




South Korea's foreign policies

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1953-1960s: Survival and absolute alignment

- ❖ **1953** -> Armistice ends the Korean War; the South is devastated and faces an existential threat.
 - ❖ “**Client State**” diplomacy under **Syngman Rhee**.
 - ❖ **Mutual Defense Treaty** with the United States.
 - ❖ Primary goal: Securing American military protection and economic aid.
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1960s-1970s: Developmental diplomacy

- ❖ General **Park Chung-hee** prioritizes the “**Miracle on the Han River**”.
 - ❖ Foreign policy becomes a direct tool for rapid industrialization.
 - ❖ **1965** -> **Japan Normalization**: \$800 million in grants and loans.
 - ❖ **1964-1973** -> **The Vietnam War**: over 300,000 troops to cement U.S. security guarantees and win lucrative business contracts.
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1988-1993: Nordpolitik

- ❖ **1988** -> Seoul Olympics
 - ❖ South Korea democratizes and gains economic confidence.
 - ❖ President **Roh Tae-woo** launches **Nordpolitik**: reach out to North Korea's traditional allies to isolate Pyongyang and open new markets.
 - ❖ **1990** -> diplomatic ties established with the **USSR**.
 - ❖ **1992** -> diplomatic ties established with **China**.
 - ❖ **1991** -> both Koreas **join the UN**.
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1998-2008: The Sunshine Policy

- ❖ South Korea feels secure enough to pursue direct reconciliation.
 - ❖ Presidents **Kim Dae-jung** and **Roh Moo-hyun** -> Engagement, economic cooperation, and dialogue.
 - ❖ **Three pillars**: maintaining military deterrence, rejecting any attempt to absorb the North, and actively promoting reconciliation.
 - ❖ “**Flexible reciprocity**” -> Separation of politics and economics; unconditional humanitarian aid.
 - ❖ **2000** -> **Inter-Korean Summit**.
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2008-2017: “Global Korea” and Middle power rise

- ❖ South Korea leverages its top 15 economy status to become a global agenda-setter.
 - ❖ Hosted the 2010 G20 Summit and built a massive, worldwide network of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs).
 - ❖ Walking a diplomatic tightrope between the U.S. (security guarantor) and China (primary economic partner).
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2017-Present: The modern crossroads

2017-2022 -> **Moon Jae-in** launched the **New Southern Policy** to diversify trade toward ASEAN and India, reducing reliance on the U.S. and China.

2022-2025 -> **Yoon Suk-yeol** pushed the Indo-Pacific Strategy to become a “**Global Pivotal State**” aligning strictly with the U.S. and Japan. Ended via impeachment.

2025-Present -> **Lee Jae-myung** adopted **Pragmatic Diplomacy** to balance the U.S. alliance with Chinese economic engagement amid domestic polarization.





Conclusion - The “Four Mirrors” and MOFA's Mission

The “**Four Mirrors**” of National Identity:

North Korea: Security threat or blood-bound brother?

United States: Symbol of freedom or dependency?

Japan: Future partner or perpetual aggressor?

China: Uneasy giant or vital neighbour?

MOFA's Key Diplomatic Mission:

- Peace and denuclearization.
 - Assertive cooperative diplomacy.
 - Economic expansion (Northeast Asia+Community).
 - Participatory diplomacy.
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