

East Asian Futures x Seoul National University Asia Center

East Asian Futures

State, Society, and Regional Transformation

*Joint Workshop of
East Asian Futures and
Seoul National University Asia Center*

16–17 September 2026
Seoul National University Asia Center



SNUAC
Seoul National University Asia Center
서울대학교 아시아연구소

EAF 未來
East Asian Futures

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East Asian Futures x Seoul National University Asia Center

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State, Society, and Regional Transformation

**Joint Workshop of
East Asian Futures & Seoul National University Asia Center**

16–17 September 2026
Seoul National University Asia Center
Seoul, Korea

Hosted by:
Seoul National University Asia Center &
East Asian Futures

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East Asian Futures: State, Society, and Regional Transformation

Joint Workshop of East Asian Futures and Seoul National University Asia Center

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Standard panel format: 5-minute chair's introduction · 15 minutes per presentation · 20-minute general discussion. Panel 5 includes four presentations and runs for 85 minutes.

Day 1 · Wednesday, 16 September 2026

State, Order, and Transformation in East Asia

09:00–09:30	Opening Remarks Prof. Suhong CHAE (Seoul National University Asia Center) Prof. Dr. Christine MOLL-MURATA (East Asian Futures) Prof. Baek Yung KIM (Seoul National University Asia Center) Prof. Dr. Hannes MOSLER (East Asian Futures)
09:30–10:40	Panel 1 State and Society in North Korea
Presenter	Presentation
Elisabeth RACHSTEIN (EAF)	<i>Closing the Future: Temporality and Legitimation in North Korean Political Discourse</i>
Eetu LAUSTELA (EAF)	<i>Radiant but Elusive: North Korean Futures in Texts about ‘Socialist Civilization’</i>
Dr. Hyun Jong NOH (SNUAC)	<i>Restructuring North Korean State Capacity through “Social Tasks (Sahoejeok Gwaje)”: From Infrastructural Coordination to the Routinization of Despotic Mobilization</i>
Chair: Prof. Dr. Felix SIEGMUND (EAF) General discussion: 20 minutes	
10:40–11:00	Coffee / Tea Break
11:00–12:10	Panel 2 Chinese Political Thought and International Order
Presenter	Presentation
Konrad BÖHM (EAF)	<i>Visions of Future World Order in Chinese Schools of International Relations</i>
Dr. Jeong-Kyung SEO (National Assembly Library of the Republic of Korea)	<i>Moral Self-Authorization and Relational Authority: Beyond Yan Xuetong’s Moral Realism</i>
Liliia PEICHEVA (EAF)	<i>Making Sense of China’s Behaviour in International Conflicts</i>
Chair: Dr. Pavel EM (EHESS) General discussion: 20 minutes	
12:10–13:10	Lunch

13:10–14:20		Panel 3 China’s Global Strategy and Security	
Presenter		Presentation	
Martyna SZOJA (EAF)		China’s Role Claims in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime: Current and Future Directions	
Arne Moritz MEYER (EAF)		China as a New Global Space Power: A Role Analysis in the Context of Global Leadership Competition in the Area of Outer Space	
Prof. Jiwoon BAIK (Institute for Peace and Unification Studies, SNU)		China’s Global South Discourse: Historical Genealogy and Reappropriation	
Chair: Prof. Dr. Hannes MOSLER (EAF) General discussion: 20 minutes			
14:20–14:40		Coffee / Tea Break	
14:40–15:50		Panel 4 Historical Memory and Regional Relations in East Asia	
Presenter		Presentation	
Minkyun PARK (EAF)		Competing Futures of Normalization: Chronotopic Contestation, Ontological Security, and Korea–Japan Relations	
Dr. Man Fung YEUNG (SNUAC)		Abandonment Anxieties and “Alliance Coercive Diplomacy”: A Case Study of Sino-DPRK Relations (1992-2022)	
Dr. Yuko NAGASAWA (Waseda University)		Colonial Korea within Japan–Germany Relations: The Case of Wonsan, a Northern City	
Chair: Prof. Dr. Christine MOLL-MURATA (EAF) General discussion: 20 minutes			
15:50–16:10		Coffee / Tea Break	
16:10–17:35		Panel 5 State, Society, and Social Transformation in East Asia	
Presenter		Presentation	
Xiaoyu XIONG (EAF)		Calibrating the State’s Political Expectation of Teachers in a Neoliberal Era: Coevolution of Morality and Quality Discourse in China	
Dr. Hyunjung CHI (SNUAC)		Making Mental Illness Countable: The Emergence of Psychiatric Epidemiology in South Korea, 1950s–1960s	
Dr. Pavel EM (EHES)		Regional Development in North Korea from 2021 to 2025	
Gwon SON (Sapienza University of Rome)		Constructing the Meaning of the Commons: The Case of the Gyeonguiseon Gongyuji in Seoul	
Chair: Dr. Hyun Jong NOH (SNUAC) General discussion: 20 minutes			
18:00		Workshop Dinner	

