

South Korea Martial Law Decree Spotlights Communist Infiltration

The Chinese communist regime's infiltration of Korean politics and culture is extensive, deep, and not well known, according to experts.

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South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol attends the third session of the G20 Leaders' Meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Nov. 19, 2024. Mauro Pimentel/AFP via Getty Images



A martial law order from South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol has again put communist influence in the country under the spotlight.

For the first time in nearly four decades, the South Korean leader invoked the authority, accusing the opposing Democratic Party of aligning with communist North Korea. He revoked martial law hours after parliament voted to lift the order.



to declare martial law to protect the free Republic of Korea from the threat of North Korean communist forces, to eradicate the despicable



pro-North Korean anti-state forces that are plundering the freedom and happiness of our people, and to protect the free constitutional order," Yoon said in a late-night address on Dec. 3.



He said the political opposition, which dominates the national



assembly, was "paralyzing the judiciary by intimidating judges and impeaching a large number of prosecutors" and causing dysfunction in other government sectors as well.

South Korea President Lifting Emergency Martial Law

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North Korea is far from the only country bringing communist influence over the peninsula.

China, South Korea's biggest trading partner, has considerable sway.

Opposition Ties to China

Lee Jae-myung, who has likened himself to Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and leads the opposition party, has taken a more friendly stance toward the Chinese regime even as Yoon has tried to steer his country closer to the United States and reverse the country's yearslong trend of appeasing Beijing.

During a campaign rally in March, Lee criticized Yoon's approach to China and his comments on the regime's military encroachment on Taiwan, which the Chinese regime has sought to claim as its own.

"Why are you provoking China?" Lee said. "What does the Taiwan issue have to do with South Korea?"

A former presidential candidate, Lee was convicted two weeks ago of violating election law and was sentenced to a one-year suspended prison term.



South Korea's main opposition Democratic Party leader Lee Jae-myung (C) walks out from the main conference hall of the National Assembly in Seoul, Korea, after South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol declared martial law on Dec. 4, 2024. Jung Yeon-je/AFP via Getty Images

Lee lost the 2022 election to Yoon by less than 1 percentage point, making it the closest election in South Korean presidential history.

“It’s a very serious problem that we need to be aware of,” Suzanne Scholte, president of Virginia-based Defense Forum Foundation, previously told [The Epoch Times](#). “A liberal democracy like South Korea almost elected a pro-communist candidate in the last election.”

The concern may be a pressing one if Yoon’s popularity plummets as a result of his emergency declaration. His own political party has disavowed the martial law order and said they would “stop it with the people.”

“Yoon’s political days are likely numbered since the populace will be united in its criticism, and the majority opposition party will seek Yoon’s impeachment,” Bruce Klingner, a veteran at the CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency who specializes in Korean affairs, told [The Epoch Times](#).

During the brief martial law declaration, Lee called for people in South Korea to descend on the national assembly to protest the order.

Lee’s party won a major legislative victory in April’s general election, winning 175 out of 300 seats to the ruling People Power Party’s 108 seats.

Chinese Regime’s Wide Reach

South Korea is heavily reliant on China for trade and investment, a relationship that has further allowed Chinese authorities to influence its other sectors, including politics.

“Economy, culture, universities, there is no place that hasn’t been penetrated,” a former counter-espionage official, who asked to remain anonymous, previously told [The Epoch Times](#).

Cities in the two countries have signed nearly 700 friendship or sisterhood agreements.

Hundreds of Chinese civil servants were sent to work and train in South Korea through a state-sponsored civil servant exchange program. The Chinese embassy pays for South Korean youths to spend a week in China; it hands them books of Chinese leader Xi Jinping's speeches to read before they depart and expresses hope that they'll be leaders of future bilateral relations.



Then-China's National People's Congress Standing Committee Chairman Li Zhanshu (L) shakes hands with South Korea's National Assembly Speaker Kim Jin-pyo during a joint press conference at the National Assembly in Seoul, South Korea, on Sept. 16, 2022. Kim Hong-ji/AFP via Getty Images

A mayor for the South Korean city of Gwangju in 2023 tried to build a park to honor the composer of the anthem of the People's Liberation Army and a marching song for North Korea in order to attract tourists from China.

The subversion by the Chinese Communist Party in Korea is not as well known compared to the threats from North Korea, but "it is extensive, and it is rather deep," Tara O, author of *The Collapse of*

North Korea, previously told Epoch Times sister media outlet NTD. She said the effort to build the park was “very ironic.”

“That is just one of cultural warfare by China,” she said.

Dozens of South Korean media outlets carry articles by the Chinese regime’s propaganda mouthpiece People’s Daily.

South Korea also has the highest number of Confucius Institutes, a Chinese state-funded language education program to promote Beijing’s agenda.

In a previous interview with The Epoch Times, Choi Soo Yong, a retired case officer from the National Intelligence Service, noted that there’s a room dedicated to the collections of works about Xi at the Seoul National University.

By contrast, the university has no memorial to South Korea’s forefathers.

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Eva Fu
Reporter



Catherine Yang
Author

Eva Fu is a New York-based writer for The Epoch Times focusing on U.S. politics, U.S.-China relations, religious freedom, and human rights. Contact Eva at eva.fu@epochtimes.com



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