

SOUTH KOREA’S FOREIGN POLICY: THE HEDGING STRATEGY

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ABSTRACT

SOUTH KOREA’S FOREIGN POLICY: THE HEDGING STRATEGY

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The main purpose of this thesis is to analyze how South Korea as a middle power utilizes hedging strategy to pursue its regional and international interest vis-à-vis the United States and China. The concept of hedging gained the attention of International Relations (IR) scholars following the increasing effects of globalization since the beginning of 2000s. When the traditional approach to explain middle power behavior through the concepts of balancing and bandwagoning could not meet complex structure created by globalization, IR scholars developed a new concept; hedging. Elements of middle power diplomacy can be seen in South Korea’s regional and international behavior as a middle power. Since hedging strategy has usually been used by the middle powers, it is important to show how South Korea has adapted the hedging strategy to protect its international and regional interests and its middle power status. Also, it is essential to examine the foreign policy objectives of South Korea to understand why it relies on hedging strategy.

This thesis aims to analyze the hedging strategy of South Korean governments especially after 2007 because hedging strategy can be seen more clearly after South Korean President Lee Myung Bak inauguration speech in 2007. Following 2007,

hedging strategy aimed to improve South Korea's relations with North Korea, to be aligned with South Korea's decision of being committed to its strategic alliance with the U.S. and its strategic partnership with China at the same time.

Keywords: South Korea, hedging, middle power, United States, China



ÖZ

GÜNEY KORE’NİN DIŞ POLİTİKASI: RİSKTEN KORUNMA STRATEJİSİ

KILIÇARSLAN GÜL, Ezgi

Yüksek Lisans, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü

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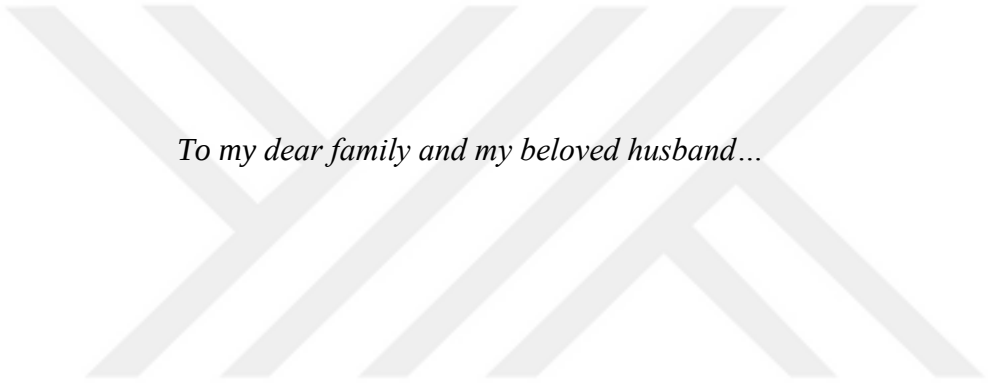
Bu tezin ana amacı, orta ölçekli bir güç olan Güney Kore'nin Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ve Çin karşısında bölgesel ve uluslararası çıkarlarını sürdürmek için riskten korunma (hedging) stratejisini nasıl kullandığını anlamaktır. 2000'li yılların başından itibaren küreselleşmenin etkilerinin artmasıyla Uluslararası İlişkiler (UI) araştırmacıları riskten korunma kavramı ile yakından ilgilenmeye başlamıştır. Orta ölçekli güç davranışını dengeleme ve büyük güçlere eklemlenme kavramları aracılığıyla açıklamaya yönelik geleneksel yaklaşım küreselleşmenin ortaya çıkardığı karmaşık yapıyı karşılayamadığından, Uluslararası İlişkiler uzmanları yeni bir kavrama yönelmişlerdir. Bu kavram riskten korunma yani hedging olarak adlandırılmıştır.

Orta güç diplomasisinin unsurları, orta ölçekli bir güç olan Güney Kore'nin bölgesel ve uluslararası davranışlarında görülmektedir. Riskten korunma stratejisi genel anlamda orta ölçekli devletler tarafından kullanıldığı için, Güney Kore'nin söz konusu stratejiyi uluslararası ve bölgesel çıkarlarını ve orta ölçekli güç konumunu korumakta nasıl kullandığını anlamak son derece önemlidir. Ayrıca Güney Kore'nin

neden riskten korunma stratejisine başvurduğunu anlamak için Güney Kore'nin dış politika hedeflerini de incelemeye ihtiyaç vardır.

Bu tez, Güney Kore hükümetlerinin 2007 yılında Cumhurbaşkanı Lee Myung Bak tarafından dile getirilen ve 2007 yılından sonra Güney Kore hükümetlerinin daha açık bir şekilde uygulamaya başladığı riskten korunma stratejisini incelemeyi hedeflemektedir. 2007 yılından itibaren, Riskten Korunma stratejisi, Güney Kore'nin Kuzey Kore ile daha iyi ilişkiler kurmasını sağlamak, ABD ile ittifakta bulunmak ve aynı zamanda Çin ile ortaklık taahhüdünde bulunmak amacına yönelik olarak işler hale getirilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Güney Kore, Riskten Korunma, Orta Ölçekli Güç, Amerika, Çin



To my dear family and my beloved husband...

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
BoP	Balance of Power
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
G20	Group of Twenty
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GGK	Government General of Korea
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
ROK	Republic of Korea
SCA	Soviet Civil Administration
USAMGIK	United States Army Military Government

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research Question and Methodology

Even though, the middle power concept started to gain popularity after the Second World War (WWII) due to Canadian and Australian efforts, the term middle power dates back to 15th century.¹ After WWII, a significant number of new states emerged in Asia and the other regions. South Korea was one of the new states that emerged in Asia, after completing its establishment in 1948.²

Traditionally, the foreign policy objectives that linked with middle power diplomacy are balancing and bandwagoning.³ However, the complex globalization created a need for new concepts to explain middle power behavior. Therefore, International Relations (IR) scholars have started to use new terms such as; hedging, bonding, transcending and hiding to explain the middle power behavior.⁴

Korea suffered under dark periods of Japanese protectorate period (1905-1910) and Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945). When Japan was defeated by the Allies in 1945, Korea thought that it would regain its sovereignty. However, their joy did not last long. Immediately after Japan left the country, the Soviet Union and the United States of America (U.S.) came to the peninsula. The Soviet Union deployed in the north of the 38th parallel and the U.S. deployed in the South. Until 1948, the north was ruled by The Soviet Civil Administration (SCA) and the south was governed by

¹ Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, ed. Carsten Holbraad and Hedley Bull (Holmes Meier, 1978), p.298.

² Carsten Holbraad, *Middle Powers in International Politics* (London, GB: Macmillan, 1984), p.1.

³ Kei, Koga. The Concept of “Hedging” Revisited: The Case of Japan's Foreign Policy Strategy in East Asia's Power Shift, *International Studies Review* 20, no. 4, (December 2018): 633–60. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/vix059>, p.1.

⁴ Chaesung Chun, working paper, East Asian Security and South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy, vol. 09 (Seoul, South Korea: EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative, 2014), p.2.

The United States Army Military Government (USAMGIK). Both the north and the south managed to create their sovereign states in 1948, but both sides wanted to reunify under their own terms. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) as North Korea adopted communist ideology influenced by the Soviet Union and China. The Republic of Korea (ROK) supported by the U.S. adopted the Western notion of liberal democracy. The clash of ideologies resulted in a disastrous war called the Korean War, which started in 1950. On 27 July, 1953 the Korean Armistice Agreement was signed, however two countries could not manage to sign a peace agreement. Therefore, to this day both countries are in a war against each other.

South Korea's neighboring a country that technically it is still in a war, highly affected its foreign policy objectives. In the period between 1945 and 1953, the U.S. and South Korea forged a strong military alliance and this alliance constituted the most important pillar for the South Korea's national security. Even before the Korean War, South Korea was suffering under famine, low population and under developed economy because of Japanese colonial rule. After the war, conditions of South Korea worsened and until the 1960s it highly depended on the U.S. economic and military aid. Starting with the 1980s South Korean economic development started to increase rapidly. Increasing economic capacity led to South Korean search for new markets and economic cooperation with other states including China. At the same time, China was also experiencing rapid economic development. When the Cold War period ended in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Russia, rigid security concerns of both South Korea and China lessened. Similarly to South Korean – U.S. security alliance China was the leading supporter of North Korean security. Not to danger its military alliance with North Korea, during the Cold War period China held back from making official cooperation with South Korea until 1990s, however their trade relations kept rising and in 2002, China replaced the U.S. as being South Korea's leading trading partner. During the 1990s and early 2000s ROK governments tried to establish closer relations with North Korea. However, the U.S. under Bush administration was waging a "War on Terror" and it believed that North Korea was one of the terrorist countries because it was selling nuclear missiles and

smuggling arms to other terrorist countries such as; Iraq and Iran.⁵ Therefore, South Korea's getting closer with a country that the U.S. labeled as terrorist caused fractions in the U.S.-South Korea alliance.⁶

In December 2007, when South Korean President Lee Myung Bak came to power, he referred to South Korea as a middle power and stated that it will use middle power diplomacy to contribute to the regional and international peace and security. Therefore, South Korean middle power diplomacy is relatively new. President Lee knew that in order to manage the North Korean threat and pursue its middle power diplomacy in the region, it needed the support of the U.S. and China. Therefore, he focused on establishing good relations with both by referring to the U.S.-South Korea relations as "strategic alliance" and describing relations with China as "strategic partnership".⁷ To maintain its alliance with the U.S. and partnership with China, South Korea needed a new type of foreign policy strategy called "hedging".

Since South Korea is a significant regional actor due to its contribution to the regional peace and stability and it is a significant global actor because of its economic development, it is important to understand its foreign policy strategy under the great Sino-U.S. rivalry. Because South Korea is in alliance with the U.S. and partners with China at the same time, hedging strategy will provide meaningful analyses for describing the foreign policy vision of South Korea which is caught between the U.S. and China. Therefore, this thesis will answer the questions such as: What is middle power?; What is middle power diplomacy?; Is South Korea a middle power?; Does South Korea pursue middle power diplomacy?; What is hedging?; and finally How does South Korea pursue hedging strategy considering its relations with the U.S. and China?

⁵ Scott Stossel, "North Korea: The War Game," *The Atlantic*, June 13, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2005/07/north-korea-the-war-game/304029/>.

⁶ Choong Nam, Kim. "The Roh Moo Hyun Government's Policy Toward North Korea." *East-West Center*, 2005. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep06492>, p.1.

⁷ Seongho Sheen, "To Be or Not to Be: South Korea's East Asia Security Strategy and the Unification Quandary," *The International Spectator* 44, no. 2 (June 29, 2009): 41–58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03932720902909209>, p.43.

Methodology of the thesis will be based on the secondary research. It will utilize the sources such as; books, journal articles, e-articles, working papers, research reports, foreign policy papers and press releases.

1.2. Summary of the Chapters

The second chapter will analyze the theory of middle power while giving different definitions of middle power. To decide whether South Korea is a middle power or not, second chapter will analyze the different approaches to middle power theory through realist, liberal and constructivist IR theories. It will touch upon the South Korean conceptualization of middle power even though the literature on South Korean middle power diplomacy is relatively new. This chapter will analyze the South Korean material capacity, its behavior and its regional and international function to decide if South Korea checks the middle power criteria and finally, it will give examples from the South Korean actions that are in line with the middle power theory. Second chapter will also define middle power strategies while focusing on three concepts; balancing, bandwagoning and hedging. It will analyze the benefits of hedging strategy and what hedging strategy entails. It will also talk about hedging capacity in general and hedging capacity of South Korea.

The third chapter will explain South Korean foreign policy since 1948 because to understand the hedging strategy of 2008 onwards, development process of South Korea is needed. It will start with the Japanese Colonial Rule because to understand how Korean peninsula divided as South Korea and North Korea, we need to explain why the Soviet Union and the U.S. came to the peninsula in the first place. The chapter will also talk about the Korean War and its aftermath, because South Korean foreign policy was highly affected by the Korean War due to its relations with North Korea vis-à-vis China and the U.S. The period between 1948 and 1993 will be analyzed through the foreign policy of controversial South Korean leaders, who mostly relied on the U.S. military and economic aid to consolidate their parties and to increase the personal wealth of their party members. It will also, touch upon changing dynamics under different governments while approaching to North Korean issue and China. With the 1993 government of Kim Young Sam, the chapter will analyze the effects of the end of the Cold War and how South Korean governments

furthered from the U.S. alliance and became closer with China due to their moderate approach against the North Korea. Lastly, the chapter will explain the effects of globalization and South Korea's changing foreign policy objectives due to its rapid economic growth.

The fourth chapter will focus on the hedging strategy and the hedging strategy of South Korea. It will define the hedging strategy. To analyze the hedging strategy of South Korea between the U.S. and China, this chapter will give the information about how the strategic alliance with the U.S. was established through giving historical background of their relations. After that, it will focus on the Sino-South Korean relations and how the strategic partnership between them emerged. Finally, it will describe the hedging strategy adopted by three ROK governments starting with the 2008-2013 Lee Myung Bak government, the 2013-2017 Park Geun Hye government and the 2017-2022 Moon Jae In government.

The fifth and final chapter will answer the questions that were asked in the introduction chapter while highlighting the main arguments given in the second, third and fourth chapters. And it will conclude with the current South Korean government approach to related issues such as; hedging and managing the relations with the U.S. and China under Yoon Suk Yeol presidency.

CHAPTER 2

THEORY OF MIDDLE POWER AND THE SOUTH KOREA'S EMERGENCE AS A MIDDLE POWER

After the Second World War, significant numbers of new states emerged in Africa and Asia. The emergence of new small states changed the ratio of great powers and small states especially in the South East Asia. Sudden increase in the numbers of emerging states caught the attention of International Relations (IR) researchers and during the 1960s and 1970s researches about emerging states increased.⁸

Since the majority of states are not great powers, especially after the Cold-War with the end of bipolarity, the need for differentiation of minor powers based on their capacities and their influence on international system increased.⁹ Middle power theory distinguishes states that have sufficient amount of capacity to pursue their own national interest vis-à-vis great powers and states that are able to survive on its own from the states that have lesser capacity and state that are struggle for survival.¹⁰

Since the early 2000s, South Korean governments used the concept of middle power in their diplomatic narrative and they used the concept to explain their foreign policy agenda.¹¹ Therefore, this chapter will focus on the middle power theory and the middle power characteristics of South Korea.

⁸ Carsten Holbraad, *Middle Powers in International Politics*, p.1.

⁹ Adam Chapnick, "The Middle Power," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 7, no. 2 (1999): 73–82, <https://doi.org/10.1080/11926422.1999.9673212>, p.73.

¹⁰ Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, p.63-5.

¹¹ Kim, Sung-Mi. *South Korea's middle-power diplomacy: Changes and challenges*. (London: Chatham House, 2016), p.1.

2.1. Defining a Middle Power

2.1.1. Emergence of Middle Power Concept

To explain South Korea's foreign policy goals and her position in the International System, the theory of Middle Power is a useful tool. Since this thesis will analyze the hedging policies of South Korea, and the hedging policies usually seen in the middle power's foreign policies it is important to give a comprehensive explanation of the Middle Power Theory.

According to Martin Wight, in the 15th century, mayor of Milan Giovanni Botero (1544-1617) defined powers as small, large and middle-size respectively comparing to its neighbors.¹² To Botero, on the one hand, small sized powers are not able to survive on its own. On the other hand, large sized powers are not just able to survive by themselves but they also have some amount of authority over its neighbors.¹³ However, middle sized power holds a considerable authority and strength which enables them to survive on its own without the help of others.¹⁴ Therefore, in international relations it is possible to define middle powers as the powers actors that have the capacity to influence other actors in the international realm but does not possess a level of power to change the international system so, they have lower strength than the great powers yet, they are more influential than the small powers.¹⁵

Even though, there are references to middle powers in the past IR literature. Middle Power theory gained the attention of IR scholars after the World War II (WWII).¹⁶

¹² Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, p.298.

¹³ Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, p.298.

¹⁴ Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, p.298.

¹⁵ Meltem Müftüler Baç, "Middle Power," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, July 2, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/middle-power>, p.1.

¹⁶ Dong-min Shin, "A Critical Review of the Concept of Middle Power," *E-International Relations*, December 6, 2015, <https://www.e-ir.info/2015/12/04/a-critical-review-of-the-concept-of-middle-power/>, p.1.

2.1.2. Definitions of Middle Power

According to Glazebrook, middle powers support great power control, they are eager to have an alliance with a great power and they act together with a great power, they also possess some degree of influence on the other states.¹⁷ One of the most appreciated definitions of “middle power” created by the Canadian Diplomat Robert Gerald “Gerry” Riddell in 1948.¹⁸ He described middle powers as “*those which by reason of their size, their material resources, their willingness to accept responsibility, their influence and stability are close to being great powers*”.¹⁹ Riddell believed that, because of their desirable resources and their strategic position, middle powers are more likely to attract danger from outside than the small powers and less likely to manage to protect themselves than the major powers.²⁰

However, Martin Wight claimed the opposite of Riddell’s concerns. He argued that since the middle-sized powers do not reflect an aggressive characteristic to others and have an enough power to sustain its own survival, they are less likely to face an outside danger. Therefore, the chance of their lasting in the international realm is greater.²¹

Kenneth Waltz on the other hand, had an indifferent approach to the matter of middle power. Since, he identifies power as the combination of six resources; military strength, size of population and territory, political stability, competence, economic capability and resource endowment there are not any distinctive differences between

¹⁷ George DeT. Glazebrook, “The Middle Powers in the United Nations System,” *International Organization* 1, no. 2 (June 1947): 307–18, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020818300006081>, p. 308.

¹⁸ Carsten Holbraad extracted from the unpublished work of R. G. Riddell, ‘*The Role of the Middle Powers in the United Nations*. See: Riddell, R.G. (1948) “The Role of Middle Powers in the United Nations” *Statements and Speeches* 48:40 (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs).

¹⁹ Frederic H. Soward, “On Becoming and Being a Middle Power: The Canadian Experience,” *Pacific Historical Review* 32, no. 2 (1963): 111–36, <https://doi.org/10.2307/4492152>, p. 112. From 307-318; R. G. Riddell, “The Role of the Middle Powers in United Nations,” *External Affairs, Statements and Speeches*.

²⁰ Carsten Holbraad, *Middle Powers in International Politics*), p.69.

²¹ Martin Wight, *Power Politics* p.299.

small and middle-sized powers.²² To him, military strength is the main component since, middle powers cannot spend as much as the great powers on military advancement, middle powers are doomed to fall behind great powers.²³

Like the great number of IR researchers, Waltz also believes that, only through forming an alliance with a great power a middle power can enhance its power, but it is not possible for a middle power to enhance its power and maintain its identity at the same time because in order to gain great power status it should completely embrace great power's ideology.²⁴

The arguments about the middle powers gained more attention with the Cold War because it introduced the term "*great power*".²⁵ With the enhancement of their nuclear power, both United States of America (USA) and the Soviet Union leveled up in the hierarchical labeling of powers. They became a great power. Arthur Andrew explained that, every state in the international arena would be eager to make an alliance with a great power (small, middle or large-sized) without considering the circumstances or the issues.²⁶ Differentiation of terms between a great powers and a super power meant accepting influential non-major powers as middle power, rather than a small power.²⁷

The end of the cold war and the start of globalization contributed to the idea that the middle powers are willing and are able to come up with innovative solutions to

²² Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1979), p.131.

²³ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* p.181.

²⁴ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* p.182.

²⁵ **Superpower**, "a state that possesses military or economic strength (or both) and general influence vastly superior to that of other states". André Munro, "Superpower," Encyclopaedia Britannica, April 29, 2013, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/superpower>, p.1.

²⁶ Arthur Andrew, "Defence by Other Means: Diplomacy for the Underdog," *Canadian Institute of International Affairs*, no. 44 (1970): 1–126, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40201077>, p.23.

²⁷ Adam Chapnick, "The Middle Power," p.78.

international problems, also they became more influential in some areas such as; international political economy.²⁸

2.2. Middle Power Approaches

So, how can we decide if a state is a middle power? Andrew Carr argues that there are three indicators which we need to look into while we make decision whether a state is a middle power or not. First, we need to understand the position of the state in the international arena. Second, we have to analyze how it behaves in the international system. Finally, we need to have a clear image of its identity.²⁹

To make a comprehensive analysis, we can benefit from the Adam Chapnick's three approaches: hierarchical approach and usually politically driven behavioral and functional approaches.³⁰

2.2.1. Hierarchical Approach

In the Cold War era, realists believed that, in order to define a state as a middle power, we need to decide where they are positioned in the hierarchical structure of the international system through analyzing its geographical position in and its material capabilities.³¹ According to hierarchical approach, calculating their size of territory or population, military spending, numbers of trade, gross domestic product (GDP)³² it is possible to differentiate the middle states from the small states.³³ Some

²⁸ Mark Beeson, "Middle Powers in the International Political Economy," essay, in *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary International Political Economy*, ed. Timothy M. Shaw et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2019), 201–15, https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-45443-0_13. p.201.

²⁹ Andrew Carr, "Is Australia a Middle Power? A Systemic Impact Approach," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 68, no. 1 (October 31, 2013): 70–84, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2013.840264>, p.71.

³⁰ Adam Chapnick, "The Middle Power," p.75.

³¹ Moch Faisal Karim, "Middle Power, Status-Seeking and Role Conceptions: The Cases of Indonesia and South Korea," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 72, no. 4 (2018): 343–63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2018.1443428>, p.3.

³² "Gross domestic product (GDP) is the total monetary or market value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific time period. As a broad measure of overall domestic production, it functions as a comprehensive scorecard of a given country's economic health." From Jason Fernando, "Gross Domestic Product (GDP): Formula and How to Use It," *Investopedia*, March 30, 2023, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/gdp.asp#toc-what-is-gross-domestic-product-gdp>.

of the authors in the early literature believed that the differentiation between the great, middle and small powers came from their position, recognition and the capabilities.³⁴ Contemporary literature added the label of ‘major’ and categorizes hierarchical powers as; great power, major power (large), middle power and the minor (small) power.³⁵

As mentioned before a **great power**, has a sovereignty over considerable amount of territory and population, provides political stability, possesses great economic capabilities, has excelled in military strength, has increased resource endowment and maintains competence.³⁶ These merits must combine with the ability to use them to its own needs and achieve its goals.³⁷ The title of great power was firstly recognized after the Napoleonic period. Viscount Castlereagh wanted to form a group that consists of most powerful states because of their capabilities and population. Therefore in 1815; Austria, Britain, France, Prussia and Russia formed the Concert of Europe. More or less, after fifty year Italy managed to become one.³⁸ With the end of WWI in 1919, United States of America and Japan won the title because a great power needs to have a military strength that is at least more than the half of the strength that the most powerful state has in the international system.³⁹

³³ Moch Faisal Karim, “Middle Power, Status-Seeking and Role Conceptions,” p.3.

³⁴ David B. Dewitt and John J. Kirton, *Canada as a Principal Power: A Study in Foreign Policy and International Relations* (Toronto, Canada: Wiley, 1983), p.22.

³⁵ Randall L. Schweller, “The Concept of Middle Power,” *Academia.edu*, June 29, 2014, https://www.academia.edu/7493871/The_Concept_of_Middle_Power, p.4. (Prepared for the “Study of South Korea as a Global Power Project”, Overseen by the Expert Commission on Middle Power Diplomacy, hosted at the Center for Strategic and International Studies/CSIS Korea Chair). For more information see Cha, Victor D., and Marie Dumond, eds. “The Korean Pivot: The Study of South Korea as a Global Power.” Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep23175>.

³⁶ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* p.131.

³⁷ John G. Ikenberry, Michael Mastanduno, and William C. Wohlforth, “Introduction: Unipolarity, State Behavior, and Systemic Consequences,” *World Politics* 61, no. 1 (January 2009): 1–27, <https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.0.0029>, p.4.

³⁸ Frederic H. Soward, “On Becoming and Being a Middle Power,” p.112.

³⁹ Randall L. Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler’s Strategy of World Conquest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p.17.

Major (large) Powers on the other hand, are the lower rank of the great powers. There are three types of major powers⁴⁰. First, the supporters; they do not try to change the international system and contributes to shared responsibilities. Second, the spoilers, they want to change the international system entirely and replace with a different one. Third, the shirkers; they want to gain power without taking responsibility for the needs of the international system.⁴¹ Even though they are not as powerful as the great powers (might not have a nuclear power), major powers have a great influence over the global system yet, they are not capable of changing it. They mostly contribute to the balance of power (BoP).⁴² According to Schweller, current major powers either have nuclear weaponry or have nuclear capabilities, yet having nuclear weaponry does not make a state a major power (e.g. North Korea) or not having a nuclear weaponry denies the major power status from a state (e.g. Japan).⁴³

A state can be a **Minor (small) Power** for variety of reason(s). When we look at Waltz's definition of great power, (*having considerable amount of territory and population, providing political stability, possessing great economic capabilities, having excelled in military strength, having increased resource endowment and maintaining competence*⁴⁴) small powers can be explained as the states that does not have the merits of the great powers. Thus, they have an insufficient amount of military strength, economic endowment, political competence to influence the international system.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ For more information see David A. Lake, "Beneath the Commerce of Nations: A Theory of International Economic Structures," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (June 1984): 143-170.

⁴¹ Randall L. Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu, "After Unipolarity: China's Visions of International Order in an Era of the U.S. Decline," *International Security* 36, no. 1 (Summer 2011): 41-72, https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00044, p.42.

⁴² Randall L. Schweller, "The Concept of Middle Power," p.4.

⁴³ Randall L. Schweller, "The Concept of Middle Power," p.6.

⁴⁴ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* p.131.

⁴⁵ Godfrey Baldacchino and Anders Wivel, "Small States: Concepts and Theories," *Handbook on the Politics of Small States*, March 4, 2020, 1-19, <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788112932.00007>, p.2.