Day 2 · Thursday, 17 September 2026

Democracy, Governance, and Future Collaboration

09:00–09:20	Morning Reflection: Reflections on Day One and Opening of Day Two Joint remarks by Prof. Baek Yung KIM and Prof. Dr. Hannes MOSLER Key themes from Day One · Connections to Day Two · Priorities for future collaboration
09:20–10:30	Panel 6 Democracy, Memory, and Political Polarization
Presenter	Presentation
Prof. Dr. Hannes MOSLER (EAF)	<i>Retrospective Future: Far-Right Memory Politics in South Korea</i>
Dr. Suk-Ki KONG (SNUAC)	<i>Polarized Civil Society and Fandom Politics in South Korea: Democratic Crisis and Resilience in the Digital Age</i>
Dr. Miongsei KANG & Dr. Jong-Cheol KIM (SNUAC)	<i>Political Fandom and the Asymmetric Effects of Partisan Media: Evidence from South Korea’s 2025 Presidential Election</i>
Chair: Prof. Dr. Marion EGGERT (EAF) General discussion: 20 minutes	
10:30–10:50	Coffee / Tea Break
10:50–12:00	Panel 7 Working Conditions, Economic Planning, and Regional Security
Presenter	Presentation
Prof. Dr. Markus TAUBE (EAF)	<i>Economic Planning in the PR China: Evolving Perspectives of the Future as Manifested in China’s Five-Year Plans, 1980–2025</i>
Dr. Monika ARNOŠTOVÁ (EAF)	<i>Family Support, Filial Piety, and Gendered Labour-Market Strategies among Educated Youth in Shanghai</i>
Dr. Ki-Chul PARK (Sookmyung Women’s University)	<i>Navigating the US–China Rivalry: A Strategic Assessment of East Asian Maritime Security and Trilateral Cooperation</i>
Chair: Prof. Baek Yung KIM (SNUAC) General discussion: 20 minutes	
12:00–13:00	Lunch
13:00–14:00	Strategic Roundtable East Asian Futures: Building Collaborative Research Agendas
Moderators: Prof. Dr. Markus TAUBE (EAF) and Dr. Jong-Cheol KIM (SNUAC) • Key intellectual insights emerging from the workshop • Future collaborative research themes and joint publications • Faculty and doctoral-researcher exchanges • Future EAF–SNUAC workshops and institutional cooperation	

14:00–14:10 Closing Remarks: Prof. Baek Yung KIM (Seoul National University Asia Center) · Prof. Dr. Hannes MOSLER (East Asian Futures)

ABSTRACTS

PANEL 1

State and Society in North Korea

Chair

Prof. Dr. Felix SIEGMUND

*Closing the Future:
Temporality and Legitimation in North Korean Political Discourse*

Elisabeth RACHSTEIN

North Korea is frequently portrayed as a political system defined by continuity, isolation, and resistance to change. Yet official discourse reveals an intense preoccupation with the future. This paper examines how North Korean state narratives construct relationships between past, present, and future to legitimise political authority and stabilise the existing social order. Drawing upon discourse analysis of official speeches, news broadcasts, and political publications from the Kim Jong-un era, the paper analyses five moments of crisis and transformation to show how temporality functions as a central mechanism of political legitimation. Across these diverse episodes, official discourse repeatedly presents the past as a source of moral lessons, the present as a moment of collective struggle, and the future as an inevitable destination of prosperity, security, and national fulfilment.

