

Politics of the Korean Peninsula



Historical Context – THE KOREAN WAR (1950-1953)

- After the Japanese Defeat in 1945, the Korean Peninsula was divided at the 38th parallel
 - Northern half = to be temporarily occupied by the Soviet Union
 - Southern half = to be temporarily occupied by the U.S.
- By 1948 = 2 separate governments had emerged
- North Korea = Communist
- South Korea = Democratic
- 1947: United States signs the *Truman Doctrine*, pledging support for countries fighting Communism
 - **CONTAINMENT POLICY**
- By mid-1949 = both the United States and the Soviet Union had withdrawn all of their troops from North and South Korea



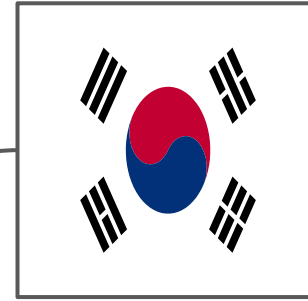
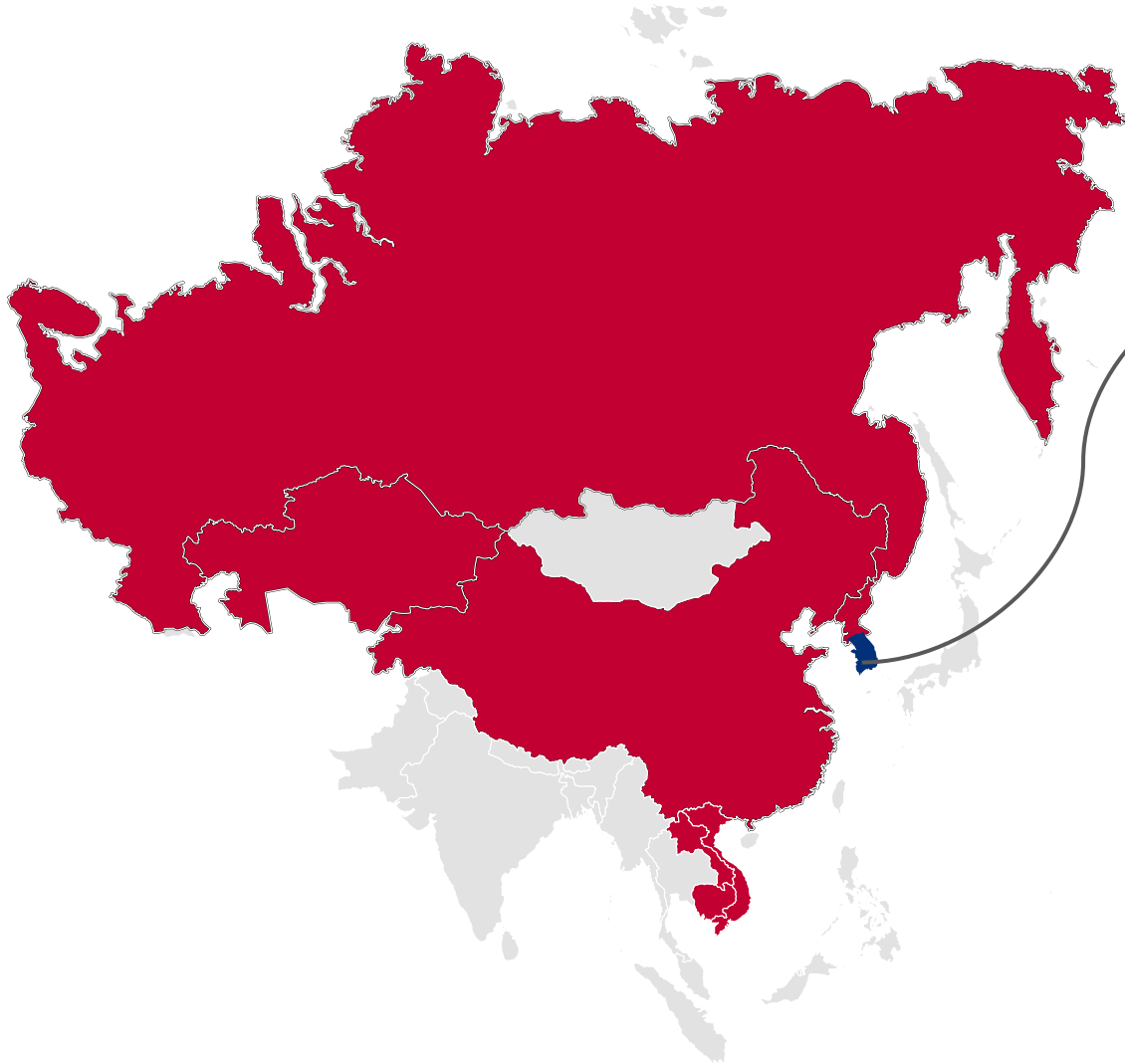
Historical Context – THE KOREAN WAR (1950-1953)

