

## TRENDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOLERANCE FOREIGN POLICY IN SOUTH KOREA

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### Abstract

This article reveals the importance of the factor of tolerance in the system of international relations. The article also analyzes the place and role of the factor of tolerance in South Korea-Japan relations. In addition, the problem of developing the factor of tolerance in the relations between South Korea and North Korea is studied and analyzed in the article.

**Keywords:** Tolerance, history of Korea, Japanese nation, colonial politics, intolerance, international relations, South Korea–Japan relations, Former President Yoon Suk Yeol, Kim Dae-Jung-Obuchi Joint Declaration, inter-Korean relations, President Lee Jae Myung.

### Introduction

In today's era of globalization, in which international relations are expanding, the role of tolerance based on mutual, kindness, trust, cooperation and peace is enormous. Tolerance is an integral part of society and the state, and plays an important role in the history of man and his development.

Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty, it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace[1].

Tolerance is not concession, condescension or indulgence. Tolerance is above all an active attitude prompted by recognition of the universal human rights and fundamental values. Tolerance is to be exercised by individuals groups and states[1].

South Korea has achieved the most successful economic development in history. This country, which had been among the poorest in the world until the early 1960s, became one of the world's leading economies by the mid-1990s as demonstrated by high per-capita income and world-class industries. In the early 1960s, Korea had much of the characteristics shared by many developing countries today, such as prevalent poverty, low economic productivity, low levels of technology and entrepreneurship in society, insufficient capital, poor endowment of natural resources, over-population in a relatively small territory, and internal political instability and external threats to its security. South Korea has successfully overcome these obstacles and achieved economic development within a single generation[2, p. 2].

Developed countries are distinguished from less developed countries by the fact that they have developed a large strategy in foreign policy in advance. Having a mutually agreed perspective

on each area of foreign policy is not an easy task. Often, foreign policy in isolated areas produces unexpected results from initial planning, leading to self-organization of the national development direction. Today, the South Korean government is trying to have a broad and systematic national strategy.

If we look at the history of Korea, in 1906-1910, Japan led efforts to conquer and colonize Korea. On August 22, 1910, under strong pressure, Korea lost its sovereignty and became a colony of Japan in the form of a governor-general. The military-police administration method was introduced in the country. The goal of the colonial government was to end Korean identity. Koreans were forced to forget their history and mother tongue. It was forbidden to form Korean associations not only in political, but also in scientific, literary, sports and other fields. In 1945, Korea was liberated from Japanese occupation [3, p. 99]. It is these historical factors that have caused the formation of intolerance of Koreans towards the “Japanese nation” and have been preserved for a long time.

If we look at history, strong countries have always conquered weaker countries and pursued colonial policies. In turn, the colonial policy was carried out in various forms. For example, many colonial countries have carried out brutal colonial policies with violence against their conquered territories, while some colonial countries have tried to carry out colonial policies based on humane values towards their colonies. But in most cases, the colonial policy was brutal and based on violence. In addition, different relations were formed in the colonial countries in relation to the occupied countries and are still preserved today. For example, in many countries the attitude of enmity, hatred and intolerance has been preserved, while in some countries, the attitude of learning and respecting the language and culture of the said colonial state, as well as the government policy, has been formed and preserved. Today, looking down and intolerant attitude towards the countries that were colonized in history, or the preservation of hostility and hatred towards the countries that were the colonies of a certain country, leads to the erosion of the factor of tolerance in international relations. It is true that in history, the colonial policy was brutal. But this was caused by the system of that time, ruling circles, geopolitical factor, lack of legal guarantees of human rights and freedoms, struggles between different forces, and other similar factors. However, in today's society where human rights are guaranteed and based on democracy, it is wrong to blame some nation for these historical disputes, to look down on the former colonial countries and to be intolerant.

South Korea and Japan are close and essential neighbors, working together in diverse fields, including security and economy, and upholding the principles of liberal democracy and market economy. Although historical disputes have strained their relationship, the pressing security landscape has amplified the necessity for both countries to jointly address regional security and other concerns in a manner consistent with their mutual interests and values.

The Government of Former President Yoon Suk Yeol has actively pursued various diplomatic efforts to seek practical solutions to issues between South Korea and Japan and to enhance their relationship. The leaders of Korea and Japan met in September and November 2022 and agreed on the necessity of improving their nations relations and promptly addressing current issues to expand cooperation. President Yoon Suk Yeol visited Japan on March 16-17, 2023, marking the first bilateral summit meeting in 12 years since December 2011. In a reciprocal

visit, Prime Minister Kishida visited South Korea on May 7-8, 2023, a mere 52 days after Former President Yoon's visit to Japan. These visits have restored shuttle diplomacy between the leaders of Korea and Japan and set the course for the improvement of bilateral relations. During the Korea–Japan summit in May 2023, in-depth discussions were held on cooperation in a wide range of areas including economy, industry, science, culture, and people-to-people exchanges[4, p. 48].