Rather than appearing as an open field of possibilities, the future is represented as the predetermined outcome of an ongoing revolutionary process. Through narratives of sacrifice, self-reliance, external hostility, and national unity, political contingency is transformed into historical necessity. In this way, official discourse closes off alternative political futures by presenting the existing revolutionary trajectory as both natural and inevitable. By exploring the relationship between temporality and political legitimation, the paper contributes to broader discussions of authoritarian resilience and future imaginaries in East Asia. It argues that North Korean discourse does not merely project desirable futures but actively forecloses alternative ones, presenting the regime's historical trajectory as the only conceivable path forward.

***Radiant but Elusive:
North Korean Futures in Texts about ‘Socialist Civilization’***

Eetu LAUSTELA

This study analyzes how recent North Korean publications discuss and depict futures. The focus is on what characteristics are associated with the future, and what implications they have about North Korea’s ideological development in the Kim Jong-un era. Qualitative content analysis was used to code future-oriented texts around the concept of ‘socialist civilization’, a political slogan and policy used since 2012. The data set consisted of 157 newspaper articles and 51 magazine and scientific journal articles published by North Korea in 2012–2023 with the term in the title. The results demonstrate that North Korea approaches the future mainly through intentions, such as plans and commands, with heavy focus on attitudes and emotions. When futures are described directly, they are depicted in loosely positive terms, with a focus on optimism and urgency rather than clear prospects with dates. The future and the present are routinely blurred together to signal fast development and progress in the now. The texts aim to inspire people in the present to fulfill the state’s short-term goals rather than to deliver them determined long-term visions. This lack of clear utopian promises follows a wider trend in postsocialist states, diverging from past futures under 20th century socialist ideologies.

***Restructuring North Korean State Capacity through
“Social Tasks (Sahoejeok Gwaje)”: From Infrastructural Coordination to the
Routinization of Despotic Mobilization***

Hyun Jong NOH

This study examines how North Korea has adapted its state coordination in response to the breakdown of the planned economy and increasing marketization. It focuses on “social tasks” (sahoejeok gwaje), coercive assignments through which the state shifts the burden of supplying materials, labor, funds, and public services onto state-owned enterprises and social organizations beyond the formal plan. Drawing on North Korean official materials, third-party documentation, and interviews with four former officials and cadres, the article argues that social tasks have evolved from a supplementary device within the planned economy into a central mechanism of coercive state coordination. Building on Michael Mann’s concept of state power, it shows that the decline of planning capacity after the Arduous March increased reliance on extra-plan extraction and labor mobilization. Social tasks now operate as quasi-fiscal instruments and mechanisms of enterprise control and labor discipline, thereby reshaping relations among the state, Party cadres, enterprises, and the population.

PANEL 2

**Chinese Political Thought and
International Order**

Chair

Dr. Pavel EM

Visions of Future World Order in Chinese Schools of International Relations

Konrad BÖHM

Chinese International Relations experts at universities and think tanks play a central role in shaping the perception of Chinese foreign policy within and outside China. Prominent among them are scholars engaged in the construction of “Chinese Schools of IR Theory,” a research program that explicitly draws on Chinese political thought and historical experience to challenge the dominance of Western IR theory and conceptualize a ‘just’ global order. My presentation compares visions of the future international order across these “Chinese Schools”. It investigates how future orientation shapes interpretations of the present and past, and vice versa. The research analyzes shared and divergent temporal narratives among scholars of Moral Realism, Tianxia theory, symbiosis theory, and relational approaches. Employing qualitative text analysis, it compares academic publications across three dimensions: (1) critiques of the current global order, (2) invocations of Chinese historical experience and philosophical concepts, and (3) visions of a desired future international order. The presentation frames Chinese IR schools as illustrative cases of the broader mechanisms through which future-oriented narratives reconstruct history and contemporary politics. Findings indicate that these scholarly communities advance distinct and internally varied future imaginaries, underscoring the heterogeneity of elite Chinese discourse and the negotiated nature of future-oriented aspirations.

