



Pandemic Nationalism in South Korea

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Published online: 17 July 2020

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Abstract

As in much of the world, the Coronavirus pandemic has dominated South Korean politics in 2020. Compared to other countries, Seoul's approach has been highly nationalist and politicized, as the ruling party lauded its pandemic response as the global standard and linked it to a larger, leftist-nationalist agenda. This "pandemic-leftist" discourse peaked around the April 15 midterm elections, but subsided the following month, as domestic and foreign setbacks arose. To explain, firstly, a competitive-nationalist race to flatten the infection curve encouraged the government to infringe on the civil liberties of infected patients, and society to stigmatize them. Other countries contained Covid-19 without such rights violations and stigma. Secondly, critics distinguished between the government's relative success in pandemic response and its general failures in economic and foreign policies. Instead of asking other countries to learn from one's country, each country would do well to learn from the experiences of others and to continually improve its own policies.

Keywords Korea · Japan · Covid-19 · Pandemic · Nationalism · Media · Politics

Pandemic Politics and "South Korean Model"

Moon Jae-in was elected as South Korea's President on 10 May 2017, after the year-long scandal and impeachment of former, conservative (rightist) party President Park Geun-hye. Representing the politically leftist-nationalist, Democratic Party of Korea (DPK), Moon started with astronomical public approval ratings (around 84%),¹ as he promised to dramatically improve the people's livelihoods and relations with North Korea. The Moon Administration raised the minimum wage by 16.4% in 2018, the largest increase in nearly two decades, and by 10.9% in 2019,² and limited businesses to a 52-h work

week. In 2018, Moon became the first sitting president to meet with a North Korean leader (Kim Jong-un) three times.

However, by 2019, Moon's approval rating dropped by more than half to low 40s and even 30s, because of economic slowdown, lack of progress on North Korea talks, and political scandals (*Yonhap News*, 18 Oct. 2019). Pundits expected Moon's ruling DPK party to lose seats in the midterm (15 April 2020) legislative elections. However, the spread of the Coronavirus to South Korea, with the first reported case on 20 January 2020, upended such expectations.

Initially, the Moon Administration was roundly criticized for not banning travelers from China, against the advice of Korean Medical Association, and for then-second largest number of reported cases outside of China. Since March, however, led by Korean Center for Disease Control (KCDC), the government "flattened" (lowered) the infection curve. Not just in South Korea, but throughout East Asia (e.g., Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Vietnam), medical bureaucracies and general publics were relatively prepared because of their experiences with past epidemics, such as SARS (Severe acute respiratory syndrome) (2003), H1N1 Flu (2009), and—in South Korea—MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) (2015). Nonetheless, South Korea's media—especially the state-run broadcasters and pro-government, leftist newspapers (e.g., *Hankyoreh*)—effusively praised the government for leading the global battle against Covid-19.

¹ Katharina Buchholz, "President Moon's Approval Rating Is in Free Fall," *Statista* (29 May 2019), <https://www.statista.com/chart/18207/president-moon-jae-in-approval-rating-south-korea>

² Lee Ho-jeong, "2020's minimum wage to rise 2.9% to 8590 won," *Korea JoongAng Daily* (12 July 2019), <https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=3065452>

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After the COVID-19 pandemic struck Korea, the Moon Jae-in administration almost immediately got extensive testing up and running and adopted a transparent and open approach to keep the public fully informed rather than resort to a lockdown like other countries. The world is thus hailing Korea as a role model for grappling with the contagion. (*Korean Overseas Information Service*, April 2020)³

South Korea has definitely been seen globally as having responded effectively without sacrificing its economy thanks to its democratic methods and voluntary efforts by its public. (*Hankyoreh*, 19 April 2020)⁴

President Moon declared South Korea to be “the undisputed ‘No.1’ epidemic response country leading the world.”⁵ The Ministry of Culture released a video, “A letter from ‘Wonderland,’” to share their experiences and knowledge with the world (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5PA_ptV6F1o). Buoyed by domestic and foreign media praise of the “South Korean model,” the ruling Democratic Party of Korea (and its satellite party) captured an unprecedented, near two-thirds majority of the National Assembly (180 of 300 seats) on 15 April 2020, and Moon’s approval rating rose to as high as 70% (*Korea Times*, 8 May 2020).

