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STATE TRANSFORMATION AND ACTOR PROLIFERATION:

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HOW TÜRKİYE AND SOUTH KOREA EMERGED AS MIDDLE POWERS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

STATE TRANSFORMATION AND ACTOR PROLIFERATION: HOW
TÜRKİYE AND SOUTH KOREA EMERGED AS MIDDLE POWERS IN THE
21ST CENTURY

A Master's Thesis

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STATE TRANSFORMATION AND ACTOR PROLIFERATION: HOW TURKEY AND
SOUTH KOREA EMERGED AS MIDDLE POWERS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

By Pelin Dengiz

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ABSTRACT

STATE TRASFORMATION AND ACTOR PROLIFERATION: HOW TRKIYE AND SOUTH KOREA EMERGED AS MIDDLE POWERS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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This thesis aims to analyze how Trkiye and South Korea have emerged as “middle powers” in the 21st century. Both countries have exerted their power over their foreign policy thanks to the transformation the states went through, while both states are taking part in the liberal global economy. In this thesis, it is hoped to contribute to the middle power literature, and to discuss the manifestation of the internal transformation to the foreign policy. Trkiye and South Korea are taken as cases through Process Tracing method and the state transformation they went through is studies with a Neo-Gramscian approach.

Keywords: Trkiye, South Korea, Middle Power, State Transformation

ÖZET

DEVLETİN DÖNÜŞÜMÜ VE AKTÖRLERİN ÇOĞALIŞI: TÜRKİYE VE GÜNEY KORE’NİN 21.YY’DA ORTA GÜÇ OLARAK YÜKSELİŞLERİ

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Bu çalışma Türkiye ve Güney Kore’nin 21.yy’da nasıl “orta güç” olarak yükseldiğini incelemektedir. Her iki ülke de liberal ekonomiye eklemlenirken geçirdikleri dönüşüm sayesinde güçlerini dış politikaya da yansıtmışlardır. Bu tezde orta güç literatürüne katkıda bulunmak, devletin içeride geçirdiği dönüşümün dış politikaya yansımalarını tartışmak amaçlanmaktadır. Süreç İzleme metodu kullanılarak Türkiye ve Güney Kore vakaları incelenmiş, devletlerin geçirdikleri dönüşüm Neo-Gramsci’ci bir bakış açısıyla ele alınmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye, Güney Kore, Orta Güç, Devlet Dönüşümü

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ABBREVIATIONS

JDP: Justice and Development Party

AKP: Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

TÜSİAD: Türk Sanayicileri ve İş İnsanları Derneği (Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association)

MÜSİAD: Müstakil Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği (Independent Industrialists and Businessmen Association)

MIKTA: Mexico, Indonesia, Korea, Türkiye, Australia

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

IMF: International Monetary Fund

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

DAC: Donor Assistance Committee

EU: European Union

OPEC: Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries

TİKA: Turkish International Cooperation and Coordination Agency

TOKİ: Toplu Konut İdaresi Başkanlığı (Housing Development Administration of Türkiye)

AFAD: Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetimi Başkanlığı (Emergency Disaster Management Presidency)

PT: Process Tracing

ISI: Import-Substitution Industrialization

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

FTA: Free Trade Agreement

NAPCI: Northeast Asia Peace and Co-operation Initiative

HCI: heavy and chemical industrialization

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This thesis aims to contribute to the middle power literature through two studies: Türkiye and South Korea. It does so by addressing the state transformation both countries went through in the late 20th to early 21st century, that had influence over their foreign policies. It will be argued that the integration into the neoliberal global order led the countries towards economic growth, which became the reserved tool for more active and multilateral foreign policy decisions. However, said integration also brought structural transformation to the state, where prominent actors in domestic policy proliferated, and the state had to assume a regulatory role in mitigating the power competition of several interest groups. The research question is as follows: “what were the changes and driving sources behind the emergence of Türkiye and South Korea as middle powers in the 21st century?”. This first chapter introduces the middle power concept, through definitions, contextualization and criticisms. Then, Turkish and South Korean economic history is briefly discussed, with common themes such as self-perceptions, regional aspiration and global reactions. Finally, the missing link of the literature is discussed, that is the internal process and the dynamics of the state that created the conditions to acquire a middle power status in the international arena. The second chapter brings the contextualization, theoretical explanations and the introduction of the method. Different definitions and understandings of what state is in the 20th century will be discussed in order to make parallelisms for the Turkish and South Korean state transformations. Following the chronological approach, realist, liberal and constructivist explanations are discussed briefly before deciding on a Neo-Gramscian approach. Then, Process Tracing (PT) is explained as the method of this thesis. The third chapter contextualizes said state transformation through Turkish and South Korean cases. There are four subsections for political history, state transformation, fragmentation and foreign policy, helpful for understating the process the states went through and the products of it. Finally, the last chapter concludes the text by providing a thorough run-down of the thesis and its implications for the literature.

