

EDITOR'S CHOICE OF THE MONTH

SPECIAL EDITION

from the series DIM DIPLOMATIC EVENINGS

SPECIAL ISSUE 2 | JANUARY 2026



**CENTRUL PENTRU STUDIUL DEZVOLTĂRII
INTERNAȚIONALE ȘI MIGRAȚIEI**

CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MIGRATION

Editor's Choice

DIM Diplomatic evenings

speech delivered on November 21, 2025

H.E. the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea,

Mr. RIM Kap-soo

SOUTH KOREA AND ROMANIA IN A CHANGING WORLD ORDER

Abstract

This paper reconstructs the main themes and messages presented by H.E. Mr. RIM Kap-soo, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Romania, during the DIM *Diplomatic Evening* held on 21st November 2025. Following the structure and internal logic of Mr. Ambassador's lecture, the text presents his perspective on the changing international environment, marked by renewed geopolitical competition, technological interdependence, and the erosion of post-Cold War assumptions. The discourse addresses the role of deterrence and alliance-based security, as well as the evolution of the Korea-Romania Strategic Partnership within a broader trans-regional context connecting European and Indo-Pacific security dynamics.

The paper reproduces Mr. Ambassador's reflections on the strategic imperatives shared by the two countries, including their security environments, alliance commitments, and interest in strengthening practical cooperation. Particular attention is given to the areas highlighted in the lecture as relevant for the bilateral relationship, such as defense cooperation, energy and nuclear technology, infrastructure, technological innovation, and economic resilience. The purpose of the paper is to provide a clear, detailed, and structured reproduction of the diplomatic discourse delivered during the event.

Introduction: A Partnership Emerging in a World of Disruption

In recent years, the global order has entered a phase of profound volatility that unsettles assumptions formed in the decades after the Cold

War. The liberal international architecture, that was once perceived as stable, expandable and normatively irreversible, is being challenged by geopolitical revisionism, accelerating technological competition, fragmented economic interdependence and the weakening of multilateral consensus. Military conflict, technological rivalry and ideological fragmentation have eroded post-Cold War certainties such as the inevitability of globalization, political convergence and a linear expansion of democratic peace. Within this contested landscape, bilateral partnerships that historically operated in the background of great-power politics have acquired amplified significance. Therefore, by fostering cooperation in defence, energy, technology and diplomacy, such partnerships can influence regional dynamics and reinforce broader strategic resilience.

It is within this context that the Centre for the Study of International Development and Migration (DIM) organised the second edition of its *Diplomatic Evenings* on 21st November 2025, hosting His Excellency Mr. RIM Kap-soo, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Romania, as keynote speaker. The Ambassador delivered a nuanced lecture about *the Strategic Partnership between Korea and Romania Amid a Changing International Landscape*, which was centred on the transformation of the world order, the resurgence of history, and the evolving logic of alliances, deterrence and development.

At the outset of his intervention, the Ambassador referred to the broader international context in which the bilateral relationship is situated. His Excellency described a global environment marked by increasing volatility, renewed geopolitical competition, technological rivalry and challenges to assumptions associated with the post-Cold War period. Within this setting, it was emphasized that bilateral partnerships have gained renewed relevance as instruments for cooperation in areas such as security, energy, technology and diplomacy.

During the lecture, H.E. Mr. RIM Kap-soo outlined his assessment of current global developments and presented his views on security,

alliance-based cooperation and the evolution of relations between South Korea and Romania. H.E. referred to the transformation of the world order, the renewed importance of deterrence and alliances, and the need for practical cooperation between like-minded states. Despite geographical distance, Romania and South Korea share comparable strategic imperatives as democracies proximate to revisionist actors and anchored in alliance-based security cultures. As a result, this convergence creates openings for substantive collaboration beyond symbolic engagement. Several domains in which bilateral cooperation has become increasingly relevant were identified throughout the discourse.

The paper proceeds to explore four interrelated dimensions highlighted during the *Diplomatic Evening*, namely: (1) the erosion of the post-Cold War order and its implications for middle-power diplomacy; (2) Korea and Romania as aligned middle powers confronting revisionist neighbours and strategic uncertainty; (3) the evolution of bilateral relations since the 2008 Strategic Partnership and the institutional platform it provides; (4) concrete opportunities for deeper cooperation, particularly in defence industrial collaboration, nuclear energy and civil-nuclear cooperation, infrastructure and supply-chain diversification, and technological innovation including emerging technologies.