Pandemic Leftist-Nationalism

In the election’s aftermath, ruling party supporters proclaimed that domestic and foreign changes linked to the pandemic offered an unprecedented moment to implement a leftist-nationalist agenda. All significant political parties in South Korea identify as nationalist defenders of the Korean nation against its external enemies (and domestic collaborators). The political left-right divide is centered on the alleged enemies of the nation. For the anti-communist right, which dominated South Korean politics from 1947 to 1997 and which is currently represented by major opposition United Future Party (UFP), the enemies are communists who enslaved the northern half of the nation, and their leftist collaborators in South Korea. For anti-colonial left, represented by the ruling DPK,

the enemies are the colonial-era Japanese, who enslaved the whole nation, and their Korean collaborators and descendants.⁶

South Korean leftists have labeled the post-1945, rightist political and economic elites as “pro-Japanese collaborators,” who oppressed leftist, populist movements, created a conglomerate (“chaebol”)-dominated economy, blocked reconciliation with North Korea, and normalized relations with Japan without redress for colonial victims. Leftist efforts to restructure South Korea’s economy and relations with North Korea and Japan were constrained by domestic rightists (conservatives) and by external pressure from the United States. But the “coronavirus revolution” politically weakened the rightist opposition and showcased S. Korea as a “new model of development and self-reliance.” Declared President Moon’s third anniversary speech (10 May 2020):

The Republic of Korea has become the safest and most transparent production base in the world. Countries around the world have now begun to prefer innovative capabilities and safe investment destinations to cheap labor. This presents a golden opportunity for us. We will push ahead with bold strategies to attract high-tech industries and investments from overseas as well as to help Korean companies return from abroad. The Republic of Korea will become a “world factory of high-tech industries,” thereby changing the global industrial map.

Editorialized the pro-government newspaper *Hankyoreh*:

In a “G-Zero” era lacking leaders, South Korea stands at the starting block, poised to break free of its slavish following of the “great power” model and chart its own course. The reconfiguration of the world by the “coronavirus revolution” leaves us facing important responsibilities. It’s time for us to take another step forward in preparing for an economic and employment crisis, the decline of globalization and a restructuring of the global supply network, and to thoroughly consider and make preparations for a more fair and equal community. (*Hankyoreh*, 19 April 2020)

Befitting South Korea’s post-pandemic status, the administration declared a Korean “New Deal” to create jobs, both directly and by investing in new, high-tech industries.

After the election, Moon expressed hopes that North and South Korea shall jointly cooperate against Covid-19, and that

³ Sohn Ji-ae, “Global Benchmark in Fight vs. COVID-19,” *Korean Overseas Information Service (KOIS)* (April 2020), <http://www.kocis.go.kr/eng/webzine/202004/sub08.html#a>; also see “WHO Chief: S. Korea is Model for Fighting COVID-19,” *KBS World Radio* (19 March 2020), https://world.kbs.co.kr/service/news_view.htm?lang=e&Seq_Code=152128; “Canada seeks S. Korean model in coronavirus response: Trudeau to Moon,” *Yonhap News* (March 26, 2020, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20200326005851315>).

⁴ Park Min-hee, “Has China truly emerged “victorious” from its COVID-19 battle?” *Hankyoreh* (19 April 2020), http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_editorial/941119.html

⁵ “Special Address by President Moon Jae-in to Mark Three Years in Office,” Republic of Korea, President’s Office (10 May 2020), <http://english1.president.go.kr/BriefingSpeeches/Speeches/820>

⁶ Gi-Wook Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics, and Legacy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); Joseph Yi, Joe Phillips and Wondong Lee, “Manufacturing Contempt: State-linked Populism in South Korea,” *Society* 56 (5), pp. 494–501 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-019-00404-2>.

this cooperation shall expand to other spheres (*Hankyoreh*, 28 April, 2020). Moon’s leftist-nationalist supporters argued that the April 15 elections offered a mandate for reconciliation efforts. Mr. Ko Youngdae (Solidarity for Peace and Reunification in Korea) declared:

In the last general election, the people [in South Korea] expressed overwhelming support for the Moon administration. Don’t you think that this is a demonstration of the people’s desire to be more actively engaged in improving inter-Korean relations? If the Moon administration actively, with confidence, engages with North Korea without looking for the U.S.’s approval, the Trump administration will have to follow by moving on improving DPRK-US relations. (*Catholic Peace Broadcasting Company*, 27 April 2020)

Even as the pandemic and midterm elections supposedly boosted the ruling party’s reconciliation efforts with North Korea, they enhanced its tough (‘principled’) stance against Japan. Despite the pandemic, the government (*Seoul*) doubled domestic stockpiles of major strategic industry items formerly provided by Japanese companies. It aimed to reorganize South Korea’s supply chain to exclude Japan and ally with China (*Hankyoreh*, 12 May 2020).