Middle powers can be small in size but greatly developed such as; Denmark and Finland) or they can be middle sized and developed like South Korea and Canada and finally, they can possess a large territory but developing/newly developed states e.g. Turkey and Mexico.⁴⁶ To show the importance and the diversity of middle powers, Mo Jongryn and Andrew F. Cooper referred to Argentina, Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Mexico, South Korea and Turkey as the Middle 7, because they constituted the seven middle states in the Group of Twenty (G20).⁴⁷ G20 refers to nineteen states and European Union (EU) which are the world's greatest economies (they constitute almost 80 percent of the total output of global economy) with the goal of maintaining stability of international economy and finance.⁴⁸ For example, In December 2021, South Korea's GDP was announced as 1.8 trillion US Dollars (USD) ranked 11th in the G20 members.⁴⁹ Also, in 2020 South Korea's military spending calculated as 45.7 billion USD⁵⁰ ranked 10th in the world and today it has 6.7 million⁵¹ total military personnel which makes South Korean army the world's third largest army in size. Of course, South Korea's economic or military capacity is significantly lower compared to USA (world's largest economy) having GDP of 23.3 trillion USD or China (second largest economy in the world) having GDP of 17.7 trillion USD. However, it is still a significant economy considering the rest of the world economies.⁵²

⁴⁶ Randall L. Schweller, "The Concept of Middle Power," p.4.

⁴⁷ Mo Jongryn and Andrew F. Cooper, "*The Middle 7 Initiative*," essay, in *Middle Powers and G20 Governance*, ed. Mo Jongryn (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 103–21, p.111.

⁴⁸ James McBride McBride, Anshu Siripurapu, and Noah Berman, "What Does the G20 Do?," *Council on Foreign Relations*, accessed May 23, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/background/what-does-g20-do#chapter-title-0-5>.

⁴⁹ "GDP," GDP - Countries - List, accessed May 17, 2023, <https://tradingeconomics.com/country-list/gdp>.

⁵⁰ Military spending by country 2023, accessed May 23, 2023, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/military-spending-by-country>.

⁵¹ Military size by country 2023, accessed May 23, 2023, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/military-size-by-country>.

⁵² To see the whole list, visit <https://tradingeconomics.com/country-list/gdp>.

As mentioned before, earlier scholars believed that the most effective way to increase their power and reach their goal middle powers need to cooperate with the great powers or join an alliance with them.⁵³ As a neoclassical realist who prefers to analyze foreign policy through the nature of international system Schweller furthers this argument and points out that to reach their end, middle powers play three roles. They can act as a balancer to help fixing the disturbed balance. They can be the kingmakers to contribute to the power of a great power or alliance to gain advantages or they can be a *tertius gaudens* (a rejoicing third in Latin) to benefit from the dispute of two powers.⁵⁴ It will be explained in the later part of this thesis, but we can say that these roles of the middle powers are also helps to understand the logic of hedging strategies. Robert Cox accepts the fact that middle powers have mediocre material resources. They have more capacity than the small powers and have less capacity than the great powers.⁵⁵ But they are not called middle just because of their capacity. They are also situated in the middle if there is an international conflict. Therefore, middle powers tries to find more common values to minimize the risk of conflict and to manage it.⁵⁶ To Cox, if a state is able to choose to stay away from great conflicts, manage to pursue its interests while facing major powers, committed to the international order and peaceful reforms, then it is possible to call it a middle power.⁵⁷ Similar to Cox's idea, John Ravenhill believes that the hierarchical approach excludes behavioral patterns of middle powers while analyzing the way of pursuing their interests. He even claims that, power factors mostly attributed to realist theory such as; GDP, size of population and territory, geographical position or military strength nearly have no importance to explain and predict the middle powers' behaviors.⁵⁸ Their material capacity might increase the advantages of middle

⁵³ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* p.182.

⁵⁴ Randall L. Schweller, "The Concept of Middle Power," p.5.

⁵⁵ Robert W. Cox, "Middlepowermanship, Japan, and Future World Order," *International Journal* 44, no. 4 (Autumn 1989): 823–62, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40202638>, p.827.

⁵⁶ Robert W. Cox, "Middlepowermanship, Japan, and Future World Order," p.827.

⁵⁷ Robert W. Cox, "Middlepowermanship, Japan, and Future World Order," p.827.

⁵⁸ John Ravenhill, "Cycles of Middle Power Activism: Constraint and Choice in Australian and Canadian Foreign Policies," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 52, no. 3 (1998): 309–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357719808445259>, p.325.

powers compared to small states and the nature of the international system might affect the numbers of options available yet, these do not dictate fixed foreign policy behavior.⁵⁹ For example, while some of the middle powers with significant capabilities do not want to become a greater actor in the international system, some of small sized middle powers want to increase their influence to contribute to global order.⁶⁰ Hence, if capacities do not reflect the actions of middle powers, they are not enough to be a defining indicator for middle powers alone. Therefore, it is important to analyze the behavior of states to define them as a middle power.⁶¹

2.2.2. Behavioral Approach

Behavioral approach favors diplomacy and tries to understand how states behave in the international arena rather than focusing on structural recognition of power which is mostly about the material capabilities.⁶² According to scholars that support the behavioral approach, middle powers need some level of material capacity, yet it is not enough to define a state only by its capacities. To distinguish middle powers from the rest, we need to look at their certain behavioral patterns.

Middle powers behave in three distinctive manners.⁶³ They are willing to compromise if the conflict management demands it, they adopt a multilateral approach to solve the international problems and they use diplomacy if they face an international dispute.⁶⁴ Therefore, behavioral approach is mostly based on the liberal concepts.

⁵⁹ John Ravenhill, "Cycles of Middle Power Activism," p.324.

⁶⁰ Moch Faisal Karim, "Middle Power, Status-Seeking and Role Conceptions," p.4.

⁶¹ John Ravenhill, "Cycles of Middle Power Activism," p.324.

⁶² Moch Faisal Karim, "Middle Power, Status-Seeking and Role Conceptions," p.4.

⁶³ Adam Chapnick, "The Middle Power," p.75.

⁶⁴ Andrew Fenton Cooper et al., "Niche Diplomacy: A Conceptual Overview," essay, in *Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a Changing World Order* (Vancouver: UBC, 1993), 1–24, p.19.

For middle powers, diplomacy is one of the most important tools to manage the relations with other states. According to Hedley Bull, diplomacy is the execution of international relations by states and other institutions through peaceful means (with subtle manner) and official agents (professional diplomats).⁶⁵ However, according to Yul Shon middle power diplomacy should be analyzed differently, because it is based on norms, prefers soft power rather than hard power, chooses multilateralism to deal with international issues and seeks international issues that middle powers can shine (niche diplomacy).⁶⁶ Niche diplomacy is a unique way of engaging in diplomacy by the middle power states. Since, middle powers desire to engage in activities that are important for the international or/and regional relations, they seek fields that their capacities are enough to influence such as; maritime law, environment or cyber security.⁶⁷

Middle powers use conflict management to decrease the level of intensity or eliminate the possibility of violence if there is an international problem and hope to control reemergence of violence in future conflicts.⁶⁸

Since middle powers' influence is limited considering great or major powers if there is a threat of violence they are willing to compromise to eliminate that threat. Also, even though conflict management can be used unilateral or multilateral middle powers prefer multilateral conflict management especially if a great power involved in a dispute because they can be more influential as a group. According to Robert Keohane, multilateralism is the cooperation between three or more states by forming

⁶⁵ Hedley Bull, Stanley Hoffmann, and Andrew Hurrell, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, 4th ed. (Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p.156.

⁶⁶ Yul Sohn, "Searching For A New Identity: South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy – Analysis," *Eurasia Review*, December 18, 2015, <https://www.eurasiareview.com/18122015-searching-for-a-new-identity-south-koreas-middle-power-diplomacy-analysis/>.

⁶⁷ Eriks Varpahovskis, "A Dolphin in an Oil Sea : Application of the Korean Version of Middle Power State Concept to the Case of Kazakhstan," *International Journal of Foreign Studies* 10, no. 1 (June 30, 2017): 59–86, <https://doi.org/10.18327/ijfs.2017.06.10.59>, p.67.

⁶⁸ Molly Melin, "Escalation in International Conflict Management: A Foreign Policy Perspective," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 32, no. 1 (2014): 28–49, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0738894214545033>, p.31.

a group for coordinating their policies through institutions or formal/informal arrangements.⁶⁹

When we look at the three behavioral habits of middle powers, we can see that their end goal is to maintain their interests and achieve their goals through the use of *smart power*. As Joseph Nye puts it, power is the ability to move others in order to reach your goal, to do so a state can coerce other states to their will by brute force (hard power) or give incentives to convince (soft power) them or attract them to make others do what you want.⁷⁰ In basic terms, smart power is to use those three means together. Waltz believed that middle powers are bound to seek alliances because with limited capabilities it is hard for middle powers to coerce other actors to their will.⁷¹ Therefore, for middle powers using incentives or payments to pursue their interests is more achievable because increasing economic strength is easier than increasing military strength.⁷²

Attraction however, is the most preferable tool because middle powers focus on the ways of influencing others through their contribution to the great power goals, through their commitment alliances that they are belong to and by acting multilaterally to make their voices heard.⁷³

According to Eriks Varpahovskis, Korean version of Middle Power theory focusing on behavioral approach is one of the most developed and modernized theory and Korean researchers believe that states should have some distinct features to be named as middle power.⁷⁴ A middle power should be a trustworthy partner for its neighbors, to great powers and most importantly for the hegemon (USA).⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Robert O. Keohane, "Multilateralism: An Agenda for Research," *International Journal* 45, no. 4 (Autumn 1990): 731–64, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40202705>, p.731.

⁷⁰ Joseph S. Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (March 2008): 94–109, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716207311699>, p.94.

⁷¹ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* p.182.

⁷² Joseph S. Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," p.94.

⁷³ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1979), p.124-7.

⁷⁴ Eriks Varpahovskis, "A Dolphin in an Oil Sea," p.66.

Also, it should work for decreasing the level of mistrust between its partners.⁷⁶ Furthermore, it should be the network creator. Yul Sohn believes that there are three ways to become a networker. First, middle powers can convince states and non-state actors to work side by side for mutual interests, common norms and shared understandings. Second, it can provide the way of connecting between different network systems. Third, it can shape the network systems by reforming them and providing hierarchy.⁷⁷ For example, according to Sook Jong Lee today most of the middle powers have higher position in the hierarchy of economic strength and rather than having a larger size of population or territory and greater economic capacity is more important for the networking.⁷⁸ Thus, while the hierarchical approach defines middle powers by their material or structural capacity and tries to understand how they can become more powerful, the behavioral approach focuses more on normative aspects that pushes middle powers to seek a greater role in the international system.⁷⁹ Yet, like the hierarchical approach, the behavioral approach creates its own problems.

Critics believe that, theoretical background of the approach comes from Western states which favor the liberal values such as Canada, Denmark and Australia. Since, those countries are highly industrialized and have higher income levels, emerging middle states such as South Korea may prefer different values.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Young Jong Choi. "South Korea's Regional Strategy And Middle Power Activism." *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* 23, no. 1 (2009): 47–67. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23257990>, p.59.

⁷⁶ Chaesung Chun, working paper, East Asian Security and South Korea, p.2.

⁷⁷ Retrieved from Yul Sohn. "'Middle Powers' Like South Korea Can't Do Without Soft Power And Network Power." *Global Asia*, September 2012. https://www.globalasia.org/v7no3/cover/middle-powers-like-south-korea-cant-do-without-soft-power-and-network-power_yul-sohn.

⁷⁸ Sook-Jong Lee, working paper, South Korea as New Middle Power Seeking Complex Diplomacy, vol. 25 (Seoul, South Korea: *EAI Asia Security Initiative*, 2012), p.10.

⁷⁹ Moch Faisal Karim, "Middle Power, Status-Seeking and Role Conceptions," p.4.

⁸⁰ Moch Faisal Karim, "Middle Power, Status-Seeking and Role Conceptions," p.4.

Eduard Jordaan listed structural and behavioral differences between the traditional (Western) middle powers and the emerging middle powers (non-Western).⁸¹ Structurally there are six main differences. First, traditional middle powers emerged during the Cold War, yet emerging middle powers are seen after the Cold War. Second, even though traditional middle powers are stable and highly democratized, emerging middle powers are newly democratized and might lack some aspects of democracy that creates some degree of instability. Third, traditional middle powers exist in the core (*rich and powerful states mostly free from outside control and possess economic diversity*)⁸² of the world economy, yet emerging middle powers exist in the semi-periphery (lower than core but more diversified than economically undeveloped periphery)⁸³ in the world economy. Fourth, traditional middle powers have low level of regional influence, but emerging middle powers have high level of regional influence. Fifth, for traditional middle powers regional relations are relatively unimportant, yet emerging middle powers champion regional relations and associate themselves to their region. Lastly, in traditional middle powers distribution of domestic wealth is highly equal, but in emerging middle powers it is highly unequal.⁸⁴ Traditional middle powers and emerging middle powers have behaviorally four main differences. Firstly, traditional middle powers have fairly low level of regional orientation, yet emerging middle powers have considerably high level of regional orientation. Secondly, while traditional middle powers are ambivalent towards regional cooperation and integration, emerging middle powers are very keen on pursuing leadership for the regional cooperation and integration. Thirdly, even though both favors to legitimize their actions for effecting global change, while traditional middle powers prefer the moderate way emerging middle powers prefer the assertive way. Finally, when constructing an international identity, traditional

⁸¹ Eduard Jordaan, "The Concept of a Middle Power in International Relations: Distinguishing between Emerging and Traditional Middle Powers," *Politikon* 30, no. 1 (2003): 165–81, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0258934032000147282>, p.168

⁸² Daniel Chirot and Robert King Merton, "*Social Change in the Twentieth Century*" (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), p.13.

⁸³ Steven R. Steiber, "The World System and World Trade: An Empirical Exploration of Conceptual Conflicts," *The Sociological Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (Winter 1979): 23–36, <https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/4106385>, p.24.

⁸⁴ Eduard Jordaan, "The Concept of a Middle Power in International Relations," p.168.

middle powers choose to distance their self from the powerful actor in the region, yet emerging middle powers choose to distance themselves from the weak actors in the region.⁸⁵ Thus, claiming that all middle powers behave same due to the similar normative goals and motivations ignores the structural and behavioral differences between middle powers.⁸⁶

Hence, it is possible to say that like the hierarchical approach that tries to identify middle powers through realist understanding, behavioral approach that seeks to clarify the definition of middle powers by liberal concept is not enough. Therefore, the functional approach attributed to the constructivist theory focus on how the identity building would contribute to the identification of middle powers.

2.2.3. Functional Approach

Chapnick's last approach to determine whether a state is a middle power or not is the functional approach. It refers to states' ability to influence international relations on specific issues and how their unique features are different from other states.⁸⁷ For example, according to Geoffrey Hayes, one of the acclaimed middle powers Canada is very keen on peacekeeping; hence it would choose negotiation over arguing and identify itself as a friendly state.⁸⁸ Even though, approaches focusing on identity mostly link with constructivist theory, some scholars argue that importance of middle power identity was also mentioned by the liberal scholars such as; Robert Keohane.⁸⁹ He suggests that, rather than focusing on the states' ability to maintain their security through their material resources, we should focus on the state leaders' vision of what kind of role their countries play in the international system.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Eduard Jordaan, "The Concept of a Middle Power in International Relations," p.168.

⁸⁶ Moch Faisal Karim, "Middle Power, Status-Seeking and Role Conceptions," p.4.

⁸⁷ Adam Chapnick, "The Middle Power," p.74.

⁸⁸ Geoffrey Hayes, "Canada as a Middle Power: The Case of Peacekeeping," essay, in *Niche Diplomacy: Middle Powers after the Cold War*, ed. Andrew Fenton Cooper, 1st ed. (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1997), 73–89, p.73.

⁸⁹ Andrew Carr, "Is Australia a Middle Power? A Systemic Impact Approach," p.76.

⁹⁰ Robert O. Keohane, "Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics," *International Organization* 23, no. 2 (Spring 1969): 291–310, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s002081830003160x>, p.295.

Canadian diplomat Hume Wrong wanted to differentiate the small powers involvement in WWII and doing so helped to spreading of middle power concept. Because of that, in 1942 he expressed the first philosophical method of differentiating Canada from the rest by its functions. Wrong believed that because Canada managed to contribute to the Allies in great extent, its interests are aligned with the Allies and Canada's involvement was significant in the war, Canada should be listened in the war deliberations by the major Allied powers.⁹¹ In 1944, Prime Minister of Canada Mackenzie King furthered Wrong's theory and created his own concept called "middlepowerhood". He argued that, middle power countries need to unite to maintain and increase their influence in international arena.⁹² He also believed that, if a state has functional interests in international relations its importance becomes greater than other states without functional interests.⁹³ King's main argument drives from the fact that, middle powers do not possess enough capability to direct the international system. They are not great powers, yet they also are not the weakest members of the system. Because of that, countries such as Australia, Canada, Nordic Countries and since 1990s South Korea claim that being in the middle is their self-identification.⁹⁴

Therefore, for functional approach having middle sized material capacity and integrating soft power policy, peaceful reform seeking or adopting multilateral behavior is not enough to identify a state as middle power. It should self-identify as a middle power and the international community should recognize it as such.⁹⁵ Identity is important because states pursue their interests on the basis of how they define their self in relation to the other and it shows how social identities function at the both

⁹¹ Adam Chapnick, "The Middle Power," p.74.

⁹² Dong-min Shin, "A Critical Review of the Concept of Middle Power," E-International Relations, December 6, 2015, <https://www.e-ir.info/2015/12/04/a-critical-review-of-the-concept-of-middle-power/>, p.1.

⁹³ Adam Chapnick, "The Middle Power," p.74.

⁹⁴ Laura Neack and Laura Neack, essay, in *The New Foreign Policy: Power Seeking in a Globalized Era*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 153–72, p.161.

⁹⁵ Anton Bezglasnyy, "Middle Power Theory, Change and Continuity in the Asia-Pacific" (thesis, University of British Columbia, 2013), p.28.

international and domestic arena.⁹⁶ Self-identification as a middle power relies on states' own geostrategic position and historical background meaning it depends on space and time.⁹⁷ Yet, Chapnik believes that status is not permanent, it is based on economic strength and political stability. While middle powers' influence shift back and forth due to circumstances, great powers will remain great.⁹⁸ Similar to Jordaan who argues that traditional middle powers and emerging middle powers behave differently, Sarah Teo also argues that different states can have different middle power identities.⁹⁹

Identity may be constructed through the nature of relation between the state leaders and the domestic society (being democratic) or states' relations with the international society (being a bridge).¹⁰⁰ In international arena state leaders of Australia emphasized how Australia is committed to rule based order, yet South Korean leaders championed the idea of being a bridge between the developing and developed countries. For example, in March 2010 South Korean President Lee Myung Park announced his policy of "New Asia Initiative" (NAI) with the purpose of increasing the level of security, economic and cultural cooperation with all Asian countries including the countries from South Pacific region through enlarging Korean diplomacy.¹⁰¹ According to David Shim and Patrick Flamm, NAI contributes to deepening the cooperation for culture, energy and trade with the countries from the Pacific, South East Asia and Central Asia; therefore it enables South Korea to act as bridge between developing and developed states.¹⁰²

⁹⁶ Alexander Wendt, "Collective Identity Formation and the International State," *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 2 (June 1994): 384–96, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2944711>, p.385.

⁹⁷ Sarah Teo, "Middle Power Identities of Australia and South Korea: Comparing the Kevin Rudd/Julia Gillard and Lee Myung-Bak Administrations," *The Pacific Review* 31, no. 2 (September 6, 2017): 221–39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2017.1371210>, p.233.

⁹⁸ Adam Chapnick, "The Middle Power," p.74.

⁹⁹ Sarah Teo, "Middle Power Identities of Australia and South Korea," p.233.

¹⁰⁰ Alexander Wendt, "Collective Identity Formation and the International State," p.385.

¹⁰¹ Soon-chun Lee, "Summit and S. Korea's 'New Asia Initiative'," *The Korea Herald*, March 30, 2010, <https://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20090601000021>.

¹⁰² David Shim and Patrick Flamm, "Rising South Korea: A Minor Player or a Regional Power?," *Pacific Focus* 28, no. 3 (December 8, 2013): 384–410, <https://doi.org/10.1111/pafo.12015>, p.393.

In domestic arena, Australia's identity is constantly challenged by the political parties and in South Korea struggle between the public masses and elites is challenging the South Korean identity.¹⁰³ However Sarah Teo argues that, South Korea and Australia are not without common characteristics. They both enjoy the multipolarity of the international system for creating new fields for middle powers to rise, both are committed to democratic values and acknowledge that they have specific responsibilities for the international relations and functions to perform in the international system. Therefore, their identity as middle power are produced and reproduced through their different and similar conditions.¹⁰⁴ However for Carr, this could also mean that since being a middle power is a self-asserted identity if a government chooses not to use middle power as a label, in every election there is danger of a state to lose its middle power identity.¹⁰⁵

Laura Neack also warns us about the desires of middle power. On the one hand, they want to fulfill the role of being a good citizen of the international community and take responsibility for the greater good and on the other hand they want to increase their level in the international hierarchy.¹⁰⁶ Thus, she claims that there are two sides of the middle power coin. One side concerns with the normative values to contribute to the international order and the other side seeks status and focuses on its interests for international position.¹⁰⁷

Through the functional approach, constructivist concept of identity contributed to the middle power theory by providing a new understanding because it suggested that middle power should not be recognized as a fixed classification, on the contrary it is more likely a constructed argument that is pursued by policymakers.¹⁰⁸ Since, all three approaches entangled together and are insufficient alone when trying to decide

¹⁰³ Sarah Teo, "Middle Power Identities of Australia and South Korea," p.233.

¹⁰⁴ Sarah Teo, "Middle Power Identities of Australia and South Korea," p.233.

¹⁰⁵ Andrew Carr, "Is Australia a Middle Power? A Systemic Impact Approach," p.76.

¹⁰⁶ Laura Neack, *The New Foreign Policy*, p.164.

¹⁰⁷ Laura Neack, *The New Foreign Policy*, p.163.

¹⁰⁸ Moch Faisal Karim, "Middle Power, Status-Seeking and Role Conceptions," p.4.

whether a state is a middle power or not, this thesis will touch upon all approaches in order to show the middle power status of South Korea. However, it is important to mention that the South Korean scholars usually prefer to use behavioral approach to determine a middle power and to label South Korea as a middle power.¹⁰⁹

2.3. South Korea as a Middle Power

2.3.1. South Korean Literature of Middle Power

According to Eriks Varpahovskis Korean scholars' claim that a state should be accepted as a middle power is based on seven main reasons. First, its function in the international arena should be playing the role of bridge building between the major and great powers to find solutions for conflicts. Second, to minimize the lack of military, economic and political capabilities, a middle power should rely significantly on international networking. Third, it should have actively contributed to the construction and designing of international or regional systems. Fourth, a middle power should play the role of a middle man between the state actors and non-state actors. Fifth, it should use its strategic geographical position to be an important actor for the international and regional systems. Sixth, a middle power should promote niche diplomacy to prove its importance for the international community. Last, it should not seek leadership for fields that great powers are already a leader.¹¹⁰ The last, criteria is already applicable to South Korea because it does not try to take leadership from great powers.

2.3.2. Hierarchical Approach

As mentioned in the section on the hierarchical approach, South Korea neither has economic and military capacities like the USA, nor does it have fewer capacities than the underdeveloped countries such as Rwanda or Cameroon. Basically, it has middle capacities between great and small powers. Therefore, because of the facts that South Korean economy usually holds the 12th rank for the world countries GDP ranking

¹⁰⁹ Eriks Varpahovskis, "A Dolphin in an Oil Sea," p.68.

¹¹⁰ Eriks Varpahovskis, "A Dolphin in an Oil Sea," p.68.

and it is in the first five of strongest military in the Indo-Pacific region, South Korea can be labeled as a middle power on the basis of the hierarchical approach.¹¹¹

2.3.3. Behavioral Approach

Even though there are some scholars who refer to the elements of hierarchical and functional approach, South Korean literature mostly focuses on the behavioral approach while deciding on whether a state is a middle power or not.¹¹² While claiming that South Korea is an emerging middle power that is regionally active since the beginning of twenty-first century¹¹³, this part will analyze if South Korea meets the six criteria (the last criteria is not a concern of South Korea) which is outlined by the Varpahovskis.

1. South Korea as a Bridge Builder

As many East and Southeast Asian countries, South Korea also suffers from the rivalry between the U.S. (historically number one ally of South Korea) and China (largest trade partner of South Korea). Since both countries are major players in the Asian continent and competition for regional hegemony between them is rising, tension between them would negatively affects the stability of the region. Therefore, on many occasions the ROK governments dedicatedly try to mediate the relations between the U.S. and China.

For example, in May 6, 2009 China sent a Note Verbale to former U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki Moon¹¹⁴, claiming that China has sovereignty over the islands in the

¹¹¹ Seung Hugh Shin, "Can South Korea Maintain Its Middle Power Status in the Indo-Pacific Century?," *Policy Forum*, September 4, 2022, <https://www.policyforum.net/can-south-korea-maintain-its-middle-power-status-in-the-indo-pacific-century/>.

¹¹² Eriks Varpahovskis, "A Dolphin in an Oil Sea," p.66-8.

¹¹³ Sook-Jong Lee, working paper, South Korea as New Middle Power Seeking Complex Diplomacy, p.10.

¹¹⁴ "Submissions to the CLCS." United Nations. Accessed June 4, 2023. https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/commission_submissions.htm.
To see the letter please visit https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/mysvnm33_09/chn_2009re_mys_vnm_e.pdf.

