

# Publication Statement

## **The Final Stance Toward Liberal Democracy**

Baekma Ridge, located in Cheorwon, Gangwon Province during the Korean War, stands as a historic battleground marked by immense sacrifice in defense of the Republic of Korea's freedom. At this site, soldiers of the Republic of Korea Armed Forces fought with their lives to protect the nation's existence and its liberal democratic system.

Among them was the late Staff Sergeant Jo Eung-seong, who fell while maintaining his combat posture, aiming his rifle until his final moment. Years later, when his remains were discovered, he was still found in that very stance. His posture was not merely that of a fallen soldier, but a symbol of unwavering commitment to defending freedom and loyalty to the Republic of Korea.

What he risked his life to protect was not merely a single hill. It was a society where people can speak freely, choose freely, and where the people themselves are the sovereign authority of the state—namely, the values of liberal democracy enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Korea.

Article 1 of the Constitution of the Republic of Korea states: "The Republic of Korea shall be a democratic republic, and sovereignty shall reside in the people, and all state authority shall emanate from the people." This principle forms the foundation of the nation's political order and declares that the people are the true owners of the state. The system through which the will of the people is most directly expressed is elections. Electoral integrity is not merely a matter of administrative procedure. It is the essential mechanism through which popular sovereignty is realized and the most fundamental institutional pillar sustaining liberal democracy. If elections are not fair, the will of the people can be distorted, and the legitimacy of democracy itself is inevitably undermined. Democracy is not completed by the mere act of voting. It becomes a living system only when the will of the people is accurately reflected and the process is transparently verified. For this reason, many democratic nations continuously assess the fairness and transparency of their electoral systems, operating various auditing and verification mechanisms to strengthen institutional trust.



**The late Sergeant Cho Eung-seong of the Republic of Korea Armed Forces—a veteran of the Korean War who fell asleep at Baengma-gogi (White Horse Hill) with his rifle still aimed.**

The Republic of Korea is no exception to this principle. Verifying electoral fairness and examining institutional vulnerabilities is not an act of undermining democracy, but rather a process that strengthens it. It is not an expression of distrust toward the state, but a responsible examination of its institutions and an essential effort to safeguard popular sovereignty.

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This report originates from such a critical awareness. It aims to examine whether the principle of popular sovereignty, as declared in the Constitution, is fully realized within the electoral system, and to identify what institutional improvements and verification measures are necessary to further strengthen public trust. This is a public mission to reinforce the foundation of liberal democracy.

The freedom of the Republic of Korea was built upon countless sacrifices. The posture of a soldier who did not lay down his weapon until the very end on Baekma Ridge asks us a question: How responsibly are we protecting this freedom today?

Safeguarding the sovereignty of the people under all circumstances and preserving the fairness and transparency of elections—the core institution of democracy—is the responsibility of those living today. It is our duty to the generation that fought for freedom and our historical mission to pass on a free Republic of Korea to future generations.

The liberal democracy of the Republic of Korea was never given freely. It is a value that must be protected and a principle that must be upheld to the very end. We must continue to verify, examine, and act responsibly to preserve it.

Just as the final posture of a soldier who fell defending freedom at Baekma Ridge, the liberal democracy of the Republic of Korea is a promise that must be upheld until the very end.

As citizens of the Republic of Korea, and in order to pass on a nation we can be proud of to future generations, we write this report in the spirit of the late Staff Sergeant Jo Eung-seong, who never turned his rifle away.

**Freedom and Innovation Party of Korea**  
**Leader of Freedom and Innovation Party: Hwang Kyo-ahn**

Central Policy Committee Chairman: Park Cheol-hui

Vice Chairman: Kang Hyun-jun

Commissioner: Lee Ji-hwan, Jeon Byung-gil, Jung Jae-wan



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# Foreword

## 1. Collapse of the Separation of Powers in the Republic of Korea: An Omnipotent National Election Commission (NEC)

### 1) Inability of Judicial Oversight: A Sitting Supreme Court Justice Serving as Chair of the NEC

- In the Republic of Korea, when appointing members within the National Election Commission (NEC), a Supreme Court Justice has been appointed. This has been carried out as a long-standing convention; however, despite the need for mutual checks and balances over several decades, the NEC has effectively become a “sanctified” institution. As a result, investigations or trials related to the NEC are conducted by individuals affiliated with the NEC itself. This situation is analogous to self-judging, where a perpetrator investigates and adjudicates their own alleged crime.
- Although an unprecedented 126 election invalidation lawsuits were filed regarding the 2020 National Assembly elections, the Supreme Court justices sided exclusively with the NEC and dismissed all cases. Even in the case titled “2020Su30 Election Invalidation Case for National Assembly Members,” filed by former lawmaker Min Kyung-wook as a candidate, numerous pieces of physical evidence—such as ballots bearing the Japanese flag motif and so-called “cabbage leaf ballots”—which had never appeared at polling or counting stations, were revealed during recount proceedings. These findings strongly suggested the possibility of ballot substitution (ballot swapping) prior to the recount. Nevertheless, the case was dismissed.
- Election invalidation lawsuits are subject to a single-instance trial system and must be adjudicated within 180 days as a mandatory provision. However, the Supreme Court delayed proceedings. Furthermore, regarding the invalidation lawsuits for the April 10, 2024 National Assembly elections and the June 3, 2025 presidential election, no rulings have been issued to date, despite exceeding the 180-day statutory deadline.



- Despite numerous complaints and accusations concerning election crimes, law enforcement authorities—namely the police and prosecution—have failed to conduct proper investigations.