Within the existing literature on international relations, the concept of "*middle power*" is a complicated status to categorize states, which the scholars struggle with its inherent ambiguity and lack of a universally agreed-upon definition. As Robertson and Carr (2023) put it, "it has always been easy to identify 'who' was a middle power, but hard to pin down 'what' a middle power was" (p. 382). The central problem lies in the very notion of "power" in international relations, and how it is translated into foreign policy. Traditionally, scholars have classified states based on a hierarchy of material capabilities: starting from great powers, followed by middle, and small powers. The foreign policy behavior and capacity is proportionate to the amount of power a state acquires. However, the question remains - how do we objectively measure and decide that a state is in the middle of the multidimensional international system? The "middle power" label often gets trapped within a "neither great nor small" binary. Jordaan's (2003, p. 165) definition, "Middle powers are states that are neither great nor small in terms of international power, capacity and influence and demonstrate a propensity to promote cohesion and stability in the world system" while helpful, does not capture the full picture. Middle powers arguably exist on a spectrum between dominant great powers and smaller states with limited influence. Perhaps more nuanced terms like "pivotal states" or "bridge-builders" better reflect their potential to act as intermediaries and play crucial roles in global governance¹. In that sense, the lack of a clear definition leads the scholars to self-elect (Neack, 2017) the cases for the membership list. However, the fluidity of the concept further complicates matters, as the number of middle powers isn't fixed. It depends on the specific criteria used for classification and the ever-shifting dynamics of the international system. Cooper et al. (1993) explored this dynamic nature in light of a changing global order, where the changes in global politics and economy led to middle powers to take up more space in international relations. Similarly, Cooper & Parlar Dal (2016) analyze the evolution of the concept in the context of contemporary international politics, through waves of multilateralism and institutionalism in shaping middle power diplomacy.

¹ I am aware that classification of states based on "power" has some conceptual implications depending on its measure. For example, regional/rising/pivotal power concepts have explanatory aspects on the same topic "middle power" concept covers. However, for the sake of the study, my focus is on "emerging middle powers". For other concepts, see Flermes, (2007) and Nolte (2010) for regional powers; Hart & Jones (2010) for rising powers and Chase, Hill & Kennedy (1996) for pivotal states.

At times going beyond their geography and self-interest, these states act in favor of stability, predictability and controllability. Jordaan (2003) explains the underlying idea of this conformism as a “conservative strategy that has the effect of perpetuating the *status quo*, entrenching existing inequalities in power and wealth to their relative benefit” (p167). Middle powers do not challenge the military-political balance of power or liberal democracy pursuit, but may show their dissatisfaction with the current state of liberal international order through discourse or practice. Therefore, the middle powers may push for global justice for recognition or impartiality, while still being benefactors of the system.

When we consider the place middle powers occupy within the international system, several questions come to mind regarding their status, aspects and roots of their status. Are they deemed as in the “middle” because of a hierarchical international system? Did they emerge as middle because the great power role was already occupied, or are they operating alongside the hegemon as seconds (Jordaan, 2003; Ruvalcaba, 2019; Robertson, 2017)? The existing literature aims to find this status by addressing whether the position is rooted in the international hierarchy or foreign policy behaviors. By proving their operative value between the great powers and small powers- the two ends of the global power spectrum, the middle powers portray the hierarchical relations as the inherent and normative nature of the international relations. However, this late-bloomers club is not limitless nor definitive. A certain group of “like-minded” states are needed to form a group and advocate for reforms, but over-proliferation of middle powers would eventually diminish each one’s weight in agenda setting. These are the possible questions implied for the middle power literature, which will be covered shortly.