South China Sea.¹¹⁵ China announced map of a nine-dashed u-shaped sea line that nearly covers the surface of the South China Sea near the Malaysian, Philippine's and Vietnamese coasts and encircle Taiwan (Chinese Taipei) as a whole.¹¹⁶ Since the U.S. claim that it is committed to the security of Asia-Pacific region (and to its regional balance) and to International Maritime Law, actions of China in the South China Sea causes disturbance in the U.S.-China relations.¹¹⁷

Some Korean scholars believe that South Korea should mediate more assertively because of the risk of military conflict in the region and the risk of harming Korea's sea trade.¹¹⁸ Since 2015, South Korea recommends peaceful resolution mechanisms to both countries and advocates for freedom of sea navigation.¹¹⁹

2. South Korea's International Networking

International networking is forged by the policy choices of the governments such as; participating in the International Governmental Organizations (IGOs) or creating Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) to increase a state's influence or to decrease others power.¹²⁰ For instance, in 2021 South Korea signed 4 trade agreements, had 10 agreements under negotiation and had 20 agreements that are already in force.¹²¹ It may not be possible for South Korea to create a network of military agreements as

¹¹⁵ Shafiah F. Muhibat and Audrey Stienon, *The Future of the Seas in East Asia: Forging a Common Maritime Future for ASEAN and Japan* (Jakarta: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2015), p.31.

¹¹⁶ Asif Khan and Maseeh Ullah, "South China Sea Dispute under Law of Sea," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, January 2018, 1–45, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3239127>, p. 16.

¹¹⁷ Ronald O'Rourke, *the U.S.-China Strategic Competition in South and East China Seas: Background and Issues for Congress* (Washington, District of Columbia: Congressional Research Service, 2020), p.28.

¹¹⁸ Jihoon Yu, "South Korea Can Play a More Active Role in the South China Sea," *The Diplomat*, May 4, 2023, <https://thediplomat.com/2023/05/south-korea-can-play-a-more-active-role-in-the-south-china-sea/>.

¹¹⁹ Jihoon Yu, "South Korea Can Play a More Active Role in the South China Sea,"

¹²⁰ Miles Kahler, "Middle Powers, Network Power, and Soft Power." Edited By Victor D. Cha and Marie Dumond. *The Korean Pivot: The Study of South Korea as a Global Power*. Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep23175.5>, p.13.

¹²¹ "Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Trends Brief 2022/2023 : Republic of Korea," UNESCAP, January 9, 2023, <https://www.unescap.org/kp/2023/asia-pacific-trade-and-investment-trends-brief-20222023-republic-korea#>.

the U.S. has done, yet fields of trade and economy is open to create successful network links that can suppress the U.S. or other major powers.¹²²

Furthermore, in 2018 the number of IGOs that South Korea participate reached 91. South Korea multilaterally cooperates with other states to contribute to the international agenda regarding international cooperation and development, environmental protection, resource development and disease control.¹²³ In 2010, South Korean government initiated an IGO called the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) to support less developed countries' economic development and environmental sustainability.¹²⁴ Hence, it is possible to say that ROK is dedicated to joining and creating international network mechanisms.

3. South Korea in the Regional and International Systems

According to Jongryn Mo, because of the fact that South Korea always faced with security threats from North Korea since the Korean War, the country has always tried to contribute to the international order and stability.¹²⁵ Proving that, its efforts are recognized by the international community, in 1996 ROK was elected to non-permanent seat for the United Nations Security Council (elected second time in 2012) and later in 2001 Korean minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Han Seung Soo was elected as the President of General Assembly of the United Nations and most importantly in 2005 Foreign Minister of South Korea Ban Ki Moon was appointed as the UN Secretary General.¹²⁶

To this day South Korea actively promotes international and regional stability. For example, most recently in 29 May 2023, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and

¹²² Miles Kahler, "Middle Powers, Network Power, and Soft Power," p.14.

¹²³ Jongnam Choi, ed., "International Organization," The National Atlas of Korea, December 2019, http://nationalatlas.ngii.go.kr/pages/page_2023.php.

¹²⁴ Jongnam Choi, ed., "International Organization," http://nationalatlas.ngii.go.kr/pages/page_2023.php.

¹²⁵ Jongryn Mo, "South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy: A Case of Growing Compatibility between Regional and Global Roles," *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis* 71, no. 4 (2016): 587–607, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020702016686380>, p.594.

¹²⁶ Jongryn Mo, "South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy," p.594.

17 leaders and representatives from the Pacific Island Forum met in former presidential Blue House in Seoul for the 2023 Korea-Pacific Islands Summit for the first time.¹²⁷ Joint declaration after summit stated that, achieving international peace and stability also encompasses the need for achieving stability and peace in the Asia-Pacific region with emphasizing the shared values of the rule of law, democracy, human rights, freedom and the rule-based regional and international order.¹²⁸ Therefore, leaders of the Pacific Island Forum acknowledged the fact that strengthening economic development and security cooperation on the fields such as; human security, public health, energy security, climate security, maritime security, transnational security and cyber security is necessary for the regional and international community.¹²⁹ Thus, South Korea also meets the third criteria of Varpahovskis for the commitment to the international and regional systems.

4. South Korea between State and Non-state Actors

In tradition, state is the main actor for regulating all activities in the domestic arena, however the international production has extended so much that even the highly developed economies find it hard to keep up with the global economy. And many of the developing states struggle even for maintaining their economic growth.¹³⁰ Complexity of the system needed for new type of governance to enable nongovernmental organizations to regulate business affairs and to challenge state order.¹³¹ To increase their influence, middle states such as South Korea resort to NGOs and other non-governmental actors like multinational corporations. For states,

¹²⁷ Reuters, “South Korea to Boost Aid, Security Collaboration with Pacific Islands,” ed. Lincoln Feast, Reuters, May 31, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/south-korea-boost-aid-security-collaboration-with-pacific-islands-2023-05-31/>.

¹²⁸ Reuters, “South Korea to Boost Aid, Security Collaboration with Pacific Islands,” <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/south-korea-boost-aid-security-collaboration-with-pacific-islands-2023-05-31/>.

¹²⁹ Reuters, “South Korea to Boost Aid, Security Collaboration with Pacific Islands,” <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/south-korea-boost-aid-security-collaboration-with-pacific-islands-2023-05-31/>.

¹³⁰ Kenneth W. Abbott and Duncan Snidal, “Chapter Two. the Governance Triangle: Regulatory Standards Institutions and the Shadow of the State,” *The Politics of Global Regulation*, 2009, 44–88, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400830732.44>, p.45.

¹³¹ Kenneth W. Abbott and Duncan Snidal, “Chapter Two. the Governance Triangle,” p.45.

increasing their influence in the international arena depends on two main capabilities. First, they should establish successful regional and international nongovernmental networks. Second, they should create a strong link between the national governments and its network arrangements.¹³²

According to Miles Kahler, South Korea managed to create successful global corporate networks with more open inward foreign direct investment policies, with increasing the economic network structures and through its dynamic civil society sector.¹³³ ROK governments and South Korean NGOs have interlinked relations. For development projects that need special capabilities, the government unilaterally leads the development projects.¹³⁴ For example since 1999 South Korean governments works with the Korea NGO Council for Overseas Development Cooperation for international development and humanitarian assistance.¹³⁵

In South Korea, leading advocacy NGOs started to join the official development assistance (ODA) policies. Most important advocacy NGOs including the People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD) and the Citizens' Coalition for Economic Justice (CCEJ) created an exclusive international committee to execute advocacy missions such as; supporting democracy and human rights, forming post 2015 initiations and observing ODA policies.¹³⁶ To support NGOs and to create a network between its NGOs and other countries, South Korean governments take on adversarial, supplementary or complementary role depending on the nature of the

¹³² Miles Kahler, "Middle Powers, Network Power, and Soft Power," p.12.

¹³³ Miles Kahler, "Middle Powers, Network Power, and Soft Power," p.12.

¹³⁴ Sook Jong Lee and Kyoung Sun Lee, "The Complex Relationship between Government and Ngos in International Development Cooperation: South Korea as an Emerging Donor Country," *International Review of Public Administration* 21, no. 4 (November 1, 2016): 275–91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/12294659.2016.1242259>, p.285.

¹³⁵ "Korea NGO Council for Overseas Development Cooperation (KCOC)," Sphere, September 23, 2022, <https://spherestandards.org/focal-points/korea-ngo-council-for-overseas-development-cooperation-kcoc/>.

¹³⁶ Sook Jong Lee and Kyoung Sun Lee, "The Complex Relationship between Government and Ngos," p.285.

advocated fields.¹³⁷ In the table 1 below, the role of the South Korean government is illustrated.

Table 2. 1 Korean Government (GO)-NGOs relations in development cooperation

Supplementary		• GO implementing development projects • NGOs providing uncovered services • NGOs utilizing expertise (appropriate technology)	• GO improving public perceptions on aid • NGOs raising civic awareness and campaigning development related issues	• Prioritizing development agenda in domestic policy • Achieving development goals and complying with rules and norms	
Complementary	• GO funding NGOs' volunteer programs • NGOs dispatching and managing KOICA-NGO volunteers • Sharing information and experiences	• GO funding and contracting out NGOs • NGOs implementing GO projects • GO supporting NGOs' initiated activities	• GO funding NGOs for capacity building • NGOs providing diverse education to citizens	• GO sharing information on IGOs' agreements • NGOs proposing alternative opinions	
Adversarial		• Mutual Monitoring and Evaluation		• GO planning ODA policy for national interests • NGOs pressing GO to respond to local needs • GO remaining to be away from political issues • NGOs promoting universal values and helping minorities	
	Overseas Volunteering	Development Project	Development Education	Development Policy	
	Service Delivery			Policy Advocacy	

Source: Sook Jong Lee and Kyoung Sun Lee, "The Complex Relationship between Government and Ngos," p.286.

The examples mentioned above shows that, South Korea acts as a bridge between the state and non-state actors to promote common international values; therefore the country meets the fourth criteria of being a middle power for the behavioral approach scholars.

5. Importance of South Korea's Geographical Position

According to Hun-Chang Lee, Korea experienced geographical advantage most of the time in its history because of its social capacity to adopt advanced institutions

¹³⁷ Sook Jong Lee and Kyoung Sun Lee, "The Complex Relationship between Government and Ngos," p.286.

and technologies.¹³⁸ Because of the fact that it was close to China, Korea was able to benefit from the advanced Chinese civilization and was able to enter the rich Chinese market.¹³⁹ Since tenth century, Korea could find developed countries to benefit from their state formation and economic structure. Since the end of the twentieth century, South Korea enjoys being located close to Japan the most developed economy in East Asia and to the U.S. the most developed economy in the globe.¹⁴⁰ Because, South Korea is relatively smaller than most of its neighbors in geographical terms it forges strategic partnership with the major players in its region.¹⁴¹

Even though, there are setbacks caused by its geographical position such as; North Korean threat and being stuck in the middle of Sino-the U.S. rivalry, South Korea tries to turn these disadvantages to advantage by advocating the role of being a buffer zone between North Korea and the U.S. or between China and the U.S. and prove itself as an important ally in the region. Especially, South Korea's participation in the Six Party Talks (SPT) a forum designed to normalize the relations with North Korea and to address North Korean nuclear programme¹⁴² with members including China, Japan, Russia, the U.S., North Korea and South Korea is important. South Korea's dedication to normalizing relations with North Korea and contribution to the North Korea-the U.S. relations with its endless push for denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula¹⁴³ proves that it uses its strategic geographical position for the regional and international stability and order.

¹³⁸ Hun-Chang Lee, "How Geography and International Relations Shaped Economic Development in the Republic of Korea," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 2, no. 5 (2010): 7208–17, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.05.077>, p.7216.

¹³⁹ Hun-Chang Lee, "How Geography and International Relations Shaped Economic Development in the Republic of Korea," p.7216.

¹⁴⁰ Hun-Chang Lee, "How Geography and International Relations Shaped Economic Development in the Republic of Korea," p.7215.

¹⁴¹ Hun-Chang Lee, "How Geography and International Relations Shaped Economic Development in the Republic of Korea," p.7215.

¹⁴² Cheng Xiaohe, "Six-Party Talks: A Phoenix Waits for Reincarnation." Edited by Bhubhindar Singh. *IS NORTHEAST ASIAN REGIONALISM THE CENTRE OF EAST ASIAN REGIONALISM?* S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep05934.9>, p.10.

¹⁴³ Cheng Xiaohe, "Option 4: Resuming the Six-Party Talks," The Asan Forum, July 20, 2021, <https://theasanforum.org/option-4-resuming-the-six-party-talks/>.

6. South Korea's Niche Diplomacy

According to Andrew Fenton Cooper, niche diplomacy is part of the functionalist approach rather than the behavioral approach. To pursue successful diplomacy in line with their interest, middle powers need to find special tasks that are suited for their special experience with respect to existing forums and decision-making structures advocated by the great powers.¹⁴⁴ For him, if middle powers can meet with these criteria, there are two important advantages. One, they can increase their status in the international community. The other, they can play a role that is relatively independent from great powers.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, middle powers can compensate for the lack of resources that great powers have through finding specific niches in various issues-related forums.¹⁴⁶

It is also important for middle powers to have qualifications for finding niches that are suitable for them. Kim Sang Bae name this ability as “niche intelligence”.¹⁴⁷ According to him, in order to find niches successfully middle powers need to have two main abilities. Firstly, they need to possess the ability of finding structural loopholes and secondly, they need to have the ability of finding social issues that are not mentioned before (mostly socially constructed by the middle power agents); so that they can capitalize.¹⁴⁸ Korean experts believe that, international institutions (bilateral or multilateral coalitions) acknowledge South Korea as a significant partner; therefore South Korea can be the center of specific issues for exercising international influence.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ Andrew Fenton Cooper, ed., *Niche Diplomacy: Middle Powers after the Cold War* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1997), p.4.

¹⁴⁵ Andrew Fenton Cooper, ed., *Niche Diplomacy: Middle Powers after the Cold War*, p.4.

¹⁴⁶ Sook-Jong Lee, working paper, *South Korea as New Middle Power Seeking Complex Diplomacy*, p.7.

¹⁴⁷ Sangbae Kim, working paper, *Roles of Middle Power in East Asia: A Korean Perspective*, vol. 2, EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative (Seoul: East Asia Institute, 2014), p.14.

¹⁴⁸ Sangbae Kim, working paper, *Roles of Middle Power in East Asia: A Korean Perspective*, p.14.

¹⁴⁹ Victor D. Cha, and Marie Dumond, eds. *“The Korean Pivot: The Study of South Korea as a Global Power.”* Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep23175>, p.V.

The possibility of South Korea's finding niches in the nontraditional security issues such as; ecological security, atomic energy and most importantly cyber security is higher, because traditional security issues are capitalized by the great powers (mostly the U.S.).¹⁵⁰ As mentioned before, South Korea is also actively working for the ODA advocacy since it is a significant donor state supporting the developing countries through the mixture of "good governance" structure of the West and the model of "unconditional aid" of China. Furthermore, South Korea is successful in the field of "internet governance".¹⁵¹ However China and the U.S. are already competing for that field with their ideas as can be seen in inter-governmental regulatory approach by China and the United States' emphasis on the stakeholder approach.¹⁵² Yet, it can be a good opportunity for South Korea to play the role of a mediator between the U.S. and China.¹⁵³

The field of cyber security needs special attention because the level of increasing cyber-attacks in South Korea pushed governments to take on increasing cyber security measures. In 2021, Korean Ministry of Science and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) increased its budget of 186 billion Won to 240 billion Won for protection against hacker attacks, research and development and the provide security services for 5G+.¹⁵⁴

Therefore, South Korea needs to create complementary programs for establishing the rules of the field of cyber security to be the leader of the cyber security field.¹⁵⁵ The existence of possible fields such as; cyber security shows that South Korea can

¹⁵⁰ Sangbae Kim, working paper, *Roles of Middle Power in East Asia: A Korean Perspective*, p.24.

¹⁵¹ Sangbae Kim, working paper, *Roles of Middle Power in East Asia: A Korean Perspective*, p.24.

¹⁵² Sangbae Kim, working paper, *Roles of Middle Power in East Asia: A Korean Perspective*, p.24.

¹⁵³ Sangbae Kim, working paper, *Roles of Middle Power in East Asia: A Korean Perspective*, p.24.

¹⁵⁴ L. Yoon, "South Korea: Information Security Budget of the Ministry of Science and ICT 2021," Statista, December 6, 2022, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1252935/south-korea-information-security-budget-of-the-ministry-of-science-and-ict/#:~:text=In%202021%2C%20the%20annual%20budget,won%20in%20the%20previous%20year.>

¹⁵⁵ Sangbae Kim, "Cyber Security and Middle Power Diplomacy: A Network Perspective," *The Korean Journal of International Studies* 12, no. 2 (September 26, 2014): 323–52, <https://doi.org/10.14731/kjis.2014.12.12.2.323>, p.343.

pursue niche diplomacy. Thus, it can be said that the six criteria given by Varpahovskis is applicable to South Korea.

Overall, since the seventh criteria that suggests middle powers should not seek leadership for the areas that great powers are already a leader is not applicable for Korea, because there are no examples that suggests otherwise, it is possible to say that South Korea checks for all seven criteria for being a middle power suggested by Varpahovskis.

2.3.4. Functional Approach

For functional approach, most important elements are the self-identification as middle power and being a good citizen. In 2008, Lee Myung Bak gave his inauguration with the slogan of “Global Korea” while making reference to the middle power diplomacy (junggyun-guk). To show his dedication to global platforms he hosted international summits such as; the 2010 G20 Seoul Summit, 2011 The Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness Busan Summit and the 2012 Nuclear Security Seoul Summit. Since then, political elites explicitly refers to the middle power diplomacy for characterization of South Korean foreign policy.¹⁵⁶ Thus, South Korea also meets the criteria of being a middle power for the functional approach.

2.4. Middle Power Strategies: Balancing, Bandwagoning and Hedging

There are continuing power shifts in the global arena, including Asia-Pacific region due to relative decline of the United States’ power, the rise of China, and the geopolitical assertiveness of Russia.¹⁵⁷ All these shifts created a need for new understanding of balance of power theory while analyzing inter-state relations.¹⁵⁸ Recently, behavior of middle powers drew the attention of IR scholars because

¹⁵⁶ Sook-Jong Lee, working paper, *South Korea as New Middle Power Seeking Complex Diplomacy*, p.10.

¹⁵⁷ Sinem Ünalldilar Kocamaz, “The Rise of New Powers in World Politics : Russian, China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization / Sinem Ünalldilar Kocamaz,,” *Journal of International Relations* 16, no. 61 (March 1, 2019): 127–41, https://doi.org/10.29171/azu_acku_pamphlet_ua853_a3_k633_2019, p127.

¹⁵⁸ Kei, Koga. The Concept of “Hedging” Revisited, p.2.

middle powers influence on international balance of power keeps rising.¹⁵⁹ Traditional IR literature argues that to maintain security and autonomy, middle powers use strategies of balancing to ally with the weak side or bandwagoning to join the strong coalition.¹⁶⁰

Balancing

Balancing can be described as checking the power of states with the power of other states (alliances).¹⁶¹ According to Waltz after assuring their survival states seek for hegemony and to counter against those seeking for domination other states either resort to military build-up or choose forging an alliance.¹⁶² Similar to Waltz's idea, Stephen Walt believes that if there is a threat states balance against the source of threat.¹⁶³ States are more willing to balancing if an aggressor power is geographically close to them, because through an alliance states would not have to rely on the source of threat's mercy.¹⁶⁴ During 1950s and 1960s, liberal Southeast Asian countries such as; South Korea relied on balancing strategy because they were facing imminent and direct threat (in South Korean case source of threat was North Korea and communism).¹⁶⁵ But after 1970s they wanted to diversify their policy options for economic development. Furthermore, according to Williams, Lobell and Jesse, after the end of the Cold War states do not form alliances or resort to military build-up out of fear or for their survival. Rather, they resort to international institutions and international law if there is a conflict; they create diplomatic networks and economic

¹⁵⁹ Kei, Koga. The Concept of "Hedging" Revisited, p.2.

¹⁶⁰ Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security* 19, no. 1 (Summer 1994): 72–107, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539149>, p.80.

¹⁶¹ Randall L. Schweller, "The Balance of Power in World Politics," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, June 25, 2016, 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.119>, p.1.

¹⁶² Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* p.118.

¹⁶³ Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliance* (Cornell Univ. Press, 1987), p.21.

¹⁶⁴ T.Y. Wang and Alexander C. Tan, "Balancing, Bandwagoning or Hedging: Taiwan's Strategic Choices in the Era of a Rising China," *Political Science* 73, no. 1 (September 21, 2021): 66–84, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00323187.2021.1967765>, p.68.

¹⁶⁵ Cheng-Chwee Kuik, "How Do Weaker States Hedge? Unpacking ASEAN States' Alignment Behavior towards China," *Journal of Contemporary China* 25, no. 100 (March 2, 2016): 500–514, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2015.1132714>, p.506.

relations to check the actions of the hegemon.¹⁶⁶ Therefore, for middle powers traditional balancing can be considered outdated in the global world where there is complex relations and high level of dependence.

Bandwagoning

Bandwagoning can be understood as becoming an ally with a state that poses potential threat to survive or to benefit from its achievement.¹⁶⁷ Bandwagoning concept's main assumption is if a state wants to maximize its power it would join to stronger side and benefit from its achievements.¹⁶⁸ However, there are significant risks of bandwagoning strategy. First of all, bandwagoning is an unequal relation. To benefit from great power's achievement a middle power might have to give asymmetrical concessions to a great power and could be coerced to act according with great power's will.¹⁶⁹ Small and isolated states might have to bandwagon but middle powers have capacity choose other options.

Therefore, in complex reality confining middle powers behavior to two dichotomies seemed not enough, so IR researchers started to use new concepts to analyze middle powers behavior such as; transcending, bonding, hiding and hedging.¹⁷⁰

Hedging

Cheng-Chwee Kuik defines hedging as an act of maximizing benefits while minimizing risks.¹⁷¹ Hedging strategies have political, economic and military dimensions. In economic hedging, states forge direct economic links to maximize

¹⁶⁶ Kristen P. Williams, Steven E. Lobell, and Neal G. Jesse, *Beyond Great Powers and Hegemons: Why Secondary States Support, Follow or Challenge* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), p.12.

¹⁶⁷ Stephen M. Walt, "Testing Theories of Alliance Formation: The Case of Southwest Asia," *International Organization* 42, no. 2 (Spring 1988): 275–316, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020818300032823>, p.282.

¹⁶⁸ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* p.126.

¹⁶⁹ Stephen M. Walt, "Testing Theories of Alliance Formation: The Case of Southwest Asia," p.282.

¹⁷⁰ Chaesung Chun, working paper, *East Asian Security and South Korea's Middle Power*, p.2.

¹⁷¹ Cheng-Chwee Kuik, "How Do Weaker States Hedge," p.502.

their profit and diversify their economic links to minimize economic dependence.¹⁷² Political hedging entails contributing to regional balance of power to minimize political risks and with military hedging they minimize security risks through military alliance.¹⁷³

Middle powers often use hedging strategies to improve their relative position via the system leader to counter potential risk if there is an uncertainty usually in a unipolar system that goes under power shifts.¹⁷⁴ To do so, they apply two main strategies. First, they increase their military and economic capabilities to balance against the source of threat. Second, they try to maintain mutual relations to dodge direct conflict.¹⁷⁵ On the one hand, hedging strategy focus on multilateral mechanisms for forging direct relations and regional integration, on the other hand it tries to preserve traditional security alliance.¹⁷⁶ Therefore, not to choose balancing with the U.S. against China to lose economic cooperation with China and not to choose bandwagon with China to benefit from the rise of China but having to lose security benefits that the U.S. provides, South Korea opts for hedging strategy.

To use hedging strategy middle powers need certain capabilities. Even though middle power theory rejects the idea that there is a direct cause and affect relation between the capacities of states' and their behavioral outcome, to make a comprehensive analysis Geeraerts and Salman introduced six indicators combining political, military and economic capabilities as hedging indices.¹⁷⁷ Political indicator is to having a democratic government. Military indicators are growth of military

¹⁷² Cheng-Chwee Kuik, "How Do Weaker States Hedge," p.502.

¹⁷³ Cheng-Chwee Kuik, "How Do Weaker States Hedge," p.502.

¹⁷⁴ Mohammad Salman, "Strategic Hedging and Unipolarity's Demise: The Case of China's Strategic Hedging," *Asian Politics & Policy* 9, no. 3 (July 2017): 354–77, <https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12330>, p.354.

¹⁷⁵ Mohammad Salman, "Strategic Hedging and Unipolarity's Demise," p.354.

¹⁷⁶ Lai-Ha Chan, "Australia's Strategic Hedging in the Indo-Pacific: A 'Third Way' beyond Either China or the US," *Australia-China Relations Institute*, April 8, 2019, 1–26, p.3.

¹⁷⁷ Gustaaf Geeraerts and Mohammad Salman, "Measuring Strategic Hedging Capability of Second-Tier States under Unipolarity," *Chinese Political Science Review* 1, no. 1 (March 2016): 60–80, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41111-016-0010-6>, p.63.

arsenal and military spending. Economic indicators are foreign exchange rate and gold reserves, GDP and government debt.¹⁷⁸

2.4.1. Hedging Capacity of South Korea

South Korea's hedging capacity increased substantially in recent years. According to Linz and Stepan, if there is no actor that challenges the democratic regime from inside and outside of a state, if majority of the citizens believes that democratic institutions work and democratic procedures are preferred and applied by the constitution, then it can be said that this state has managed to consolidate its democracy.¹⁷⁹ Since South Korean constitution declares that South Korea shall be a democratic country¹⁸⁰ and there have not been any challenge against democracy, two criteria have already been met. Only the criterion that entails that majority of people should believe that democratic institutions are working has been a challenging issue for South Korea, because mass public especially the students suffered under controversial ROK governments. However, President Park Geun Hye's impeachment showed that if there is corruption, abuse of power and such; democratic mechanisms works with the will of South Korean citizens. South Korea also managed to advance its military capabilities, so that it can use for hedging strategies. Military spending of South Korea is calculated as 45.7 billion USD ranked 10th in the world¹⁸¹ and today with 6.7 million total military personnel; South Korean army is the world's third largest army in size.¹⁸² Lastly, after experiencing a significant economic downfall during the Asian financial crisis in 1998 the ROK governments implemented economic measures to rebuild the economy. During the 2000s the heads of the South Korean family-run corporations (chaebols) reformed their business structure to

¹⁷⁸ Gustaaf Geeraerts and Mohammad Salman, "Measuring Strategic Hedging," p.63.