***Moral Self-Authorization and Relational Authority:
Beyond Yan Xuetong's Moral Realism***

Jeong-Kyung SEO

Yan Xuetong's moral realism offers a corrective to materialist accounts of power by emphasizing leadership, credibility, and support. This presentation argues, however, that the theory has undergone gradual denormativization in responding to questions of universality, measurement, and causal explanation. As morality is recast from a value-oriented standard into instrumental morality, and popularity becomes an indicator of moral conduct, morality increasingly functions as a resource for accumulating power rather than an independent constraint upon it. This shift creates a central problem: support mobilized by a great power cannot by itself demonstrate the moral legitimacy of its leadership. Participation may reflect consent, but also dependence, alignment, necessity, or the absence of alternatives. To address this limitation, I distinguish moral self-authorization from relational authority. Moral self-authorization occurs when a great power converts its moral identity and practices into a self-assigned entitlement to lead, represent, protect, or order others. Relational authority, by contrast, emerges only when other states can meaningfully approve, negotiate, criticize, or refuse such claims, and when their responses constrain the great power itself. The presentation concludes by introducing a genealogical study of China's moral politics, tracing its transformation from horizontal solidarity toward increasingly differentiated and hierarchical claims of responsibility and leadership.

Making Sense of China's Behaviour in International Conflicts

Liliia PEICHEVA

In the face of an increased number of global conflicts, the USA's withdrawal and cracks in the global order, it is becoming increasingly important to understand how other major powers position themselves when a war breaks out. With its latest global initiatives, China has been asserting its role in peacemaking on the world stage. As a global power, China presents itself as an alternative to the belligerence of the West. It says it stands for sovereignty, undivided security, a strengthened role for the UN, and global peace and dialogue, among others. However, internal and external debates about whether China's behaviour in conflicts could be considered neutral call these claims into question. Current scholarly literature mostly focuses on China's growing flexibility with regard to its non-interference principle, its mediation efforts in selected conflicts, and its security partnerships and investment in other countries. This dissertation aims to analyse China's role claims and the image it projects of itself in global conflicts since the Global Initiatives were proclaimed, examining its behaviour and the ideas it uses to justify it through case studies. The overarching question is what drives this behaviour, and whether it displays similarities with China's behaviour in the past. Taking George Herbert Mead's approach to temporality as a starting point, the thesis argues that the past and the future do not exist independently; rather, the past is constantly rewritten and the future is anticipated from our active, ever-changing present.

PANEL 3

China's Global Strategy and Security

Chair

Prof. Dr. Hannes MOSLER

***China's Role Claims in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime:
Current and Future Directions***

Martyna SZOJA

China has become an increasingly influential actor within the global nuclear non-proliferation regime (NPR), leading to claims that China is the main P5 actor to protect and lead the regime. China has expanded its diplomatic and leadership rhetoric, submitting over 150 official statements concerning nuclear weapons in 2012–2025, advocating especially for specific initiatives. Yet its impact remains ambiguous. This research – inspired by the concept of leadership – asks how China constructs and enacts its role within the nuclear non-proliferation regime. For this analysis, three case studies were selected: No-First-Use (NFU) policy, Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone, and denuclearized Korean Peninsula. This selection was motivated by the high number of references to these initiatives, long-term advocacy, and suitable empirical basis for China's potential leadership assessment. The goal is to critically assess the view that China aims to become the NPR leader. This research addresses a significant gap on China's role in the nuclear non-proliferation regime, as the literature overall remains dated and fragmented. Moreover, no study examined it through a National Role Theory (NRT) framework.

China as a New Global Space Power: A Role Analysis in the Context of Global Leadership Competition in the Area of Outer Space

Arne Moritz MEYER

China's recent outer space programs have emerged as a symbol of the country's technological and geopolitical advancement, sparking strong interest by media, scientists and politicians alike. This thesis explores whether China is actively pursuing a global leadership role in outer space and combines strategic narrative analysis with material capacity to act analysis to evaluate its ability to enact this role. It provides an overview over the current debate on China and state of the art of Chinese outer space exploration and highlights the divide between positions on a potential US-China space race. By examining China's major outer space programs and comparing them to similar programs conducted by other states, the thesis develops an approach based on a national role theory framework. Utilizing this framework, the proposal highlights the aspects of external perception, self-perception and identity, and the capacity to act based on four leadership auxiliary roles: pioneer, agenda-setter, path-maker and mediator. The thesis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current order in outer space, a possible new Chinese global leadership role and its implications for international leadership dynamics.