The government has actively listened to the voices of various sectors and levels through public-private consultations on forced labor, public debates, and visits with victims. At the same time, the government has held consultations with Japan to discuss its constructive responses. As a result, the government announced on March 6, 2023, its position on the Supreme Court ruling regarding forced labor mobilization. The government's solution is to provide compensation to the victims of forced labor mobilization with were plaintiffs in the ruling through the Foundation for Victims of Forced Mobilization by Imperial Japan, which was established by the Korean government. This landmark decision simultaneously satisfies the 1965 Claims Settlement Agreement between Korea and Japan and the 2018 Supreme Court ruling. This initiative by Korea represents the nation's magnanimous and proactive will to normalize the deteriorated Korea–Japan relations.

On the same day our government announced its position on the forced labor issue, Japan announced that it would inherit the positions of previous cabinets, including the “Kim Dae-Jung-Obuchi Joint Declaration” in which Japan expressed its “deep remorse and heartfelt apology” for its colonial rule. Moreover, during his visit to Korea in May 2023, Prime Minister Kishida stated, “I personally feel my heart ache at the thought of countless people having gone through very challenging and sad times under extreme conditions”. Furthermore, as the Japanese government expressed its non-opposition to voluntary contributions from Japanese companies the possibility of contributions from Japanese companies remains open[4, p. 48]. Now that the goal of normalizing South Korea–Japan relations has been visibly achieved through the announcement of the solution to the Supreme Court ruling on forced labor and the presidential visit to Japan, the government will continue its efforts to expand the momentum for improving Korea–Japan relations to economic and security cooperation as well as cultural and human exchanges.

If Korea and Japan confront their dark historical past with genuine sincerity, they will be able to overcome the current challenges and embark on a path toward a new future. Moreover, as the two nations that share liberal democratic values build trust while engaging in mutual exchanges and cooperation, they will not only surpass the peak of past relations but also pioneer a new era, opening up new possibilities for the future of Korea–Japan relations. This, in turn, plays an important role in the development and strengthening of the factor of tolerance in international relations and in raising the position of the Republic of Korea in the international arena to higher levels.

One of the problems that greatly hinders the development of the factor of tolerance in the national policy of the Republic of Korea is the relationship between South and North Korea. This issue has a great negative impact not only on South Korea's domestic and foreign policy, but also on the erosion of the factor of tolerance in international relations. It is recorded in the

history of Korea that in November 1947, at the initiative of the United States, the UN General Assembly decided to hold general elections in the north and south of Korea and to form a government under the supervision of the UN Provisional Commission in Korea. Since the USSR refused to allow this commission to enter North Korea, these elections were held only in the South. According to the election results, the parliament of the Republic of Korea was formed, it adopted the country's constitution and elected the president. On August 15, 1948, the Republic of Korea was officially declared. On September 9, 1948, at the 1st session of the Supreme People's Council, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was established in the north of the peninsula, and its constitution was adopted[3, p. 99].

From the time the two contemporary Korean states were founded in 1948, they have vied with each other for domestic legitimacy and international recognition. The devastating war between the two in 1950-3 intensified rather than resolved these rival claims, and the competition for legitimacy between Seoul and Pyongyang remained fierce for decades after the Korean War. However, from the early 1970s onward, inter-Korean relations have moved fitfully and gradually toward greater contact and mutual recognition, a process which has accelerated since the end of the 1990s. As Korean division and inter-Korean conflict were products of Great Power politics and the Cold War, movement in inter-Korean relations was largely the result of changes in Great Power relations during the Cold War period. However, since the end of the Cold War, the major impetus in inter-Korean relations has shifted toward an internally driven dynamic on the Korean Peninsula itself, especially under the initiative of South Korea. At the present time inter-Korean relations are dominated by this internal dynamic. At the same time however, they remain constrained and limited by external forces, in particular the nuclear confrontation between North Korea and the United States. While the two Koreas have moved toward a position of the factor peaceful coexistence, further integration between the two is necessarily linked to resolution of these external conflicts as well as greater integration among the countries of Northeast Asia[5, p. 2].

Article 4 of the Constitution of the Republic of Korea states: "The Republic of Korea shall seek unification and shall formulate and carry out a policy of peaceful unification based on the principles of freedom and democracy"[6].

In the political framework being established by the new president, Lee Jae-myung, particular emphasis is placed on the principles of tolerance. Specifically, the goal is to strengthen mutual respect, inclusiveness, and peace in the region through the development of dialogue and cooperation with North Korea. In June 2025, the Ministry of Unification of South Korea granted non-governmental organizations (NGOs) permission for the first time to engage in prompt communication and collaboration with North Korea in cultural and humanitarian areas. This decision is expected to facilitate the restoration of intercultural relations between South and North Korea, enhance humanitarian aid, and promote dialogue, thereby reinforcing regional inclusiveness and mutual understanding. This indicates that the values of tolerance are increasingly being integrated into both the domestic and foreign policies of the Republic of Korea[7].

It can be concluded from the above that today, in the system of modern international relations, the need to develop the factor of tolerance is increasing. Relations between different countries

are similar to relations between different people. Because, only if people can recognize and respect the universal rights of others and be forgiving and patient towards them, qualities such as peace, friendship, mutual trust and cooperation, and tolerance will be formed between them. The lack of mutual trust and compromise between people causes various conflicts between them. But people can have a positive or negative attitude towards mutual trust.

Today, the place and role of the factor of tolerance in the foreign policy of South Korea is gaining special importance. South Korea is trying to ensure security and peace in the Korean Peninsula and the region based on the factor of tolerance in foreign policy.

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