Do states who spend considerable time in “middle power” status move on to being a “significant power” (Robertson, 2017)? This is argued for Canada and Australia especially, and MIKTA (Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Türkiye, Australia) countries are given as examples for the middle powers of today along with Brazil, Saudi Arabia, South Africa (Gilley & O’Neil, 2014) who are situated below great powers. If that is the case what is the threshold for unlocking this position? A certain level of GDP, a number of international institutions to become members of, contributing to peace promotion around the world... “The term has evolved as

competition between academic schools of thought, political competition for the control of foreign policy narratives, and competition for prestige between states. In each example, definitions are socially constructed... and serve specific interests.” (Robertson, 2017, p366). Just like how there is no universally recognized definition of the concept, it is also not possible to exactly pinpoint the moment a state moves on from being in the middle. It is apparent that by evolving higher than a middle power, these states still are not considered superpowers. Does that mean there are theoretically an infinite number of achievable adjectives that lay between a middle power and superpower?

One approach follows a sequential route and looks at the development of the concept historically. The concept of “middle power” in literature became prevalent during the interwar and post-World War II period as a claim of countries like Canada and Australia to be recognized as a distinct category and be treated as such. When the “statistics to measure economic and military power became more available” (Roberston, 2017, p361), tangible capacity definitions became the yardstick of status for middle powers in the post-World War II period. Canada, Australia, Japan and Sweden are among the examples of traditional middle powers of the 20th century. With further interconnected politics and globalized economies, countries like South Korea, India, Mexico and Türkiye entered to the list as emerging middle powers of the 21st century. Jordaan differentiates these two groups by saying “traditional middle powers are stable social democracies, whereas democracy in emerging middle powers is often far from consolidated, and in many cases only recently established, with undemocratic practices still abounding” (2003, p171). Consequently, the traditional middle powers take place at the core of the world economy, whereas the emerging middle powers remain at the semi-peripheries. In the first decade of the 21st century, these emerging middle powers experienced a rise in their material and immaterial capacities, strengthened their position in the international structure (Morales Ruvalcaba, 2020). Here it should be noted that although they may overlap, middle power and semi-periphery are not interchangeable terms.

The historical evolution and application process regarding the concept of “middle power” cannot be separated from its theoretical discussion. Theory-wise,

Chapnick (1999) distinguishes three classifications for middle powers: hierarchical, functional and behavioral approaches. The hierarchical approach, echoing the historical evolution of the concept, is interested in material capabilities measured through economic success and military capabilities. Following the traditional understanding, states with high GDP and advanced military equipment are considered as middle powers in this approach. Functional approach is more interested in the roles a state can play in the international arena such as peacekeeping, brokering, donor, mediator etc. The behavioral approach focuses on the state's characteristics and its foreign policy behavior. This approach also identifies middle powers "by their expressed desire for greater international status" (Chapnick, 1999, p75). The hierarchical model is the echo of material realities while the functional and behavioral approaches view middle powerhood as a label to increase status.

Following the behaviorist approach, Robertson and Carr (2023) identify three distinct values of middle powers commonly exerted: internationalism, multilateralism and being "Good Citizens". The middle powers should rise and evolve within the system they operate under. After all, they are pointed out as examples because they successfully integrated themselves within the global order and were able to rise among the ranks of development. In that sense, they owe their success to their connections and international relations, along with other economic and ideational factors. With the "good citizens" concept, we also see compliance with international norms as an essence of the concept as "the notion of 'good citizenship' was integrally tied to the interests and outlooks of western, liberal, and overwhelmingly white states" (p393). Acts like calling for the implementation of international norms on multilateral institutions, hosting global summits and events, increasing their credit score can be given as examples for this complacency.

The aforementioned criticism towards the concept stems from its limited applicability due to an inherently conformist nature. It can be argued that the middle power concept reflects a Western-centric and deterministic view of international relations, overlooking the geographical nuances and cultural-historical diverse experiences of these states, treating all as similar units within the club. Moreover, these club members could try to make their status exclusive to attain for others,

contradictory to their own demand to be further integrated to institutional organizations. Expanding the size and inclusivity of international organizations, therefore, becomes a concern. Cooper highlights that "middle powers face the reality that their voices may be diluted" (2013, p970) as the growth of these leadership groups has the potential to diminish their influence and agency. Further, the rise and prevalence of the middle powers do not hinder the existing power imbalances within the international system. As "a middle power is rarely in a position to threaten the survival of a great power" (Fels, 2017, p216), the material capability of a middle power is not enough to reshape the structure. However, it could be argued that the "middle power" concept reinforces rather than challenges existing hierarchies as long as they have the space to operate alongside them. Teo underlines that "weakening of stratification...would only be to the extent that middle powers are still able to preserve their material and ideational advantages over the rest of the non-great powers" (2022, p13). This implies that the concept might function to maintain a specific global order rather than promoting true inclusivity and equality.

