

South Korean President Yoon's Criminality as a Habit in Policy Leads to Catastrophe in East Asia

How institutional cancer derives from the fabrication of the tablet PC used to impeach Park Geun-hye

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South Korea's government is engaged in a form of diplomatic and security suicide that defies understanding.

Whereas previous presidents of the left and right understood that it would be fatal to alienate China and Russia, promote war with North Korea, or blindly follow all orders from an increasingly chaotic Washington, President Yoon Suk Yeol is unlike any president in post-war Korea, and perhaps like any politician in Korean history. Whether he is drawing South Korea into preparations for war with China that are destroying the economy, planning for integrated responses to North Korea via missile defense that end South Korea's sovereignty, or persecuting his opponents of the left and right at home to a degree unseen in the last thirty years, he is truly unique.

The problem is that Yoon is not a diplomat or a politician, but rather a criminal operator who made his way to the top through tricks and deceptions and now the mask has fallen off to reveal an imposter.

The results were clear at the 30th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in San Francisco, President Yoon, for all his toady statements, was unable to secure a bilateral meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping or US President Joe Biden. In light of how President Park Geun-hye, also a pro-American conservative, great deference from President Xi, the decay of Korean diplomacy is clear. [1]

Compared to other pro-US conservative leaders such as Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye,

Yoon has emphasized South Korea, the US, and Japan's trilateral alliance to an unusually high degree. He has gone as far as to verbally attack China and Russia, regressing Northeast Asia back to the Cold War era framework of ROK-US-Japan Vs North Korea-China-Russia.

In an interview with Reuters on April 19, 2022, Yoon provocatively brought up the "Cross-Strait issue" and told the reporter:

"We are absolutely opposed to changing the status quo by force, along with the international community... (The cross-strait issue) is not simply a matter between China and Taiwan, but a global issue that goes beyond the region, like the issue between North and South Korea. [2]

For China, turning the cross-strait conflict into a global issue like the one between the two Koreas is unacceptable. Therefore, China's Vice Foreign Minister Qin Gang fiercely responded to Yoon two days later on the 21st. "Those Who Play with Fire over Taiwan Will Burn to Death," he said. [3]



President Yoon Seok-yul has begun to express strong “anti-Chinese” messages on the cross-strait conflict, something he had never expressed before taking office. To understand the background and history of his anti-China and anti-Russian stance, it is necessary to have a certain understanding of South Korea’s internal affairs and Yoon’s rise to power. The photo is from MBC, a major South Korean broadcaster.

However, Yoon’s bold statement favoring Taiwan over the “Cross-Strait conflict” does not mean the incumbent administration is working closely with the island. Rather, the Taiwanese will feel uneasy with a third party – South Korea in this case – provoking China by bringing up the issue without any prior planning and consultation. Yoon is merely utilizing the “Cross-Strait issue” to embolden the trilateral alliance between the US and Japan to pump up conservative support back home.

Yoon’s actions are souring relations with Russia, a country that has historically been more friendly to South Korea than China. For instance, in the name of supporting Ukraine, Yoon suddenly offered to send arms to the country. In the end, Russia became impatient and invited the solitary North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, to de facto retaliate against South Korea through diplomatic and security means. But Yoon characterized this act as another “direct provocation,” and has since repeatedly stated that he is willing to engage in armed conflict, raising tensions in Northeast Asia. [4] [5]

Of course, the ROK-US-Japan alliance is a fundamental principle of South Korean conservatives. However, the trilateral alliance does not require South Korea to unnecessarily disengage itself from China and Russia, especially when Seoul needs to seek cooperation from Beijing and Moscow to resolve the North Korean nuclear crisis. Nevertheless, Yoon’s diplomacy is effectively bringing China, Russia, and North Korea closer, and thus destabilizing the region.

Yoon’s Deadly Criminal Past Could Shake Up Northeast Asia’s Diplomatic and Security Order

So why is Yoon Seok-yul putting the regional diplomatic and security order at risk? For starters, he is not a conservative by nature.

