate. And so, between January and March, I think the tone and tenor of the campaign actually appears to have served to mobilize South Korean women to come out against Yoon.

And I would argue that this is actually one of the areas to watch very closely in the context of the transition. Because as this issue has become politicized, it also brings with it the risk



that politicization will lead to public protests. And public protests on issues like gender equality, I think, will signify that it's necessary for Yoon to come up with an effective approach to the issue that can gain popular support. But it also can be a real drag on, and symbol of potential failure by the Yoon administration in its early days. So, I'm hoping that in the context of the transition, that it will be possible for the Yoon camp to really wrap its mind around how to deal with this issue.

You know, by the way, the other remarkable image from election night, when Yoon gave his victory speech, was the fact that you saw very few women in the room. That is a picture also that the Yoon administration is going to have to find a way to effectively deal with.

Adriana Reinecke

Thank you so much. This has been extremely informative. It's always such a treat for Jada and I, whenever we get to talk to experts like yourself. We're coming to the end of our podcast, there's one question that we always like to pose, and that is: many of our listeners are students and young professionals, and what advice would you have for those interested in pursuing a career in East Asian Studies?

Scott Snyder

Okay, well, that's a great question. First, listen to your podcast, because you're covering the issues. I think we've gone into a fair amount of detail with some of these issues, but you know, really study the issues in Asia.

And then, the other thing is, especially once you develop a broad familiarization with the issues of concern in the Asia Pacific, it's important to develop a set of interests and expertise. And I think that the most effective way of doing that is actually through writing and publishing. Because ultimately, if you're going to get a job in, at least in the think tank world that I'm a part of, you're going to need a portfolio, and the portfolio ends up being your past published writing that demonstrates your knowledge and expertise on particular issues.

Of course, there are other ways to go — not everybody ends up using writing as their main way of developing an expertise. And of course, in Washington, we're also very attuned to the necessity of networking. But I think that, in the end, to be successful in taking that first step, of kind of getting into the career track, you have to develop both. And so, I would encourage anybody starting out to focus on developing both a written product and using a network in order to find the niche that they, or the stepping stone, they need to get in, and then develop from there.



Jada Fraser

That's really excellent advice, Mr. Snyder. I know that that definitely resonates with Adri and I, as we are just getting started on kind of really developing that portfolio and trying to publish more. So, as someone that is just starting to get in the swing of doing that, I completely echo that sentiment.

Mr. Snyder, it's been really a pleasure to have you on the podcast. This has been super informative. I learned a lot for, actually, papers that I'm writing right now. So thank you so much for bringing this perspective. Our listeners are going to take a lot away from this conversation.

We also want to encourage our listeners to follow Mr. Snyder on Twitter. His handle is [@Snydersas](#). His ongoing project from the Council on Foreign Relations is focusing on domestic challenges to the US-Korea Alliance. It's going to assess South Korea's domestic politics and institutions, the sustainability of US commitment to its alliance obligations, and the pressures emanating from geopolitical developments. So, stay on the lookout for some of the publications that are going to come out of this project. I know that Adri and I are going to be very interested in following along with your work, and thank you so much again for coming on and speaking with us today.

Scott Snyder

Well, Jada and Adri, thanks for having me. I enjoyed it a lot, and I wish you all the best in your careers. I'll keep my eye out for your names in print.

Jada Fraser

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