There are several influences over a state's middle power behavior including increases in economic capability, regional (in)stabilities, and domestic political trends. Although it is not the sole determinant of a middle power's influence, rising economic capability gives middle powers strong bargaining power to take up more space in global politics and push for their agendas. The increasing GDPs of South Korea, India and Türkiye give them greater leverage in trade negotiations, international institutions, and regional partnerships. As Patience (2014) underlines, regionalism as a response to globalization, can act as a strategic tool for middle powers to enforce cooperation via a distinct identity. Thus, regionalization offers localized solutions in which middle powers have a better chance of leading. Regarding the influence of domestic politics, however, an increasingly authoritarian turn for middle power countries such as Türkiye and Brazil shadow the progress. Grzywacz and Gawrycki raise concerns about how the "authoritarian turns undermine the status of middle powers as well as their reputation as reliable and predictable actors in international relations" (2021, p2629). Authoritarian tendencies undermine the core values traditionally associated with middle powers – reliability, predictability, and commitment to international norms. Questioning the liberal international order may at times result in contestation of less institutionalized

international norms or aversion from criticism; for example, stemming from the understanding of global justice, Türkiye challenges the EU with a nationalist and securitized foreign policy through an interest-driven lens (Aydın-Düzgüt, 2023).

Then, what is the significance of Türkiye and South Korea for middle power literature? Both countries had similar paths: from military coups to institutionalizing democracy, both are examples of prominent international actors within their region as well as multilateral organizations. Similarly, both countries have started out their fiscal accumulation through state-planned development policies, which gave way to a neoliberal approach and limited intervention. Despite being latecomers to the global economy, their fast-paced growth in the 90 and early 2000s placed them among the biggest economies of the world. Another similarity is the presidential systems, as a central and singular decision-making unit follows a regulatory role among multiple interest groups. Therefore, there are valuable parallelisms to be drawn from these two cases despite their geographical and cultural differences. One thing to underline about this work is that comparing Türkiye and South Korea in the context of middle powers have already been done (e.g. Schiavon & Dominguez, 2016; Baydag, 2021; You, 2022). Following the behavioral approach, the existing literature compares economic growth and utilization of soft power as a means of multilateral foreign policy behavior. However, the *how* part of this power production is often overlooked, as “soft power” analysts put a state’s ability over the sources. “Power is far too complex in its sources, effects and production to be reduced to one dimension” (Bilgin & Eliş, 2008, p15). The novelty of this thesis lies in the introduction of state transformation and internal dynamics in the making of foreign policy behavior.

Türkiye and South Korea: Similar Beginnings, Diverging Futures

Often categorized as “emerging” middle powers, Türkiye and South Korea have had their share of skyrocketed economic success that placed them into top international organizations. Both countries are members of the Organization of Economic Cooperation (OECD), G20, and donors of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Türkiye’s GDP stands as 7th largest in Europe and 17th in the world (World Bank, 2024). South Korea ranks 12th in the world with its GDP

(Jeong, 2024) despite its population being around 60% that of Türkiye. Arguably coming from similar historical backgrounds in which they have experienced consequent military regimes and a democratization process that was accompanied by opening up to the global market in the late 20th century. Despite their accumulation of economic revenues and diplomatic know-how, being fit into the middle power literature for them is a phenomenon of the 21st century. Türkiye has adopted policies that fit into the concept of "middle power" during the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)'s era, arguably seeing this position as a stepping tool for future foreign politics that would fit a "pivotal regional power" (Ilgit & Ozkececi-Taner, 2014) increasing active presence in international institutions. The availability of economic resources, combined with the JDP's outreach on Muslim identity, provided a new outlet for the Turkish state in the shape of the Middle East. Similar to Türkiye, South Korea also started to pursue a proactive foreign diplomacy within its region in the 21st century. The political success of the democratization process is combined with the country's rapid economic development and is championed as an exemplary model through multinational organizations (Kim, 2015). Shim & Flamm (2013) discuss that South Korea possesses the pretension, endowment, influence and recognition criteria to fill the role of a regional power; with regional initiatives, diplomatic leverage, institutional performance and economic capacity. The rest of the chapter is reserved for a comparison of the middle powerhood of both countries.