¹⁷⁹ Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins, 1996), p.6.

¹⁸⁰ *Constitution* (Seoul, Republic of Korea: Korean Overseas Information Service, 1987).

¹⁸¹ Military spending by country 2023, accessed June 25, 2023, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/military-spending-by-country>.

¹⁸² Military size by country 2023, accessed May 23, 2023, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/military-size-by-country>.

compete in the global market. In the end, they managed to create economic giants such as; Samsung, Hyundai Motors, LG and Kakao.¹⁸³ South Korea's ranked 11th in World's GDP ranking¹⁸⁴ and ranked 10th in foreign exchange and gold reserves in 2022.¹⁸⁵ In September 2022, its government debt accounted for 48.1 percent of South Korean nominal GDP.¹⁸⁶ If debt to GDP ratio is above 77% chances of payments is low and if the ratio is between 77 percent - 64 percent it can mean that country is having a slow growth.¹⁸⁷ South Korea's ration suggests that it can manage its payments and maintain its economic growth. South Korea advanced right capabilities for successful hedging because it focuses on economic growth while maintaining a parallel military and economic development and establishes good international and regional relations.¹⁸⁸

2.5. Conclusion

In the Western literature mainly there are three approaches to middle power theory. The hierarchical approach is influenced by the realist theory of power politics based on the material capabilities of the states. South Korea can be recognized as a middle power according to this approach, because its capabilities and the level of international influence are neither below the underdeveloped states nor equal to great powers. The behavioral approach is mostly linked with the liberalist concepts such as multilateralism, soft power (and smart power), active diplomacy, resorting peaceful

¹⁸³ Chung Min Lee, "Korea Net Assessment 2022: Shoring Up South Korea's National Security Apparatus," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 5, 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/12/05/korea-net-assessment-2022-shoring-up-south-korea-s-national-security-apparatus-pub-88546>, p.7-8.

¹⁸⁴ "GDP," GDP - Countries - List, accessed June 27, 2023, <https://tradingeconomics.com/country-list/gdp>.

¹⁸⁵ "Country Ranking by Foreign Exchange & Gold Reserves 2022-2023," Take-Pofit.org, accessed June 27, 2023, <https://take-profit.org/en/statistics/foreign-exchange-reserves/>.

¹⁸⁶ "South Korea Government Debt: % of GDP," South Korea Government Debt: % of GDP, 2002 – 2023 | CEIC Data, accessed June 27, 2023, <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/korea/government-debt--of-nominal-gdp#:~:text=Government%20Debt%20covers%20Central%20Government%20only.&text=In%20the%20latest%20reports%2C%20South,USD%20bn%20in%20Dec%202022>.

¹⁸⁷ Will Kenton, "Debt-to-GDP Ratio: Formula and What It Can Tell You," Investopedia, May 31, 2023, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/d/debtgdpratio.asp>.

¹⁸⁸ Gustaaf Geeraerts and Mohammad Salman, "Measuring Strategic Hedging," p.69.

conflict management mechanisms to deal with the international issues, etc. Since South Korea is committed to liberal values such as democracy or rule-based order (the upcoming chapter will analyze the nature of South Korean policies in detail) it behaves as middle power according to the explanation of the scholars of behavioral approach. Functional approach focuses on the middle power identity and how middle powers states position themselves in the international system (e.g. being a good international citizen). According to functional approach, in order to define a state as a middle power first the state should use middle power rhetoric and identify itself as such. With South Korean President Lee Myung-Bak's referral to the country's identity as a middle power and speeches of political elites stating that South Korea is committed to the idea of being a good citizen, South Korea can be accepted as a middle power in terms of the functional approach.

The use of middle power rhetoric by the ROK governments is relatively new. Therefore, Korean literature for South Korea's role of middle power is developing. However, combination of the arguments from the hierarchical, the behavioral and the functional approaches supports the claim that South Korea can be identified as a middle power.

Before and during the Cold War period, middle powers accepted to either balance with a great power for security umbrella or bandwagon to a great power to benefit its achievements. However, after the Cold War process of globalization enabled middle powers to diversify their foreign relations especially politically and economically. Therefore, other than balancing and bandwagoning, middle powers started to use new strategies to pursue their goals. One of those strategies is hedging. It entails that minimizing risks while maximizing the benefits at the same time. Thus, to maintain its strategic security alliance with the U.S. and strategic economic partnership with China at the same time and to ensure regional peace and stability South Korea used hedging strategy since 2008.

CHAPTER 3

EMERGENCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA (ROK) AND ITS FOREIGN POLICY UNTIL 2022

3.1. Establishment of the Republic of Korea (ROK)

Division of the Korean Peninsula did not occur in one night. Years before the signing of the Armistice Agreement between the South and the North on July 27, 1953 the peninsula was already divided. Since the main reason for division based on the Japanese protectorate period (1905–1910) and its colonial rule (between 1910 and 1945), it is important to mention those periods to understand the mindset of South Korean leaders and South Korean governments. Having a general understand of South Korean foreign policy will clarify why South Korea uses hedging policies between its number one ally the U.S. and its leading trading partner China. This chapter will examine the process of founding of South Korea and its foreign policy until current South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's coming to power on May 10, 2022.

3.1.1. Japanese Rule

In November 1905, the Eulsa Treaty (Japan–Korea Protectorate Treaty of 1905) was signed to officially deprive Korea from its sovereignty and to make it Japan's protectorate. It is safe to say that the Korean Empire unwillingly signed the treaty. According to Kirk Larsen, Japan's main reason for choosing protectorate over official annexation of Korea was to easily pursue its geopolitical and economic interests in the peninsula without the burden of formal colonial rule.¹⁸⁹

In order to gain back Korea's sovereignty, with fruitless efforts Korean Emperor Go Jong pleaded to Western powers by sending a letter to 1906 Hague Conference and

¹⁸⁹ Kirk W. Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties and Trade: Qing Imperialism and Chosŏn Korea, 1850–1910*. 1st ed. Vol. 295. Harvard University Asia Center, 2008. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1tg5pqx>, p.280.

he sent three envoys to the Hague Peace Conference in 1907 to protest against the Japanese protectorate.¹⁹⁰ Furthermore, the Righteous Armies formed by Korean guerrilla forces fought against Japanese soldiers, even though they had significantly less soldiers and weapons. In 1907, the Righteous Armies gained support from the formal Korean army, yet against the advanced Japanese army it had a little effect.¹⁹¹ Even the attempts of Yi In Yeong in 1908 (recognized guerilla leader) to reach the embassies in Seoul in order to make the Righteous Armies an official army at war recognized by the international law did not find any support. Therefore, with the lack of support and the increasing deaths caused by the Japanese army, the guerrilla attacks by the Righteous Armies considerably lessened in 1909.¹⁹²

Korean resistance proved that Koreans could not be managed and subdued so easily. Also, since 1905 Western countries showed almost no interest in Japanese actions in Korean peninsula. Therefore, Japanese officials believed that a formal invasion of Korea was needed.¹⁹³

On 29 August 1910 with the Treaty of Annexation Japan announced that Korea was officially annexed by Japan. They changed the name of Korea to Government General of Korea (GGK) and introduced several harsh elements of colonial rule such as; press censorship, total control over Korean economy, increased violence, strict police rule and systematic imprisonment for the dissidents.¹⁹⁴ According to Michael Robinson, for Japan making Korea a colonial state was not enough, it was working for the total cultural assimilation of Koreans. To this end, Japanese officials tried to replace Korean language with Japanese, adopted a racist approach towards Koreans, they exploited Korean workers and subdued them physically and mentally (e.g. South Korean comfort women¹⁹⁵) through their advanced political, military and

¹⁹⁰ Hyung-Gu Lynn, "The History of Korea, 1905–1945," *The Oxford Handbook of South Korean Politics*, December 2021, 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780192894045.013.2>, p.4.

¹⁹¹ Hyung-Gu Lynn, "The History of Korea, 1905–1945," p.4.

¹⁹² Hyung-Gu Lynn, "The History of Korea, 1905–1945," p.4.

¹⁹³ Kirk W. Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties and Trade*, p.280.

¹⁹⁴ Hyung-Gu Lynn, "The History of Korea, 1905–1945," p.6.

¹⁹⁵ For more information please read George L. Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011).

economic means.¹⁹⁶ The first decade of Japanese colonial rule referred as the “Military Rule” / “Budan Seiji” was based on strict control over public life of Koreans and use of force against rebels. Yet, rebellions from the natives did not stop and in 1919 with the March First uprising they peaked. The uprising offered some degree of hope to Koreans and put them in the world’s attention for a short time and increased the nationalist ideas in Korea. Therefore, Japan introduced a new period of “Cultural Rule” / “Bunka Seiji” promising cultural autonomy to Koreans yet GGK reforms provided limited freedom for Korean culture until 1937.¹⁹⁷

At that time, China was also suffering from the hand of Japan. On July 7, 1937 Japanese and Chinese soldiers exchanged fire on the Marco Polo Bridge closer to Peking which led to full-scale war between colonial Japan and ready to rebel China, called Second Sino-Japan War (1937-1945).¹⁹⁸ The war in China ushered Japanese aims for total assimilation of Korea and integrating natives to Japanese army. With that aim in mind Japan introduced a new movement called the “Imperial Citizens” / “Kominka Undo”.¹⁹⁹ Most of the Korean citizens believed that the movement of Imperial Citizens was a “cultural genocide”.²⁰⁰ The goal was to spread Japanese language, thoughts and institutions in the colony through use of Japanese in schools, making official documents written in Japanese, compulsory participation in the Japanese ceremonies and total replacement of Korean law with Japanese law. These implementations became most strict during the 1941-1945 Pacific War especially because of the fact that Koreans were mobilizing for the war.²⁰¹

Officially, on August 15, 1945 Korea was liberated from 35 years Japanese colonial ruling, yet this freedom was not an earned one. Korea was free from Japan because

¹⁹⁶ Michael E. Robinson, *Korea’s Twentieth-Century Odyssey: A Short History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), p.36.

¹⁹⁷ Michael E. Robinson, *Korea’s Twentieth-Century Odyssey: A Short History*, p.43.

¹⁹⁸ James B. Crowley, “A Reconsideration of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 22, no. 3 (May 1963): 277–91, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2050187>, p.277.

¹⁹⁹ Michael E. Robinson, *Korea’s Twentieth-Century Odyssey: A Short History*, p.44.

²⁰⁰ ERIN BLAKEMORE, “How Japan Took Control of Korea,” History.com, February 28, 2018, <https://www.history.com/news/japan-colonization-korea>.

²⁰¹ Michael E. Robinson, *Korea’s Twentieth-Century Odyssey: A Short History*, p.77.

Japan was defeated by the Allies. This liberation was of course celebrated by Koreans but it was not without complications. After Japan ended its presence, Koreans had to face harsh reality of the aftermath of the occupation. First of all, the mobilization of Koreans by Japanese officials in the war whether as labor or soldiers was brutal. Japanese officials coerced Koreans to work under hard conditions to serve Japanese soldiers, they even created prostitution camps which not just decreased Korean population significantly but also, created a flow of traumatized returnees in Korea.²⁰² Second, even before 1945 Korean cities were overcrowded with unemployed rural people because most of the lands in rural side were under the Japanese control, and in 1945 returnees' rates of unemployment peaked.²⁰³ Third, short period after the liberalization of Korea returnees of exile in the U.S., the Soviet Union and China arrived to spread their nationalist ideas. Fourth, because most of the leading Korean figures were either exiled or killed, there was a power vacuum for the leadership. The old nationalist party became the Korean Independence Party and with the help of China they created the Korean Restoration Army.²⁰⁴ On the one hand, exiled nationalist leaders such as Kim Ku returned from China and Syngman Rhee (later will be the first President of ROK) returned from the U.S. On the other hand, communist leader Kim Il Sung gained the full support of Manchurian guerillas and the Soviet Leader Stalin.²⁰⁵ Between the liberation date and the end of Korean War in 1953 Koreans lived in turmoil caused by the power vacuum and rivalry among political leaders and different ideologies.²⁰⁶ Especially, official presence of the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) increased the tension between communists and conservatives. However, claiming that the two countries were separated by the war is not a correct way of thinking. Since, with the help and participation for the process of state building by the U.S. on August 15, 1948 the Republic of Korea (ROK) was formally established in the South under

²⁰² Michael E. Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey: A Short History*, p.101.

²⁰³ Michael E. Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey: A Short History*, p.101.

²⁰⁴ Michael E. Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey: A Short History*, p.103.

²⁰⁵ Chang-Il Ohn, "The Causes of the Korean War, 1950-1953," *International Journal of Korean Studies* XIV, no. 2 (2010): 19-44, p.19.

²⁰⁶ Michael E. Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey: A Short History*, p.101-103.

Syngman Rhee but his new government faced backlashes including uprisings, therefore the U.S. President Truman decided to preserve the U.S. military presence in the South.²⁰⁷ In the North on September 3, 1948 the communists officially declared the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) as a formal state.²⁰⁸ Yet, the turmoil between two sides did not end and especially the active presence of the U.S. in South and influence of Soviet Union in the North increased the tension between two states and on June 25, 1950 it escalated into a full-scale war.

3.1.2. Korean War (1950-1953)

It is possible to say that the Korean War is different than other revolutionary wars in Asia. It is not a revolutionary movement against a colonial power or an invader but it is between two revolutionary sides that chose to pursue different ideologies. On the one hand, in the South the ROK had the advantage of population since it was twice the DPRK's population and got the best farmable river valleys. On the other hand, the North possessed the entire mineral and coal resources, hydro-electric power and the industrial base built by the Japanese.²⁰⁹ Both were in a realization that a torn Korea is a lesser Korea and open to outside influence. Therefore, both tried to unite the peninsula through all kinds of schemes such as; reciprocal fires, political assassinations, bribery, public demonstrations, guerilla attacks and economic threats.²¹⁰ Russians and Americans played the role of supporting patrons to protect their ideologies in the peninsula but their approach was different.²¹¹ Soviet Union was promising full support to Kim Il Sung in the North but it was less concerned with the unification of two Koreas. However, American involvement in the South was a lot more complicated than the Soviet's involvement in the North.²¹²

²⁰⁷ James I. Matray, "The Korean War 101 Causes, Course, and Conclusion of the Conflict," *EDUCATION ABOUT ASIA* 17, no. 3 (Winter 2012): 23–28, p.24.

²⁰⁸ Michael E. Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey: A Short History*, p.110.

²⁰⁹ Allan R. Millett, "Introduction to the Korean War," *The Journal of Military History* 65, no. 4 (October 2001): 921–35, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2677623>, p.930.

²¹⁰ Allan R. Millett, "Introduction to the Korean War," p.930.

²¹¹ Chang-Il Ohn, "The Causes of the Korean War, 1950-1953," *International Journal of Korean Studies* XIV, no. 2 (2010): 19–44, p.21.

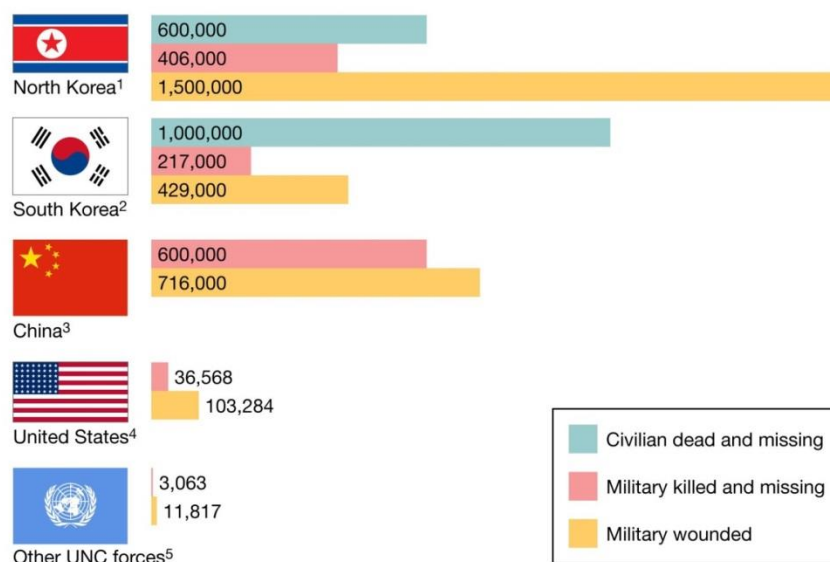
²¹² Allan R. Millett, "Introduction to the Korean War," p.930.

USAMGIK's presence in the South did not welcome by the Northern communists and they made guerilla attacks to the South and border clashes between the South and the North increased.²¹³ To stabilize the peninsula, the U.S. was concerned with the repatriation of Northern Koreans.

Even though there is still uncertainty about who initiated the Korean War, general belief is that the war started on June 25, 1950 with the great Northern attack on the South. The war was devastating because South or North, participants were still Korean. Involvement of the U.S., members of the United Nations Command Forces (UNC), Soviet Union and China expanded the duration of the war and unsurprisingly South and North Korea suffered most deaths.

Table 3. 1 Deaths in Korean War

Battle casualties of the Korean War (1950–53)



¹ Figures reflect the higher end of U.S. and South Korean estimates, which range from 500,000 to 600,000 civilian dead and missing, from 294,000 to 406,000 military killed and missing, and from 226,000 to 1,500,000 military wounded.

² South Korean estimates of civilian dead and missing range from 500,000 to 1,000,000. Official figure of military killed in action is 187,712.

³ Figures are U.S. and South Korean estimates. Official Chinese figures acknowledge 152,400 military killed and missing, 238,000 military wounded.

⁴ Figures reflect official U.S. tally, which counts 33,741 battlefield killed and missing and 2,827 dead and missing in war zone from other causes. U.S. military deaths outside the war zone were 17,678, bringing the total military dead and missing during the Korean War to 54,246.

⁵ No UNC member had more than 700 battlefield deaths except Turkey (721).

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Source: *Battle Casualties of the Korean War (1950–53)*, Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica), accessed June 20, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Korean-War#/media/1/322419/67418>.

²¹³ Allan R. Millett, "Introduction to the Korean War," p.931.

3.2. South Korean Foreign Policy during Cold War Period (1948-1992)

3.2.1. Syngman Rhee Government (1948-1960)

On 24 July 1948, Syngman Rhee became the first president of the Republic of Korea. He spent forty years in exile and during that time he developed an open hatred for communism. Some scholars argue that as a leader he was not supported by the U.S. in the way Kim Il Sung was supported by the Soviet Union. Because, his main ambition was to reunite the country he did not hesitate to dispute with the U.S. He publicly denounced armistice, mobilized public mass for unification, threatened the U.S. to continue war alone if UN forces in Korea stopped fighting against the North Korea and demanded continuation of the war until his country is united. However, despite his efforts North Korea, UN and China agreed upon an armistice on 27 of June, 1953 and it came into force without him signing the agreement.²¹⁴

His stance on unification and his dedication to anti-communism brought him a significant popularity among South Korean public, but his popularity was short lived. His government was controversial but he was not an effective leader. After the Korean War, South Korea was suffering under poverty. Rhee and his Liberal Party worked for advancing Rhee's rule and increasing his and party members personal wealth but not for the economic growth of South Korea.²¹⁵ Rhee government's economic plan was built upon the reliance on the U.S. aid. During mid-1950's American aid almost covered 80 percent of government revenues and significant portion of South Korea's GNP. Rhee gave import licenses to businessmen in his inner circle and used most of the profits for his Liberal Party.²¹⁶

Similar to his economic plan, Rhee's foreign policy objectives also built upon the American support. On the one hand, he wanted to pursue independent foreign policy to pursue reunification with the North; on the other hand he was solely depended on

²¹⁴ Michael J. Seth, *A History of Korea: From Antiquity to the Present* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), p.331.

²¹⁵ Michael J. Seth, "An Unpromising Recovery South Korea's Post-Korean War Economic Development: 1953-1961," *Education About Asia* 18, no. 3 (2013): 42-45, p.42.

²¹⁶ Michael J. Seth, "An Unpromising Recovery South Korea's Post-Korean War, p.42.

the U.S. for economic and military strength.²¹⁷ Therefore, maintaining the American economic and security support for South Korea constituted his main foreign policy objectives for South Korea and ultimately his desire for reunification with North Korea.²¹⁸ Also, because he witnessed Japanese colonial rule in Korea, he refrained from re-establishing diplomatic relations with Japan or did not established foreign relations with any countries except the U.S., even though South Korea could benefit from foreign trade relations with other countries including Japan.²¹⁹

At the appearance, his government was democratic because elections and opposition parties were maintained but, to stay in power Rhee and his party used armed forces and bribery to manipulate the elections. Increasing political instability, corruption, favoritism of Liberal Party members and low economic grow rates resulted in the end of Rhee's popularity.²²⁰

The reality of losing the support of Korean citizens pushed Rhee and his party to take extreme measurements such as; declaring a new National Security Law in December 1958 to enable him to use violence against all oppositions and critics against his government under the name of national security and ordering the execution of Cho Pong Am - his rival in 1956 elections - in 1959.²²¹ At last, again for a fourth term in March 1960, he won the elections due to death of his rival Chough Pyung Ok. However, election was annulled because of the April 19 Revolution of 1960 (Sa Il Gu), a student-led movement against Rhee's rule and his party. During the uprising

²¹⁷ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads Autonomy and Alliance in an Era of Rival Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), p.22.

²¹⁸ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads Autonomy and Alliance in an Era of Rival Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), p.23.

²¹⁹ Vitor Ramon Fernandes, "South Korean Foreign Policy under Syngman Rhee and Park Chung Hee: Contrasting Strategies under Similar Structural Constraints," *JANUS NET E-Journal of International Relation* 14, no. 1 (May-October 2023): 125–41, <https://doi.org/10.26619/1647-7251.14.1.8>, p.132.

²²⁰ Michael J. Seth, "An Unpromising Recovery South Korea's Post-Korean War, p.42.

²²¹ Michael J. Seth, "An Unpromising Recovery South Korea's Post-Korean War, p.42.

hundreds of students killed by the police but the movement did not stop and ended his regime.²²² Hence, he had to resign and was exiled to Hawaii.²²³

After Syngman Rhee exiled, new elections held in August 1960 and Yun Bo Seon from the Democratic Party won the elections. However, his presidency was short lived due to public demonstrations and political instability.²²⁴

3.2.2. Park Chung Hee Period (1961-1979)

On May 16, 1961 Park Chung Hee another controversial figure came to power through a military coup and started the military regimes in South Korean history.²²⁵ The '5.16 Revolution' was not a "bloody" revolution because the military overran the streets in a short period of time, Yun Bo Seon was not killed (he even ran for presidency in the upcoming years) and nearly no one was harmed.²²⁶ Most of the literature suggests that, Park Chung Hee's regime was very similar to Syngman Rhee regime because both were democratic on the surface but in reality they were both corrupt, controversial and they both failed to create political stability.²²⁷ Park Chung Hee created the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) but the agency was not a mere intelligence agency during his regime and later in Chun Doo Hwan's military regime it became the most feared institution.²²⁸

Park Chung Hee's foreign policy focused on the normalization of relations with Japan and communist countries including China and the Soviet Union.²²⁹ Students could not believe that how he could even considers normalization of relations with

²²² Kyung Moon Hwang, "Remembering April 19, 1960 Student Revolution," koreatimes, April 16, 2014, https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2016/05/633_155532.html.

²²³ Michael J. Seth, "An Unpromising Recovery South Korea's Post-Korean War, p.42.

²²⁴ Vítor Ramon Fernandes, "South Korean Foreign Policy under Syngman Rhee," p.132.

²²⁵ Vítor Ramon Fernandes, "South Korean Foreign Policy under Syngman Rhee," p.132.

²²⁶ Ramon Pacheco Pardo, *Shrimp to Whale: South Korea from the Forgotten War to K-Pop* (London, UK: C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., 2022), p.73.

²²⁷ Vítor Ramon Fernandes, "South Korean Foreign Policy under Syngman Rhee," p.133.

²²⁸ Ramon Pacheco Pardo, *Shrimp to Whale: South Korea from the Forgotten War to K-Pop*, p.75.

²²⁹ Tae Dong, Chung. "Korea's Nordpolitik", p.149.

Japan due to cruelty that Japan embarked upon South Korean society.²³⁰ Also, dependence on the U.S. resulted in the subordination of South Korea to the U.S. during the Cold War period; South Korea had to send soldiers to Vietnam War in 1965 and a number of U.S. military bases were opened in South Korea.²³¹ Park Chung Hee announced his “Special Foreign Policy Statement Regarding Peace and Unification” on June 23, 1973.²³² His statement suggested that if there is equality and reciprocity, South Korea is willing to maintain good relations with countries that possess different political systems and ideologies including China, Soviet Union and North Korea.²³³

President Park achieved an economic success through government-controlled economic development plan based on export-oriented economic growth.²³⁴ He believed that, in order to achieve economic development non-economic issues should be dealt with.²³⁵ Therefore, he worked for closing ties with the U.S. and some degree with Japan. However, his military-led controversial regime disturbed the relations between his government and the citizens of South Korea, especially students were so frustrated by his regime that upheavals did not stop until his assassination on October 26, 1979.²³⁶

The death of Park Chung Hee brought hope to South Korean citizens. They were talking about “Seoul Spring” even though it was autumn to reflect their hope. On 6 December, 1979 Choi Kyu Hah became president by the power of the constitution

²³⁰ Kyung Moon Hwang, *A History of Korea: An Episodic Narrative*, 2nd ed. (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p.194.