Tokyo had implicitly threatened to withhold exports of key industry items, if Seoul enforced the 2018 Supreme Court ruling expropriating Japanese companies to compensate colonial-era laborers. (Tokyo claimed the ruling violated the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations and requested third-party arbitration, as stipulated by the bilateral Treaty, but Seoul ignored the request.) By reducing dependency on Japan, Seoul’s ruling party could achieve its longstanding goals of re-interpreting the 1965 treaty (and forcing Japan to compensate wartime laborers) and terminating the 2016 military intelligence-sharing agreement (General Security of Military Information Agreement, GSOMIA).

Ruling-party (DPK) supporters argued that Japan’s right-wing Abe government has lost credibility because of its fumbling response to Covid-19 and shall necessarily concede to the superior Moon Administration. Seoul can leverage the pandemic to respond “resolutely to Japan on historical and territorial issues” (*Hankyoreh*, 24 May 2020).

Opinion polls in Japan have shown a steep drop in the Abe administration’s approval ratings due to the failed coronavirus response, with 68% of respondents saying they felt “uneasy” about healthcare and testing. Reading the signals from the Abe administration, the same [Japanese] media that was disregarding South Korea before are now publishing reports calling Japan’s response the “‘analog’ to

South Korea’s artificial intelligence” and insisting that the government “has so much to learn about countermeasures that it ought to be bowing its head and saying ‘at your service’ to South Korea.” Amid these changes, Seoul National University professor Nam Ki-jeong predicted that... “adjustment of relations with South Korea will emerge as a diplomatic task for Japan in the post-coronavirus era”....One signal of that would be for it to humbly acknowledge South Korea’s disease control achievements and reach out. (*Hankyoreh*, 24 May 2020).

Critiquing South Korean Model: Itaewon and Shincheonji Clusters

Domestic and especially foreign media praise of the South Korean model noticeably subsided in May 2020. The spark was the government’s response to an infection spike associated with the local LGBT community. On May 7, a Protestant Christian newspaper (*Kookmin Ilbo*) posted an article titled “[Exclusive] corona 19 case visited a gay club in Itaewon”—later revised as, “[Exclusive] corona 19 case visited a famous club in Itaewon.” Despite the revision, the *Kookmin Ilbo* article sparked an avalanche of domestic and international media coverage, which revealed that, on May 1 and early hours of May 2, a 29-year man from Yongin (near Seoul) visited five bars and nightclubs (King Club, Trunk Club, Club Queen, Sulpan, H.I.M.), and a sauna, popular with gay men, in Seoul’s Itaewon district. The Yongin man was then-asymptomatic and tested positive the following week. He potentially infected 1500 people, and—as of 24 May 2020 (*Yonhap News*)—225 persons tested positive because of direct (96 persons) or indirect (129) contacts with Itaewon-area clubs. Contact tracing was delayed, because more than half the clubs’ visitors registered false contact information. The government used mobile phone, credit card, and CCTV records to forcibly trace and test all visitors.

The government did not reveal names of infected patients, but publicized via SNS their ages, geographic locations, and the names of places visited (e.g., nightclubs, churches). Therefore, acquaintances could guess the names of patients and their sexual orientations. The Korean “3-T” model of tracking, testing, and transparency (publicizing), critics claimed, violated the privacy and civil liberties of patients who did not wish to be tested or to be linked to stigmatized places (e.g., gay nightclubs).