## 2) Limitations of Legislative Oversight

- Due to alleged evidence of election irregularities discovered at counting centers and recount sites, as well as statistically implausible and inexplicable discrepancies between early voting results and election-day voting outcomes, a majority of the public has raised suspicions regarding election integrity. In response, citizens are demanding electoral reforms to restore transparency and trust, including the abolition of early voting, the direct stamping of ballots using the personal seal of the polling station manager, and manual vote counting at polling stations.
- The Constitutional Court ruled that the Board of Audit and Inspection (BAI) cannot audit the NEC, as the NEC is a constitutional institution. While the National Assembly remains the only body capable of overseeing the NEC through mechanisms such as parliamentary audits, the NEC possesses investigative and inquiry powers that can significantly influence the electoral success or failure of elected lawmakers. Consequently, members of the National Assembly are effectively in a subordinate position vis-à-vis the NEC.
- Regarding electoral system reform, lawmakers have been either passive or have acted in alignment with the NEC's position. This is because acknowledging "election fraud" would call into question the legitimacy of their own election under the current system. In particular, the Democratic Party of Korea, which holds a supermajority of 198 seats, categorically denies allegations of election fraud. Instead, it supports the NEC's stance and is pursuing legislation to formalize the printed stamping method (facsimile seal imprinting)—considered by critics to be a fundamental cause of mass production of fraudulent ballots—by replacing the personal seal of the polling station manager with a printed seal. Legislative proposals calling for reforms such as the abolition of early voting have virtually no chance of passage. As a result, the legislature has become effectively incapacitated in advancing electoral reform.



## 2. Examination of Alleged Election Fraud

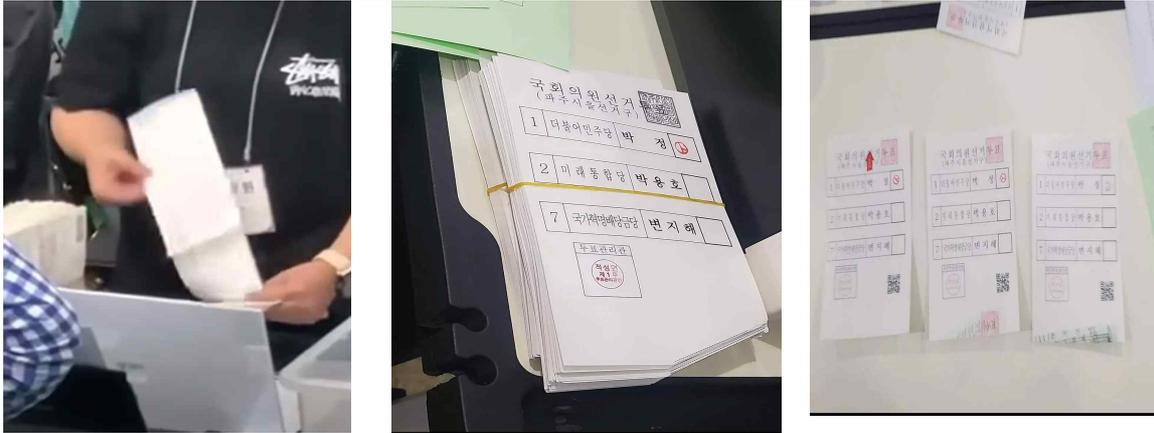
### 3) Issuance of Irregular (Non–Official) Ballots Led by the NEC

- While election fraud, if it occurs, involves numerous systemic factors, the most fundamental issue lies in the use of ballots that are not officially authorized ballots. According to Article 157 (“Receipt and Marking Procedures for Ballots”), Paragraph 1 of the Public Official Election Act, ballots must be issued to voters on election day by the polling station manager, who must affix their personal seal to the ballot. Furthermore, under Article 158, Paragraph 3, concerning early voting, it is stipulated that: “Ballots for the relevant election shall be printed, the ‘Early Voting Manager’ section shall be stamped with the manager’s seal, and the ballot shall be issued to the voter together with a return envelope without detaching the serial number.” Thus, by law, the polling station manager must personally affix their seal and issue the ballot. However, in practice, instead of using personal seals, stamps produced by the NEC are used, and these stamps are returned to the NEC after voting hours. This constitutes an unlawful electoral practice.
- When using stamps produced and later retrieved by the NEC rather than the personal seal of the manager, a critical vulnerability arises: the NEC could, in theory, mass-produce fraudulent ballots before or after the election period.
- Moreover, in early voting (conducted several days prior to election day), the stamping method does not involve manual affixation by the manager. Instead, an image of the seal is pre-registered in an electronic server, and the seal is printed directly onto the ballot during ballot issuance—a process referred to as “printed stamping” (facsimile imprinting). The NEC has established subordinate regulations to implement this method, despite it being inconsistent with higher-level statutory law. This creates a highly dangerous situation in which large volumes of fraudulent ballots could be produced rapidly at any time and place.
  - ① “Glue ballots” – where the upper portions of ballots are stuck together due to differing printing processes; under normal voting procedures, such adhesion should not occur.
  - ② Bundled ballots without fold marks – unlike normal ballots, which bear folding traces, these appear in stacked, unfolded form. Although the National Election Commission has explained these as “shape–restoring paper,” such materials are reportedly not found elsewhere globally.
  - ③ Misprinted ballots (“cabbage leaf ballots”) – ballots showing printing errors, often with green overlay distortions. Under standard procedures, polling officers are required to verify and stamp ballots, and defective ballots should be discarded. The presence of such ballots suggests that proper procedures may have been bypassed or that the ballots entered the system through



irregular channels.

- It is alleged that organized electoral fraud networks may exploit early voting ballots by mass-producing pre-marked votes and inserting them into early voting ballot boxes or introducing them during the counting process.