Sources of middle powerhood

For Türkiye, the role of middle power materialized as humanitarian aid through a historical heritage and shared sensibility. Particularly after the 2007 elections with JDP's success and the economic boom after the 2001 economic crisis (witnessing impressive growth rates until into the mid-2010s), the idea of a proactive diplomacy in the immediate region emerged. A prominent figure behind this idea was Ahmet Davutoğlu, the Foreign Minister, later the Prime Minister and his 'strategic depth' doctrine. "In a nutshell, the doctrine emphasized the importance of a multilayered, multilateral, and multifaceted foreign policy for Türkiye. It also stressed the importance of non-state actors" (Baba, 2018, p82). Highlighting the humanitarian aspect of economic diplomacy, Türkiye aimed to be an alternative to

UN-centered humanitarian systems. In 2011, a state-led initiative of foreign aid was sent to war-torn Somalia. A significant difference between this aid and other condition-bound aids from international institutions was that Türkiye did not tamper with the usage by the recipient government. Diverging from the traditional Turkish foreign policy, JDP has taken interest in the Middle East region and invested heavily. Turkish construction businesses invested in Iran, Libya and Qatar, the state also signed FTA with Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia, Syria, and Egypt (Altunışık and Martin 2011, 596).

South Korea has consolidated its liberal democratic model after following a long period of authoritarian rule. “The liberal values of the current international order such as open trade, multilateralism, and the rule of law are openly and vibrantly supported by Korea” (Mo, 2016, p592). By reaching a per capita income of more than 25,000 US dollars, the country can be safely placed in the category of emerging power, if not an established one (Shin 2015.). After making its way out of poverty through receiving aid and acquiring development success, South Korea shared this experience model and itself became a member of the Donor Assistance Committee of the OECD (Baydag, 2021). Starting from the late 20th century but gaining momentum in the early 2000s, South Korea has found itself in a position to advantage of opportunities for “middle powerism” by gaining stature in regional and global contexts through active networking, proactive support for multilateral institutions including the G20 and MIKTA, substantial ODA contributions, and support for ecologically responsible development” (Job, 2022, p42). Increase of its quota in the IMF and admission into DAC are tangible proofs of the country’s growing influence in regional and global affairs. Arguably, geopolitical constraints set South Korea back from assuming more assertive roles in international crises.

From these arguments, it is understood that the precondition of becoming a middle power is economic success. Certainly, global factors and foreign policy aspirations also matter to some point, but the possibility of becoming a middle power arguably cannot be materialized without tangible economic sources to back the policies. Therefore, integration into the global economy and raising the share in international trade is the common and necessary condition of acting as a middle power.

Role of national elites

Holsti's (1970) leading work argues that elites' roles, understood through material and social dimensions, play a decisive factor in how they see the rise of their country in regional and international politics. Therefore, the elites' perception about the state decides on the level of engagement in foreign policy. National elites hold significant financial resources and can take up decisive space in a country's foreign policy. In the neoliberal framework, the interests and demands of these groups have influence over the state in how much a country's economy develops and integrates into the global market. "The rising economy and progressive foreign policy within global and regional organizations have added Türkiye to the list of rising powers in the international system" (Sucu et al., 2021, p310). The focus on economic expansion and impressive annual growth in the early 2000s gave rise to a new group of entrepreneurs in Anatolia to explore emerging markets, particularly in the Middle East (Altunışık & Martin, 2011). This entrepreneurial spirit fueled Türkiye's "rising power" image as well as increasing its fiscal power for foreign policy objectives. However, the internal dynamic behind this external expansion is a clash of interest groups. As the traditionally secular Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TÜSİAD) finds itself more and more challenged by the Islamist Independent Industrialists and Businessmen Association (MÜSİAD), Islamic influence over Ankara's foreign policy pressures on the direction of humanitarian efforts (Gilley, 2015). This effect can be exemplified in the instance of Erdoğan dispatching his deputy prime minister, Beşir Atalay, and the president of the Disaster and Emergency Management Agency (AFAD), Fuat Oktay, to the Philippines to coordinate Türkiye's relief works on the ground (p39).