- June 1950 = North Korea invaded South Korea ☐ wanted to unify the country under a communist government
- United Nations meets in response
 - Voted to condemn the invasion
 - Agreed to organize an army to oppose it
- 16 countries contributed troops to UN army → but 90% of those troops came from the U.S.
 - Leader of the UN army = US General Douglas MacArthur
- July 1951 – July 1953 = stalemate along this line near the 38th parallel
- **July 1953 = truce was signed → both sides agreed to divide Korea (once again) along the 38th parallel**
- 5 million deaths and mass devastation of much of Korea

**IS
Reunification
Possible on the
Korean
Peninsula?**



Communist States in East Asia (1955-1991)

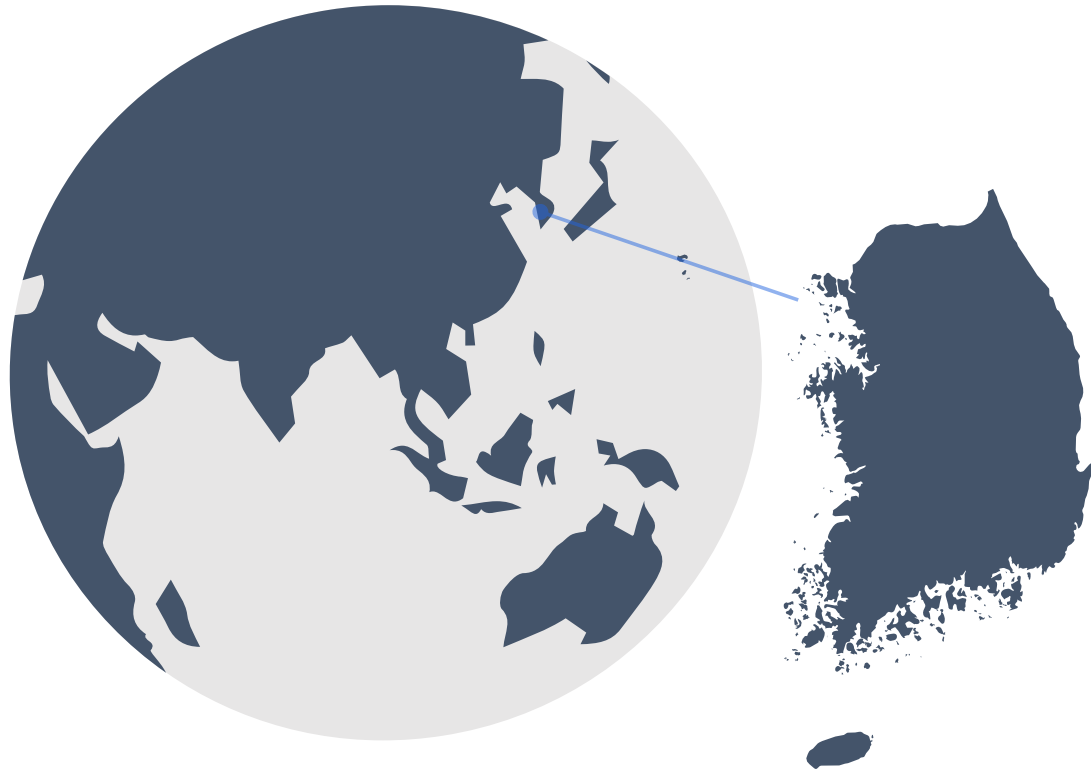


Truman Doctrine (1946) – United States of America pledges support for any country seeking assistance in fighting Communism.

This aligned with the US' **Containment Policy**, an effort to contain the spread of Communism and other left-wing ideologies to prevent a **Domino Effect**.

This Domino Effect can be seen where by 1980, the Soviet Union, North Korea, the People's Republic of China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos had all Communist Governments

SOUTH KOREA'S STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE



1

ANCHOR OF DEMOCRACY

Surrounded by the tyrannical regimes of the DPRK, the Russian Federation, and the People's Republic of China, South Korea serves as a steadfast beacon of Democracy in East Asia.

2

NUCLEAR BUFFER STATE

Situated directly south of the Nuclear Capable DPRK, South Korea stands protected by Western Powers, allowing the world to keep a distant eye on the hostile Northern neighbor.

3

ECONOMIC POWERHOUSE

South Korea is one of the world's leading exporters of electronics, automobiles, and ships. Major companies like Samsung, Hyundai, and LG play significant roles in the global economy.