²³¹ Kyung Moon Hwang, *A History of Korea: An Episodic Narrative*, p.199.

²³² Tae Dong, Chung. “Korea’s Nordpolitik: ACHIEVEMENTS & PROSPECTS.” *Asian Perspective* 15, no. 2 (1991): 149–78. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42703974>, p.151.

²³³ Tae Dong, Chung. “Korea’s Nordpolitik”, p.151.

²³⁴ Michael J. Seth, *A History of Korea: From Antiquity to the Present*, p.339.

²³⁵ Seung-Mi, Han. “The New Community Movement: Park Chung Hee and the Making of State Populism in Korea.” *Pacific Affairs* 77, no. 1 (2004): 69–93. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40022275>, p.74.

²³⁶ Michael J. Seth, *A History of Korea: From Antiquity to the Present*, p.339.

and realized his promise for releasing political prisoners.²³⁷ People were finally thinking that the controversial period of South Korea was finally over. However, their joy was short-lived because another military officer was gathering forces behind President Choi.

3.2.3. Increasing Relations with Communist States under Chun Doo Hwan Government (1980-1988)

A military commander similar to Park, on December 12, 1979 Chun Doo Hwan suppressed public opposition and resistance within the National Assembly with a coup d'état and became president in September 1980.²³⁸ To establish his government's legitimacy President Chun appealed to the U.S. for support. The U.S. President Ronald Reagan, in return demanded that the life of Chun's political rival Kim Dae Jung (elected South Korean president during 1997-2002) would be spared and his security would be guaranteed.²³⁹ When Chun complied with Reagan's request, Reagan invited Chun to visit White House to show cooperation between two governments to increase Chun's legitimacy.²⁴⁰ Similar to Park government, Chun government worked for the normalization of relation with Japan for South Korean security and economic growth.²⁴¹ President Chun also tried to establish good relations with China and the Soviet Union and to this end, in 1982, the ROK government gave most favored nation status to Soviet Union, China and other communist states.²⁴²

During Chun Doo Hwan's presidency Inter Korean relations also experienced some degree of normalization. For example, in August 1984, Chun said that South Korea is

²³⁷ Michael J. Seth, *A History of Korea: From Antiquity to the Present*, p.411-12.

²³⁸ Ramon Pacheco Pardo, *Shrimp to Whale: South Korea from the Forgotten War to K-Pop*, p.215.

²³⁹ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.46.

²⁴⁰ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.46-7.

²⁴¹ Yanghyeon Jo, "Chun Doo-Hwan Administration's Diplomacy towards Japan: The Origin of the Draft Proposal for the ROK-Japan Security- Economic Cooperation," *Seoul Journal of Japanese Studies* 4, no. 1 (2018): 221-52, p.222.

²⁴² Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.48.

willing to provide technology and goods to advance the lives of North Koreans. After that, South Korea was damaged by deathly floods that killed nearly 200 people and destroyed countless homes and buildings. This time the North Korean President Kim Il Sung provided help by creating a truce village on the inter-Korean border and North Korea sent rice, medicine, cement and fabric through the Red Cross organization in the two Koreas.²⁴³

Even though, Chun eased some restrictions for his people such as removing curfew, travel restrictions or ending the wearing of mandatory militaristic uniforms for school children, his regime was still controversial. Censorship for press, closed trials for dissidents and arrests of protestors continued.²⁴⁴ Similar to Rhee and Park, Chun also supported businessmen in his inner circle and used profits for his Democratic Justice Party and his reputation in the eyes of the public was negative.²⁴⁵ Regardless of his unpopularity, Chun managed to recover economy unlike Rhee and Park. He managed to pursue successful economic policies such as securing foreign funds from Japan.²⁴⁶ And with the support of drop in oil prices began in 1981 which enabled South Korea to increase its production level and this resulted in increasing export relations with the U.S. and Japan.²⁴⁷

April 13, 1987 marked another day for the continuation of controversialist rule in South Korea. Because Chun announced that the new president would be selected by the National Council for Unification. Meaning that, he would be the one that chooses the new president. Everyone knew that Roh Tae Woo the leader of Democratic Justice Party since 1985 would be the new president since Chun him-self was

²⁴³ Ramon Pacheco Pardo, *Shrimp to Whale: South Korea from the Forgotten War to K-Pop*, p.114-15.

²⁴⁴ Michael J. Seth, *A History of Korea: From Antiquity to the Present*, p.415.

²⁴⁵ Michael J. Seth, *A History of Korea: From Antiquity to the Present*, p.415.

²⁴⁶ Yanghyeon Jo, "Chun Doo-Hwan Administration's Diplomacy towards Japan, p.231.

²⁴⁷ Michael J. Seth, *A History of Korea: From Antiquity to the Present*, p.415.

training Roh.²⁴⁸ This announcement led to uprisings by political activists and middle class which was met by increasing police brutality against protestors.²⁴⁹

3.2.4. Roh Tae Woo's Nordpolitik (1988-1993)

As expected Roh Tae Woo became president on February 25, 1988. The main feature of Roh Tae Woo's foreign policy was *Nordpolitik* or *Northern Policy*. His aim was to diversify South Korea's diplomatic relations to make more independent foreign policy from the U.S. and to gain some level of autonomy without challenging the U.S. while benefiting from the U.S. security umbrella.²⁵⁰ Roh's *Nordpolitik* policy was influenced by the *Ostpolitik* policy of the West Germany, which was based on creating closer relations with the Communist states.²⁵¹ His policy had three steps. These steps were, increasing economic relations with states that have closer relations with North Korea, increasing diplomatic relations with communist states and getting international recognition for both South and North Korea.²⁵² Roh's timing was perfect since Gorbachev wanted to increase the economic relations with developing South Korea. Thus South Korea and Soviet Union opened trade offices in both countries in 1989 and by 1990 they exchanged full diplomatic relations.²⁵³ Similar to Soviet Union, China's interest to create economic relations with South Korea also increased due to economic development of South Korea. Therefore, in 1990 they exchanged trade offices and in 1992 they set up full diplomatic relations.²⁵⁴ Roh's Northern Policy also entailed that South Korea's growing relations with the Soviet Union (later Russia) and China would contribute to the isolation of the North

²⁴⁸ Ramon Pacheco Pardo, *Shrimp to Whale: South Korea from the Forgotten War to K-Pop*, p.120.

²⁴⁹ Michael J. Seth, *A History of Korea: From Antiquity to the Present*, p.417.

²⁵⁰ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.54.

²⁵¹ Michael J. Seth, *A History of Korea: From Antiquity to the Present*, p.420.

²⁵² Dan C. Sanford, "ROK's Nordpolitik: Revisited," *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* 7, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 1993): 1-31, p.2-3.

²⁵³ Michael J. Seth, *A History of Korea: From Antiquity to the Present*, p.420.

²⁵⁴ Michael J. Seth, *A History of Korea: From Antiquity to the Present*, p.420.

Korea.²⁵⁵ One of the most significant results of his Nordpolitik was South Korea's membership in the United Nations. Between 1990 and 1991, South Korea eagerly pursued UN membership and it could even accept a joint seat with North Korea due to North Korean demands.²⁵⁶ However, North Korea saw that with Nordpolitik South Korea managed to convince China and Soviet Union to not veto South Korean membership. Fear of South Korea would defeat North Korea in UN discussions forced North Korea to agree upon a separate membership.²⁵⁷

Importantly, Roh Tae Woo was the first South Korean president to describe South Korea as a middle power to show the success of the ROK in free market economy and its commitment to international security and multilateralism.²⁵⁸

3.3. South Korea's New Strategies after the Cold War

3.3.1. Globalization efforts of Kim Young Sam (1993-1998)

December 1992 elections marked a significant change for South Korea, because finally after more than thirty years it had an elected civilian president named Kim Young Sam. Like his predecessor he was a conservative leader that was supported by the previous president Roh Tae Woo, but the end of the cold war greatly affected his policies.²⁵⁹

Kim Young Sam is known with his "globalization" / "seggyehwa" policy that realized in 1996 with South Korea's membership in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). He followed a moderate path to democratization and development without crossing with conservative elites and most importantly he ended the military regime and military involvement in South Korean

²⁵⁵ Kyung Moon Hwang, *A History of Korea: An Episodic Narrative*, p.233.

²⁵⁶ Gabriel Jonsson, *South Korea in the United Nations Global Governance, Inter-Korean Relations, and Peace Building* (London, UK: World Scientific, 2017), p.57-60.

²⁵⁷ Gabriel Jonsson, *South Korea in the United Nations Global Governance*, p.57-60.

²⁵⁸ Jeffrey Robertson, "South Korea as a Middle Power: Capacity, Behavior, and Now Opportunity," *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 16, no. 1 (2007): 151-74, p.156.

²⁵⁹ Ramon Pacheco Pardo, *Shrimp to Whale: South Korea from the Forgotten War to K-Pop*, p.133.

politics.²⁶⁰ His “New Korea” that promises eliminating social, economic and political turmoil brought hope to many South Korean citizens.²⁶¹

Under Kim’s government, relations between the U.S. and South Korea hindered due to the U.S.-North Korean relations. For the first time, the U.S. established direct relations with DPRK without consulting South Korea.²⁶² The Clinton administration was trying to normalize the relations with North Korea by opening a dialogue with new North Korean leader Kim Jong Il that came into power in 1991.²⁶³ However, Bill Clinton’s efforts of normalization with North Korea alarmed Kim Young Sam’s government due to North Korean nuclear program.²⁶⁴ The problem between the U.S. and South Korea came from the different approaches adopted by two countries against the threats of North Korea to leave the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1993.²⁶⁵ On the one hand, South Korea was demanding strict measurements against DPRK’s nuclear ambitions; on the other hand the U.S. was trying to ease North Korea with normalization process.²⁶⁶

3.3.2. Kim Dae Jung’s Sunshine Policy (1998-2003)

Kim Dae Jung won the elections in February 25, 1997. His main goal was to strengthen the relations with North Korea. In order to achieve his goal President Kim announced his “sunshine policy”.²⁶⁷ This policy entailed three main objectives. First, under no circumstances South Korea will pardon any North Korean military

²⁶⁰ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.55.

²⁶¹ Victor D. Cha, “Politics and Democracy under the Kim Young Sam Government: Something Old, Something New,” *Asian Survey* 33, no. 9 (September 1993): 849–63, 849.

²⁶² Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.55.

²⁶³ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.55.

²⁶⁴ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.55.

²⁶⁵ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.55.

²⁶⁶ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.55.

²⁶⁷ Levin, Norman D., and Yong-Sup Han. “The Sunshine Policy: Principles and Main Activities.” In *Sunshine in Korea: The South Korean Debate over Policies Toward North Korea*, 1st ed., 23–32. RAND Corporation, 2002. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mr1555capp.9>, p.1.

aggression. Second, South Korea would not try to assimilate North Korea. Third, the South will pursue active cooperation with North Korea.²⁶⁸ He gave great importance to the kinship that South and North Koreans shared. Therefore, he pledged that South Korea is more than willing to provide aid to his Northern brothers and sisters.²⁶⁹ Kim argued that South Korea has managed to advance its economic presence in the globe due to South Korea's successful adaptation of liberal policies. He was aware that the North Korea was suffering under the isolation from the International market and having economic setbacks.²⁷⁰

His approach to North Korea was also supported by the public. Therefore on June 13–15, 2000 first Inter-Korean Summit happened with the participation of Kim Dae Jung and Kim Jong Il.²⁷¹

According to Kim Choong Nam, one year after the Summit the trade worth of two countries became \$400 million; this was four times more than the mid-1990s.²⁷² However, security aspect of the relationship was nothing like the economic relations, neither there were any developments about the unification nor any attempts from the North Korean side.²⁷³ President Kim was blamed for giving too many concessions to North Korea. It seemed that, he was making hasty decisions to prove to the U.S. that his Northern Policy was working.²⁷⁴ Yet, at that time South Koreans were blaming the U.S for taking very hard stance against North Korea, even some argued that

²⁶⁸ Jesse Min, "The Sunshine Policy of South Korea," The sunshine policy of South Korea, accessed June 26, 2023, <http://large.stanford.edu/courses/2017/ph241/min2/>.

²⁶⁹ Ho-Yeol Yoo, "The Sunshine Policy and the Inter-Korean Relations in the 21st Century," *Institute of International Studies*, October 10, 2006, 1–17, p.1.

²⁷⁰ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.86.

²⁷¹ Michael J. Seth, *A History of Korea: From Antiquity to the Present*, p.477.

²⁷² Choong Nam, Kim. "The Roh Moo Hyun Government's Policy Toward North Korea," p.7.

²⁷³ Choong Nam, Kim. "The Roh Moo Hyun Government's Policy Toward North Korea", p8.

²⁷⁴ Yong-Sup, Han. "The Sunshine Policy And Security On The Korean Peninsula: A Critical Assessment And Prospects." *Asian Perspective* 26, no. 3 (2002): 37–69. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42704373>, p.38.

American attitude towards North Korea was the reason for the aggressiveness of the North and causing tension in the peninsula as well as putting the inter-Korean relations in danger.²⁷⁵ In 2002, the U.S. President George W. H. Bush declared North Korea as a member of the “axis of evil” and put North Korea in the same place with Iraq under Saddam Hussein’s government. After that Kim Jung Il froze the relations with the South Korea and this caused further anger towards the United States in the country.²⁷⁶

3.3.3. Prosperity and Peace under Roh Moo Hyun Government (2003-2008)

After being elected in 2003, President Roh Moo Hyun also committed himself to the “sunshine policy” which he inherited from the prior president. Roh Moo Hyun described North Korean issue as both national and foreign policy of the Republic of Korea.²⁷⁷ South Korean attempt of forging better relations with the North Korea was still an issue for the United States. George W. Bush was leading a conservative government and he was not appreciating South Korea’s growing ties with the North Korea.²⁷⁸ On the 11th of January 2003, Kim Jung-Il declared that the North Korea was withdrawing from the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) signed in 1991.²⁷⁹ His argument was that, North Korea has already announced its decision on the withdrawal in March 12, 1993 but it was suspended before the day it became legally binding.²⁸⁰ This news was interpreted as an International Security crisis. On the one hand, in 2003 United States was occupied with the “war on terror” and North Korea’s having nuclear weapons was very concerning for the Bush Administration because North Korea might sell nuclear weapons to terrorists which might be used

²⁷⁵ Michael J. Seth, *A History of Korea: From Antiquity to the Present*, p.477-478.

²⁷⁶ Choong Nam, Kim. “The Roh Moo Hyun Government’s Policy Toward North Korea”, p 10.

²⁷⁷ . Choong Nam, Kim. “The Roh Moo Hyun Government’s Policy Toward North Korea”, p 12.

²⁷⁸ Choong Nam, Kim. “The Roh Moo Hyun Government’s Policy Toward North Korea”, p 12.

²⁷⁹ . Choong Nam, Kim. “The Roh Moo Hyun Government’s Policy Toward North Korea”, p 13.

²⁸⁰ Kelsey Davenport, “Chronology of the U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy, 1985-2022,” Arms Control Association, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/dprkchron#2003>

on the American territory.²⁸¹ On the other hand Japan since the end of World War II after the devastating results of the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, did not want a non-ally nuclear power so close to its territory.

Despite North Korea's fluctuant behavior and criticisms from the U.S. President Bush, President Roh visited Pyongyang in October 4, 2007 and announced the "Declaration for Advancing Inter-Korean Relations and Peace and Prosperity" with Kim Jung Il.²⁸² Even though Kim Jung Il did not end the North Korean nuclear program, South Korea advocated peace and prosperity to overcome the differences between the two Koreas and to rebuild inter-Korean relations to open the path of unification.²⁸³

3.3. South Korean Foreign Policy under Globalization

3.3.1. Restoring Relations with the U.S. under Lee Myung Bak Government and his Global Korea Policy (2008-2013)

After winning the elections in February 25, 2007 President Lee Myung Bak's first visit to United States happened in April 2008, at Washington DC.²⁸⁴ In his visit the President affirmed that the South Korea is committed to its 'strategic alliance' with the U.S. and he is willing to do everything to meet the demands of 21st century in coordination with the U.S.²⁸⁵ It is important to know that it was the first time that a South Korean President used the term "Strategic Alliance" to describe the two countries relations. It can be said that, former President Roh damaged the relationship with the United States more than the President Kim Dae Jung and the newly elected President Lee knew that South Korea's relationship with the U.S

²⁸¹ Choong Nam, Kim. "The Roh Moo Hyun Government's Policy Toward North Korea", p 1.

²⁸² Sung-Wook Nam et al., *South Korea's 70-Year Endeavor for Foreign Policy, National Defense, and Unification* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p.26.

²⁸³ Sung-Wook Nam et al., *South Korea's 70-Year Endeavor for Foreign Policy*, p.26.

²⁸⁴ Seongho Sheen, "To Be or Not to Be," p.44.

²⁸⁵ Seongho Sheen, "To Be or Not to Be," p.44. Retrieved from: President Lee Myong-bak, "Speech at the Korea Society Dinner in New York (in Korean)", New York, 15 April 2008. <http://www.mofat.go.kr/state/areadiplomacy/northamerica/index2.jsp?TabMenu/4TabMenu2>

should be rebuilt especially for the unification of Korea because the U.S. is an important regional actor. President Lee denounced sunshine policy of his predecessors and referred to period between the 1998 and 2008 as a “lost decade”.²⁸⁶ Therefore he promised to work with the U.S. and help her when it needs help. United States reacted positively to President Lee’s clear commitment to the bilateral relationship among two countries and President Lee became the first president who was invited to the Camp David.²⁸⁷ Furthermore, he assisted the U.S. mission for promoting ‘peace’ and ‘democracy’ and had fulfilled the demand of the United States for 3,600 troops to deployed in Iraq for the reconstruction mission.²⁸⁸

President Lee’s mission did not stop with the rebuilding of the relations with the United States. He had also an ambition to prove that South Korea is a global actor in the International arena through his policies of “Global Korea” and “New Asia Initiative”.²⁸⁹ President Lee was giving high level of importance to South Korea’s activeness in the platforms such as; ASEAN+3, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the East Asia Summit, and APEC and most importantly to Six-Party Talks.²⁹⁰ First Six-Party talks were held between 27th August and 29th August of 2003 in Beijing.²⁹¹ It was needed to reflect on the abandonment of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons by the North Korea. 2003 Six-Party talks had a significant meaning because for the first time the United States, Russia, China, Japan, South Korea and North Korea came together to discuss the security of the region and easing tension in the Korean peninsula.²⁹² President Lee attended the December 2008 Six-Party talks, which was chaired by Russia and the meeting seemed successful,

²⁸⁶ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.143.

²⁸⁷ Seongho Sheen, “To Be or Not to Be,” p.44.

²⁸⁸ Seongho Sheen, “To Be or Not to Be,” p.45.

²⁸⁹ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.143.

²⁹⁰ Seongho Sheen, “To Be or Not to Be,” p.49.

²⁹¹ Kwak, Tae-Hwan. “Resolving the North Korean Nuclear Issue through the Six-Party Process: A Creative Formula.” *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* 20, no. 1 (2006): 1–25. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23258243>, p.3.

²⁹² Kwak, Tae-Hwan. “Resolving the North Korean Nuclear Issue, p.4.

because every party reflected on the need of increasing relationships for the region.²⁹³ However, in 2009 North Korea declared that it will not be attending the Six-Party talks anymore and stated that it will resume its nuclear program rapidly.²⁹⁴

3.3.2. Trustpolitik of Park Geun Hye (2013-2017)

Park Geun Hye is the first female South Korean President and the daughter of 2nd President Park Chung Hee who was assassinated by the head of the Korean Central Agency because of his dictatorship in 1979.²⁹⁵ Her mother was also assassinated by a North Korean assassin in her early twenties which gave her the political experience while acting as a first lady during her father's presidency.²⁹⁶ In her article she introduced her Trustpolitik as her main foreign policy (Park 2011, 15). She argued that, Trustpolitik is an alignment policy that is based on public consensus and having a strong stance against unexpected national or international events.²⁹⁷ Her policy would align South Korea's relations with the North and align inter-Korean relations with international community. Also, it would entail closing discussions with North Korea if North Korea continues with nuclear armament and opening discussions if North Korea is willing to cooperate.²⁹⁸

Park Geun Hye's foreign policy did not only focus on North Korea. She also tried to increase the level of cooperation among Asian countries. To contribute to regional

²⁹³ Seongho Sheen, "To Be or Not to Be," p.49.

²⁹⁴ Kelsey Davenport, "Chronology of the U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy, 1985-2022," Arms Control Association, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/6partytalks>.

²⁹⁵ Soo-Hyun, Mun. "'Femininity without Feminism': Korea's First Woman President and Her Political Leadership." *Asian Journal of Social Science* 43, no. 3 (2015): 249-72. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43495868>, p.253.

²⁹⁶ Scott Snyder et al., *Domestic Constraints on South Korean Foreign Policy* (New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations, 2018), p.32.

²⁹⁷ Geun-hye, Park. "A New Kind of Korea: Building Trust Between Seoul and Pyongyang." *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 5 (2011): 13-18. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23041772>, p.15.

²⁹⁸ Geun-hye, Park. "A New Kind of Korea," p.15.

development she pursued Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI) and the Eurasia Initiative.²⁹⁹ She established good relations with China to cope with regional conflicts and the North Korean nuclear issue and she furthered ROK-the U.S. relations based on mutual trust.³⁰⁰ However she was impeached due to bribery, coercion and abuse of power on 9 December 2016.³⁰¹

3.3.3 Bridging Policy of Moon Jae In Government (2017-2022)

After Park Geun Hye's shocking impeachment, Moon Jae In came to office on May 10, 2017. Most of the literature argues that he will be known for his successful conflict management during the peaked Sino-the U.S. rivalry.³⁰² Even though he was criticized by the public because of his Covid-19 pandemic policies due to rapid spread of virus, his pandemic foreign policy was remarkable because he managed to make South Korea an increasingly significant international player due to South Korea's military build-up, its commitment to democratic values and its economic development.³⁰³ His New Southern Policy (NSP) and New Southern Policy Plus (NSP Plus) enabled him to play the role of bridge between the U.S. and Indo-Pacific region.³⁰⁴ Especially President Moon gained a reputation as middle man between the U.S. and North Korea. In 2018, he met with North Korean leader Kim Jung Un three times to convince him to a nuclear disarmament.³⁰⁵ Since the U.S. president Donald Trump was wary of North Korea having nuclear weapons, President Moon made

²⁹⁹ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.143.

³⁰⁰ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.143.

³⁰¹ Brian Padden, "Impeached South Korean President Sentenced to 24 Years in Prison," VOA, April 6, 2018, <https://www.voanews.com/a/former-south-korea-leader-park/4335087.html>.

³⁰² Ramon Pacheco Pardo, "The Moon Jae-in Presidency: Key Foreign Policy Legacies," BSoG, February 25, 2022, <https://brussels-school.be/publications/other-publications/moon-jae-presidency-key-foreign-policy-legacies>.

³⁰³ Ramon Pacheco Pardo, "The Moon Jae-in Presidency: Key Foreign Policy Legacies".

³⁰⁴ Ramon Pacheco Pardo, "The Moon Jae-in Presidency: Key Foreign Policy Legacies".

³⁰⁵ Laura Bicker, "South Korea's Moon Jae-in: Caught between Trump and Kim," BBC News, September 18, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-45543956>.

joint agreement with the U.S. on the issue of North Korean nuclear armament.³⁰⁶ During his term President Trump made announcements that the U.S. would withdraw American troops in different locations including South Korea.³⁰⁷ Also, President Trump believed that U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA) that was signed in 2007 is harmful for the U.S. and American workers; therefore it should be terminated or negotiated.³⁰⁸ Fuchs and Lee believed that, despite President Trump's wary approach towards South Korea, U.S. ROK alliance survived thanks to the Moon Jae In's efforts.³⁰⁹ He, agreed to renegotiate FTA agreement between the U.S. and South Korea and managed to make joint military exercise with the U.S.³¹⁰ He also cooperated with U.S, Australia, India and Japan (Quad) on issues such as; vaccine delivery and technological issues.³¹¹ Even though he signed a joint agreement with the U.S. President Biden against China's assertive actions, he refrained from open criticisms and announced that ending economic ties with China is not an option for South Korea.³¹²

3.4. Conclusion

South Korean foreign policy can be explained with the theory of emerging middle powers. As mentioned in Chapter II, emerging middle powers give great importance to alliances, regional cooperation and multilateralism. After Korean War, a devastated and torn South Korea relied upon the U.S. security umbrella and tried to cope with domestic disturbances and political instability. Due to the threat of North

³⁰⁶ Michael Fuchs and Haneul Lee, "Bridging the Divide in the U.S.-South Korea Alliance," *Center for American Progress*, November 2020, 1–22, p.7.

³⁰⁷ Hatice Çelik, "Trump Dönemi Abd'nin Kuzey Kore Ve Güney Kore Politikası," essay, in *Küresel Politikalar Ve Bölgesel Dönüşümler*, ed. Fulya Köksoy, 1st ed. (Ankara, TR: Nobel, 2020), 27–43, p.40.

³⁰⁸ Philip Rucker, "Trump: 'We May Terminate' U.S.-South Korea Trade Agreement," *The Washington Post*, April 28, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-we-may-terminate-us-south-korea-trade-agreement/2017/04/27/75ad1218-2bad-11e7-a616-d7c8a68c1a66_story.html.

³⁰⁹ Michael Fuchs and Haneul Lee, "Bridging the Divide in the U.S.-South Korea Alliance," p.3.

³¹⁰ Shin, Hyonhee. "S.Korea, U.S. to Begin Joint Military Drills despite N.Korea Rebuke." *Reuters*, August 15, 2021. <https://www.reuters.com/world/skorea-us-begin-joint-military-drills-monday-yonhap-2021-08-15/>.