China's Global South Discourse: Historical Genealogy and Reappropriation

Jiwoon BAIK

This paper traces China's changing appropriation of the Bandung Spirit from Mao Zedong's "Intermediate Zone" thesis to the Three Worlds Theory and contemporary Global South discourse. It examines how the 1955 Bandung Conference transformed the Intermediate Zone from an abstract revolutionary constituency into a community of postcolonial states. Through Zhou Enlai's diplomacy, China embraced peaceful coexistence based on respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, and mutual non-aggression across ideological differences. This accommodation proved unstable. During the Sino-Soviet split, the "Two Intermediate Zones" thesis subordinated peaceful coexistence to world revolution, while support for insurgencies in Asia and Africa violated Bandung's principles. It interprets Deng Xiaoping's 1974 UN speech as a refracted return to Bandung. By redefining world conflict as hegemony versus anti-hegemony, China abandoned revolutionary export, restored relations with nationalist governments, and recast solidarity as South-South cooperation among developing countries. Finally, the paper shows how contemporary Chinese discourse replaces "Third World" and socialism with "developing countries" and the "Global South," turning Bandung into symbolic authority for global governance reform. This genealogy reveals both continuity and rupture: China invokes Bandung to legitimate its leadership yet removes the ideological tensions that once made Third World thought central to the CCP's vision of revolution and human emancipation.

PANEL 4

**Historical Memory and
Regional Relations in East Asia**

Chair

Prof. Dr. Christine MOLL-MURATA

***Competing Futures of Normalization:
Chronotopic Contestation, Ontological Security, and Korea–Japan Relations***

Minkyun PARK

This presentation examines how competing visions of the future shaped the political possibility of cooperation with Japan during South Korea’s normalization debates in the 1960s. Drawing on ontological security theory and the concept of the chronotope, it argues that the controversy was not simply about remembering the colonial past or moving beyond it. Political actors connected the same past to different anticipated futures and positioned Korea and Japan within different political spaces. In one ordering, colonial history remained an unfinished warning: renewed Japanese economic influence and political interference threatened to reproduce relations of dependence and undermine Korean sovereignty. In another, Korea and Japan were repositioned within the Free World, anti-communist Asia, and a regional economy oriented toward security, modernization, and growth. Here, overcoming colonial subordination required a stronger Korea capable of cooperating with Japan without becoming subordinate to it. These competing spatiotemporal orderings shaped the ontological politics of normalization by projecting different future Korean selves and different Korea–Japan relations. Political possibility was therefore structured by how actors connected past, present, future, and political space to define what forms of cooperation could become legitimate, necessary, or dangerous.

***Abandonment Anxieties and “Alliance Coercive Diplomacy”:
A Case Study of Sino–DPRK Relations (1992–2022)***

Man Fung YEUNG

Due to North Korea’s military activities compromising China’s interests, China became more displeased with North Korea’s provocations as Beijing would likely be entrapped into an unnecessary conflict between Pyongyang and Washington. To constrain North Korea from undermining China’s interests, Beijing tried to maintain a distance from Pyongyang. In this case, China’s measures produced abandonment anxieties in North Korea. The existing research argues that North Korea engages with brinkmanship games against China to retain Beijing’s support. However, there is an absence of indicators to measure abandonment anxieties in alliance politics. Hence, it is difficult to examine under which conditions Pyongyang feels necessary to coerce China. To address the knowledge gap, I developed a concept of “alliance coercive diplomacy” to explore how North Korea has reduced its abandonment anxieties caused by China from the post–Cold War era to 2022. To develop this research framework, I will analyze the reasons behind “alliance coercive diplomacy” being the most feasible measure for a junior ally to adopt to maintain its patron’s support. Moreover, I investigate the conditions of when and how the weaker member would adopt “alliance coercive diplomacy” to keep the ally’s support in the alliance game. In this research, I argue that China is one of the targets of North Korea’s provocations. Nevertheless, Pyongyang would do so when it suffers from intense levels of abandonment anxieties.

***Colonial Korea within Japan–Germany Relations:
The Case of Wonsan, a Northern City***

Yuko NAGASAWA

The scholarship on colonial Korea has largely focused on Japan–Korea relations, nationalist resistance, major urban centers, and Protestant missionary activities. This study examines Japanese colonial rule in Korea through the history of the German Catholic Benedictine Monastery of Saint Ottilien. The Benedictines arrived in Korea in 1909 and initially established their mission in Seoul. In the late 1920s, following growing tensions with the French missionary authorities, the Benedictines relocated from Seoul to Wonsan, a northern colonial port city amid the expansion of both Japanese settlement and Protestant missionary activity. Following the defeats of Germany and Japan in 1945, the monastery was confiscated by the North Korean authorities, and several monks were interned in labor camps. By focusing on German non–state actors, this study offers a perspective that moves beyond nation–centered and confrontational narratives of colonial Korea. Drawing on primary sources including missionary correspondence and publications, this study explores the German perspective on Korean society under Japanese colonial rule. Aiming to move beyond Asia–centered frameworks in Korean Studies, it examines the experiences of German missionaries amid cultural oppression and military expansion by Japan, and the wartime defeats of both Germany and Japan.