South Korea's economic miracle story is inseparable from the rise of powerful conglomerates, named *chaebols*. "A *chaebol* is a group of affiliated firms that is actually controlled by its chairman or head. Chaebols are usually ranked in order of their asset size" (Kim, 2013, p6). Brands like Samsung, Hyundai, SK and LG are the current major examples of these influential business groups. From the 80s, the authoritarian regime provided the conditions for chaebols to flourish with government-led investment projects, fostering "increasingly large export-oriented

industrial conglomerates" (Horowitz, 2002). This policy created the environment for chaebols to monopolize certain sectors and seek significant autonomy to implement their business strategies. By prioritizing global integration and profitability chaebols pursued a "neoliberal strategy" (Kim, 2022), laying the groundwork for Korea's economic success. When we come to the 21st century, we see that the Lee Myung-bak government through company-friendly economic policies such as "corporate tax reduction, abolition of limits on investments of large companies, a number of deregulation actions, a currency policy for boosting exports" (Kim, 2013, p4) which boosted great business performance in the world markets but did not have stimulating results for the domestic demand.

This literature review accentuates the dominant trends in middle power literature thus far. Rooted in the very emergence of the concept, the analyses focus on state presence in international affairs and performance in international organizations, and therefore state-centric, without actually investigating the underlying conditions within the state that helped them become a middle power. It is clear that assuming the role of a middle power is inseparable from economic capacity and incorporation into the global market. Heavier than the ideological stance of geographical proximity, it is the accumulated fiscal power and market share that gives out the entry tickets into to like-minded's club. Once reaching a certain threshold (example) is reached, the emerging middle power countries of the 21st century expand its global vision to demonstrate this newly acquired grandeur. What is missing, however, is the internal mechanism that generated such permissive conditions for the states to step up to the plate to fulfill new roles. Structural conditions and external circumstances, such as the 1997 or 2008 financial crises; the Arab Spring or North Korean chair succession would be of limited effect in dictating foreign policy behavior of our case countries. State-level analysis, albeit being more accurate in explaining, also fails to convey the underlying conditions of Türkiye and South Korea's ascendance in global politics. In order to comprehend the complete picture, we should consider the internal dynamics and especially the state-capital relations from an objective lens. As we see briefly, the elites who are the products of the globalization process also influence their respective country's foreign policy and further integration into the neoliberal political order, manifested in humanitarian and reformist policies in Türkiye and South Korea cases.

Self-Perceptions

Stemming from Davutoğlu's ideas, "the new Turkish foreign policy elites tend to define Türkiye as a central power, with its capability and desire to act independently in its immediate neighborhood and even in the international arena" (Yalcin, 2012, p202). The Turkish policymakers are more occupied with the region and as such, role conceptions such as "great regional power" seems to be more acknowledged by the national elites compared to a middle position (Dal, 2019). This shows a preference for more independent action.

South Korea, on the other hand, went so far as self-prescribing a middle power role in the international arena. Instead of a regional focus, Korea aims to be closer with other "like-minded" middle power countries (John, 2014) to set a middle-level channel for international relations discourses. In this end, the lack of "regional" in the South Korean public perception could also stem from the knowledge that with China looming over East Asia as well as the fluctuating presence of the US, South Korea cannot become the dominant state within the region. This awareness comes from both material capabilities of the country as well as its own dependency/partnership with the Chinese economy, along with other neighbors in the region. What is interesting is that despite these structural constraints in the region, Seoul clings to its position with the undefined hope of becoming more in the future. "Most South Korean citizens and even experts think of South Korea's future as that of a great power" (Mo, 2016, p602).