Before Itaewon, the most significant rights violations occurred with the first mass infection cluster, the Shincheonji religious sect. An elderly woman (patient No. 31) attended the sect’s church in Daegu on Feb. 9 and 16,

before testing positive. At the time, the government had neither introduced social distancing nor restricted travel from China (apart from Hubei province). Still, Korean politicians blamed Shincheonji for the epidemic, perhaps—as critics suggested—to deflect blame from the Chinese and Korean governments’ handling of the epidemic. The city governments of Seoul and Daegu sued the group for obstruction of duty in February and March after they found some mismatches in the list of facilities run by Shincheonji and the list of information about their members submitted by the church. On March 1, Seoul City Mayor Park Won-soon, a ruling party (DPK) member and likely, future presidential candidate, demanded government prosecution of Rev. Lee Man-hee, the Shincheonji leader and founder, “for murder, injury and violation of the law on prevention and management of infectious diseases.” “Had they taken appropriate measures earlier on, we could have prevented so many of the deaths and illnesses,” Mayor Park wrote on his Facebook account. A petition submitted to the Blue House on Feb. 22 requesting the government disband the sect gained over 1.3 million signatures.⁷

In March 2, Rev. Lee expressed remorse that so many patients were tied to his church, but denied any intent to mislead government authorities; in fact, Vice Minister of Health Kim Kang-lip publicly stated that the Shincheonji church has cooperated with authorities. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) stated that politicians and media were “exaggerating the church’s role in the outbreak,” and that “USCIRF has received reports of individuals encountering discrimination at work and spousal abuse because of their affiliation with the church.”⁸ The Center for Studies on New Religions reported, “The lists of Shincheonji members supplied to the authorities have been partially leaked, and Shincheonji devotees have been publicly insulted and beaten, and some have been fired from their jobs.”⁹ In Ulsan, on February 26, a Shincheonji female member died after falling from her 7th floor apartment. Her husband was reportedly attacking, and trying to compel, her to leave Shincheonji. On May 4,

another alleged victim of spousal abuse, a 42-year-old mother of two, died after falling from her 11th floor apartment.¹⁰

Although Shincheonji members were the most vilified group during pandemic, their rights were rarely defended by the courts or media.¹¹ The domestic media mostly interviewed politicians or ex-members, who labeled the sect as a secretive, harmful “cult.” The western media either ignored the religious sect or repeated the “cult” frame of Korean media.¹² But the LGBT community received strong, sympathetic gaze from western media, which interviewed its leaders and pressed the Korean government to respect their rights. Reported US-based Public Radio International:

“The way the government is conducting contact tracing is a concern for everyone,” said Lee Jong-gul, director of the gay rights group Chingusai. “There needs to be a better balance between human rights and privacy in relation to fighting the disease.” “Is it really helpful to release such excessive information,” he said.¹³

Responding to foreign and domestic criticism, government officials offered anonymous testing for persons related to the Itaewon cluster. Still, some mainstream and especially social media criticized persons associated with the Itaewon cluster. Some entertainment celebrities even apologized for visiting clubs outside the Itaewon cluster.¹⁴

In South Korea, a positive test implied immoral behavior that defied the national interest, especially when linked to unconventional, religious and sexual minorities. Other countries contained Covid-19 without such rights violations and stigma. In USA and Europe, celebrities (e.g., actor Tom Hanks, former basketball player Patrick Ewing, Korean-

⁷ “[DEBRIEFING] What is the Shincheonji Church of Jesus and who are its members? And more importantly, what are its links to the coronavirus?” *Korea JoongAng Daily* (17 March 2020), <https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=3075027>

⁸ “The Global Response to the Coronavirus: Impact on Religious Practice and Religious Freedom,” U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (March 2020), <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2020%20FactSheet%20Covid-19%20and%20FoRB.pdf>; Lianne Kolirin, “Witch-hunt of sect at heart of Coronavirus,” Religion Media Centre (2 March 2020), <https://religionmediacentre.org.uk/news-comment/witch-hunt-of-sect-at-heart-of-coronavirus>

⁹ “Coronavirus and Shincheonji: Stopping the Witch Hunt,” Center for Studies on New Religions (not dated), https://www.cesnur.org/2020/shincheonji_appeal.htm

¹⁰ Choe Sang-Hun, ‘Proselytizing Robots’: Inside South Korean Church at Outbreak’s Center, *New York Times* (10 May 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/10/world/asia/south-korea-coronavirus-shincheonji.html>