Geopolitical Trends in 2024

Conflicting Ideologies between Traditional Conservatism, and Progressivism

New Cold War: Hyper nationalism, Militarization, & the re-emergence of Historic Rivalries

Increasing Militarization

Economic Globalization

Cultural Diffusion & Interconnectivity

MIRRORING TRENDS ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

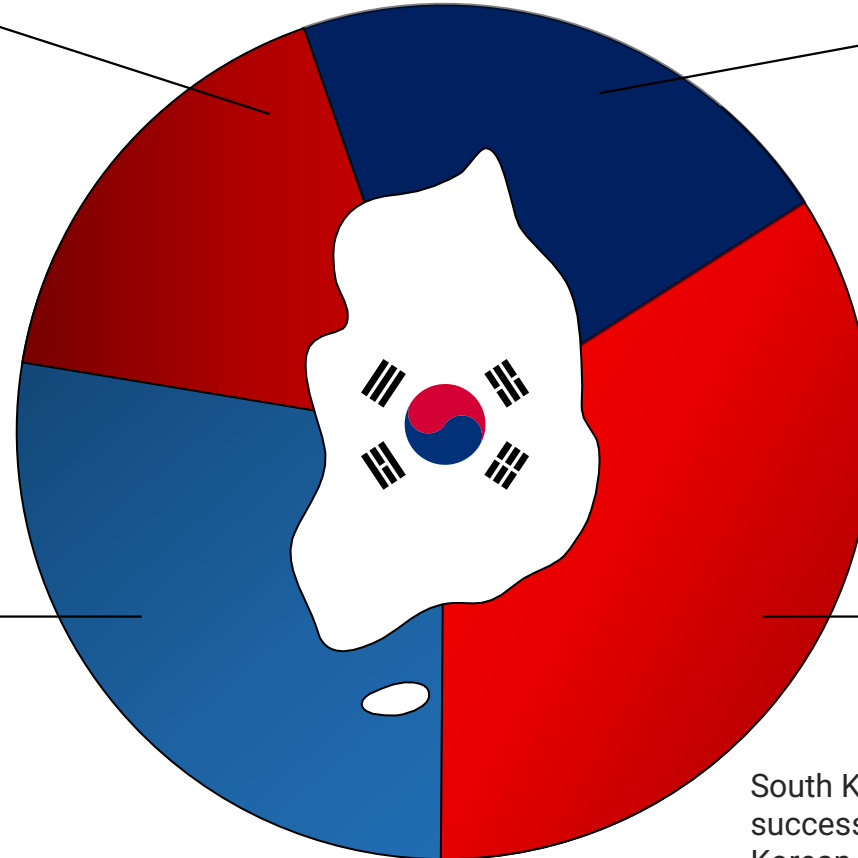
2024

Conflicting Identity

The conflicting political identities of North and South Korea are starkly characterized by the North's adherence to the Juche ideology of self-reliance and a centralized, authoritarian regime, while the South embraces a democratic, capitalist system with a strong emphasis on economic development and global integration.

The New Cold War

The New Cold War between North and South Korea is defined by a prolonged state of political and military tension, characterized by frequent military posturing, ideological rivalry, and occasional diplomatic engagements amidst ongoing international efforts to mitigate nuclear threats and promote stability on the Korean Peninsula.



Economic Globalization

Marked by rapid industrialization, export-oriented growth, and integration into global supply chains, supported by strategic government policies, technological advancements, and a robust manufacturing sector that has propelled the country to become a major player in international trade and commerce.

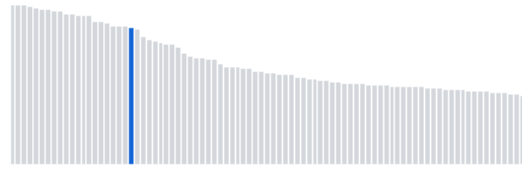
Cultural Integration

South Korea's vibrant K-pop industry exemplifies the country's successful cultural integration with the West, blending traditional Korean musical elements with Western pop influences to create a global phenomenon that not only transcends borders but also promotes cross-cultural understanding and appreciation worldwide.

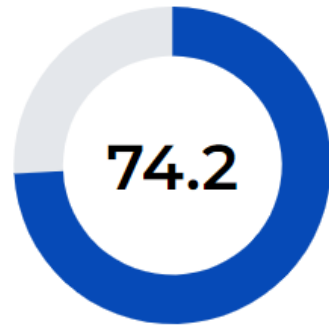
SOUTH KOREA IN 2024

#21

OVERALL RANK



#20 out of 85 in 2022



Overall Score

[Read our methodology to see how](#)

CATEGORY	SCORE	RANK
Adventure	20.1	#54
Agility	78.1	#13
Cultural Influence	67.5	#7
Entrepreneurship	81.3	#7
Heritage	41.1	#31
Movers	59.2	#10
Open for Business	42.1	#74
Power	63.1	#6
Quality of Life	45.2	#24

NORTH KOREA IN 2024

- Highest Proportion of Enslaved People
 - Walk Free Foundation's Global Slavery Index
- Least Economic Freedom
 - The Heritage Foundation
- Most Persecuted Christians
 - Open Doors' World Watch List
- 3rd Least Democratic Country in the World
 - Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index
- 4th Least Press Freedom
 - Press Freedom Index
- 165 out of 167 on the Global Freedom Index (2023)

GIVEN THEIR
PROXIMITY, WHY
HAVE NORTH AND
SOUTH KOREA
DEVELOPED SO
DIFFERENTLY?