The Return of History: Post-Cold War Illusions and Strategic Reawakening

H.E. Mr. RIM Kap-soo opened his keynote at the DIM *Diplomatic Evening* with the observation that “the world we have known is gone”. Assumptions associated with the post-Cold War period, including expectations of sustained stability and predictable international cooperation, have been increasingly challenged by renewed geopolitical rivalry and military conflict. In his lecture, he described an international environment in which security, technology, economic relations and diplomacy have become closely interconnected.

To illustrate this transformation, Mr. Ambassador referred to two major developments that, in his view, reshaped global security dynamics: the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The attacks of 2001 redirected international attention toward counterterrorism, asymmetric threats and security-driven policy responses, while the war in Ukraine marked the return of large-scale interstate conflict in Europe. These events accelerated trends such as militarization, the use of sanctions, the emergence of cyber and hybrid threats, and growing concerns related to non-proliferation.

Mr. Ambassador further emphasized that contemporary crises are increasingly interconnected across regions. As an example, H.E. referred to North Korea's support for Russia during the war in Ukraine, noting that this development illustrates the growing linkage between European and Indo-Pacific security environments. In this context, security challenges can no longer be treated as geographically isolated. Throughout the lecture, the multidimensional nature of security challenges was highlighted – the growing interdependence between military security, economic stability and technological development. Also, supply chains, infrastructure and advanced technologies are factors that now feature prominently in national security considerations.

The changing role of interdependence was addressed, noting that economic and technological connections, while previously associated with stability, may also create vulnerabilities when critical infrastructure and supply chains are exposed to geopolitical pressure. In this context, His Excellency referred to South Korea and Romania as countries operating in complex strategic environments that require a careful balance between deterrence, diplomacy and resilience.

H.E. Mr. RIM Kap-soo emphasized that diplomacy must be supported by credible capabilities. Peace is achieved not only through dialogue, but also through strength, a principle that he associated with South Korea's security posture on the Korean Peninsula. Mr. Ambassador also referred to Romania's security environment, particularly in light of the

war in Ukraine and its role within NATO, noting similarities in the emphasis placed on deterrence and alliance cooperation.

The lecture further highlighted that security considerations increasingly extend into economic and technological domains. Mr. Ambassador referred to areas such as advanced technologies, digital infrastructure, energy and critical materials as fields where strategic competition has intensified. In this context, it was emphasized that leadership in these sectors has become an important element of contemporary power relations.

Overall, the discourse presented an understanding of international security in which deterrence, technological capacity, economic resilience and cooperation among allied and like-minded states are closely linked. Mr. Ambassador framed the evolving relationship between South Korea and Romania within this broader international environment, emphasizing the need to adapt to systemic change while maintaining alliance-based cooperation.

South Korea and Romania: Parallel Histories and Shared Imperatives

In his discourse, H.E. Mr. RIM Kap-soo described South Korea and Romania as countries that, despite their geographical distance, face comparable strategic challenges. Both states were presented as democracies situated in regions affected by persistent security tensions and emphasized that alliances constitute fundamental pillars of their respective security policies.

Mr. Ambassador referred to historical experience as a key factor shaping national approaches to security. In the case of South Korea, he highlighted the lasting impact of the Korean War, noting that the unresolved nature of the conflict continues to influence defense planning, public awareness and strategic culture. According to the lecture, this historical legacy has reinforced the importance of deterrence, military preparedness and alliance cooperation as enduring security priorities.

With regard to Romania, H.E. referred to the country's Cold War experience and post-communist transition, as well as to the more recent security implications of the war in Ukraine. It was noted that proximity to ongoing conflict and regional instability has reinforced Romania's emphasis on security guarantees, defense readiness and active participation in collective defense frameworks.

Throughout the discourse, Mr. Ambassador emphasized that these historical experiences have fostered a shared understanding of security as a sustained responsibility rather than a passive condition. Both South Korea and Romania operate in strategic environments where deterrence and alliance-based cooperation are viewed as practical necessities shaped by historical memory and contemporary risk.

The lecture further highlighted that security challenges affecting Europe and East Asia are increasingly interconnected. As an illustration of this trans-regional dynamic, Mr. Ambassador referred to developments linking the Indo-Pacific and European security environments, emphasizing that conflicts and strategic decisions in one region can have direct implications for another. In this context, H.E. presented the relationship between South Korea and Romania as one grounded in converging perspectives on security, alliances and international cooperation. According to the discourse, these shared perspectives provide a basis for continued dialogue and cooperation in an international environment characterized by heightened uncertainty and interconnected security dynamics.