A former career prosecutor, Yoon first came to prominence in South Korean politics in 2013 while investigating the National Intelligence Service’s(NIS) presidential election meddling scandal in the early days of the Park Geun-hye administration.

The allegation was that the NIS used internet posts to help Park win the 2012 presidential election. At the time, prosecutor Yoon attacked the legitimacy of Park Geun-hye’s administration by pushing for excessive investigations into the NIH. This caught the eye of South Korea’s progressive Democratic Party.

After bouncing around from job to job, Yoon became the head of the special prosecutor team investigating Park’s impeachment in 2016 when Park administration’s power waned. The investigation eventually led to Park’s imprisonment for bribery charges and a 22-year prison sentence, making Yoon one of the most important figures in the downfall of the conservative forces.

Yoon quickly rose to the top of the prosecutors’ ranks in the Moon Jae-in administration, becoming the chief prosecutor of the Seoul Central District Prosecutors’ Office. He began

gaining the trust of then-President Moon, a liberal, by arresting more than 200 key conservatives, including Park's predecessor, Lee Myung-bak, and former Supreme Court Chief Justice Yang Seung-tae. He then rose to the crest of the prosecutors' organization, the Prosecutor General. [6]

However, as soon as Yoon became prosecutor general, he began to run afoul of the Democratic Party's supporters by investigating the then justice minister, Cho Kuk, who was considered the next presidential candidate. Over the next year or two, Yoon gradually shifted right, eventually winning the support of the conservatives in becoming the president.

In other words, he initially stood on the liberal side imprisoning conservatives, but suddenly joined the conservative side ahead of the 2022 presidential election, causing an identity crisis. For nearly two years since Yoon took office, Yoon's prosecutors have been probing Lee Jae-myung, the leader of the opposition Democratic Party, on bribery charges. This is quite ironic considering that Yoon himself led the prosecutors and jailed a slew of conservatives as recently as 2018. [7]

More fundamentally, however, Yoon has been embroiled in serious fabrication controversy early in the Park's impeachment investigation.

In late 2016, JTBC, a major South Korean broadcaster, reported on a tablet device as evidence that Choi Soon-sil (her legal name is Choi Seo-won), a civilian and mere friend of Park, had received various classified state information. The network promptly submitted the device to prosecutors after breaking the news, and the prosecution accepted JTBC's report as a "fact". The public perceived this as the president arbitrarily handing over power to a civilian, and Park's qualifications as president were called into question. In fact, within a month of the tablet's appearance, Park was facing impeachment charges and was forced to step down from the presidency four months after the launch of the impeachment inquiry. [8]



President Yoon Seok-yul and Justice Minister Han Dong-hoon, then-chief prosecutor and then-third-in-command of the Seoul Central District Prosecutors' Office, respectively, testified during a 2017 (during Moon Jae-In regime) National Assembly oversight hearing that the "Choi Soon-sil tablet" was Ms. Choi's based on their investigation. The photo is from a report by South Korea's main broadcaster, JTBC.

However, having already questioned the veracity of JTBC's reporting and the prosecution's investigation, I continued investigating the case despite serving a year in prison and undergoing years of trial due to the JTBC lawsuit. Eventually, I obtained conclusive evidence that JTBC and the prosecution had acquired a tablet PC belonging to a Blue House official and fabricated the news report and investigation to attribute the device to Choi Soon-sil. JTBC obtained a real PC that would normally contain confidential Blue House documents and then, in collaboration with the prosecutor's office, they created a "pseudo-event" making it seem as if a civilian had taken various secrets from the president. That was no easy task, requiring them to fabricate documents regarding various reports and investigations. [9]

To be absolutely clear, Yoon Seok-yeol, the current South Korean president, was a key player in the "tablet manipulation investigation," a state crime in all senses of the word, from late 2016 to early 2017, and that led to the successful impeachment of President Park.

I have worked together with Choi Soon-sil to launch 20 civil and criminal lawsuits regarding this miscarriage of justice and abuse of power over the past few years. In a recent civil lawsuit, Choi finally forced the court to admit that many of the reports and sensitive materials found on the PC were in fact fabricated.