³¹¹ Ramon Pacheco Pardo, "The Moon Jae-in Presidency: Key Foreign Policy Legacies".

³¹² Ramon Pacheco Pardo, "The Moon Jae-in Presidency: Key Foreign Policy Legacies".

Korea especially after the North Korean announcement of nuclear program in 1970s, South Korea focused on the security aspects in its foreign policy and tried to establish good relations with China and the Soviet Union (later Russia) and other communist states. During 1990s, membership in UN and OECD increased South Korea's international influence and South Korea tried to participate in international events as much as possible. Today, South Korea furthers its middle power position through being a good international citizen and contributing to international and regional peace and security.



CHAPTER 4

SOUTH KOREA: HEDGING BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES (U.S.) AND CHINA

4.1. Road to ‘Strategic Alliance’ with the United States and ‘Strategic Partnership’ with China

4.1.1. South Korea and the U.S. Relations until 2007

The United States Army Military Government (USAMGIK) was established in October 1945 to maintain the stability in the South of the 38th parallel (South Korean border to North Korea) after the end of the Japanese colonial rule.³¹³ To support the U.S. military government, South Korean armed forces called the National Defense Guard (NDG) was established in 1945 and in 1948 when the ROK was established, it became the Korean National Guard (KNG).³¹⁴ Until 25 June 1950 when the Korean War broke, South Korea pleaded for military armament assistance from the U.S. but the help came when the war started.³¹⁵

After the devastating war ended in 1953, South Korea’s national security understanding was based on two main principles. First, preventing any military attack from North Korea and second, maintaining their close ties with the United States based on strong military alliance.³¹⁶ Some Koreans whom their parents were working adults in the 1960s says that, most of time they were not able to see their parents, because all capable adults in the Cold War era were constantly working to

³¹³ Sung-Wook Nam et al., *South Korea’s 70-Year Endeavor for Foreign Policy*, p.12.

³¹⁴ Sung-Wook Nam et al., *South Korea’s 70-Year Endeavor for Foreign Policy*, p.12.

³¹⁵ Karunakar Gupta, “How Did the Korean War Begin?,” *The China Quarterly* 52 (October 1972): 699–716, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0305741000048153>, p.702-3.

³¹⁶ Seongho Sheen, “To Be or Not to Be,” p.42.

build-up the country.³¹⁷ All efforts of South Koreans were supported by the United States because the U.S. strategy during the Cold War was to globally contain the Soviet Union and the communist ideology.³¹⁸ To support South Korea against communist North Korea, the U.S. was sending economic and military aid to South Korea constantly since the end of the Korean War until the beginning of 1960s. In 1960, 73 percent of the defense budget and 35 percent of the government's spending were paid by the United States' aid.³¹⁹ Therefore, the U.S. became South Korea's *number one ally* due to their strong military and diplomatic alliance.³²⁰

Throughout the 1960s and 1980s North Korea carried on its military assaults against South Korea such as; guerilla attack on the South Korean Presidential House, killing American officers in South Korea, attempting to assassinate President Chun Doo Hwan and assassinating President Park Chung Hee's wife, therefore American military support was crucial for South Korea.³²¹

End of the Cold War brought significant changes to the security concerns of the Republic of Korea. The 'public enemy number 1' North Korea was not seen as the prominent threat anymore.³²² Even though, North Korea still had an important level of military capacity, South Korea's defense budget was increasing significantly and the gap between the two countries on the economic terms was growing a part more than ever.³²³ The growing economic condition of South Korea was resulting in the growing confidence for ROK, thus North Korea was started to be seen as a problem needed to be solved through peaceful reunification process rather than as an

³¹⁷ "Population Change and Development in Korea," Asia Society, accessed June 25, 2023, <https://asiasociety.org/education/population-change-and-development-korea>.

³¹⁸ Wonjae Hwang, *South Korea's Changing Foreign Policy: The Impact of Democratization and Globalization* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017), p.25.

³¹⁹ Sung-Wook Nam et al., *South Korea's 70-Year Endeavor for Foreign Policy*, p.6.

³²⁰ Wonjae Hwang, *South Korea's Changing Foreign Policy*, p.25.

³²¹ Seongho Sheen, "To Be or Not to Be," p.42.

³²² Seongho Sheen, "To Be or Not to Be," p.42-43

³²³ Seongho Sheen, "To Be or Not to Be," p.43.

immediate threat that should be dealt with in an urgent manner and the reliance on the U.S was relatively decreasing.³²⁴

When South Korean President Kim Young Sam come to office in 1993, he emphasized that South Korea would mainly focus on its globalization process.³²⁵ In May 1993, South Korean foreign minister Han Sung Joo announced the five components of the ROK's globalization policy as; regional cooperation, multilateralism, globalism, diversification and future orientation.³²⁶ In 1993, to prove South Korean commitment to its globalization policy, Kim government started with participating in UN Peace Keeping Operations and sent a combat service support battalions consisting of engineers to Somalia.³²⁷ Since 1993, the ROK governments provide services for Peace Keeping Operations for states suffering under famine, civil war, genocide such as; re-building public facilities, border patrols, mediation, humanitarian aid, medical assistance, preserving public order, inspection and supervising elections.³²⁸ Even though South Korea was cooperating with the U.S. in the global arena, bilateral relations were suffering because Kim Young Sam was not appreciating the U.S. efforts of establishing direct relations with North Korea and he was arguing that in order to further its goals in the region, South Korea's reliance to the U.S. should end.³²⁹ Unlike the previous president Kim Young Sam, President Kim Dae Jung believed that in order to implement his sunshine policy for peaceful reunification with North Korea, he needed the support of the U.S. and help from the international community.³³⁰ He did not want give up on approaching North Korea because of criticism towards sunshine policy by the U.S. and domestic opposition

³²⁴ Sung-Wook Nam et al., *South Korea's 70-Year Endeavor for Foreign Policy*, p.136.

³²⁵ Hatice Çelik, "South Korea as a Middle Power: A Case Study of South Korea-ASEAN Relations" (thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2017), p.38.

³²⁶ Balbina Hwang et al., "Korea and PKO: Is Korea Contributing to Global Peace?" *Global Korea: South Korea's Contributions to International Security. Council on Foreign Relations*, (October 2012): 13-27. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep05670.2>, p.13.

³²⁷ Balbina Hwang et al., "Korea and PKO: Is Korea Contributing to Global Peace?," p.15.

³²⁸ Balbina Hwang et al., "Korea and PKO: Is Korea Contributing to Global Peace?," p.17-8.

³²⁹ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.74.

³³⁰ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.84.

groups.³³¹ For Kim Dae Jung, to maintain South Korean security against North Korea and to preserve regional peace and stability alliance with a great-power such as the U.S. was vital. The U.S. President Clinton supported Kim's peaceful approach to North Korea and the tensions between the two countries eased.³³² However, when George W. Bush became the President of the U.S. he withdrew the U.S. support to Kim Dae Jung's policy and declared that the international community, including South Korea needed to implement harsher policies against North Korea.³³³

Also, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the U.S. shifted its focus to China, because the Chinese aggression across the Taiwan Strait during 1995 to 1996 started the debate of the 'rise of China'.³³⁴ To maintain its dominance in the region the U.S. initiated the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) with South Korea and Japan in 1999.³³⁵

In 2003, George W. Bush referred to China as strategic competitor of the U.S. and the event of 9/11 increased the aggressiveness of the U.S.³³⁶ Declaring a war against terrorism, the U.S. downsized its military aid for South Korea and became less interested in its commitment to South Korean defense.³³⁷ Since, South Korea has linked with the U.S. due to their military alliance; South Korea feared that the rising tensions between China and the U.S. as major players in the region would hinder its peaceful reunification process with North Korea and disturb the regional balance.³³⁸ Therefore, South Korean President Roh Moo Hyun announced his Northeast Asian Initiative in 2003 to reconcile South Korea's military alliance with the U.S. to play

³³¹ Ho-Yeol Yoo, "The Sunshine Policy and the Inter-Korean Relations in the 21st Century," p.1.

³³² Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.84.

³³³ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.85.

³³⁴ Jae Ho Chung, *Between Ally and Partner: Korea-China Relations and the United States* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007), p.92.

³³⁵ Jae Ho Chung, *Between Ally and Partner: Korea-China Relations and the United States*, p.92.

³³⁶ Jae Ho Chung, *Between Ally and Partner: Korea-China Relations and the United States*, p.92.

³³⁷ Seongho Sheen, "To Be or Not to Be," p.43.

³³⁸ Jae Ho Chung, *Between Ally and Partner: Korea-China Relations and the United States* p.93.

the role of balancer in an advanced multilateral cooperation with the Northeast Asian countries for the peace and prosperity of Northeast Asia.³³⁹ However, the U.S. officials including the President Bush were suspicious about President Roh's intentions.³⁴⁰ They believed that, South Korea is establishing an economic and security community in the Northeast Asia in order to distance itself from the U.S.³⁴¹ Therefore, tensions between the two countries rose significantly during the Roh government until Lee Myung Bak's presidency in 2008.³⁴²

4.1.2. Sino-South Korean Relations until 2008

On August 24, 1992 South Korea finally managed to normalize its diplomatic relations with China after 42 years since the start of the Korean War.³⁴³ According to Chung, normalization of diplomatic relations was an expected result of the efforts of South Korea since the 1970s.³⁴⁴ In the 1970s South Korea feared that the U.S. would completely abandon South Korea because in 1969 the U.S. President Richard Nixon announced that the U.S. military forces would withdraw from Asia and its allies in the region are primarily responsible for their own security in his Guam doctrine.³⁴⁵ Hence, during the 1970s South Korea worked for improving its relations with China to use Chinese influence against North Korea (allies since the Korean War) to ease the tension between the two Koreas and to maintain stability and peace in the region.³⁴⁶ Also, to expand its indirect trade with China, South Korea sent officers from its foreign ministry to China.³⁴⁷ President Park Chung Hee opened South

³³⁹ Jongryn Mo, "South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy," p.600.

³⁴⁰ Kim, Sung-Mi. *South Korea's middle-power diplomacy: Changes and challenges*, p.4.

³⁴¹ Kim, Sung-Mi. *South Korea's middle-power diplomacy: Changes and challenges*, p.4.

³⁴² Choong Nam, Kim. "The Roh Moo Hyun Government's Policy Toward North Korea", 22.

³⁴³ Jae Ho Chung, *Between Ally and Partner: Korea-China Relations and the United States* p.1.

³⁴⁴ Jae Ho Chung, *Between Ally and Partner: Korea-China Relations and the United States* p.1.

³⁴⁵ Sung-Wook Nam et al., *South Korea's 70-Year Endeavor for Foreign Policy*, p.227.

³⁴⁶ Jae Ho Chung, *Between Ally and Partner: Korea-China Relations and the United States* p.30.

³⁴⁷ Jae Ho Chung, *Between Ally and Partner: Korea-China Relations and the United States* p.30.

Korea's door to China as well as to the Soviet Union.³⁴⁸ He lifted the prohibition on postal services between South Korea and communist countries and allowed South Koreans to exchange letters with their relatives in China through the International Red Cross.³⁴⁹ China welcomed the efforts of South Korea and on January 27, 1979, China's official gazette People's Daily referred to ROK government as the government of Park Chung Hee rather than using the usual label of puppet regime of the U.S., but there were no official diplomatic relations between the two countries³⁵⁰

From 1980 onwards, China started to change its relations with both South and North Korea. Chinese President Deng Xiaoping adopted a more pragmatist foreign policy strategy than the previous leaders that followed Mao Zedong's closed economy policy.³⁵¹ He opened the door for bilateral trade relations with South Korea and maintained its security commitment to North Korea.³⁵² Therefore, during Chun Doo Hwan government the only field of cooperation between South Korea and China was indirect trade. Both governments used Japanese and American companies and firms from Hong Kong to maintain their indirect trade relations because North Korea was strongly against the Sino-South Korean indirect trade relations.³⁵³ Not to agitate the U.S. and increase the relations with China at the same time, President Chun Doo Hwan officially stated that if China and the U.S. can become partners, South Korea is willing to accept China as its partner's partner so that China would be a less of a threat to South Korea in 1981.³⁵⁴ During the 1980s both South Korea and China were increasing their economic capabilities; therefore they both were in a search for new export markets and stability in their region and due to the need for advancing their technology and earning foreign capital South Korea and China expanded their

³⁴⁸ Tae Dong, Chung, "Korea's Nordpolitik", p.149.

³⁴⁹ Jae Ho Chung, *Between Ally and Partner: Korea-China Relations and the United States* p.31.

³⁵⁰ Jae Ho Chung, *Between Ally and Partner: Korea-China Relations and the United States* p.33.

³⁵¹ Ilpyong J. Kim, "Korea's Relations with China and Japan in the Post-Cold War Era," *International Journal of Korean Studies* II, no. 1 (1998): 27-44, p.29.

³⁵² Ilpyong J. Kim, "Korea's Relations with China and Japan in the Post-Cold War Era," p.29.

³⁵³ Jae Ho Chung, *Between Ally and Partner: Korea-China Relations and the United States* p.32.

³⁵⁴ Jae Ho Chung, *Between Ally and Partner: Korea-China Relations and the United States* p.33.

cooperation.³⁵⁵ The bilateral trade between China and South Korea rose to 1,679 million USD in 1987 and China became the seventh largest trading partner of South Korea.³⁵⁶ Just in two years, trade between the two countries was estimated to be over 3 billion USD and China became the third largest trading partner of South Korea, after the U.S. and Japan.³⁵⁷ Also Chinese people started to visit South Korea more often and sports events contributed to the normalization of relations between South Korea and China.³⁵⁸ For example, on 6 June, 1987 China announced that from now on China would officially refer to South Korea as Republic of Korea regardless of North Korea's objection.³⁵⁹

Roh Tae Woo's Nordpolitik / Northern Diplomacy initiated an economic development plan, close to eastern coast of China, which was called "Yellow Sea Plan" in 1988.³⁶⁰ Understanding that South Korean plan would further the economic cooperation between the two countries, China decided to increase its social and economic exchanges with South Korea from 1988 to 1992.³⁶¹ 1988 Seoul Olympic Games and 1990 Asian Games in Beijing enabled them to increase their social contact and increasing bilateral trade between the two countries supported their cooperation. Therefore, South Korea opened a trade office in Beijing in January 1991, and the Chinese Chamber of International Commerce (CCOIC) opened a trade office in Seoul in April 1991 and finally they managed to normalize their diplomatic relations in 1992.³⁶²

During the 1990s, Sino-South Korean relations were opposite of the U.S.-South Korean relations. Globalization efforts of Kim Young Sam and the sunshine policy

³⁵⁵ David Dollar, "South Korea-China Trade Relations: Problems and Prospects," *Asian Survey* 29, no. 12 (December 1989): 1167–76, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2644763>, p.1168.

³⁵⁶ Jae Ho Chung, *Between Ally and Partner: Korea-China Relations and the United States* p.34.

³⁵⁷ Ilpyong J. Kim, "Korea's Relations with China and Japan in the Post-Cold War Era," p.30.

³⁵⁸ Tae Dong, Chung. "Korea's Nordpolitik", p.162.

³⁵⁹ Jae Ho Chung, *Between Ally and Partner: Korea-China Relations and the United States* p.35.

³⁶⁰ Jae Ho Chung, *Between Ally and Partner: Korea-China Relations and the United States* p.43.

³⁶¹ Tae Dong, Chung. "Korea's Nordpolitik", p.163.

³⁶² Ilpyong J. Kim, "Korea's Relations with China and Japan in the Post-Cold War Era," p.30.

of Kim Dae Jung were welcomed by China and the two countries agreed upon forging a cooperative partnership in 1998.³⁶³ In this period, China maintained its role of leading supporter of North Korea, yet with South Korea's opening to North Korea, Chinese interests aligned with ROK and Sino-South Korean relations peaked.³⁶⁴ One of the most important developments for Sino-South Korean relations happened in 2003 with China replacing the U.S. as the largest trading partner of South Korea.³⁶⁵ When Lee Myung Bak came to office in 2008, he denounced the sunshine policy of Kim Dae Jung and pro-North Korean policy of Roh Moo Hyun and promised that the "lost decade" for the U.S. - South Korean relations would be restored.³⁶⁶ From 2008, South Korea found itself in the middle of the increasing Sino-U.S. rivalry. In order to maintain its strategic alliance with the U.S. and its strategic partnership with China,³⁶⁷ South Korea initiated its hedging strategy.³⁶⁸

4.2. South Korea's Hedging Strategy under Middle Power Diplomacy (2008-2022)

The clash between the U.S. hegemony and rising China in the Northeast Asia pushed South Korea to reform its foreign policy.³⁶⁹ Since 2008, ROK governments use hedging strategy to mitigate the impacts of Sino-U.S. rivalry and to maintain peace and security in the region. Hedging strategy of South Korea has three pillars; maintaining alliance relations in the region to approach or to contain North Korea, furthering South Korea's security autonomy while having a strong military alliance with the U.S. and having good relations with the U.S. and China at the same time.³⁷⁰

³⁶³ Xiaoming Zhang, "China and Inter-Korean Relations," *Asian Perspective* 26, no. 3 (2002): 131–44, <https://doi.org/10.1353/apr.2002.0017>, p.137.

³⁶⁴ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.105.

³⁶⁵ Seongho Sheen, "To Be or Not to Be," p.46.

³⁶⁶ Young Jong Choi. "SOUTH KOREA'S REGIONAL STRATEGY," p.48.

³⁶⁷ Seongho Sheen, "To Be or Not to Be," p.43.

³⁶⁸ Jae Ho Chung, *Between Ally and Partner: Korea-China Relations and the United States* p.6.

³⁶⁹ Chaesung Chun, working paper, East Asian Security and South Korea's Middle Power, p.2.

³⁷⁰ Chung Min Lee and Kathryn Botto, "President Moon Jae-in and the Politics of Inter-Korean Détente," *KOREA STRATEGIC REVIEW* 2018, November 16, 2018, 1,

Therefore, South Korea's hedging strategy is based on, creating an issue-specific dispute settlement mechanism to help great powers to lessen their reciprocal doubts about each other to maintain its good relations with both the U.S. and China³⁷¹ To stabilize its relations with the North, South Korea holds and attends inter-Korean summits and Six Party Talks. To maintain its strategic partnership with the U.S., South Korea make Joint Agreements with the U.S., attends U.S.-South Korean Summits provide support for the U.S. led initiations such as: The Free and Open Indo-Pacific Initiative, holds and attends the ROK-U.S. Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meetings and to maintain its strategic partnership with China, South Korea signed the Free Trade Agreement with China in 2015, created business networks through corporations such as; Samsung and L.G. and joined the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) including ten ASEAN countries, China, Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

4.2.1. Hedging Strategy of Lee Myung Bak Government (2008-2013)

Lee Myung Bak used his policy of "Global Korea" to strengthen South Korea's networking capacity and to enhance ROK's international influence.³⁷² He underlined the functional aspects of South Korea's middle power diplomacy such as; being a mediator, bridge builder and having reformist attitude in multilateral platforms and international negotiation mechanisms such as; the OECD, the Nuclear Summit and G20.³⁷³ Lee Myung Bak, emphasized that South Korea possesses middle power identity because it is willing and capable of contributing to international peace and stability, it has a middle-level of global power and it is a newly advanced economy.³⁷⁴ Lee's "niche diplomacy" targeted issues of economic and environmental cooperation and international development.³⁷⁵

<https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/11/16/president-moon-jae-in-and-politics-of-inter-korean-d-tente-pub-77730>, p.48.

³⁷¹ Chaesung Chun, working paper, East Asian Security and South Korea's Middle Power, p.2.

³⁷² Sook-Jong Lee, working paper, South Korea as New Middle Power Seeking Complex, p.14.

³⁷³ Kim, Sung-Mi. *South Korea's middle-power diplomacy: Changes and challenges*, p.5.

³⁷⁴ Kim, Sung-Mi. *South Korea's middle-power diplomacy: Changes and challenges*, p.5.

³⁷⁵ Kim, Sung-Mi. *South Korea's middle-power diplomacy: Changes and challenges*, p.5.

When Lee Myung Bak announced that he would return to the traditional partnership with the U.S. in his trip to Camp David in April 2008, China responded with a blunt reply and described the U.S. – South Korean alliance as a leftover notion from the Cold War era.³⁷⁶ However, in May 2008, President Lee visited Beijing and tried to ease Chinese concerns by referring to South Korean – Chinese relations as strategic partnership.³⁷⁷ Nevertheless, China was disappointed because ROK government furthered its security alliance with the U.S. through adapting the U.S. – ROK Joint Vision Statement in June 2009.³⁷⁸ The Joint Statement meant that South Korea and the U.S. would act together against the North Korean military and nuclear threat.³⁷⁹ President Lee believed that the U.S. and ROK governments could create a new strategic alliance based on peace, mutual trust and common values. Since, South Korea managed to complete its democratic transition and achieved significant level of economic development, the two countries could find more common grounds due to their shared commitment to free market economy and liberal democracy.³⁸⁰ To stretch its strategic alliance with the U.S., South Korea supported the U.S. efforts for global peace and security. For example, in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) meeting in October 2011, South Korea granted economic aid to Afghanistan worth 200 million USD for social and economic development and 300 million USD for reconstruction of police and military forces³⁸¹

Chinese disappointment about the Joint Vision Statement showed itself clearly in the events of 2010. On March 26, 2010 North Korea torpedo attack sank the ROK Navy corvette ROKS Cheonan and on October 23, 2010 North Korea shelled the Yeon

³⁷⁶ Park Jin, “Korea between the United States and China: How Does Hedging Work?,” Korea Economic Institute of America, May 15, 2020, <https://keia.org/publication/korea-between-the-united-states-and-china-how-does-hedging-work/>, p.62.

³⁷⁷ Scott Snyder, “Establishing a ‘Strategic Cooperative Partnership,’” *Comparative Connections* 10, no. 2 (July 2008): 1–9, p.1.

³⁷⁸ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.216.

³⁷⁹ Joint Vision for the Alliance of the United States of America and the Republic of Korea,” National Archives and Records Administration, June 16, 2009, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/joint-vision-alliance-united-states-america-and-republic-korea>.

³⁸⁰ Seongho Sheen, “To Be or Not to Be,” p.45.

³⁸¹ Victor D. Cha, and Marie Dumond, eds. *“The Korean Pivot*, p.48.

Pyeong Island in South Korea. In response, China protected North Korea in UN discussions despite South Korea's plea for holding North Korea responsible.³⁸² Events like these, shows that South Korea needs hedging strategy. If South Korea can maintain its strategic partnership with China, it can gain support from China against North Korean aggressions and increase its economic development due to their trade relations.³⁸³ And if South Korea can maintain its strategic alliance with the U.S. it can secure itself against Chinese assertiveness.³⁸⁴ However, after a decade of improving relations with China and detachment from the U.S. under Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun governments, President Lee Myung Bak's efforts of reconciling with the U.S. negatively affected the relations with China. To make hedging strategy work, South Korea needed to be on good terms with both countries, thus after being elected in 2013 Park Geun Hye worked for restoring relations with China.³⁸⁵

4.2.2. Park Geun Hye's Hedging Strategy (2013-2017)

Park Gun Hye has an advanced Chinese language and used her skill to increase her popularity in the eyes of Chinese people.³⁸⁶ She met with the Chinese President Xi Jin Ping constantly and tried to improve the broken Sino-South Korean relations under Lee Myung Bak presidency.³⁸⁷ For the first time, a South Korean military leader Jung Seung Jo (chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General) visited China and traveled through a Chinese military aircraft in June 2013 and he talked about North Korean military aggressions.³⁸⁸ In July 2014, President Xi visited South Korea before visiting North Korea also for the first time and President Park conveyed that

³⁸² Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.216.

³⁸³ Seongho Sheen, "To Be or Not to Be," p.48.

³⁸⁴ Sukhee Han, "From Engagement to Hedging: South Korea's New China Policy," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 20, no. 4 (December 2008): 335–51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10163270802507328>, p.343.

³⁸⁵ Park Jin, "Korea between the United States and China: How Does Hedging Work?," p.62.

³⁸⁶ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.217.

³⁸⁷ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.217.

³⁸⁸ Seok-Joo Hwang, "S. Korean Military Chief Visits China for Talks," Yonhap News Agency, June 4, 2013, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/PYH20130604084300315>.

South Korea's and Chinese visions about the Northeast Asia are aligned.³⁸⁹ Their meeting resulted in the signing of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between two countries in November 2014.³⁹⁰ President Xi Jinping's visit to South Korea showed that the strategic partnership between the two countries was advancing. Because of the fact that, China is the South Korea's leading trading partner and South Korea needs China for economic development Park Geun Hye's efforts contributed to the hedging strategy of South Korea.³⁹¹ However, it is important to note that, South Korea needs Chinese support for the process of reunification with North Korea as well. Since China is holding a permanent seat in the UN Security Council and is member of the Six Party Talks, South Korea will always depend on the Chinese support.³⁹² Park Geun Hye also supported the Chinese initiation of the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP) in 2014 and agreed with China on the issue that Asia-Pacific countries should focus on regional economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in 2015.³⁹³ In the same year, President Park visited Washington for the U.S. – South Korea Summit with purpose addressing North Korean nuclear threat and reaffirmed that South Korea is committed to its alliance with the U.S.³⁹⁴ Park Geun Hye managed to give signals that the disturbances in Sino-South Korea relations emerges because of the U.S. pressure.³⁹⁵ For example, the U.S. President Barack Obama openly stated that South Korea should take a strong stand against Chinese aggression towards Taiwan and its violations of international rules and norms in the South China Sea.³⁹⁶ But also, when

³⁸⁹ Park Jin, "Korea between the United States and China: How Does Hedging Work?," p.63.