¹¹ We found only three articles in mainstream Korean and western media that defended human rights of Shincheonji members: 서 (Kim Seo-hee), “신 지는 가해자인가 생 인가 [Is Shincheonji a perpetrator or victim]?” *JoongAng Daily* (12 March 2020), <https://news.joins.com/article/23728060>; Joseph Yi, “Religious freedom and COVID-19 epidemic [Letter to Editor],” *Korea Herald* (15 March 2020), <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20200311000649>; Raphael Rashid, “Being Called a Cult is One Thing, Being Blamed for an Epidemic is Quite Another,” *New York Times* (9 March 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/09/opinion/coronavirus-south-korea-church.html>

¹² Victoria Kim, “Secrecy is paramount for South Korean sect linked to coronavirus surge. Many believers are in SoCal,” *Los Angeles Times* (2 March 2020), <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-03-02/secracy-was-paramount-for-south-korean-sect-behind-surgin-g-coronavirus-infections-including-in-socal>

¹³ Jason Strother, “South Korea’s coronavirus contact tracing puts LGBTQ community under surveillance, critics say,” *Public Radio International* (May 22, 2020), <https://www.pri.org/stories/2020-05-22/south-korea-s-coronavirus-contact-tracing-puts-lgbtq-community-under-surveillance>

¹⁴ “Singer Park Gyu-ri, rapper Song Min-ho apologise for visiting clubs, not observing social distancing,” *The Strait Times* (13 May 2020), <https://www.straittimes.com/lifestyle/entertainment/singer-park-gyu-ri-rapper-song-min-ho-apologise-for-visiting-clubs-not>

American actor Daniel Dae Kim)¹⁵ and pastors¹⁶ publicly shared their Covid-19 experiences. In contrast, no South Korean celebrity or pastor has publicly come out.

Even as domestic and foreign media highlighted human rights concerns with the South Korean model, their attention spread to other models of pandemic containment in Europe (e.g., Germany, Sweden) and East Asia (Vietnam, Taiwan, Japan). A Google search shows that news stories with “South Korean model” peaked in March and April, with relatively few afterwards. The ruling DPK still proclaimed South Korea to be the global standard for epidemic response, but foreign media and governments considered lessons from a wide range of countries.

Critiques of Pandemic-Leftism

Ruling party (DPK) leaders linked their relative success in containing Covid-19 to a larger political agenda of restructuring the domestic economy and foreign relations. This argument, however, did not sway the necessary audience of investors and governments. In contrast to Covid-19, critics claimed, the Moon administration’s approach to economics and foreign affairs has not been guided by experts in line with the global mainstream, but by left-wing, nationalist ideology. Korea’s economy was stagnating even before Covid-19, and experts blamed DPK policies for increasing labor and energy costs, burdensome regulations, and bilateral tensions with Japan, including an (informal) boycott of Japan-related goods, services, and travel.

The DPK’s new policy of massive government spending would not change underlying conditions that discouraged investment, even from Korean companies. If government subsidies did persuade some companies to establish factories, much of the work will be done by robots susceptible to neither infections nor unionization.

In a survey conducted by the Korea Economic Research Institute (KERI) in 2018, 16.7 percent of [Korean] businesses said they have no intention of reshoring due to high wage costs in Korea. This was the second-most-cited reason for not considering relocating, after the

¹⁵ “Famous people who had Covid-19,” *Wonderwall.com* (22 May 2020), <https://www.wonderwall.com/celebrity/photos/famous-people-who-have-tested-positive-coronavirus-covid-19-3022493.gallery>; “Coronavirus pandemic: Which politicians and celebs are affected?” *Aljazeera* (26 May 2020), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/03/coronavirus-pandemic-politicians-celebs-affected-200315165416470.html>

¹⁶ “Belfast pastor credits cleaner’s prayer for getting him through COVID-19 battle,” *Irish Central* (26 May 2020), <https://www.irishcentral.com/news/belfast-pastor-cleaner-covid19>; Marcos Zapata, “Surviving COVID-19 in Spain Changed My Faith: Six lessons for churches from the president of the Spanish Evangelical Alliance,” *Christianity Today* (21 April 2020), <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/april-web-only/spain-covid-19-coronavirus-survivor-pastor-advice-churches.html>

need to have a physical presence in overseas markets to grow business there, at 77.1 percent. Among those surveyed, 5.6 percent said regulations in Korea made operations here unattractive for them....[INSEAD professor] Dutt noted that automation will limit the creation of jobs. “The jobs created will be for robots that are not susceptible to infection, not for people. So even if jobs are created they may be fewer than there would be in a world absent of COVID-19.” (*Korea Times*, 24 May 2020)

Even as Korean companies hesitated to invest in S. Korea, Japanese companies began to divest from the politically hostile market, notably carmaker Nissan (*Korea Times*, 29 May 2020).