The Strategic Partnership Reconsidered: From Political Relations to Concrete Collaboration

Addressing bilateral relations, H.E. Mr. RIM Kap-soo referred to the Strategic Partnership established in 2008 as the institutional framework guiding cooperation between South Korea and Romania. According to Mr. Ambassador, this partnership has provided continuity in political dialogue and has enabled the gradual development of cooperation across

multiple sectors. His Excellency emphasized that the effectiveness of a partnership is reflected in its practical implementation over time.

In the field of defense, the speaker referred to South Korea's growing engagement with European partners and to its interest in developing long-term forms of cooperation. It was stated that defense relations are not limited to the delivery of equipment, but may also include elements such as training, maintenance, logistics and industrial collaboration. These aspects were presented in the lecture as components of sustained cooperation rather than isolated transactions.

Energy cooperation was also addressed as part of the bilateral relationship. H.E. Mr. RIM Kap-soo referred to nuclear energy, including emerging technologies, as an area of potential cooperation in the context of energy security and long-term sustainability. South Korea's experience in nuclear engineering and project implementation positions the country as a relevant partner in discussions related to future energy solutions. These references were presented as possible directions for cooperation, rather than as finalized or agreed projects.

Infrastructure and logistics constituted another area mentioned in the discourse. Mr. Ambassador referred to Romania's strategic geographical position and to the relevance of transport and port infrastructure within regional and allied frameworks. In this context, he emphasized that predictability and institutional continuity are important considerations for international cooperation and investment, particularly from the perspective of private companies.

Technological development was presented as an increasingly important dimension of the Strategic Partnership. According to the lecture, advanced technologies are closely linked to both economic resilience and security considerations in the contemporary international environment. Mr. Ambassador referred to areas such as digital infrastructure, advanced manufacturing and emerging technologies as fields in which cooperation may gain relevance.

In this context, H.E. Mr. RIM Kap-soo referred to South Korea's technological capacity and to Romania's position within European frameworks as elements that could support cooperation. These observations were situated within a broader reflection on how states adapt to technological competition and changing global conditions, without presenting technology cooperation as a separate or standalone policy area.

Toward a Future-Oriented Partnership: Aspirations, Challenges and Strategic Vision

In the latter part of his lecture, H.E. addressed the future orientation of the Strategic Partnership between South Korea and Romania. It was emphasized that effective partnerships require long-term planning, institutional continuity and sustained engagement. Cooperation endures not merely through aligned interests, but through shared responsibility and continuous effort. In this context, the partnerships must be cultivated and maintained over time, rather than declared symbolically.

Mr. Ambassador referred to existing areas of cooperation, including defence, energy and infrastructure, and noted that their further development depends on long-term commitment. H.E. also highlighted technology, education and human capital as domains of growing importance in the current international environment.

Regarding Romania's role, H.E. Mr. RIM Kap-soo referred to its position within the European Union and NATO and noted its relevance within broader European and regional frameworks. In this context, he referred to Romania as a potential point of connection for cooperation within these institutional settings. He also mentioned South Korea's own development experience, shaped by industrialisation, sustained investment in education and long-term policy planning. These references were presented as reflections on experience rather than as a model to be replicated.

In concluding this part of the discourse, Mr. Ambassador underlined that South Korea's transformation was neither linear nor effortless. It was emphasized that economic development resulted from long-term discipline, social consensus and consistent investment in education. These remarks were presented as an illustration of the importance of sustained strategic commitment in national development.

Conclusion: Korea, Romania and the Architecture of the Future

In the concluding remarks, H.E. returned to the broader international context in which the relationship between South Korea and Romania is situated – an international environment characterized by the erosion of post-Cold War assumptions, renewed security challenges and intensified technological competition. In this setting, it was emphasized that alliances and partnerships require continuous adaptation and engagement.

Mr. Ambassador reiterated the relevance of deterrence, alliance-based cooperation and practical engagement between like-minded states. H.E. referred to defence, energy, infrastructure and technology as areas in which cooperation between South Korea and Romania has relevance within the current international context. These areas were presented as components of a broader framework for dialogue and cooperation.

This paper has reproduced the main themes and messages presented in the lecture delivered by H.E. Mr. RIM Kap-soo during the DIM *Diplomatic Evening*. It has preserved the structure and content of the discourse without extending beyond its scope or introducing independent interpretation.

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