By supporting Choi's lawsuits legally and financially, and launching separate lawsuits, I gained access to undisputable evidence of the fabrication of evidence. I filed a complaint against Yoon and his co-conspirator, current Justice Minister Han Dong-hoon, to the Corruption Investigation Office For High-ranking Officials (CIOHO), South Korea's chief prosecution agency for the investigation of powerful individuals. They launched their investigation this November.

As I was unjustly imprisoned as a result of Yoon and Han's tablet manipulation investigation, I also filed a civil lawsuit for damages against the two, and that trial is currently underway. [10] [11] [12]

At last Yoon's crimes of evidence fabrication will be officially exposed. Yoon's predictable political response is to revert to hardline conservatism to solidify his only base of support. The extremity of his policies, in blatant opposition to Korea's national interests, means that the diplomatic and security order in Northeast Asia may collapse under the weight of his criminality as policy.

President Yoon's natural inclination is not to engage in the hard work of policy preparation, working level meetings, or even informal discussions over coffee or tea about where Korea needs to go but rather to come up with some trick to fool everyone and buy off, or frighten off, his opponents.

This criminal politician show could easily deteriorate into a serious Northeast Asian crisis, going even further than current tensions because Yoon would see that as an opportunity to prop up his authority. Granted he has no long-term strategy, Korea's future would not be all that important for him and his loyal followers.

Sending Journalists to Jail Like the Good Old Days of Military Government of South Korea

President Yoon has gone to great lengths to crack down on the media in South Korea out of fear that they will report on his criminal past. Since the beginning of his administration, Yoon has attempted to replace the management of South Korea's two public media organizations, KBS and MBC, and has succeeded in doing so at KBS. He has also repeatedly attempted to detain and raid the offices of liberal media outlets such as New Tamsa, News Tapa, and Kyunghyang Newspaper, both of which were foolish enough to report about his giving inconvenient facts. [13] [14]

As a result of ongoing repression, the South Korean media has been unable to cover Yoon's crimes, let alone the fabricated tablet incident that launched his career. Fortunately, this summer and fall, Japan's conservative media, *Japan Forward* and *Hanada Monthly*, *Shukan Post (Weekly Post)*, and Hong Kong's leading media, *The Yazhou Zhoukan (Asia Weekly)*, have given significant coverage to this story. Unfortunately, the cowardly South Korean media failed to address Yoon's most damning past crimes, even in the form of quoting these foreign reports. The media has forgone reporting on this issue even when the Yoon administration failed to adequately respond to foreign media reports.



[A] Hong Kong’s leading weekly newspaper ‘Yazhou Zhoukan(Asia Weekly)’ (10/9-10/15/2023) published an interview with Byun Hee-jae regarding the tablet fabrication investigation as its cover story.

[B] On September 11, ‘Japan Forward’, a leading English-language newspaper in Japan, published an interview with Byun Hee-jae on the tablet fabrication investigation. It became the number one most-viewed article in September.

[C] ‘Monthly Hanada’, a leading Japanese monthly magazine, published an article by Byun Hee-jae on the tablet fabrication investigation on November 2 in its online edition.

[D] The December 22, 2023 issue of Shukan Post (Weekly Post), a leading Japanese current affairs magazine with a weekly circulation of 300,000, published a scoop on Yoon’s tablet manipulation investigation.

Although it is natural for South Korea to build on its close relationship with the United States as a central ally, President Yoon has chosen to escalate intentionally hostility towards China, Russia, and North Korea, to cover up his criminal past. Ultimately his gangster diplomacy will be damaging to not only Korea but to the United States and the entire region.

Byun Hee-jae (변희재) is a South Korean conservative political commentator

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Notes

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[7] Can Yoon Suk-yeol Break South Korea's Decades-Old Political Curse?

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*Featured image: Yoon takes the presidential oath of office outside the National Assembly, 10 May 2022
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