Conflicting Ideologies and Identities on the Korean Peninsula

North Korean JUCHE IDEOLOGY

- North Korea's policy of "self-reliance", "autonomy", and "independence"
- In 1955, DPRK Leader Kim Il Sung delivered a speech entitled "*On Eliminating Dogmatism and Formalism and Establishing Juche in Ideological Work*".
 - The speech had been delivered to promote a political purge similar to the earlier Yan'an Rectification Movement in China

South Korean SADAЕ IDEOLOGY

- South Korea's policy of "reliance on great powers"
 - Translates to: "dealing with the greats"
- Sadae is a Confucian concept, based on filial piety, that describes a reciprocal hierarchical relationship between a senior and a junior, such as a tributary relationship.
- Sadae can be seen in Korean Foreign Policy in its relations with the Ming Dynasty, and applications of *realpolitik* in the 19th century

A group of people in red tracksuits are marching in a parade. They are carrying a flag with a star emblem. In the background, there is a large building with a star emblem and Korean text. The scene is set in a snowy environment.

What are some examples of
Totalitarian Governments in the
20th century?



Politics of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

(aka North Korea)

Defining Characteristics of North Korean Politics

- **Strict Control:** Maintained strict control over the population through extensive surveillance and an expansive security apparatus.
- **Censorship:** Enforced strict censorship and control over information, limiting access to outside media.
- **Labor Camps:** Utilized political prison camps (kwanliso) for dissenters and perceived enemies of the state.
- **International Sanctions:** Faced ongoing international sanctions due to nuclear ambitions and human rights violations.
- **Agricultural Policies:** Implemented various agricultural policies, often resulting in inefficiencies and periodic food shortages.

Worker's Party of Korea

- Founded on 24 June 1949 by Kim il Sung
- Officially adhering to a Communist Political System, the WPK promotes Juche Ideology of national independence and development through the efforts of the popular masses
- Originally promoted Korean interpretations of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy, the WPK soon developed into a Cult of Personality surrounding Kim il Sung's Juche Philosophy on its own.
 - Promotes a Single, Autocratic Leader from the Kim Dynasty

Kim Dynasty

Kim Il Sung – 1948-1994: “Eternal President”

General Secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea, President of North Korea, Chairman of the Workers' Party of Korea, Premier of North Korea, Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army

3rd longest serving non-royal head of state/government in the 20th century, in office for more than 45 years.

Kim Jong Il – 1994-2011: “Eternal General Secretary”

Younger son of Kim Il Sung

General Secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea, Chairman of the National Defence Commission

Kim Jong Un – 2011-present: “Respected Comrade”

General Secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea, President of the State Affairs of North Korea



Kim Il Sung (1948-1994)

Founding Leader: Established the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in 1948.

War Leadership: Led North Korea during the Korean War (1950-1953).

Juche Ideology: Introduced and propagated the Juche ideology, emphasizing self-reliance and independence.

Economic Policies: Initiated central planning and collectivization of agriculture.

Industrialization: Promoted rapid industrial development through Five-Year Plans.

Non-Aligned Movement: Engaged in the Non-Aligned Movement and fostered relations with other socialist countries.

Cult of Personality: Cultivated a strong cult of personality around himself.

Mass Mobilization: Instituted mass mobilization campaigns, such as the Chollima Movement, to boost productivity.



Kim Jong Il (1994-2011)



Military-First Policy: Introduced Songun, or "military-first" policy, prioritizing the military in state affairs.

Nuclear Program: Advanced North Korea's nuclear weapons program, culminating in the first nuclear test in 2006.

Economic Hardship: Managed the country during the Arduous March, a period of severe famine and economic crisis in the 1990s.

Diplomacy: Engaged in limited diplomatic engagement, including the 2000 summit with South Korean President Kim Dae-jung.

Information Control: Strengthened state control over information and media.

Kim Jong Un (2011-present)

Nuclear Advancements: Conducted multiple nuclear and missile tests, including the successful launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).

Economic Reforms: Implemented limited economic reforms, including market-oriented changes and special economic zones.

Modernization: Focused on modernizing infrastructure, including constructing high-profile projects like the Ryomyong Street and the Masikryong Ski Resort.

Diplomacy: Engaged in high-profile diplomatic efforts, including summits with U.S. President Donald Trump and South Korean President Moon Jae-in.

Human Rights: Continues to face international criticism for human rights abuses and maintaining oppressive control over the population.

Technology Development: Promoted advancements in technology and cyber capabilities.

Public Image: Works on crafting a modernized and powerful image of North Korea through state media and propaganda.



North Korean Foreign Policy

Nuclear Deterrence: Central to North Korea's foreign policy is the development and maintenance of a nuclear arsenal to deter foreign intervention and ensure regime survival.

Bilateral Relations: Focus on strategic relationships with key allies like China and, to a lesser extent, Russia, for economic support, diplomatic backing, and security assurances.

International Isolation and Engagement: Balancing periods of isolation with selective engagement, including high-profile summits and negotiations, particularly with South Korea, the United States, and regional neighbors, to reduce sanctions and gain concessions.

Self-Reliance (Juche): Emphasis on the Juche ideology, promoting political independence and economic self-sufficiency, which shapes North Korea's cautious and controlled approach to international interactions.