Seoul’s pandemic response notwithstanding, moreover, Tokyo has yet to “humbly” reach out. On 13 May 2020, Seoul demanded Japan to “swiftly retract” its restrictions by end of the month (*Yonhap News*, 13 May 2020), but no such retractions arrived. Tokyo also declined to remove Coronavirus-related entry restrictions on South Korean visitors (*Yonhap News*, 26 May 2020).

Probably most frustrating, neither the USA nor North Korea responded to Seoul’s peace initiatives. Pyongyang understood that the Trump Administration determined sanctions policy, and that Seoul had little influence on Trump.

“Since last year, the North has prioritized talks with the U.S. to ease or lift sanctions as it knows there are few things that the South can do independently with regard to these,” said Park Won-gon, a professor of international politics at Handong Global University. (*Korea Times*, 25 May 2020)

Cross-National Lessons from the Covid-19 Pandemic

South Korea, along with China, has demonstrated a highly nationalist and politicized model of pandemic containment, linking a country’s pandemic response to its global status and to the ruling party’s political agenda. A nationalist approach facilitates collective mobilization and sacrifice to contain the pandemic. But it also generates significant costs. Touting one’s country as the global leader, and linking national pride to Covid-19 containment, pressures government officials to contain infections by any means necessary, including surveillance and publicity that infringe on individual privacy. These pressures increase when the ruling party stakes its pandemic response to its larger political agenda, such as leverage with neighboring countries.

Even as liberties are violated at home, a successful containment campaign does not necessarily increase the country's global leverage. China's nationalist and politicized approach has generated backlash from other countries. The equally nationalist Trump Administration cast suspicion on Beijing's Covid-19 statistics and blamed China for the pandemic. US political scientist Joseph Nye warned, "Authoritarian leaders have used COVID-19 as an excuse to deepen their power and control" (*Korea Herald*, 28 May 2020).

Louisa Lim (*Foreign Policy*, 23 March 2020) criticized Beijing's "first truly international propaganda offensive":

China's Communist Party has long excelled at rewriting its own history, but with its latest propaganda blitz on the novel coronavirus, it's rewriting the present. And while the traditional revisionism has largely been aimed at a domestic audience, this time it has a global one in mind. Beijing is attempting to gaslight the world as it escalates its propaganda push to obscure the source of the disease. Yet the real significance of this campaign is that it represents Beijing's first truly international propaganda offensive and a new front line in the global information war.

Tokyo has not openly criticized Seoul's pandemic campaign, but it also has not conceded to Seoul in any policy arena.

A long-term cost of the nationalist approach is that it retards mutual, multilateral learning. The Chinese and S. Korean media actively discuss the policy failures, but rarely the successes, of other countries, although Germany, Taiwan, and even archrival Japan¹⁷ have flattened the curve without comparable rights violations and stigmatization.

South Korea's pandemic politics stands at a crossroads. As more states flatten the curve and adapt to the post-pandemic

"new normal," they will be compared on the various negative and positive liberties that they afford their citizens, such as privacy and economic opportunity. Seoul may continue its current containment campaign, or compromise to ease civil liberties concerns. It may continue (or accelerate) expansive, state regulation and spending, or—following Germany's Social Democrat Gerhard Schröder—shift to pro-market policies. It may forcibly liquidate Japanese properties or compromise with Tokyo, such as through third-party arbitration.

The ruling DPK party's approval rating shall decline, if other countries adapt more quickly to the post-Covid economy. In the first quarter of 2020, South Korea fell behind Japan and USA in GDP growth (*Korea Herald*, 26 May 2020). S. Korea's economy headed the political agenda before Covid-19, and it shall reemerge as the pandemic eases and the nation turns to the 2022 presidential election. Along with advertising one's successes to other countries, each country would do well to learn from the experiences of others and to continually improve its own policies.

Acknowledgements This article was supported by Hanyang University Research Fund.

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¹⁷ Ben Dooley and Makiko Inoue, "Testing Is Key to Beating Coronavirus, Right? Japan Has Other Ideas," *New York Times* (29 May 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/29/world/asia/japan-coronavirus.html>