PANEL 5

**State, Society, and Social Transformation
in East Asia**

Chair

Dr. Hyun Jong NOH

***Calibrating the State's Political Expectation of Teachers in a Neoliberal Era:
Coevolution of Morality and Quality Discourse in China***

Xiaoyu XIONG

Education scholarship has extensively examined neoliberal education policy worldwide. The predominantly economic reading of education and the managerial reform of educational administration have been criticized for narrowing the scope of education and de-professionalizing teachers. Although neoliberal criticism originates in the Western democratic context, this critical academic discourse has spilled over into non-Western and non-democratic contexts. The global travel of this discourse has generated side effects, not least a diversion of attention away from cultural specificities and differing political cultures. Limited yet valuable attention has been paid to how authoritarian states co-opt neoliberal education policy. This presentation focuses on a policy issue that has beset modern states at least since the establishment of the modern education system, namely, how to balance the political and professional expectations placed on teachers. The empirical focus is China since its economic reforms at the end of the 1970s. Driven by a strong commitment to rapid economic growth through neoliberal reform, alongside an unreformed party-state system, both political and professional expectations of teachers have become so powerful as to generate contradictions between them. Drawing on discursive institutionalism, this presentation traces the evolution of China's teacher policy and asks: how does the state calibrate its political expectations of teachers amid neoliberal reform?

***Making Mental Illness Countable:
The Emergence of Psychiatric Epidemiology in South Korea, 1950s–1960s***

Hyunjung CHI

During the mid-twentieth century, psychiatric epidemiology became increasingly standardized through international collaboration as an approach to measuring and comparing mental health across populations. In East Asia, however, its development followed uneven trajectories, shaped by different political, institutional, and professional circumstances. Although Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea shared a colonial history of psychiatry, their paths diverged after 1945. In South Korea, where psychiatric data barely existed and there was little capacity to produce it, psychiatrists began to pursue psychiatric epidemiology as a distinct practice only after the Korean War. Focusing on Yu Sök-chin's pioneering survey conducted between 1956 and 1960, the paper examines how the absence of psychiatric statistics shaped the purpose of early psychiatric epidemiological research. It traces how Yu drew on epidemiological methods circulating internationally to establish the prevalence of mental illness in rural communities and make his findings comparable with psychiatric surveys conducted abroad. Drawing on survey reports, newspapers, and professional publications, the paper reconstructs the professional and intellectual context in which Yu's survey was conceived and carried out, and considers its significance for the development of psychiatric expertise in postwar South Korea.

Regional Development in North Korea from 2021 to 2025

Pavel EM

At the 8th Congress of the Korea Workers' Party in March 2021, Kim Jong Un announced an ambitious plan to construct 50,000 new housing units in Pyongyang within five years. While global news agencies have reported on the completion of large-scale residential districts in Pyongyang, scholars have largely overlooked not only this important project, but also implications of this initiative for regional development policy. To address this lacuna, this study analyzes changes in regional development policy in North Korea following the launch of the 50,000 Project through the lenses of two contrasting perspectives: a socialist developing country and positional welfare urbanization. Using articles published in Rodong Sinmun, North Korea's principal state newspaper, this study compares the results obtained through two alternative approaches: Latent Dirichlet Allocation and an author-developed contextual analysis methodology involving ChatGPT. The findings provide a fertile basis for discussions on development policy within contemporary North Korea.