①“Glue ballots” (ballots stuck together abnormally)(Left) ②Unfolded bundles of ballots(Middle)  
③Misprinted ballots (“cabbage leaf ballots”)(Right)

#### 4) Issues with the Early Voting System

- Early voting is a system that allows voters to cast their ballots at any designated early voting station nationwide during a two-day period held 4-5 days prior to election day. The early voting system is designed and operated differently from election-day voting. Instead of using a paper-based voter registry, voter identity is verified solely through a computerized integrated voter registry system. Additionally, the serial number stub of the ballot is neither detached nor retained. Guidelines have also been issued to obscure CCTV cameras at early voting stations. In other words, the system is structured in such a way that no physical evidence remains to verify voter identity or to confirm the number of early voters.



- Early voting ballot boxes are stored at local election commission offices for 4–5 days; however, numerous instances have been reported nationwide where tampering or damage to the seals affixed to storage room doors has been observed. Ballots cast outside the voter’s registered district are delivered to the corresponding constituency via postal service, yet the postal delivery process is not subject to observer oversight. Monitoring of ballot boxes stored at election commission facilities is conducted by only two election officials recommended by the two major political parties, effectively excluding smaller parties from institutional participation in observation.
- Early voting ballot boxes are made in the form of fabric sacks, with only the lid sealed using adhesive seals. Moreover, non-residual seals—which leave no trace when removed—are used, meaning that even if seals are detached and reapplied, no evidence of tampering remains on the ballot box. Such practices, perceived as intentional negligence in election management by the election authority responsible for ensuring election integrity, have drawn public criticism.

### 5) Issues with Electronic Vote Counting Machines

- Electronic vote counting machines were introduced in 2004 and have since been subject to continuous concerns regarding system errors and vulnerability to external hacking. Despite these concerns, the National Election Commission has not transitioned to a manual vote counting system, instead continuing to rely on these machines.

	1열	2열	3열	4열	5열	6열	7열	8열	9열	10열	11열	12열	13열	14열	15열	16열
문자변환	a	n	j	j	l	v	i	q	a	d	a	g	a	o	o	o
	b	o	k	k	m	w	m	r	b	e	b	h	b	p	p	p
	c	p	l	l	n	x	n	s	c	f	c	i	c	q	q	q
	d	q	m	m	o	y	o	t	d	g	d	j	d	r	r	r
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Converted Text: Follow\_the\_party(Source: Rep. Ha Tae-keung's YouTube Video)

- According to an investigation by the National Intelligence Service (NIS), it has already been revealed that electronic vote counting machines can be hacked, and



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that it is technically possible to manipulate vote shares and vote counts for candidates.



Follow\_the\_party(Source: YouTube – Hyoying TV)

- Electronic vote counting machines in the Republic of Korea were promoted as part of the election system by entities such as Hana Program Center and the Dasan Group, and there are allegations that A-WEB (Association of World Election Bodies) has been involved. Furthermore, there are records indicating that these systems were implemented as part of Official Development Assistance (ODA) projects in countries where allegations or confirmed cases of election fraud have emerged worldwide. In addition, A-WEB is suspected to be a central entity within an alleged election fraud cartel, and it is highly plausible that the current system creates an environment in which China could intervene in election manipulation controversies.

A-WEB ODA Project Details (Source: A-WEB Press Release, Feb. 11, 2025)

Category	Recipient Country	Details of Support
2015	Kyrgyzstan	710 Optical Scan Vote Counters, 1 Set of Election Information Systems, 1 Data Center
2016	Ecuador	1,850 Vote Result Transmission Systems
2017	El Salvador	1,800 Vote Result Transmission Systems
	Fiji	50 Touchscreen Voting Systems, 1 Data Center
	Uzbekistan	1 Integrated Voter Registry System
	Congo	1 Data Center
2018 ~ 2019	Samoa	1 Set of Election Information Systems, 1 Data Center
	Papua New Guinea	1 Set of Election Information Systems, 1 Data Center

### 3. Request Based on the ROK-U.S. Alliance

- Based on the Mutual Defense Treaty between the Republic of Korea and the

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United States and the provisions of the Washington Declaration, this document requests intervention by the United States and the international community to address issues of election integrity in the Republic of Korea and to prevent communist influence allegedly driven by election fraud cartel forces. At present, the Republic of Korea has reached a stage where it is unable to maintain political independence, with election fraud and unlawful cartel structures at its core.

- Accordingly, pursuant to the declaration and treaty, this document calls for strong intervention and cooperation under the ROK-U.S. alliance, including:
- Cooperation in cybersecurity measures to prevent election-related hacking and manipulation
- Post-election verification (Risk-Limiting Audit, RLA) conducted by international election observation missions
- Examination and prevention of institutional flaws in the electoral system
- Establishment of an independent monitoring and auditing body, including members of international election observation missions, to address the structurally “sanctified” nature of the National Election Commission



Original Text of the U.S.-Republic of Korea Mutual Defense Treaty

### 3. Elimination of Electoral Fraud Cartels and Christian Significance

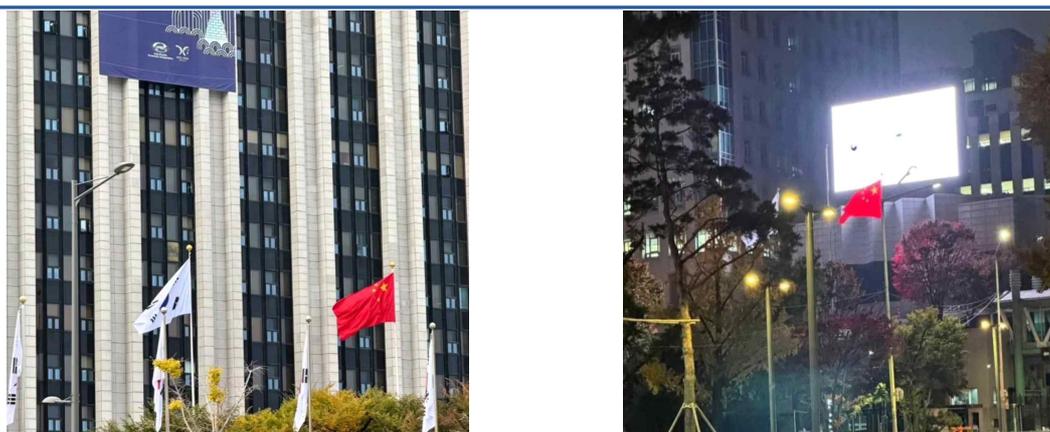
- Liberal democracy is founded upon inalienable rights granted to humanity by God, and the establishment of nations based on liberal democratic principles

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represents one of the greatest achievements in human history. However, today, liberal democracy is under threat from an alleged global election fraud cartel associated with China, and religious persecution is increasing as a result of communist expansion.