Politics of the Republic of Korea

(aka South Korea)





South Korean Government Structure

Modeled after the US Government after World War II, the South Korean Government is currently structured as follows:

Democratic Republic: South Korea is a democratic republic with a presidential system.

Constitution: Governed by the Constitution of the Republic of Korea, adopted in 1948 and revised multiple times.

Separation of Powers: Government divided into executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

Major Political Parties in South Korea

- Democratic Party of Korea (DPK): Currently the largest party, center-left, focuses on social welfare and progressive policies.
- People Power Party (PPP): Main conservative party, center-right, emphasizes economic liberalism and national security.
- Minor Parties: Include Justice Party, People's Party, and others, representing a range of political ideologies.



국민의힘
PEOPLE POWER PARTY

SOUTH KOREAN EXECUTIVE BRANCH

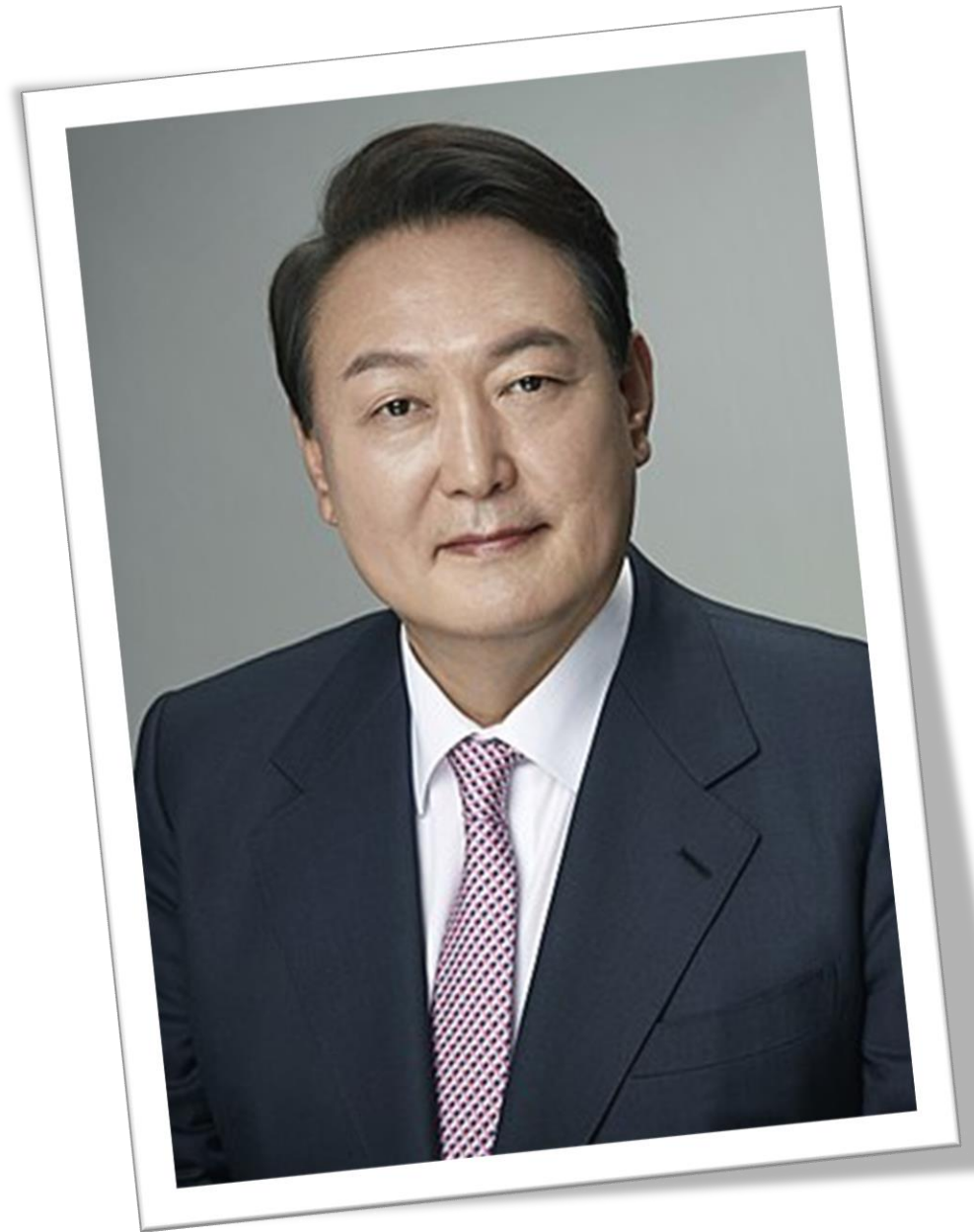
President: The President is the head of state and government, elected for a single five-year term.

Current President: Yoon Suk Yeol (since 2022)

Presidential Powers: Includes appointing the Prime Minister, overseeing the executive branch, and commanding the military.

Member of the *People Party*—a Conservative Political Party

Cabinet: Consists of ministers appointed by the President, who oversee various government departments.