³⁹⁰ Shannon Tiezzi, "It's Official: China, South Korea Sign Free Trade Agreement," – The Diplomat, June 2, 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/06/its-official-china-south-korea-sign-free-trade-agreement/>.

³⁹¹ Alain Guidetti, "South Korea and China: A Strategic Partnership in the Making," *Global Asia* 9, no. 3 (September 2014): 110–15, p.110.

³⁹² Alain Guidetti, "South Korea and China: A Strategic Partnership in the Making," p.110.

³⁹³ Park Jin, "Korea between the United States and China: How Does Hedging Work?," p.63.

³⁹⁴ Julie Hirschfeld Davis, "Obama and South Korean Leader Emphasize Unity," The New York Times, October 16, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/17/world/asia/park-geun-hye-washington-visit.html>.

³⁹⁵ Kim, Sung-Mi. *South Korea's middle-power diplomacy: Changes and challenges*, p.8.

³⁹⁶ Kim, Sung-Mi. *South Korea's middle-power diplomacy: Changes and challenges*, p.8.

President Park met with President Obama in October 2015, he stated that South Korea can have good relations with the U.S. and China at the same time and there is no contradiction in doing so.³⁹⁷ Therefore, President Park managed to have closer relations with China and reaffirmed the Washington that South Korea is committed to its strong alliance with the U.S. Park Geun Hye could not complete her presidency term due to bribery scandal that resulted in her impeachment.

4.2.3. Hedging Policy of Moon Jae In (2017-2022)

Moon Jae is a liberal politician who promoted the North-South relations through finding niches for cooperation with North Korea.³⁹⁸ He expressed that South Korea will always be a partner of the U.S., however South Korea can neither pursue balancing policy in favor of the U.S. nor it can bandwagon with China explicitly.³⁹⁹ President Moon needed both China and United States on board for the re-conciliation with the North Korea, most importantly because of the fact that both countries are permanent members of the U.N Security Council.⁴⁰⁰ President Moon met with the North Korean leader Kim Jung Un in April 2018 for the third inter-Korean Summit. Two leaders seemed to be on good terms again and they promised to improve the relationship between two countries.⁴⁰¹ However, news on January 21, 2021 showed that North Korea again froze the reconsolidation efforts. In 2021, Kim Jung Un banned the way of talking like South Koreans and increased the penalty for having

³⁹⁷ Daniel A. Pinkston and Clint Work, "Park Geun-Hye's Visit and the US-Rok Alliance," *The Diplomat*, October 26, 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/10/park-geun-hyes-visit-and-the-us-rok-alliance/>.

³⁹⁸ Je-hae Do, "[Interview] Korea Urged to Design New Foreign Policy, Security Strategies," *koreatimes*, May 31, 2020, https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2020/05/120_289659.html.

³⁹⁹ Eun A Jo, "Double Allegiance: Moon Jae-in's Strategy amid US-China Rivalry," *The Asan Forum*, September 2, 2021, <https://theasanforum.org/double-allegiance-moon-jae-ins-strategy-amid-us-china-rivalry/#3>, p.1.

⁴⁰⁰ Alain Guidetti, "South Korea and China: A Strategic Partnership in the Making," p.110.

⁴⁰¹ Benjamin Haas and Lauren Gambino, "North and South Korean Leaders Meet as US Indicates Summit May yet Happen," *The Guardian*, May 27, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/26/kim-jong-un-moon-jai-in-korean-leaders-hold-surprise-meeting>.

South Korean and American products.⁴⁰² The instability of relations with North Korea proved that Moon Jae In needs hedging strategy because to have normal relations with the North, South Korea needs to maintain its strategic partnership with China to use Chinese influence on North Korea.

The rivalry between China and the United States increased under the Trump administration.⁴⁰³ The Free and Open Indo-Pacific Initiative of the U.S. and Chinese Belt and Road Initiative clashed in the Pacific region and even the diplomatic relations between them was disturbed because of Trump's and Xi's mutual distrust.⁴⁰⁴ Moon Jae In struggled for playing a role of bridge between the two countries. Similarly to Trump, current U.S. President Joe Biden has taken a negative approach to China in his electoral campaign and supported every opposition movements such as; protests in Hong-Kong and social movements in China against the Xi Jinping government.⁴⁰⁵ The emergence of Global Covid-19 pandemic caused delays for the International summits such as the G7 of 2020 and, since South Korea relies on bilateral summits between the U.S. and South Korea and for the Sino-South Korean relations, Covid-19 slowed the pace of Moon Jae In's hedging strategy.⁴⁰⁶ Yet, Moon Jae In managed to increase South Korea's role as a global player because he was invited to 2021 G7 Summit by the U.S. and he attended the P4G Summit and attended the 2021 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial⁴⁰⁷

Overall, Moon Jae In's hedging strategy under Sino-U.S. rivalry had three pillars.⁴⁰⁸ First, he tried to move away from the U.S. for its regional security concerns without

⁴⁰² Josh Smith, "North Korea Cracks down on Foreign Media, Speaking Styles," Reuters, January 20, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/northkorea-media-idINKBN29P0BQ>.

⁴⁰³ Cheol Hee Park, "South Korea Is a Hesitant, but Friendly, US Ally in the Indo-Pacific," Atlantic Council, January 9, 2019, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/south-korea-is-a-hesitant-but-friendly-us-ally-in-the-indo-pacific/>.

⁴⁰⁴ Eun A Jo, "Double Allegiance: Moon Jae-in's Strategy amid US-China Rivalry," p.8.

⁴⁰⁵ Eun A Jo, "Double Allegiance: Moon Jae-in's Strategy amid US-China Rivalry," p.8-9.

⁴⁰⁶ Hyonhee Shin, "Exclusive North, South Korea in Talks over Summit, Reopening Liaison Office," Reuters, July 28, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/exclusive-north-south-korea-talks-over-summit-reopening-liaison-office-sources-2021-07-28/>.

⁴⁰⁷ Ramon Pacheco Pardo, "The Moon Jae-in Presidency: Key Foreign Policy Legacies".

⁴⁰⁸ Eun A Jo, "Double Allegiance: Moon Jae-in's Strategy amid US-China Rivalry," p.1.

harming its traditional alliance with the U.S. Second, he tried to forge closer economic relations with China without referring to security alliance with China. Third, if China and the U.S. had an issue-specific conflict, he tried to stay away from making explicit choices between China and the U.S.⁴⁰⁹

As mentioned before, South Korea's hedging strategy entails three main components; to approach North Korea for better relations, being committed to strategic partnership with the U.S. and to maintaining the strategic partnership with China. Therefore, Moon Jae In's attended to inter-Korean Summit in 2018, promised of better relations with North Korea.

He met with Chinese President Ji Jinping and stated that South Korea will support the Chinese initiative of the Belt and Road on June 27, 2019 in Osaka, Japan.⁴¹⁰ In December 2021, Moon Jae In declared that both the U.S. and China agreed that the Korean War should end but the reluctance of North Korea to denuclearize halts the process.⁴¹¹ Moon Jae In managed to convince both China and the U.S. for denuclearization of North Korea and his statement that entails clear rejection of *balancing with the U.S.* and *bandwagoning with China* is the reason for calling his foreign policy under Sino-U.S. rivalry is a hedging strategy.

4.3. Conclusion

It can be said that, the journey of hedging strategy of South Korea started with the Lee Myung Bak's coming to office in December 2007, because he was the first South Korean President who openly tried to have closer ties with both the U.S. and China. Until the 1970s South Korean Presidents focused on South Korea's traditional security alliance with the U.S. and the economic development of South Korea. After, 1970s relations with China started to improve but especially because of Chinese

⁴⁰⁹ Eun A Jo, "Double Allegiance: Moon Jae-in's Strategy amid US-China Rivalry," p.2.

⁴¹⁰ "Xi Jinping Meets with President Moon Jae-in of the Republic of Korea (ROK)," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China, accessed July 16, 2023, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/2019zt/xjpcxesgjtfh/201907/t20190701_710376.html.

⁴¹¹ Joey Garrison, "President Moon Jae-in: End to Korean War Agreed to 'in Principle' - Axios," USA Today, May 21, 2021, <https://www.axios.com/2021/12/13/korean-war-formal-end-moon-jae-in>.

concerns over North Korea, Sino-South Korean relations were limited to indirect trade relations. During his presidency between 1980 and 1988, President Chun Doo Hwan tried to establish good relations with communist countries including China. In the 1990s, his successors furthered Chun's approach and fractured the U.S.-South Korean relations while getting closer to China and North Korea. From 2008 onwards, Lee Myung Bak, focused onto mending fractured relations with the U.S. without damaging the relations with China. His successors Park Geun Hye and Moon Jae In also followed Lee Myung Bak's approach and tried to have good relations with both China and the U.S. South Korea needs hedging strategy because it needs to eliminate the North Korea threat for its security and for the stability of North East Asia. Since, both China and the U.S. are great powers that quarrels in the region and they both hold permanent seats in the UN Security Council to reach its goal of security and stability South Korea needs to be on good terms with both countries. To pursue hedging strategy, all three Presidents (Lee Myung Bak, Park Geun Hye and Moon Jae In) tried to have closer relations with North Korea or tried to convince the U.S. and China taking a same approach against North Korea and worked for maintaining South Korea's strategic alliance with the U.S and its strategic partnership with China. Therefore the period between 2008 and 2022 reflects the hedging strategy that is used by the ROK governments.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

To prove that South Korea is a middle power (emerging middle power) that utilizes hedging strategy to pursue its regional and international interests regarding its relations with the U.S. and China, this thesis gave the elements of middle power concept through the realist concept of hierarchical approach, liberal concept of behavioral approach and constructivist concept of functional approach.

Since hierarchical approach mainly concerns with the material resources of the states, South Korea's material capacity is shown with its global economic and military ranking.

Behavioral approach mostly focuses on diplomacy. It expects middle powers to champion multinational networking platforms to settle international and regional disputes. South Korean literature adopts a similar approach to behavioral approach while describing middle powers because it refers to middle powers role as being a bridge between the great powers. It also emphasizes the need of using networking mechanisms to close the gap between their lesser material capacity and their international influence. South Korean scholars believes that middle powers should pursue niche diplomacy to maintain and increase the relevance for the international and regional community while warning that middle powers should not seek leadership for the areas that great powers such as; the U.S. and China are already a leader. South Korea pursues networking opportunities and multilateral mechanism for the dispute settlement such as applying to Nuclear Summits to discuss the North Korean nuclear issue or trying to find niches for the prosperity of the Northeast Asia such as supporting Chinese economic initiations.

Functional approaches main argument described as, in order to refer a state as middle power named state needs to identify itself as a middle power. Both Lee Myung Bak and Moon Jae In's governments explicitly referred to South Korean middle power

identity.⁴¹² Even though, President Park Geun Hye was reluctant to refer to South Korea as a middle power; she still referred to South Korea as a middle power while referring to relations with MIKTA countries (Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey and Australia). Overall, this thesis claimed that South Korea is middle power for all three approaches including; hierarchical, behavioral and functional approach.

Traditionally, middle powers behavior explained with two strategies; balancing and bandwagoning. Balancing entails that if there is an aggressive state that seeks domination, middle powers opt for balancing against that threat through joining an alliance. Bandwagoning on the other hand based on the idea that to maximize its benefits, states join the stronger side. However, in a complex world balancing and bandwagoning are not only options for middle powers. Therefore, IR scholars came up with new strategies for middle powers including; hedging. In simple terms, hedging can be described as maximizing benefits while minimizing the risks at the same time. Hedging strategy reflected in South Korean foreign policy especially after 2008.

South Korea's foreign policy is conceptualized on the basis of four developments. First, the Japanese aggression that led to division of South Korea. Second, South Korea's allying with the U.S. against the North Korean threat. Third, South Korea's improving its relations with China due to the economic development of both countries especially after the end of the cold war. Fourth, South Korea's using hedging strategy to manage and maintain the strategic alliance with the U.S. and strategic partnership with China.

Japan's brutality during its Colonial Rule period affected Korea greatly because Japan exploited Korea as much as possible. It utilized all Korean resources including economic, military and human resources to further its imperial objectives. It forced Koreans to work under hardest conditions and even used Korean women as 'comfort women'. Japan also forced South Korean men to serve as soldiers in its military aggressions. The legacy of Japanese occupation was a devastated Korea that is poor

⁴¹² Jeffrey Robertson, "Middle Power Diplomacy and North Korea Revisited," *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 31, no. 1 (2022): 159–87, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.33728/ijkus.2022.31.1.006>, p.166.

with a broken population. The presence of USAMGIK in South Korea after the liberation was welcomed by the political elites because they needed the economic and military aid of the U.S. to consolidate their regimes. Even after the establishment of ROK in 1948, the U.S. kept supporting South Korea to help its economic development and to maintain stability in the Korean peninsula. However, from 1970s onwards, South Korean economic growth started to increase rapidly. This led South Korea to search for new trading partners and China was the best option for South Korea. South Korean approach to China was not only about economic development, it also needed China against North Korea. Because China is the only state that North Korea is in an alliance with. Since the signing of Sino–North Korean Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation, and Mutual Assistance in 1961, China and North Korea maintained their alliance. Therefore, South Korea needs Chinese influence on North Korea to mitigate the aggressions and threats of North Korea.

During the 1990s, on the one hand relations between the U.S. and South Korea were declining due to ROK governments' new approach that welcomed communist states, on the other hand Sino-South Korean relations were increasing because China supported South Korean reconciliation policies with the North. However, in 2008 the newly elected President Lee Myung Bak declared that he will restore the broken relations with the U.S. by officially referring to the U.S.-South Korean relations as strategic partnership and disappointed China. Including Lee Myung Bak who described the Sino-South Korean relations as strategic partnership, the governments of both Park Geun Hye and Moon Jae In tried to be in good terms with both the U.S. and China. Their strategy named as hedging strategy because hedging entails mitigating the risks through forming good relations with the great powers for its security and economic development. Even though, the U.S. officially rejected the Chinese claims in the South China Sea regarding unilateral maritime claims and despite Xi Jinping's violations of human rights in Hong Kong and Xinjiang province, South Korea chose not to offend China and did not denounce China's claims officially.⁴¹³

⁴¹³Andrew Yeo, (Policy Brief). "South Korean Foreign Policy in the Indo-Pacific Era." *Brookings*, (November 2022): 1-13. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/south-korean-foreign-policy-in-the-indo-pacific-era/>, p.2.

The current President Yoon Suk Yeol who came to office in May 2022, adopted a similar approach to Lee Myung Bak and declared that South Korea will focus on deepening its relations with the U.S. to play a more active regional and international role.⁴¹⁴ On 21 May, 2022 the President met with the U.S. President Joe Biden and criticized Chinese actions and stated that China should make efforts for a mutually respected relations with South Korea. Yoon's statement seemed that, he would be further away from the Moon Jae In's hedging strategy and move closer to the U.S. alliance.⁴¹⁵

To conclude, hedging strategy of South Korea is relatively new and it peaked during the Moon Jae In government of 2017-2022. The analysis of his hedging strategy showed that, South Korea is capable of pursuing good relations with both the U.S. and China at the same time without taking sides explicitly. However, current President Yoon's statements show that, under his term South Korea will further away from the hedging strategy. Since hedging strategy entails closing ties with North Korea, and maintaining strategic security alliance with the U.S. and economic cooperation named strategic partnership with China at the same time, President Yoon will focus on more maintaining relations with the U.S. and will further away from forging closer relations with North Korea and China. At the end, South Korean leaders choose hedging strategy if they want to have closer relations with North Korea, China and the U.S. at the same time.

⁴¹⁴ Andrew Yeo, (Policy Brief). "South Korean Foreign Policy in the Indo-Pacific Era," p.1.

⁴¹⁵ Sue Mi Terry, "Yoon's Strong Start in Foreign Policy," Foreign Policy, August 18, 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/08/18/yon-suk-yeol-south-korea-foreign-policy-china-united-states-japan-100-days/>.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

İkinci Dnya Savaşı'ndan sonra, Afrika ve Asya'da önemli sayıda yeni kk devletlerin ortaya çıkışı zellikle Gneydoęu Asya'daki byk devletlerin ve kk devletlerin sayısını deęiştirdi. Gelişmekte olan devletlerin sayısındaki ani artış, Uluslararası İlişkiler (Uİ) araştırmacılarının dikkatini ekti ve 1960'lar ve 1970'lerde ykselen devletlerle ilgili araştırmalar artmıştır.⁴¹⁶

Devletlerin oęu byk g olmadığı iin, zellikle iki kutupluluęun sona erdiği Soęuk Savaş'tan sonra kk gleri kapasitelerine ve uluslararası sistem zerindeki etkilerine gre ayrıştırma ihtiyacı ortaya çıkmıştır.⁴¹⁷ Orta lekli g teorisi, byk gler karşılarında kendi ulusal çıkarlarını gzetecek yeterli kapasiteye sahip devletleri ve kendi başına ayakta kalabilen devletleri, daha az kapasiteye sahip devletlerden ve hayatta kalma mcadelesi veren devletlerden ayırmayı amalamaktadır.⁴¹⁸ Dolayısıyla 2000'li yılların başından itibaren Gney Kore hkmetleri orta lekli g kavramına ithaf yaparak bu kavramı dıř politika gndemlerini aıklamak iin kullanmışlardır.⁴¹⁹

Martin Wight'a gre 15. yzyılda Milano belediye başkanı Giovanni Botero (1544-1617) gleri komşularına gre sırasıyla kk, byk ve orta byklkte olarak tanımlamıştır.⁴²⁰ Botero bir yandan kk boyutlu glerin kendi başlarına ayakta kalamadıklarını te yandan byk lekli glerin hem kendi başlarına ayakta

⁴¹⁶ Carsten Holbraad, *Middle Powers in International Politics*, p.1.

⁴¹⁷ Adam Chapnick, "The Middle Power," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 7, no. 2 (1999): 73–82.

⁴¹⁸ Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, p.63-5.

⁴¹⁹ Kim, Sung-Mi. *South Korea's middle-power diplomacy: Changes and challenges*. p.1.

⁴²⁰ Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, p.298.

kalabildiklerini hem de komşu devletler üzerinde de bir miktar otoriteye sahip olduklarını savunmuştur.⁴²¹ Fakat Botero'ya göre orta ölçekli güçler, hem başkalarının yardımı olmadan hayatta kalabilen hem de makul ölçüde otoriteye ve güce sahip olan güçlerdir.⁴²² Bu nedenle uluslararası ilişkilerde orta ölçekli güçler, uluslararası alandaki diğer aktörleri etkileme kapasitesine sahip olan ancak uluslararası sistemi değiştirecek güce sahip olmayan güçler olarak tanımlanmıştır.⁴²³

Glazebrook'a göre orta ölçekli güçler, büyük güçlerin kontrolünü desteklerler, büyük bir güçle ittifak yapmaya can atarlar ve büyük bir güçle birlikte hareket ederler aynı zamanda diğer devletler üzerinde de bir dereceye kadar etkiye sahiptirler.⁴²⁴ “Orta ölçekli güç” kavramının en beğenilen tanımlarından biri 1948 yılında Kanadalı Diplomat Robert Gerald "Gerry" Riddell tarafından yapılmıştır.⁴²⁵ Riddell orta ölçekli güçleri “büyüklükleri, maddi kaynakları, sorumluluk alma istekleri, etkileri ve istikrarları nedeniyle büyük güç olmayan fakat büyük güç olmaya yakın güçler” olarak tanımlamıştır.⁴²⁶

Orta ölçekli güçler hakkındaki tartışmalar, Soğuk Savaş döneminde ortaya çıkan “great power” kavramı ile daha fazla ilgi görmüştür.⁴²⁷ Nükleer güçlerinin artmasıyla, hem Amerika Birleşik Devletleri (ABD) hem de Sovyetler Birliği, güçlerin hiyerarşik olarak etiketlenmesinde seviye atlayarak “great power” haline gelmişlerdir. Arthur Andrew, uluslararası arenadaki her devletin, şartlara veya meselelere bakmadan büyük bir güçle (küçük, orta veya büyük ölçekli) ittifak yapmaya can atacağını söylemiştir.⁴²⁸ Büyük güç ve süper güç gibi kavramların

⁴²¹ Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, p.298.

⁴²² Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, p.298.

⁴²³ Meltem Müftüler Baç, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/middle-power>, p.1.

⁴²⁴ George DeT. Glazebrook, “The Middle Powers in the United Nations System,” p. 308.

⁴²⁵ Carsten Holbraad extracted from the unpublished work of R. G. Riddell.

⁴²⁶ Frederic H. Soward, “On Becoming and Being a Middle Power: The Canadian Experience,”

⁴²⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/superpower>

⁴²⁸ Arthur Andrew, “Defence by Other Means: Diplomacy for the Underdog,” p.23.

ortayı çıkışı küçük ölçekli güçleri tanımlarken de yeni bir kavrama ihtiyaç duyulduğu anlamına geliyordu.⁴²⁹

Soğuk savaşın sona ermesi ve küreselleşmenin başlaması, orta ölçekli güçlerin uluslararası sorunlara yenilikçi çözümler üretmeye istekli ve muktedir oldukları fikrine katkıda bulunmuş, ayrıca uluslararası ekonomi politik gibi bazı alanlarda daha etkili olmaya başlamışlardır.⁴³⁰

Andrew Carr, bir devletin orta ölçekli güç olup olmadığına karar verirken bakmamız gereken üç gösterge olduğunu savunmuştur. Bu göstergeler, devletin uluslararası arenadaki konumunu, uluslararası sistemde nasıl davrandığı ve ulusal kimliğidir.⁴³¹

Adam Chapnick is orta ölçekli güçlerin nasıl davrandığını tespit etmek için üç adet yaklaşım öne sürmüştür. Bu yaklaşımlar; hiyerarşik yaklaşım, davranışsal yaklaşım ve fonksiyonel yaklaşımdır.⁴³²

Hiyerarşik yaklaşıma göre, bölge veya nüfus büyüklükleri, askeri harcamalar, ticaret sayıları, gayri safi yurtiçi hasıla (GSYİH) hesaplanarak orta devletleri küçük devletlerden ayırmak mümkündür.⁴³³

Davranışsal yaklaşım, çoğunlukla maddi yeteneklere bağlı olarak güç tanımlaması yapmak yerine, diplomasiden yanadır ve devletlerin uluslararası arenada nasıl davrandığını anlamaya çalışır.⁴³⁴ Davranışsal yaklaşımı destekleyen araştırmacılara göre, orta ölçekli güçlerin bir miktar maddi kapasiteye ihtiyacı vardır, ancak bir devleti sadece kapasiteleriyle tanımlamak yeterli değildir. Orta ölçekli güçleri diğerlerinden ayırt etmek için onların belirli davranış kalıplarına bakmamız gerekmektedir. Davranışsal yaklaşımıcılara göre orta ölçekli güçler üç şekilde

⁴²⁹ Adam Chapnick, "The Middle Power," p.78.

⁴³⁰ Mark Beeson, "Middle Powers in the International Political Economy," p.201.

⁴³¹ Andrew Carr, "Is Australia a Middle Power? A Systemic Impact Approach," p.71.

⁴³² Adam Chapnick, "The Middle Power," p.75.

⁴³³ Moch Faisal Karim, "Middle Power, Status-Seeking and Role Conceptions," p.3.

⁴³⁴ Moch Faisal Karim, "Middle Power, Status-Seeking and Role Conceptions," p.4.

davranış sergilerler.⁴³⁵ Çatışma durumunda uzlaşmacı bir tavır sergiler ve barışçıl uzlaşma yöntemlerini kullanırlar, uluslararası sorunları çözmek için çok taraflı bir yaklaşım benimserler ve uluslararası bir anlaşmazlıkla karşı karşıya kaldıklarında diplomasiye başvururlar.⁴³⁶ Bu yüzden davranışsal yaklaşımın liberal bir yapıya sahip olduğunu söylemek mümkündür.

Fonksiyonel yaklaşım savunucuları için orta ölçekli maddi kapasiteye sahip olmak veya yumuşak güç politikasını benimseyerek barışçıl reform arayışları içinde olmak veya çok taraflı davranışı savunmak, bir devleti orta güç olarak tanımlamak için yeterli değildir. Bir devletin orta ölçekli güç olarak tanımlanabilmesi için öncelikle o devletin kendini orta güç olarak tanımlaması ve uluslararası toplumda da orta ölçekli güç olarak görülmesi gerekmektedir.⁴³⁷ Fonksiyonel yaklaşımıcılara göre kimlik önemlidir çünkü devletlerin çıkarları ve uluslararası ve bölgesel alandaki işlevleri kendi benliklerini ötekiyle ilişkili olarak nasıl tanımladıklarına bağlıdır.⁴³⁸ Dolayısıyla devletlerin kendilerini orta ölçekli bir güç olarak tanımlaması, devletlerin kendi jeostratejik konumuna ve tarihsel geçmişine, yani mekâna ve zamana bağlıdır.⁴³⁹

Eriks Varpahovskis'e göre Koreli araştırmacılar bir devletin orta ölçekli güç olarak kabul edilmesi için yedi gerekli madde olduğunu savunmuşlardır. Birincisi, orta ölçekli güçlerin uluslararası arenadaki işlevi, çatışmalara çözüm bulmak ve büyük güçler arasında köprü kurma rolünü oynamaktır. İkincisi, askeri, ekonomik ve siyasi kapasite eksikliğini en aza indirmek için, orta ölçekli bir güç uluslararası ağ oluşturmaya büyük ölçüde önem vermelidir. Üçüncüsü, orta ölçekli güçler uluslararası veya bölgesel sistemlerin inşasına ve tasarımına aktif olarak katkı sağlamalıdır. Dördüncüsü, orta ölçekli güçler, devlet aktörleri ile sivil toplum örgütleri üyeleri arasında aracı rolü oynamalıdır. Beşincisi, orta ölçekli güçler

⁴³⁵ Adam Chapnick, "The Middle Power," p.75.