- In the Republic of Korea, religious suppression has already begun. For example, Pastor Son Hyun-bo of Segyero Church in Busan has been imprisoned, and multiple churches, including the Yoido Full Gospel Church, have been subjected to search and seizure. Furthermore, at public demonstrations advocating freedom, individuals who make statements regarding China have reportedly faced punishment, or law enforcement has been deployed to restrict marches, thereby infringing upon civil liberties. In practice, tearing the Chinese Communist flag during protests is punished, whereas pro-China or pro-North Korea leftist groups face no penalties when tearing the United States flag. Such repression of freedom and religious persecution represents a grave situation, and the Lee Jae-myung administration is described as not only neglecting this issue but also openly making statements perceived as supportive of North Korea and China.



The Republic of Korea Government Complex (left) and the National Police Agency (right), flying the Chinese flag.



- Additionally, there are indications that China has been deeply involved in the exercise of public authority within the Republic of Korea. Cases have emerged in which Chinese nationals have worked part-time within the Korean police system or served as election administrative personnel in nationwide elections. There have even been instances where Chinese individuals, who are not eligible to obtain a driver's license in Korea, were found possessing forged driver's licenses.
- Amid ongoing concerns regarding deficiencies in the preliminary voter registry system, these circumstances raise the possibility that Chinese nationals could participate in elections—such as National Assembly or presidential elections, in which they are legally prohibited from voting—or even cast multiple votes. This suggests the potential for foreign intervention or manipulation in Korean elections.



Testimony regarding part-time work related to policing by a Chinese national (left), and possession of a driver's license by a Chinese national (right)

- If these structural problems within the electoral system are not corrected and the alleged election fraud cartel is not eradicated, there is a risk that pro-China and anti-U.S. administrations may continue to take power. This could lead to the ongoing erosion of liberal democracy and, ultimately, to the collapse of the Republic of Korea—founded upon Christian values—into communism.
- Therefore, this document strongly calls upon the United States and the international community to intervene in restoring election integrity in the Republic of Korea, including through electoral system reform and organizational restructuring of the National Election Commission.



# Executive Summary

## 2. Strategic Overview Based on Democratic Security

### □ Founding Ideology and National Foundations of the Republic of Korea

- The Birth of a Liberal Democratic State: Following liberation in 1945, the Republic of Korea adopted liberal democracy, a market economy, and anti-communism as the core principles of nation-building. The first President, Syngman Rhee, based on his lifelong convictions, defined the people's freedom and equality as inalienable rights endowed by nature (natural rights), and through the promulgation of the 1948 Constitution (Constitution of the First Republic), declared the nation to be a democratic republic.
  - Reflection of Christian Values: In 1948, the Constituent National Assembly opened with a representative prayer led by Assemblyman Lee Yun-young, who was also a pastor, symbolically reinterpreting the founding of the nation from a faith-based perspective. The Rhee administration institutionalized Christian values across public policy, such as designating Christmas as a national holiday and introducing the military chaplaincy system, thereby securing both the support and spiritual foundation of the Christian community during the early stages of state formation.
  - Establishment of the Rule of Law and Security Framework: In December 1948, the government enacted the National Security Act, which imposed strict measures against communist activities. This served as a critical institutional mechanism to establish the identity of the newly founded state and to defend its system from external ideological infiltration.

### □ Expansion Strategy of Communism and the Reality of Systemic Threats

- Antonio Gramsci's "War of Position": Modern communism prefers long-term ideological and cultural struggle over radical revolution. It employs a strategy of seizing "hegemony" within civil society—such as schools, media, and religion—to weaken the legitimacy of the existing system. This is analyzed as an attempt to gradually transform societal value systems and ultimately seize political power.



- Empirical Evidence of Historical Human Rights Violations: The Black Book of Communism exposes that approximately 90 million to 100 million lives were lost under 20th-century communist regimes due to political purges, forced labor, and famine. This serves as a symbolic demonstration of the dangers of concentrated power without democratic checks and balances.
- Cases of Communist Infiltration in South Korea: From early post-liberation incidents such as the forged currency case of the South Korean Labor Party (the Jeongpansa incident) and the Daegu October 1 Incident, to later cases including the Unified Revolutionary Party case in the 1960s, the Wangjaesan spy ring in the 2010s, and more recent Changwon and Jeju espionage networks, underground organizations linked to North Korea have continued to operate. These groups have attempted to form anti-government public opinion and disrupt the system by using labor organizations and civil society as their bases.
- **Crisis of Electoral Integrity and Vulnerabilities of Digital Systems**
  - Warning Against the Instrumentalization of Elections: As reflected in Joseph Stalin’s remark, “It is not the people who vote that count, but the people who count the votes,” totalitarian forces utilize elections not as a means of reflecting public will but as a procedural tool for consolidating power. The manipulated 1946 Polish referendum serves as historical evidence of how electoral systems can be abused as instruments of regime incorporation.
  - Exposure of Cybersecurity Vulnerabilities: According to a 2023 joint security inspection conducted by the National Intelligence Service (NIS) and the Korea Internet & Security Agency (KISA), vulnerabilities were discovered in South Korea’s election management system, including internal network accessibility and susceptibility to data manipulation. In the context of modern information warfare (hybrid warfare), these vulnerabilities pose risks of external interference in vote counting and the potential to trigger social instability.
  - Case of Institutional Mismanagement: During the 2022 presidential election, the so-called “basket voting” incident involving COVID-19 confirmed voters represented more than a mere procedural flaw in election administration. The more serious issue was that multiple ballots marked for presidential candidate Lee Jae-myung were found inside out-of-district early voting envelopes. This



incident significantly undermined public trust in electoral integrity, leading to a sharp decline in confidence in the electoral system.