Legislative Branch

Prime Minister: **HAN DUCK-SOO** (outgoing)
Elected as Leader by members of the
National Assembly

National Assembly: Unicameral legislature
with 300 members

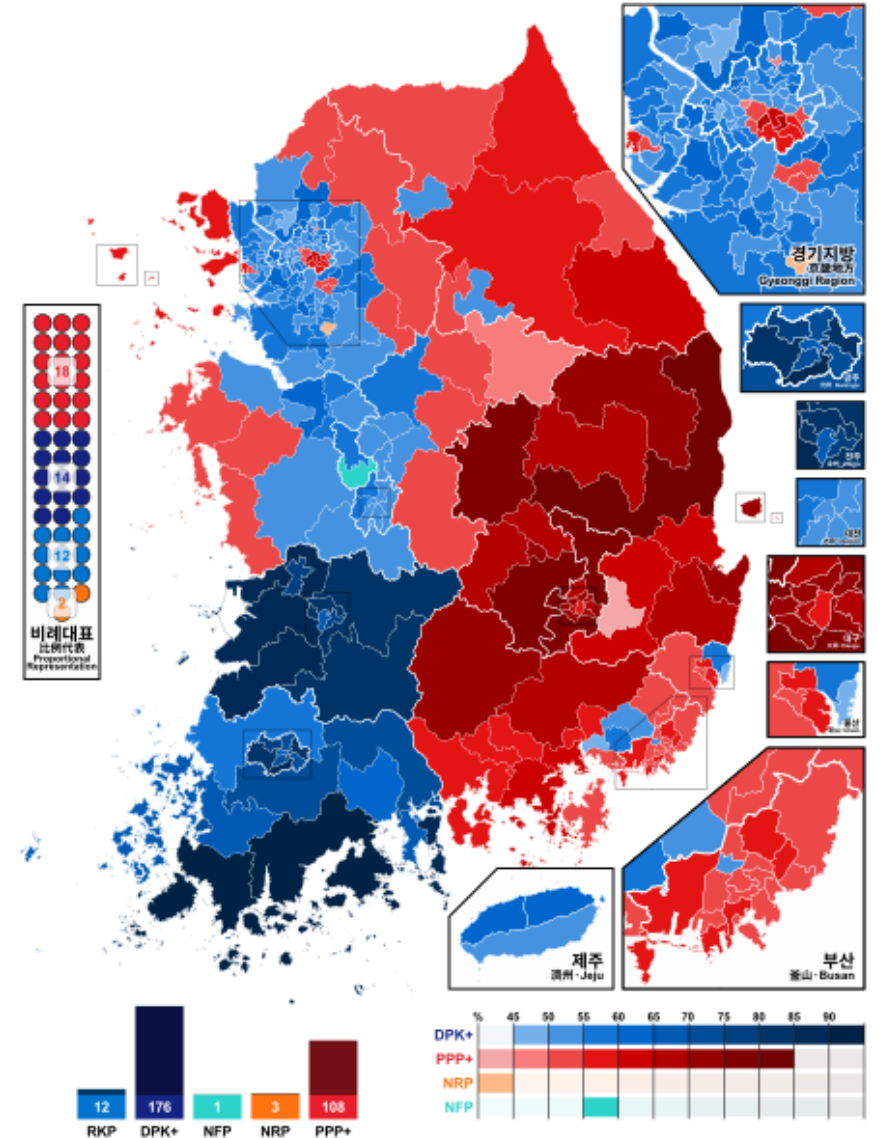
Elections: Members elected for four-year
terms through a mixed-member
proportional representation system.

Functions: Enacts laws, approves budgets,
and oversees the executive branch.



2024 SOUTH KOREAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

- Exit polls indicated that the **Democratic Party** and its partner, the **Democratic Alliance of Korea**, would win between 168 and 197 seats in the National Assembly, while the **People Power Party** and its partner, the **People Future Party**, were expected to win between 85 and 111 seats.
- The election also saw the highest number of invalid votes cast for proportional representation seats since its introduction in 2004, with the National Electoral Commission 4.4% of votes cast (over 1.3 million) determined to be fraudulent.



**Is Reunification
Possible on the
Korean Peninsula?**



HISTORICAL EXAMPLES:

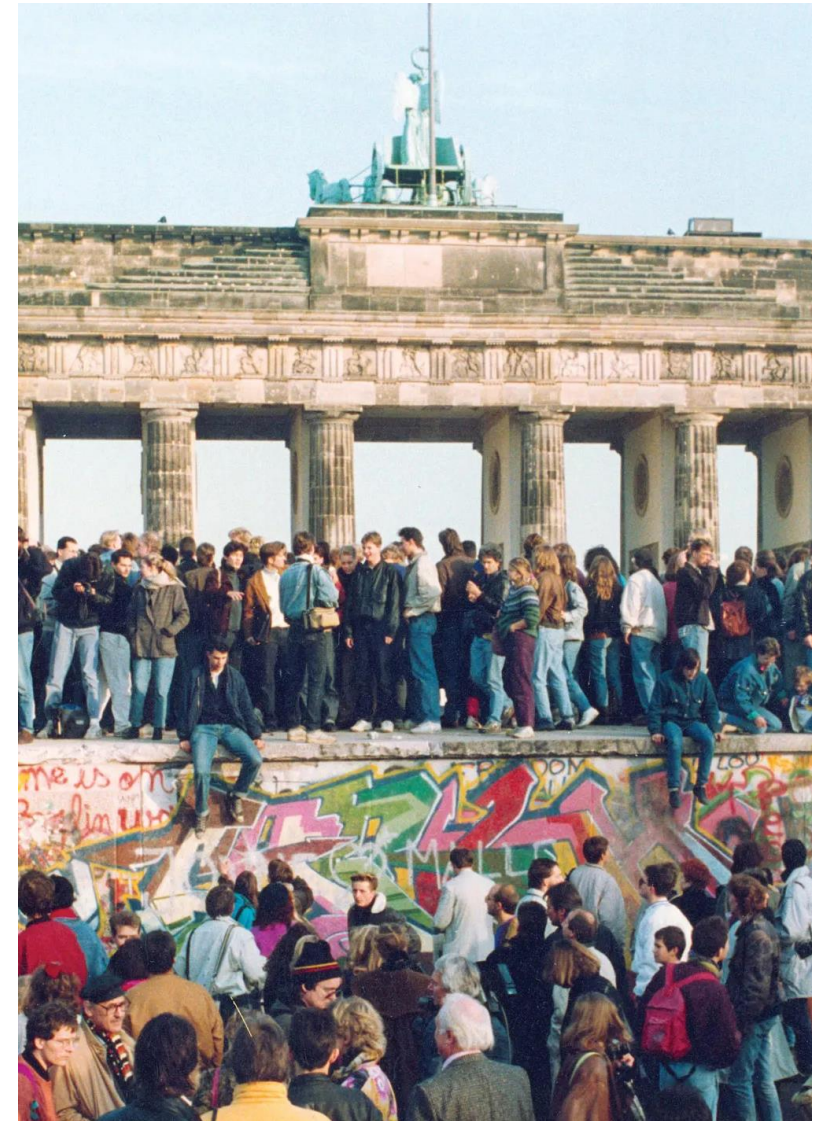
Reunification of Germany (1990)

Peaceful Revolution: The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, driven by mass protests and the demand for freedom and reform in East Germany.

Diplomatic Negotiations: Successful negotiations between East and West Germany, along with the support of international powers, including the United States, Soviet Union, United Kingdom, and France, culminating in the Two Plus Four Agreement.

Economic Integration: The adoption of the West German Deutsche Mark in East Germany, which facilitated economic alignment and stability.

Political and Legal Framework: The formal reunification process through the unification treaty, which integrated East Germany into the legal and political framework of the Federal Republic of Germany.



HISTORICAL EXAMPLES: Vietnam (1976)

Military Victory: The North Vietnamese Army, along with the Viet Cong, successfully defeated South Vietnamese forces, culminating in the Fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975.

Support from Allies: The North received substantial support from the Soviet Union, China, and other communist allies, providing military, economic, and logistical aid.

Effective Guerilla Warfare: The Viet Cong's use of guerrilla tactics and extensive support from local populations undermined the South Vietnamese government and its U.S. allies.

Political and Ideological Commitment: The North Vietnamese government maintained a strong, unified political and ideological commitment to reunifying the country under communist rule, motivating sustained efforts despite significant challenges and casualties.



Political Spectrum of the Korean Peninsula

Summer 2024

SOUTH KOREA:

- Democratic, Capitalist
- Separation of Powers
- Elected Legislature
- Multiple Political Parties
- Foreign Military Bases
- Constitutionally Backed Personal Freedoms
- Global Geopolitical & Military Support