***Constructing the Meaning of the Commons:
The Case of the Gyeonguseon Gongyuji in Seoul***

Gwon SON

The international debate on commons emerged in the 1960s as a theoretical framework addressing the social dilemma surrounding the sustainability of natural resources shared and collectively governed by rural communities. In the 1990s, it underwent a significant paradigmatic shift, expanding its scope to include social resources, such as space, in the urban context. The South Korean scholarship followed international trends, expanding the debate on urban commons, particularly in the mid-2010s. The Gyeonguseon Gongyuji movement (2015–2020) in Seoul, active in the Mapo district during the redevelopment of the area, played an important role in this expansion. What began as a refusal to vacate a square previously used as a neighborhood market under an agreement with the district, in protest against the lack of citizen participation in the redevelopment decision-making process, turned into autonomous management of the space, becoming an important reference for the commons discourse in South Korea. This contribution investigates how the meaning of commons was socially constructed in the Gyeonguseon Gongyuji. Drawing on documents produced by the movement, it combines collective action frames theory with textual analysis to examine how the movement organizers interpreted, legitimized and recounted the collective experience. The research findings show how the commons frame was adopted as an epistemic resource against the institutional regulation of urban space and as a reconceptualization of the square as a public good belonging to citizens.

PANEL 6

**Democracy, Memory,
and Political Polarization**

Chair

Prof. Dr. Marion EGGERT

Retrospective Future: Far-Right Memory Politics in South Korea

Hannes MOSLER

Since the 2010s, the far right has moved from the margins to the mainstream of democratic politics worldwide. South Korea long seemed an outlier, but President Yoon Suk-yeol's December 2024 self-coup suggests a convergence with this "fourth wave." This paper sheds light on a somewhat neglected mechanism of far-right revisionism: how movements invoke the future to rework the past. What work does the topos of the "future" (mirae), and the idiom of being "future-oriented" (mirae-jihyangjeok), perform in their memory narratives? The paper argues that the future here is not an aspirational horizon but a rhetorical instrument. Combining conceptual history, systems theory, and futures research with cultural-memory theory, it develops the notion of a Future of Retrospection: a way of using the past to make a chosen course feel morally necessary — one that sets genuine remembrance (restoring) apart from its deliberate distortion (re-storing). This is illustrated by three cases from the Yoon administration — the 2023 forced-labor agreement with Japan, Gwangju commemoration, and the Lee Myung-bak pardon — showing how each recodes accountability as a dangerous fixation on the past, licensing a final line drawn under the past that forecloses justice while claiming to fulfill it.

***Polarized Civil Society and Fandom Politics in South Korea:
Democratic Crisis and Resilience in the Digital Age***

Suk-Ki KONG

South Korea presents a striking paradox of contemporary democracy. Since democratization in 1987, a vibrant civil society and recurrent mass mobilization have played crucial roles in democratic consolidation and resilience. Yet the very political energy that has sustained Korean democracy increasingly operates through polarized identities, affective hostility, and digitally networked fandom politics. This paper examines how the transformation of civil society in the digital age is reshaping both democratic crisis and democratic resilience in South Korea. The paper develops the concept of movement-dependent democracy to explain this paradox. Korean democracy has repeatedly demonstrated its capacity to defend democratic institutions through extraordinary civic mobilization, while remaining relatively weak in institutional mediation, deliberation, and everyday democratic connection. Under conditions of platform capitalism and algorithmically mediated political communication, this structural tension has intensified. Digital platforms expand political participation but simultaneously amplify emotional identification, antagonistic polarization, and leader-centered fandom networks. Consequently, civil society increasingly shifts from an arena of mediation and collective representation toward a fragmented field of competing political identities. The paper therefore argues that South Korea's current democratic crisis should be understood not simply as a crisis of representation, but as a crisis of democratic connection. At the same time, Korea demonstrates an important form of democratic resilience: citizens remain highly capable of mobilizing when democratic institutions are perceived to be under threat. The central challenge is thus to transform mobilizational resilience into relational and institutional resilience. The paper concludes by exploring democratic reconnection—through renewed civic mediation, rooted cosmopolitan citizenship, and caring democracy—as a pathway beyond polarized fandom politics toward a more sustainable democratic civil society.