#### □ **Statistical Anomalies and Electoral Forensics Debate**

- **Statistical Irregularities:** In the 2020 National Assembly election, unusually large discrepancies were observed between early voting and same-day voting results in closely contested metropolitan districts, disproportionately favoring a particular political party. Some scholars argue that such patterns are statistically unlikely under natural conditions when analyzed through principles such as Benford's Law.
- **Assessment by International Experts:** Professor Walter Mebane, a leading authority in the field of election fraud detection, published a study analyzing data from South Korea's parliamentary elections, in which he identified numerous statistical anomalies indicative of potential fraud. This finding strongly underscores the necessity of ensuring transparency in election administration and establishing an independent verification system.

#### Summary

- ◆ **Strengthening the Will to Defend the System:** To safeguard the founding ideology of South Korea—liberal democracy and the rule of law—there is a need for vigilance against anti-system ideologies infiltrating cultural and educational sectors.
- ◆ **Enhancing Transparency in the Electoral System:** To prevent the “black-boxing” of digital equipment, urgent technical and institutional measures are required, including independent audits of source code, strict preservation of paper ballots, and the introduction of random recount systems.
- ◆ **Restoring Public Trust:** Elections form the foundation of democratic legitimacy. Even minor procedural flaws can serve as justification for external interference. Therefore, public trust must be restored through comprehensive transparency and open management throughout the entire electoral process.

### 3. Institutional and Legislative Development of Election Fraud Issues in South Korea

#### □ **Introduction and Evolution of Early Voting and Electronic Counting Systems**

- **Establishment of the Early Voting System**
  - **Institutional Change:** The “absentee ballot system based on prior reporting,” which had been maintained since the 1960s, was transformed in 2013 into a “no-report early voting system” with the introduction of a unified voter registry. It was expanded nationwide starting from the 6th local elections in 2014,



completing the current system of “2 days of early voting + 1 day of main voting.”

- Legal Basis: Under Article 158 of the Public Official Election Act, voters may receive a ballot without prior reporting by verifying their identity and providing an electronic signature.

#### ○ Introduction of Electronic Counting (Ballot Sorting Machines)

- Background of Adoption: First introduced in the 3rd local elections in 2002, electronic counting systems were expanded nationwide to enhance the speed and efficiency of vote counting. Legal grounds for the use of mechanical devices and computer systems were explicitly established through amendments in 2014.

### □ Major Issues and Controversies Surrounding Early Voting and Electronic Vote Counting

#### ○ Inability to Visually Verify the Number of Issued Ballots and Controversy over the Principle of Secret Ballot

- Serial Numbers and Barcodes: Unlike regular election-day voting, early voting ballots are issued without detaching the serial number stub (Article 158, Paragraph 3 of the Public Official Election Act). This has raised concerns that matching the serial number with voter identification information could enable “voter traceability,” thereby potentially undermining the principle of the secret ballot. Furthermore, despite the law specifying the use of a barcode, the use of a QR code has generated controversy regarding excessive data encoding and potential illegality. Although there has been a shift back to barcodes, early voting ballots generally do not include a human-readable numeric serial number alongside the barcode, making it impossible for observers to visually verify the number of issued ballots.
- Issue of Printed Seal Imprinting: Early voting officials do not manually affix their personal seals when issuing ballots; instead, this is replaced by “printed seal imprinting” (facsimile seal printing) through ballot issuance devices. This practice has continuously raised concerns regarding the ease of producing counterfeit ballots and potential violations of superior statutory law.

#### ○ Vulnerabilities in the Electronic System Security (2023 NIS Inspection Results)

- Hacking Threats: According to the results of a joint security inspection conducted by the National Intelligence Service (NIS) in 2023, it was revealed that it is technically possible to manipulate early voting turnout figures, register



ghost voters, and alter the classification results of electronic vote counting machines through infiltration of election networks. In particular, the inspection identified vulnerabilities such as the potential for program manipulation via unauthorized USB connections and wireless communication channels.

## □ **Structure of Election Administration and Suspicions of External Intervention**

### ○ Hana Program Center and the Dasan Group

- Inter-Korean IT joint venture: Established in 2001, “Hana Program Center” was an organization in which personnel from North Korea’s Pyongyang Information Center (PIC) and South Korean engineers cooperated in Dandong, China. Because the election software and technology developed in this process are alleged to have become the foundation of South Korea’s domestic election system, suspicions have been raised regarding the training of North Korean hackers and the leakage of source code.
- Corporate connections: The Dasan Group controlled the center through HanaBiz.com, and later acquired HandySoft and related companies, thereby coming to manage the National Election Commission’s online voting and postal computer network. The core of the controversy lies in the possibility that points of contact were formed in this process with China (including Huawei) and North Korea.

## □ **The Role of the Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB) and Its International Repercussions**

- Nature and activities of the organization: Founded in 2013 under South Korea’s initiative, A-WEB is an international consultative body that has provided Korean-style election equipment to less-developed countries through ODA. However, administrative deficiencies—such as autocratic management centered on the secretary-general, misuse of the budget, and activities carried out without the establishment of legal corporate status—have been pointed out by the Board of Audit and Inspection and others.
- International distrust: Former U.S. ambassador Morse Tan and others have criticized A-WEB as becoming an export channel for an “election fraud mechanism.” Recently, diplomatic pressure has intensified within the United States, with A-WEB being identified as a subject of investigation in connection



with an alleged international election–fraud cartel.