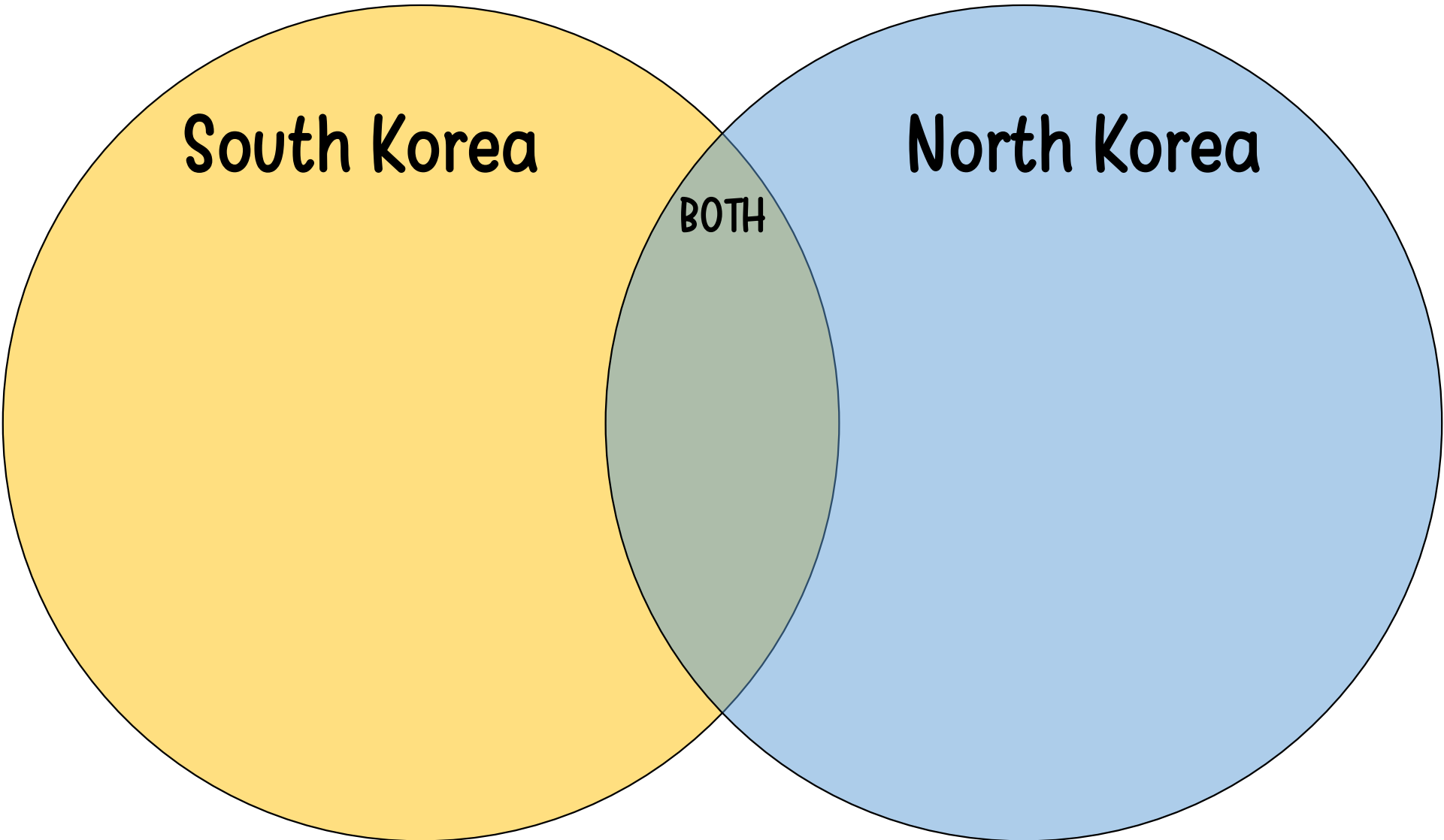
NORTH KOREA:

- Autocratic, Communist
- Single Party State
- Paranoid Isolationist
- Military State
- Widespread Oppression of Political and Ideological Groups
- Few global allies
 - (China, Russia)

Comparative Analysis

After reviewing the previous slides on Politics in the Korean Peninsula, complete the assignment on the next slide

In each circle, write 5-7 characteristics (political, social, economic, cultural, etc...) that are unique to each country. Then in the intersecting portion, write the shared characteristics between both Korean countries.



Primary Source Analysis

After reading each Primary Source on Politics in the Korean Peninsula, respond to the corresponding Questions in complete sentences.

How does the Juche ideology, as described by Kim Jong-il, reflect the broader goals and principles of the North Korean government under Kim Il-sung?

In what ways did the Juche ideology influence the economic and political development of North Korea from its inception to the early 1980s?

- "The Juche idea means, in a few words, that the owner of the revolution and construction are the masses of the people, and they are also the motive force of the revolution and construction. The great leader Comrade Kim Il-sung said: 'Establishing Juche means holding fast to an independent position, rejecting dependence on others, using one's own brains, believing in one's own strength, displaying the revolutionary spirit of self-reliance, and thus solving one's own problems for oneself on one's own responsibility under all circumstances.'"

Source: Kim Jong-il, "On the Juche Idea," 1982.

How does Park Chung-hee's vision for economic development reflect broader global trends in post-colonial nations during the mid-20th century?

In what ways might Park Chung-hee's economic policies have impacted South Korea's social and political structures in the late 20th century?

- "Our ultimate goal is to build a self-reliant economy by fostering modernization and industrialization through the mobilization of our own resources, both human and material. To accomplish this, we must uphold the principle of diligence, self-help, and cooperation, avoiding dependence on foreign assistance as much as possible."

Source: Park Chung-hee, "Address at the 5th Anniversary of the May 16 Revolution," 1966.

1. How did Roh Tae-woo's Nordpolitik policy aim to balance principles with practical diplomatic efforts in the context of the Cold War?

2. In what ways did Roh Tae-woo's declaration address the dual goals of economic development and peaceful reunification on the Korean Peninsula?

- "We will open the door to the North without sacrificing our principles. We will seek to improve relations with the Soviet Union and China, not just for economic reasons, but to create a peaceful environment on the Korean Peninsula and to lay the groundwork for peaceful reunification."

Source: Roh Tae-woo, "Special Declaration for National Self-Esteem, Unification and Prosperity," July 7, 1988.