***Political Fandom and the Asymmetric Effects of Partisan Media:
Evidence from South Korea's 2025 Presidential Election***

Miongsei KANG & Jong-Cheol KIM

Political fandom has become an increasingly prominent feature of South Korean politics, driven in part by the rapid growth of partisan YouTube channels and online political communities. This paper examines how political fandom is associated with partisan media consumption, candidate support, and affective polarization. Using a nationwide survey of 1,800 voters conducted in July 2025, one month after South Korea's presidential election, we measure political fandom with a 21-item index capturing identification with political leaders, emotional attachment, active promotion, and community engagement. The analysis yields four main findings. First, stronger political fandom is associated with greater consumption of partisan YouTube content, with community engagement playing a particularly important role. Second, partisan media consumption partly mediates the association between fandom and support for Lee Jae-myung. Third, these relationships vary substantially by party identification: they are strongest among Democratic Party supporters, while among independents, stronger fandom increases favorable evaluations of Lee without clearly translating into electoral support. Finally, the effects of partisan media exposure on affective polarization are asymmetric. Among progressive voters, greater consumption of ideologically aligned media intensifies polarization, whereas exposure to conservative media reduces it. These findings demonstrate how political fandom operates through partisan media ecosystems to shape candidate evaluations and political divisions in contemporary South Korea.

PANEL 7

**Working Conditions, Economic Planning,
and Regional Security**

Chair

Prof. Baek Yung KIM

Economic Planning in the PR China: Evolving Perspectives of the Future as Manifested in China's Five-Year Plans, 1980–2025

Markus TAUBE

This article focuses on changes in the future expectations as well as future planning of the political leadership of the People's Republic of China. It puts forward the thesis that the possibility space of futures is determined to a substantial extent by economic performance indicators. The presence or absence of economic capacities opens up or closes off potential trajectories. At the same time, however, economic capacities can also be deliberately constructed in varying specifications. To understand how the (economic) visions of the future held by the Chinese political elite have changed, and by means of which instruments attempts have been made to shape the future, this article systematically examines the Chinese Five-Year Plans from 1980 to 2025. Among other things, the aim is to demonstrate how the possibility space of (economic) futures has changed over time and what role the Chinese planning approach has played in this.

Family Support, Filial Piety, and Gendered Labour–Market Strategies among Educated Youth in Shanghai

Monika ARNOŠTOVÁ

Youth in China are confronting a convergence of macro-economic pressures—slowing growth, an ageing population, the “zero-COVID” lockdowns, the U.S. trade war, and a mismatch between university majors and labour-market needs—that have driven youth unemployment to its current 17.3 %. This environment fuels “involution”, a relentless competition in education and work that yields diminishing returns, and a growing awareness that the prosperity enjoyed by older generations may be out of reach. Young, educated Chinese respond in diverse ways. Some enter the platform economy as delivery drivers or streamers, viewing these jobs as temporary solutions. Others adopt “lying flat” by withdrawing from the labour market, while another segment pursues additional qualifications to postpone employment. Our study examines how family (or spousal) support influences the employment strategies adopted by educated youth in Shanghai under conditions of high unemployment and soaring living costs. A secondary question examines whether gendered expectations within the traditionally patriarchal Chinese family lead to divergent strategies for men and women. Drawing on 30 in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted in autumn 2024 across multiple industries, this study examines the role of filial piety as well as family or spouse support while navigating the challenging labour market.

Navigating the US–China Rivalry: A Strategic Assessment of East Asian Maritime Security and Trilateral Cooperation

Ki-Chul PARK

This strategic assessment interrogates the systemic geopolitical ramifications of the People's Liberation Army Navy's (PLAN) July 2026 Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM) deployment in the open Pacific, framed against the accelerated consolidation of the China–Russia–North Korea alignment. We posit that Beijing's operationalization of an advanced, survivable sea-based second-strike nuclear capability fundamentally disrupts the regional equilibrium of power and invalidates conventional First Island Chain containment paradigms. By evaluating the structural vulnerabilities of the legacy San Francisco bilateral “hub-and-spoke” alliance architecture, this study demonstrates the inability of uncoordinated security arrangements to counterbalance multi-theater revisionist coercion. Consequently, we argue that a deeply institutionalized, interoperable Republic of Korea–United States–Japan trilateral security apparatus is imperative for maintaining credible extended deterrence, securing pivotal Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs), and curbing proliferation incentives across the maritime commons. Through empirical analysis of posture shifts and joint operational capabilities, this paper delineates policy pathways to transition ad hoc minilateralism into an integrated theater defense framework capable of mitigating catastrophic escalation within an increasingly bifurcated Indo-Pacific order.

STRATEGIC ROUNDTABLE

**East Asian Futures:
Building Collaborative Research Agendas**

Chair

Prof. Dr. Markus TAUBE · Dr. Jong-Cheol KIM

BIONOTES

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