## □ Comparison of Domestic and Foreign Election Environments and the Issue of Reciprocity

- Trend among advanced countries toward returning to hand counting
  - Germany and the Netherlands: These countries either rendered electronic voting machines unconstitutional on the grounds that they were unverifiable or reverted to manual vote–counting methods.
  - Taiwan and Japan: These countries have adhered to the principle of hand counting or restricted machines to merely auxiliary functions, thereby prioritizing electoral transparency and public trust.
- Asymmetry in foreign voting rights between South Korea and China
  - Violation of reciprocity: South Korea grants local–election voting rights to certain qualified foreigners, including Chinese nationals, whereas China grants no voting rights whatsoever to resident Koreans. This has been criticized as creating an issue of institutional inequity from the standpoint of national sovereignty and security, while also serving as a channel through which external forces may influence domestic politics.

### Summary

- ◆ The current election system of the Republic of Korea is facing a significant challenge: digital technologies introduced under the pretext of “efficiency” are, in fact, undermining transparency and integrity. In particular, the security vulnerabilities identified through inspections by the National Intelligence Service (NIS) and allegations of links with external actors (North Korea and China) constitute serious threats to the legitimacy of democracy.
- ◆ Future Tasks:
  - Institutional Reforms: Ensure physical integrity by legislating the mandatory detachment of serial number stubs for early voting ballots, prohibiting the use of printed seals, and requiring the direct affixation of the personal seal by the early voting manager.
  - Compliance with Personal Seal Usage: Prohibit the use of centrally produced and retrieved seals by the National Election Commission (NEC), and establish penal provisions for cases where ballots are issued without the manager’s personal seal.
  - Counting at Polling Stations: (section heading preserved as in original text)
  - Strengthening Manual Counting: Relegate electronic vote counting machines to an auxiliary role and transition toward a manual vote counting–centered system, as seen in advanced democracies, allowing verification by ordinary citizens.
  - Reestablishment of External Relations: Conduct a thorough audit of A–WEB (Association of World Election Bodies) and resolve international suspicions; review the application of the principle of reciprocity regarding foreign voting rights.
  - Self–Corrective Measures: Urgently implement self–corrective mechanisms whereby the state, in cooperation with allied nations such as the United States, proactively verifies electoral integrity and clearly addresses and resolves allegations of election fraud.



## 4. Analytical Review of Issues Concerning Election Fairness in South Korea

### Legislative Trends and Analysis Relating to Elections for the 22nd National Assembly

- Since the opening of the 22nd National Assembly, interest in amendments to the Public Official Election Act has been so high that a total of 235 bills have been proposed. However, criticism has been raised that, among the proposed revisions, administrative convenience was prioritized over electoral integrity.
  - Major passed provision: Limiting the number of early-voting observers to a maximum of eight may weaken the election-monitoring function.
  - Controversial bills pending:
    - Relaxation of the offense of publishing false facts: raises concerns about fostering a false and distorted election culture.
    - Lowering the voting age: attempts to reduce the eligible age for voting and campaign activities to 16.
    - Seal of the early-voting manager: a conflict persists between efforts to explicitly legalize the use of a “printed seal” and amendment bills seeking to mandate a “direct seal” in order to prevent forgery.
- Amendment to the National Referendum Act: The amended Act promulgated in March 2026 directly transplanted the early-voting system of the Public Official Election Act and introduced multiple-choice voting, raising strong concerns that the vulnerabilities of existing elections would also be transferred to national referendums.

### Empirical and Technical Evidence Relating to Suspicions of Election Fraud

- Irregular Physical Evidence Identified During On-Site Recounts and Security Inspections: The anomalous physical evidence discovered during recounts and security inspections suggests not merely administrative mismanagement but a high likelihood of potential manipulation.
  - **(Abnormal Ballots)**: Various irregular ballots were identified, including so-called “cabbage leaf ballots” (two ballots printed in overlapping layers), bundles of crisp, uncreased ballots that appear not to have been folded or



processed through normal voting procedures, and ballots adhered with adhesive (glue). These findings make it difficult to conclude that such ballots underwent a legitimate ballot-casting process through standard ballot box submission.

- **(Illegality of QR codes)** Although the law requires the use of “barcodes,” the unauthorized use of “QR codes,” which enable information tracking, raises suspicions of violating the principle of secret elections and of data manipulation.
  - **(Security vulnerability of equipment)** A wireless LAN card was found in the vote-count control laptop (LG Gram), which could serve as a channel for computerized manipulation or hacking through external communication.
  - **(Theory of digital originals)** Analysis of scanned images detected signs of “pure digital files” lacking paper texture or noise. This has led to suspicions that the data were computer-generated rather than scans of physical originals.
- Through analysis using mathematical models, it was confirmed that data convergence phenomena with probabilities too low to occur naturally had emerged. The details are as follows.
- **(The 39% constant law)** A phenomenon was simultaneously observed across multiple candidates in which the number of out-of-district early votes matched the number of in-district votes multiplied by a certain constant (approximately 0.39).
  - **(Analysis by Professor Heo Byeong-gi)** When applying a formula that estimates population vote shares based on same-day voting results, the actual results of the 22nd general election substantially departed from the statistical confidence interval. According to this result, it would be statistically reasonable for the People Power Party (conservative) to win 141 seats and the Democratic Party of Korea (progressive) to win 113 seats; however, the actual outcome differed significantly, and this has been presented as statistical evidence of election fraud.
- **(Suspicion of geopolitical intervention: Follow\_the\_party)** The string “Follow\_the\_party,” discovered during analysis of the data from the April 15, 2020 general election, has been interpreted as a computational fingerprint of intervention by the Chinese Communist Party.
- **(Analytical mechanism)** According to the analysis of statistical data presented by the National Election Commission of South Korea, the phrase emerges



when certain numerical values are converted through the Fibonacci sequence and ASCII code.

