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## The Possibility of Putin's Life-long Rule and Russia's Foreign Policy Strategy

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### English Abstract

Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, succeeded in amending the constitution that allows him to rule the country for a total of 36 years, which are 7 years longer than the ruling period of Joseph Stalin. Through the referendum held on July 1, 2020 and with 67.97% of voting rate and 77.92% of votes supporting the changes to the constitution, Putin earned a right to consecutively run elections for two more six-year presidential terms—starting from 2024 when the current term terminates.

How did Putin succeed in institutionalizing a long-term rule for 36 years and successfully earn it? First of all, Putin's image as a political leader who sustained a uniform identity of Russia and revived the nation's economy is the most influential factor that allowed his long-term rule. Moreover, it seems like Russians are not used to a democratic leader who recognizes public opinion and are more tolerant towards an authoritative and strong leadership which ensures national security and maintains a stable social order.

Based on the support of the people and the Federal Assembly, President Putin has long carried out external strategies that advocate nationalism and patriotism by emphasizing Russia's sovereignty and national security, promoting economic development of the center and provincial areas, and thus, reclaiming the status and glory of the

former Russian Empire and Soviet Union as a global power. Key features of Putin's foreign policy to recover Russia's former status and influence as a superpower are as follow: maintaining strategic balance with the United States as a nuclear-weapon state, strengthening partnership with China, holding the U.S.-led international order in check, and advancing economic development. Russia has taken a pragmatic and realistic approach on most of international issues for the cooperation with the international community. However, on issues related to national security, Putin has carried out decisive measures for swift responses.

Priority of Russia's foreign policy is also changing. It is developing a "new type of strategic partnership" with China in the new era, promoting economic interests, and keeping the U.S. check in terms of the dominance in the international order. In short, Putin's Russia acknowledges the lead of China in the matters of the Korean Peninsula and receives support from China in affairs related to Central Asia and Europe. Putin's Russia avoids military confrontation in the Peninsula, yet secures regional peace through economic and functional cooperation by connecting railways and constructing gas pipelines and power grids among Russia and South and North Korea. Seeking mutual economic interests, Russia strategically supports inter-Korean dialogue, exchanges, cooperations, and summit talks. It also welcomes and actively supports a peaceful unification of two Koreas. In this context, the South Korean government should maintain the alliance with the U.S., yet firmly reject the deployment of the U.S. medium-range missiles. Then, Seoul must seek ways to promote inter-Korean, ROK-Russia, and Russo-Korean economic cooperation, establish multilateral security cooperation regime in Northeast Asia, and build a foundation for peaceful unification along with the strengthening of national security and advancing economic interests.



*※ Translator's note: This is a summarized unofficial translation of the original paper which was written in Korean. All references should be made to the original paper.*

*※ This article is written based on the author's personal opinions and does not reflect the views of the Sejong Institute.*