⁴³⁶ Andrew Fenton Cooper et al., "Niche Diplomacy: A Conceptual Overview," p.19.

⁴³⁷ Anton Bezglasnyy, "Middle Power Theory, Change and Continuity in the Asia-Pacific," p.28.

⁴³⁸ Alexander Wendt, "Collective Identity Formation and the International State," p.385.

⁴³⁹ Sarah Teo, "Middle Power Identities of Australia and South Korea," p.233.

uluslararası ve bölgesel sistemler için önemli bir aktör olmayı hedeflemelidir ve bu hedef doğrultusunda kendi stratejik coğrafi konumunu kullanmalıdır. Altıncısı, bir orta güç, uluslararası toplumda önemini kanıtlamak için niş diplomasisini kullanmalıdır. Son olarak, orta ölçekli güçler büyük güçlerin zaten lider olduğu alanlarda liderlik aramamalıdır.⁴⁴⁰ Güney Kore’li araştırmacılar Güney Kore’nin bütün kıstasları taşıdığını savunmuşlardır.

ABD hegemonyasının göreceli olarak gerilemesi, Çin’in yükselişi ve Rusya’nın tartışmalı jeopolitik iddiaları nedeniyle Asya-Pasifik bölgesi de dâhil olmak üzere küresel arenada güç dengeleri değişmeye başlamıştır.⁴⁴¹ Tüm bu değişimler, devletlerarası ilişkileri analiz ederken güç dengesi teorisinin de güncellenmesi gerektiğine olan inancı arttırdı.⁴⁴² Son zamanlarda, orta ölçekli güçlerin uluslararası güç dengesine olan etkilerinin artmasından dolayı Uluslararası İlişkiler araştırmacıları orta ölçekli güçlerin uluslararası arenada hareket ederken ne tarz stratejiler izlediklerini anlamaya yönelik olan ilgi de artmıştır.⁴⁴³ Geleneksel Uluslararası İlişkiler literatürü, ulusal güvenliği ve özerkliği sürdürmek için, orta ölçekli güçlerin zayıf tarafla ittifak kurarak dengeleme stratejisini veya güçlü koalisyonla katılarak çıkar sağlamak için çoğunluğa katılma stratejisini kullandıklarını savunur. Dengeleme stratejisi devletlerin gücünün diğer devletlerin (ittifakların) gücüyle kontrol edilmesi olarak tanımlanabilir.⁴⁴⁴ Waltz’a göre, devletler hayatta kalmalarını garanti ettikten sonra hegemonya peşinde koşar ve diğer devletler de tahakküm isteyenlere karşı koymak için ya askeri güçlerini arttırmaya yönelirler ya da bir ittifak kurmayı seçerler.⁴⁴⁵ Çoğunluk ile hareket (bandwagoning) etme stratejisi ise hayatta kalmak veya başarılarından yararlanmak için potansiyel tehdit

⁴⁴⁰ Eriks Varpahovskis, “A Dolphin in an Oil Sea,” p.68.

⁴⁴¹ Sinem Ünalldılar Kocamaz, “The Rise of New Powers in World Politics,” p127.

⁴⁴² Kei, Koga. The Concept of “Hedging” Revisited, p.2.

⁴⁴³ Kei, Koga. The Concept of “Hedging” Revisited, p.2.

⁴⁴⁴ Randall L. Schweller, “The Balance of Power in World Politics,” p.1.

⁴⁴⁵ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* p.118.

oluşturan bir devletle müttefik olmak olarak anlaşılabilir.⁴⁴⁶ Bandwagoning kavramının ana varsayımı bir devlet gücünü maksimize etmek istiyorsa daha güçlü tarafa katılmayı seçeceği ve o devletin başarılarından yararlanacağıdır. Fakat bandwagoning stratejisinin önemli riskleri vardır. Her şeyden önce, bandwagoning eşit olmayan bir ilişkidir. Büyük gücün başarısından faydalanmak için orta ölçekli bir güç büyük bir güce asimetrik tavizler vermek zorunda kalabilir ve büyük gücün iradesine göre hareket etmeye zorlanabilir.⁴⁴⁷ Küçük ve yalnız devletler bandwagon yapmak zorunda kalabilirler ancak orta ölçekli güçlerin diğer seçenekleri seçme kapasitesi vardır. Bu yüzden karmaşık gerçeklikte, orta güçlerin davranışını iki strateji ile sınırlamak yeterli görünmüyordu, bu nedenle Uluslararası İlişkiler araştırmacıları, orta ölçekli güçlerin stratejilerini tanımlamak için yeni kavramlar kullanmaya başladılar bunlar; aşma, bağlanma, saklanma ve riskten korunma gibi kavramlar olarak adlandırılabilir.⁴⁴⁸ Tez Güney Kore'nin hedging (riskten korunma) stratejisine odaklandığı için diğer kavramlara değinmemiştir.

Cheng-Chwee Kuik, korunmayı riskleri en aza indirirken faydaları en üst düzeye çıkarma eylemi olarak tanımlamıştır.⁴⁴⁹ Riskten korunma stratejisinin politik, ekonomik ve askeri boyutları bulunmaktadır. Ekonomik riskten korunmada devletler karlarını maksimize etmek için doğrudan ekonomik bağlantılar kurar ve ekonomik bağımlılığı en aza indirmek için ekonomik bağlantılarını çeşitlendirir.⁴⁵⁰ Siyasi korunma siyasi riskleri en aza indirmek için bölgesel güç dengesine katkıda bulunmayı gerektirir ve askeri koruma ise askeri ittifak yoluyla güvenlik risklerini en aza indirmeyi hedefler.⁴⁵¹

Riskten korunma stratejisi bir yandan bölgesel bütünleşme için çok taraflı mekanizmalara ve doğrudan ilişkilere odaklanırken, diğer yandan geleneksel

⁴⁴⁶ Stephen M. Walt, "Testing Theories of Alliance Formation: The Case of Southwest Asia," p.282.

⁴⁴⁷ Stephen M. Walt, "Testing Theories of Alliance Formation: The Case of Southwest Asia," p.282.

⁴⁴⁸ Chaesung Chun, working paper, East Asian Security and South Korea's Middle Power, p.2.

⁴⁴⁹ Cheng-Chwee Kuik, "How Do Weaker States Hedge," p.502.

⁴⁵⁰ Cheng-Chwee Kuik, "How Do Weaker States Hedge," p.502.

⁴⁵¹ Cheng-Chwee Kuik, "How Do Weaker States Hedge," p.502.

güvenlik ittifakını korumaya çalışır.⁴⁵² Bu nedenle Güney Kore Çin ile olan ekonomik faaliyetlerini kaybetmemek için Çin'e Karşı ABD ile dengeleme politikası kurmaktan ve ABD'nin sağladığı güvenliği kaybetmemek için Çin'e katılmaktan kaçınarak riskten korunma stratejisi izlemeye başlamıştır.

Kore Yarımadası bir gecede bölünmemiştir. 27 Temmuz 1953'te Güney ile Kuzey arasında Ateşkes Anlaşması'nın imzalanmasından yıllar önce yarımadanın çoktan bölündüğü varsayılmıştır. Bölünmenin ana nedeni Japon himayesi dönemine (1905–1910) ve onun sömürge yönetimine (1910 ile 1945 arası) dayandığından, Güney Koreli liderlerin ve Güney Kore hükümetlerinin zihniyetini anlamak için bu dönemlere değinmek önemli olmuştur. Güney Kore dış politikası hakkında genel bir anlayışa sahip olmak, Güney Kore'nin neden bir numaralı müttefiki ABD ile önde gelen ticaret ortağı Çin arasında riskten korunma politikaları kullandığını açıklığa kavuşturacaktır.

Güney Kore'nin dış politikası dört gelişme temelinde kavramsallaştırılmaktadır. Birincisi, Güney Kore'nin bölünmesine yol açan Japon saldırganlığıdır. İkincisi, Güney Kore'nin Kuzey Kore tehdidine karşı ABD ile ittifak kurmasıdır. Üçüncüsü, özellikle soğuk savaşın sona ermesinden sonra her iki ülkenin ekonomik gelişimi nedeniyle Güney Kore'nin Çin ile ilişkilerini geliştirmesidir. Dördüncüsü, Güney Kore'nin ABD ile olan stratejik güvenlik ittifakını korumak ve Çin ile olan stratejik ekonomik ortaklığını yönetmek ve sürdürmek için riskten korunma stratejisini kullanmasıdır.

Japonya'nın Sömürge Yönetimi dönemindeki vahşeti Kore'yi büyük ölçüde etkilemiştir çünkü Japonya, Kore'yi ciddi ölçüde sömürmüştür. Japonya İmparatorluk hedeflerini ilerletmek için ekonomik, askeri ve insan kaynakları da dâhil olmak üzere tüm Kore kaynaklarını kullanmıştır. Korelileri en zor şartlar altında çalışmaya zorlamış ve hatta Koreli kadınları 'rahat kadın' olarak kullanmıştır. Japonya ayrıca Güney Koreli erkekleri askeri saldırılarında hizmet etmeye zorlamıştır. Japon işgalinin mirası, parçalanmış bir nüfusla fakir, harap olmuş bir Kore idi. Kurtuluştan sonra Kore'deki Amerikan Birleşik Devletler Ordusu Askeri Hükümeti USAMGIK'in

⁴⁵² Lai-Ha Chan, “Australia’s Strategic Hedging in the Indo-Pacific,” p.3.

Güney Kore'deki varlığı siyasi seçkinler tarafından memnuniyetle karşılanmıştır çünkü rejimlerini sağlamlaştırmak için ABD'nin ekonomik ve askeri yardımına ihtiyaçları vardı. 1948'de Güney Kore Cumhuriyeti'nin kurulmasından sonra bile ABD ekonomik kalkınmasına yardımcı olmak ve Kore yarımadasında istikrarı korumak için Güney Kore'yi desteklemeye devam etmiştir. 1948-1960 döneminde Başkan Syngman Rhee'nin dış politika hedefleri de Amerikan desteğine dayanıyordu. Bir yandan Kuzey ile yeniden birleşmeyi sürdürmek için bağımsız bir dış politika izlemek istemiş öte yandan ekonomik ve askeri güç için yalnızca ABD'ye bağlı kalmak zorunda kalmıştır. Bu nedenle Güney Kore için Amerikan ekonomik ve güvenlik desteğini sürdürmek ve nihayetinde Kuzey Kore ile yeniden birleşme Güney Kore için ana dış politika hedefleri olmuştur. Rhee ayrıca Kore'deki Japon sömürge yönetimine tanık olduğu için Japonya ile yeniden diplomatik ilişkiler kurmaktan kaçınmış ve Japonya dâhil diğer ülkelerle dış ticaret ilişkilerinden yararlanabilecek olmasına rağmen ABD dışında herhangi bir ülke ile dış ilişkiler kurmamıştır. Park Chung Hee'nin (1961-1979) dış politikası ise Japonya; Çin ve Sovyetler Birliği dâhil komünist ülkelerle ilişkilerin normalleştirilmesine odaklanmıştır. ABD'ye bağımlılık devam etmiş ve Güney Kore'nin Soğuk Savaş döneminde ABD'ye tabi kılınmasına yol açmıştır. Bu yüzden Güney Kore 1965'te Vietnam Savaşı'na asker göndermek zorunda kalmış ve Güney Kore'de bir dizi ABD askeri üssü açılmasına müsaade etmiştir.⁴⁵³ Park Chung Hee 23 Haziran 1973'te “Barış ve Birleşmeye İlişkin Özel Dış Politika Açıklamasını” duyurmuştur.⁴⁵⁴ Açıklamada, eşitlik ve müteakabiliyet olduğu takdirde Güney Kore'nin Çin, Sovyetler Birliği ve Kuzey Kore gibi farklı siyasi sistem ve ideolojilere (komünizm) sahip ülkelerle iyi ilişkiler sürdürmeye istekli olduğunu ileri sürmüştür.⁴⁵⁵

Park hükümetine benzer şekilde Chun Doo Hwan hükümeti (1980-1988) de Güney Kore'nin güvenliği ve ekonomik büyümesi için Japonya ile ilişkilerin normalleştirmeye çalışmıştır.⁴⁵⁶ Başkan Chun da Çin ve Sovyetler Birliği ile iyi

⁴⁵³ Kyung Moon Hwang, *A History of Korea: An Episodic Narrative*, p.199.

⁴⁵⁴ Tae Dong, Chung. “Korea’s Nordpolitik”, p.151.

⁴⁵⁵ Tae Dong, Chung. “Korea’s Nordpolitik”, p.151.

⁴⁵⁶ Yanghyeon Jo, “Chun Doo-Hwan Administration’s Diplomacy towards Japan,” p.222.

ilişkiler kurmaya çalışmış ve bu amaçla 1982'de Güney Kore hükümeti Sovyetler Birliği, Çin ve diğer komünist devletlere en çok kayırlan ulus statüsü vermiştir.⁴⁵⁷ Chun Doo Hwan'ın başkanlığı sırasında Koreler arası ilişkiler de bir dereceye kadar normalleşme yaşamıştır. Örneğin Ağustos 1984'te Chun, Güney Kore'nin Kuzey Korelilerin yaşamlarını standartlarını iyileştirmek için teknoloji ve malzeme sağlamaya istekli olduğunu söylemiştir. Daha sonra Güney Kore yaklaşık 200 kişinin ölümüne ve sayısız ev ve binanın yıkılmasına neden olan ölümcül sellerden zarar görmüştür. Kuzey Kore Devlet Başkanı Kim Il Sung ise Kore arası sınırda bir ateşkes köyü oluşturarak yardım sağlamış ve Kuzey Kore, Güney Kore'ye iki Kore'deki Kızıl Haç örgütü aracılığıyla pirinç, ilaç, çimento ve kumaş göndermiştir.⁴⁵⁸

Chun Güney Kore halkı için olan sokağa çıkma yasağını ve seyahat kısıtlamalarını kaldırmış ayrıca okul çocukları için zorunlu askeri üniforma giymek gibi bazı kısıtlamalara da son vermiş veya hafifletmiş olsa da rejimi hâlâ tartışmalıydı çünkü basına sansür, muhalifler için kapalı davalar ve protestocuların tutuklanması gibi uygulamalar devam etmiştir.

1970'lerden itibaren Güney Kore ekonomik büyümesi hızla artmaya başlamıştır. Bu durum Güney Kore'yi yeni ticaret ortakları aramaya yöneltmiş ve Çin, Güney Kore için en uygun seçenek olmuştur. Güney Kore'nin Çin'e yaklaşımı sadece ekonomik kalkınmayla ilgili olmamıştır. Kuzey Kore'ye karşı da Çin'e de ihtiyacı olmuş ve olmaktadır çünkü Çin, Kuzey Kore'nin ittifak halinde olduğu tek devlettir. 1961'de Çin-Kuzey Kore Dostluk, İşbirliği ve Karşılıklı Yardım Antlaşması'nın imzalanmasından bu yana Çin ve Kuzey Kore ittifaklarını sürdürmüşlerdir. Bu nedenle Güney Kore, Kuzey Kore'nin saldırılarını ve tehditlerini hafifletmek için Kuzey Kore üzerinde Çin'in etkisine ihtiyaç duymaktadır.

1990'lı yıllarda bir yandan Güney Kore hükümetlerinin komünist devletler ile sıcak ilişkiler kurması nedeniyle ABD ve Güney Kore arasındaki ilişkiler gerilerken diğer

⁴⁵⁷ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.48.

⁴⁵⁸ Ramon Pacheco Pardo, *Shrimp to Whale: South Korea from the Forgotten War to K-Pop*, p.114-15.

yandan Çin'in Güney Kore'nin Kuzey ile uzlaşma politikalarını desteklemesi nedeniyle Çin-Güney Kore ilişkileri önemli bir ölçüde gelişmiştir. Roh Tae Woo 25 Şubat 1988'de başkan olmuş ve onun dış politikasının ana kavramı Nordpolitik veya Kuzey Politikası olmuştur. Roh'un amacı ABD'den daha bağımsız bir dış politika izlemek için Güney Kore'nin diplomatik ilişkilerini çeşitlendirmek ve ABD güvenlik şemsiyesinden yararlanırken ABD'ye meydan okumadan bir miktar özerklik kazanmaktır.⁴⁵⁹ Roh'un Nordpolitik politikası, Batı Almanya'nın Komünist devletlerle daha yakın ilişkiler kurmaya dayanan Ostpolitik politikasından etkilenmiştir.⁴⁶⁰ Roh'un politikasının üç adımı vardı. Bu adımlar, Kuzey Kore ile daha yakın ilişkileri olan devletlerle ekonomik ilişkilerin artırılması, komünist devletlerle diplomatik ilişkilerin artırılması ve hem Güney hem de Kuzey Kore'nin uluslararası tanınırlığının sağlanması olmuştur.⁴⁶¹

25 Şubat 1997'de yapılan seçimleri Kim Dae Jung kazanmıştır. Kim'in asıl amacı Kuzey Kore ile ilişkileri güçlendirmektir. Hedefine ulaşmak için Başkan Kim “güneş ışığı politikasını” açıkladı.⁴⁶² Bu politika üç ana hedefi gerektiriyordu. İlk olarak, Güney Kore hiçbir koşulda Kuzey Kore'nin herhangi bir askeri saldırısını affetmeyecekti. İkincisi, Güney Kore, Kuzey Kore'yi asimile etmeye çalışmayacaktı. Üçüncüsü, Güney, Kuzey Kore ile aktif işbirliğini sürdürecekti.⁴⁶³ Kim Güney ve Kuzey Korelilerin paylaştığı akrabalığa büyük önem verdi. 2003 yılında seçildikten sonra, Başkan Roh Moo Hyun da kendisini önceki başkandan miras aldığı “güneş ışığı politikasına” adadı. Roh Moo Hyun, Kuzey Kore meselesini Kore Cumhuriyeti'nin hem ulusal hem de dış politikası olarak tanımladı.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁵⁹ Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, p.54.

⁴⁶⁰ Michael J. Seth, *A History of Korea: From Antiquity to the Present*, p.420.

⁴⁶¹ Dan C. Sanford, “ROK's Nordpolitik: Revisited,” p.2-3.

⁴⁶² Levin, Norman D., and Yong-Sup Han. “The Sunshine Policy.”, p.1.

⁴⁶³ Jesse Min, “The Sunshine Policy of South Korea,”

⁴⁶⁴ . Choong Nam, Kim. “The Roh Moo Hyun Government's Policy Toward North Korea”, p 12.

Kuzeydoğu Asya'da ABD hegemonyası ile yükselen Çin arasındaki çatışma, Güney Kore'yi dış politikasında reform yapmaya itmiştir.⁴⁶⁵ 2008'den beri Güney Kore hükümetleri, Çin-ABD rekabetinin etkilerini azaltmak ve bölgede barış ve güvenliği korumak için riskten korunma stratejisini kullanmaya başlamıştır. Güney Kore'nin riskten korunma stratejisinin üç unsuru vardır bunlar; Kuzey Kore'ye yaklaşmak veya onu kontrol altına almak için bölgedeki ittifak ilişkilerini sürdürmek, ABD ile güçlü bir askeri ittifakı devam ettirmek ve aynı zamanda ABD ve Çin ile iyi ilişkilere sahipken Güney Kore'nin güvenlik özerkliğini ilerletmek olmuştur.⁴⁶⁶ Bu nedenle Güney Kore'nin riskten korunma stratejisi, hem ABD hem de Çin ile iyi ilişkilerini sürdürmek için büyük güçlerin birbirleriyle ilgili karşılıklı şüphelerini azaltmalarına yardımcı olmak için konuya özel bir anlaşmazlık çözüm mekanizması oluşturmaya dayanmaktadır.⁴⁶⁷ Güney Kore, Kuzey ile ilişkilerini istikrara kavuşturmak için Koreler arası zirveler ve Altı Taraflı Görüşmeler düzenlemekte ve bunlara katılmaktadır. Güney Kore, ABD ile stratejik ortaklığını sürdürmek için ABD ile Ortak Anlaşmalar yapmaktadır. ABD-Güney Kore Zirvelerine katılır ve ABD liderliğindeki girişimlere destek sağlamaktadır. Bunlara Özgür ve Açık Hint-Pasifik Girişimi, ROK-U.S. Dışişleri ve Savunma Bakanları Toplantıları örnek olarak verilebilir. Çin ile stratejik ortaklığını sürdürmek için 2015 yılında Çin ile Serbest Ticaret Anlaşması imzalayan Güney Kore; Samsung ve L.G. gibi firmalar sayesinde Çin ile ekonomik işbirliği yapmıştır. Ayrıca on ASEAN ülkesi, Çin, Japonya, Avustralya ve Yeni Zelanda'nın dâhil olduğu Bölgesel Kapsamlı Ekonomik Ortaklığa (RCEP) katılmıştır.

Güney Kore'nin riskten korunma stratejisi yolculuğunun Aralık 2007'de göreve gelen Lee Myung Bak ile başladığı söylenebilir çünkü kendisi hem ABD hem de Çin ile açıkça daha yakın ilişkiler kurmaya çalışan ilk Güney Kore Devlet Başkanıydı. Lee aynı zamanda Kuzey Kore'ye karşı sınırlama politikası izlemek için ABD ve Çin ile de aynı anda görüşmüştür. 1970'lere kadar Güney Kore Başkanları, Güney Kore'nin

⁴⁶⁵ Chaesung Chun, working paper, East Asian Security and South Korea's Middle Power, p.2.

⁴⁶⁶ Chung Min Lee and Kathryn Botto, "President Moon Jae-in and the Politics of Inter-Korean Détente," p.48.

⁴⁶⁷ Chaesung Chun, working paper, East Asian Security and South Korea's Middle Power, p.2.

ABD ile geleneksel güvenlik ittifakına ve Güney Kore'nin ekonomik gelişimine odaklanmışlardır. 1970'lerden sonra Çin ile ilişkiler gelişmeye başladı ancak özellikle Çin'in Kuzey Kore'ye yönelik kaygıları nedeniyle Çin-Güney Kore ilişkileri dolaylı ticari ilişkilerle sınırlı kaldı. 1980-1988 yılları arasındaki başkanlığı sırasında Başkan Chun Doo Hwan, Çin dâhil komünist ülkelerle iyi ilişkiler kurmaya çalışmıştı. 1990'larda halefleri Chun'un yaklaşımını ilerlettiler ve Çin ve Kuzey Kore'ye yaklaşırken ABD-Güney Kore ilişkilerini zayıflatmışlardır. 2008'den itibaren Lee Myung Bak, Çin ile ilişkilere zarar vermeden ABD ile kopan ilişkileri onarmaya odaklanmıştır. Onun halefleri Park Geun Hye ve Moon Jae In de Lee Myung Bak'ın yaklaşımını izleyerek ve hem Çin hem de ABD ile iyi ilişkiler kurmaya çalışmışlardır.

Çin ve ABD bölgede çatışan büyük güçler olduğundan ve her ikisi de BM Güvenlik Konseyi'nde daimi sandalyelere sahip olduğundan, güvenlik ve istikrar hedefine ulaşmak için Güney Kore'nin her iki ülke ile de iyi ilişkiler içinde olması gerekmektedir. Riskten korunma stratejisi izlemek için üç Başkan da (Lee Myung Bak, Park Geun Hye ve Moon Jae In) Kuzey Kore ile daha yakın ilişkiler kurmaya veya Kuzey Kore'ye karşı Amerika ve Çin ile ortak davranış sergilemeye gayret göstermiştir. Güney Kore ABD ile stratejik güvenlik ittifakını ve Çin ile stratejik ekonomik ortaklığını aynı anda sürdürmeye çalışmıştır. Bu nedenle, 2008 ile 2022 arasındaki dönem, Güney Kore hükümetleri tarafından kullanılan riskten korunma stratejisini yansıtmaktadır.

Mayıs 2022'de göreve gelen mevcut Başkan Yoon Suk Yeol'un Lee Myung Bak'a benzer bir yaklaşım benimsediği gözlenmektedir çünkü Güney Kore'nin daha aktif bir bölgesel ve uluslararası rol oynamak için ABD ile ilişkilerini derinleştirmeye odaklanacağını açıklamıştır. Güney Koreli Başkan 21 Mayıs 2022'de ABD Başkanı Joe Biden ile bir araya gelerek Çin'in eylemlerini eleştirmiş ve Çin'in Güney Kore ile karşılıklı saygıya dayalı ilişkiler için çaba göstermesi gerektiğini belirtmiştir. Yoon'un açıklaması, Moon Jae In'in riskten korunma stratejisinden uzaklaşması ve daha geleneksel bir yaklaşımla ABD ittifakına yaklaşmayı tercih etmesi olarak da yorumlanabilir.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁸ Sue Mi Terry, "Yoon's Strong Start in Foreign Policy,"

Güney Kore'nin korunma stratejisi nispeten yenidir ve 2017-2022 Moon Jae In hükümeti sırasında zirveye ulaşmıştır. Riskten korunma stratejisinin analizi, Güney Kore'nin açıkça taraf tutmadan hem ABD hem de Çin ile aynı anda iyi ilişkiler sürdürebileceğini göstermiştir. Fakat mevcut Başkan Yoon'un açıklamaları onun döneminde Güney Kore'nin riskten korunma stratejisinden uzaklaşabileceği sinyallerini vermektedir. Riskten korunma stratejisi, Kuzey Kore ile bağları kapatmayı ve aynı zamanda ABD ile stratejik güvenlik ittifakını ve Çin ile stratejik ortaklık adlı ekonomik işbirliğini sürdürmeyi gerektirdiğinden, Başkan Yoon'un ABD ile ilişkileri daha fazla sürdürmeye odaklanacak olması ve Güney Kore'yi Çin ve Kuzey Kore'den uzaklaştırma riski taşımaktadır. Sonuç olarak Güney Koreli liderler aynı anda Kuzey Kore, Çin ve ABD ile daha yakın ilişkilere sahip olmak istedikleri zaman riskten korunma stratejisini seçtikleri söylenebilir.

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