- **(Suspicion regarding forces behind it)** It has been argued that, combined with the export of electronic vote-counting systems by the Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB) and the expansion of Chinese influence, South Korea's electoral sovereignty was infringed upon.

#### Summary

- ◆ The current electoral system of the Republic of Korea simultaneously exhibits legal loopholes and technical security vulnerabilities. In order to restore electoral fairness, urgent institutional measures are required, including:
  - ◆ Mandatory direct affixation of the personal seal by early voting managers
  - ◆ Introduction of manual vote counting
  - ◆ Complete prohibition of wireless communication in election-related electronic equipment

## 5. Strategic Responses for the Protection of Liberal Democratic Elections

### Transition to an Election Model Centered on Hand Counting

- To overcome the vulnerabilities of the current electronic and automated vote counting system—including risks of hacking and manipulation—it is proposed to adopt a manual vote counting system that prioritizes fairness and transparency over efficiency.
- **(Basic Structure):** All voting shall be conducted using paper ballots, with the implementation of anti-counterfeiting printing measures and the personal seal affixation by counting officials. Although these procedures are already prescribed under the current legal framework, they are not being properly enforced in practice.

### Introduction of the Risk-Limiting Audit (RLA)

- In order to guarantee the accuracy of election results through statistical probability, the introduction of the Risk-Limiting Audit (RLA), which is being implemented in advanced countries such as the United States, is proposed.
- **(Concept)** A post-election verification technique that limits “the probability that the election outcome is wrong” to within a pre-set risk limit (e.g., 5% or less).
- **(Method)** Actual paper ballots are compared with machine tabulation results through random sampling.
- **(Scalability)** If the sample audit fails to secure sufficient statistical confidence, the scope of inspection is designed to be gradually expanded, ultimately allowing for a full recount.



- **(Expected effects)** By presenting a scientific and statistical level of confidence in election outcomes, the system can reduce unnecessary social costs and distrust.

## Restructuring the Authority of the National Election Commission and Independent Security Audits

- The current structure, in which the National Election Commission monopolizes execution, administration, supervision, and auditing—a form of “self-audit”—must be dismantled and its authority dispersed.
  - **(Limitations of concentrated authority)** Since one institution monopolizes the entire election process, the structure should be reformed because it makes external verification of internal errors or system-design problems impossible.
  - **(Establishment of an Independent Security Audit Committee)** Legislation should establish an institution that is completely independent of the Election Commission in terms of personnel and organization, and empower it to audit the election information system (including source code), ballot management, and the overall counting procedures. At this stage, members of international election observer missions should also be included to examine various matters.
  - **(Direction of legislation)** A new Office of Election Security Audit should be created within the Public Official Election Act, clearly specifying the legal basis for the audit body’s establishment and its authority to demand submission of materials, while also mandating transparent disclosure of audit results to the National Assembly and the public.

### Summary

- ◆ The policies presented are aimed at institutionalizing the verifiability of elections.
- ◆ Short term: Introduce the Risk-Limiting Audit (RLA) first in pilot electoral districts in order to build technical trust.
- ◆ Medium term: Expand hand-counting procedures nationwide and formally launch an independent security audit body.
- ◆ Long term: Complete a constitutional and legal framework in which the authority to administer and the authority to verify elections are balanced through checks and balances.

## 6. Policy Proposals for Strengthening Election Fairness Through U.S.-ROK Cooperation

### Crisis of Electoral Integrity in South Korea and the Need for International Verification

- Elections are central to determining the legitimacy of democracy. Recently,



however, social distrust concerning electronic vote-counting equipment and early-voting administration has persisted in South Korea. This creates the risk not only of undermining confidence in the accuracy of results, but also of lowering “losers’ acceptance” of the outcome and thereby collapsing institutional trust.

- **(Academic implications)** Experts such as Pippa Norris analyze election failure as stemming less from fraud itself than from a “lack of transparency.” The more technology is introduced, the more indispensable independent auditing and verifiability become.
- **(Compliance with international standards)** The OSCE and ODIHR recommend disclosure of source code, independent security audits, and Risk-Limiting Audits (RLA), among other measures. South Korea likewise should accept such international standards for the sake of institutional stability, beyond the interests of any particular political faction.

#### ○ Requests for IFES technical assistance

- **(Independent technical diagnosis)** A comprehensive evaluation of auxiliary electronic vote-counting equipment and the early-voting system.
- **(Study on RLA introduction)** Establishment of a statistically based post-election random sample audit framework.
- **(Governance improvement)** Preparation of a roadmap concerning the independence of personnel and budgeting of the Election Commission, as well as the scope of information disclosure.

#### □ The Nature and Multidimensional Importance of the U.S.-ROK Alliance

- Beginning with the 1953 Mutual Defense Treaty, the U.S.-ROK alliance has served not merely as a military defense arrangement but as an “external constitution” stabilizing the economic, political, and social order.
- **(Economic dimension)** The U.S.-ROK alliance functioned as an institutional device that enabled South Korea to choose a free-market model rather than a communist planned economy. By reducing war risk, it made capital accumulation and technological development possible; more recently, it has served as a safeguard protecting supply chains and technological sovereignty from China’s state capitalism.
- **(Political and social dimension)** The alliance has provided a “democratic



alliance effect” that restrains Korean politics from regressing into authoritarianism or becoming communist. It has also internalized the values of freedom, human rights, and the rule of law, thereby guaranteeing space in which civil society could grow autonomously.

- **(Military dimension)** The essence of the U.S.-ROK alliance lies not in waging war but in deterring war. The tripwire function of U.S. forces stationed in Korea, the combined defense system, and, more recently, the strengthening of extended deterrence through the Washington Declaration together constitute a core structure blocking strategic miscalculation by North Korea and China.

#### □ Request for Alliance-Based Guarantees of Election Fairness

- Article II of the U.S.-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty provides for mutual consultation when the “political independence or security” of either country is threatened. Recent allegations of Chinese administrative interference (such as remotely controlled beam projectors and part-time Chinese police personnel) constitute a serious security threat infringing upon South Korea’s political right of self-determination.
- **(Historical legitimacy)** The Republic of Korea was founded through institutional design under the U.S. military government and through the 1948 general election held under UN supervision. International involvement in protecting electoral fairness is therefore in line with the founding legitimacy of the Republic of Korea.
- **(Cybersecurity alliance)** In 2024, the two countries confirmed that cyberattacks under certain circumstances could constitute an armed attack under Article III of the treaty; threats to election infrastructure likewise require an alliance-level response.
- **(Key requests to the United States)**
  - **(Deployment of an OSCE-model observer mission)** Introduction of an international election-monitoring system.
  - **(Election security cooperation)** Joint protection of cybersecurity and election infrastructure.
  - **(Formation of a U.S.-ROK democracy consultative body)** Establishment of an alliance-based mechanism for the defense of democracy.



## Summary

- ◆ Resolving controversies over election fairness in South Korea is not merely a matter of domestic politics, but an alliance task necessary to preserve the stability of South Korea, a key strategic hub in the Indo-Pacific. It is therefore an urgent matter to reaffirm the integrity of the electoral system through IFES's objective diagnosis and the security cooperation of the U.S.-ROK alliance.

## 7. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

### □ Policy Objectives and Summary

#### ○ (Objectives)

- ① Securing electoral integrity
- ② Restoring public trust in the electoral system through reform
- ③ Securing international transparency

- **(Summary)** After implementing hand counting, social trust in election outcomes shall be secured by legislating verifiability, independent audits, and post-election statistical verification (such as RLA).

### □ Specific Measures

#### ○ Legal and Institutional Reforms

- Abolition of early voting, mandatory direct affixation of the personal seal by the polling manager, and on-site vote counting at polling stations
- **(Implementation of Manual Counting)** Abolish existing electronic and digital vote counting systems and ensure electoral fairness through a transparent and verifiable manual counting model
- **(Legislating Risk-Limiting Audits (RLA))** Introduce RLA provisions into the Public Official Election Act, establishing a default risk limit (e.g., 5%) for all elections and defining procedures for sample selection and escalation

#### ○ Administrative and Organizational Reforms

- **(Reorganization of the National Election Commission)** Address the institutional “sanctification” of the NEC by separating its core functions and establishing an independent security audit body to ensure transparency in election management and operations
- Prohibit judges from concurrently serving as Chair of the National Election Commission



## ○ Technical and Statistical Measures

- **(Development of RLA Implementation Manuals and Statistical Toolkits)** Develop sample selection algorithms, ballot comparison methodologies, and manuals tailored to the Korean context, and mandate training for NEC personnel, local election officials, and audit bodies
- **(Introduction of Election Data Forensics and Monitoring Systems)** Implement algorithms to detect temporal and regional anomalies in voting data, operate an automated alert system, and incorporate the need for statistical anomaly detection
- **(Principle of Parallel Paper–Based Verification)** Require ballots to include unique identification numbers and barcodes, and mandate processes that allow cross–verification with CVR (Cast Vote Record / Construct Validity Ratio, as referenced)
- **(Establishing cooperative frameworks with international organizations such as IFES, International IDEA, and the OSCE)** Regularize consultation on election technology and procedures, the dispatch of international observer missions, and international verification of equipment and processes, while implementing U.S.–ROK cooperation and international monitoring.
- **(U.S.–ROK technical cooperation in cybersecurity and information security)** Recommend the conclusion of MOUs covering process monitoring of election systems, joint exercises against election–related hacking, and mutual technical support.

## ○ International Cooperation and Transparency

- **(Establishment of Cooperation Frameworks with International Organizations such as IFES, International IDEA, and OSCE)** Institutionalize technical and procedural advisory support, deployment of international observation missions, and international verification of equipment and processes, alongside strengthened ROK–U.S. cooperation and international oversight
- **(ROK–U.S. Technical Cooperation in Cybersecurity and Information Security)** Recommend the conclusion of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) for process monitoring, joint training on election–related cyber threats, and mutual technical assistance

## ○ Key Conclusions



- Compliance with the Law: Use the personal seal of the polling manager, not NEC-issued seals; require direct affixation, not printed seals
- Establishment of Checks and Balances: Prohibit judges from concurrently serving as NEC Chair
- (1) Verifiability as the Highest Priority: Verifiability must take precedence over electronic efficiency, and statistical verification tools such as RLA must be institutionalized
- (2) No Trust Without Procedural Transparency: Given the volume of evidence and allegations, reforms such as the abolition of early voting are urgent, and all procedures must be managed with full transparency
- (3) Institutionalization of Independent External Audits (Domestic and International): Establish a domestic independent audit body while strengthening objectivity through cooperation with international organizations such as IFES and OSCE
- (4) Strengthening Legal and Administrative Accountability: Urgently establish clear liability and penalty provisions for procedural violations and security breaches
- (5) Phased and Pilot-Based Implementation to Build Social Consensus: Conduct step-by-step pilot programs to verify effectiveness and side effects while building public consensus
- (6) ROK-U.S. and Multinational Cooperation as a Strategic Choice: Electoral integrity extends beyond a domestic issue and is linked to Northeast Asian security and alliance credibility; therefore, ROK-U.S. cooperation and international monitoring mechanisms are essential