Global Reactions

Sandal (2014) argues that the Turkish policymakers' attention shift towards the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa is a mixed result of the economic growth, relative political stability and disappointments with the EU process. Türkiye and especially president Erdoğan's popularity skyrocketed after the 2009 world economic forum, where Erdoğan stormed off in protest to a dialogue with then-president of Israel, Shimon Peres. However, the tide turned against the republic when the Arab

Spring began, and Türkiye found itself overly-involved with the turmoil of its neighbors. “Ankara’s over ambitions to position as an ‘order-setting regional power’ and transform the region in its mirror image led to Türkiye’s over-involvement in the domestic affairs of key Arab spring countries” (Öniş & Kutlay, 2017, p19).

South Korea’s middle power role is perceived as an example among developing nations as the country acts as a benign power. Korea’s capability to influence regional politics is a different question, as the presence of the USA-China nexus forces the regional countries to pursue a more deliberate stance. The US connects to the region through bilateral relations of the hub-and-spokes system and does not have any demand of South Korea to fulfill a role bigger than a traditional ally. “It’s regional-balancer role is perceived by the USA not only as South Korea’s departure from strong relations with the USA in the region, but also as a move towards closer relations with China” (Karim, 2018, p357).

Regional Policies

According to Jordaan (2003), traditional middle powers do not have distinguishable projects regarding their region, but emerging middle powers have strong regional self-association and fairly high regional initiation. The contrasting regional policies of Türkiye and South Korea reflects differing priorities. While Türkiye strives for regional leadership and independent policies, it is often confronted with its powerful neighbors and complex relations. South Korea also has to carry a delicate navigation policy of balancing US and China within the region, in order to stabilize relations and secure partnerships. Türkiye's regional approach, under the AKP government, emphasizes economic and cultural engagement, particularly with Muslim communities through partnerships with businesses and NGOs, thus bringing out the soft power aspects with the help of economic engagements. The JDP government, along with public and private investments to the Middle East and Africa, worked with “small- and medium-sized Turkish businesses and faith-based Turkish NGOs to link with Muslim communities in Africa” (Baba, 2018, p83). This strategy aims to cultivate influence and promote Turkish values, positioning Türkiye as a regional leader and a “source of inspiration” in the Arab world (Keyman & Gumuscu, 2014). However, tensions with the West and regional

conflicts pose challenges to this vision. In contrast, South Korea's regional policy is targeted towards filling a balancer role between the US and China. Instead of picking a side and going on the extreme end either in a Sino-centric or anti-Chinese fashion, it is argued that "South Korea's national interest is best served when it strives for a region of equilibrium where the weight of China is balanced by the weight of nearby Japan coupled with that of the distant United States" (Lee, 2012, p16). Choi (2009) also argues that South Korea's East Asian regionalism is more productive in economic areas rather than security issues.

Institutional performance

Both countries, as is the nature of middle powers, utilize their positions within international institutions to make their voices heard and open up channels where they operate better. G20 presidency in 2015 was an important point for Türkiye's foreign policy, a new outlet for promoting its "actorness" and economic competence for its rapid economic growth. Arguably, the rotating presidency not only helped Türkiye towards its goals as a middle power that seeks elite status but also reinforced the other members' perception of Türkiye as one. Dal (2019), however, mentions that Turkish status-seeking policies in the G20 vis-à-vis its middle power peers underperformed because the Turkish national elites' had a weak role conception about their middle power status. Arguably, Türkiye strengthened its institutional force through homegrown public institutions such as Turkish Airlines, TİKA (Turkish International Cooperation and Coordination Agency), Kızılay (Turkish Red Crescent), TOKİ (Housing Development Administration of Türkiye), and AFAD (Emergency Disaster Management Presidency) in order to promote and coordinate its humanitarian activities (Öniş & Kutlay, 2017).

G20 membership holds a special place in Korea's case as well and especially "the hosting of the G20 Summit in 2010 is viewed by the government as a critical recognition of the country's arrival as a significant international actor" (Saxer, 2013, p398). Within the institution as well as outside, the most prevalent policy areas for Korea to show participation in were green growth and development cooperation. For example, the launch of the Global Green Growth Institute, an international organization for exchanging environmental strategies and technologies, and the

Green Climate Fund hosting were among the niche diplomacy practices of the Lee Myung-bak government. Similarly, Korea's developmental partnership with ASEAN produced hundreds of cooperation projects on the areas of education, environment and culture, "in order to enhance capacity-building and to strengthen people to people exchanges" (Howe & Park, 2019, p118).

The creation of and participation in MIKTA (Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Türkiye, and Australia) also highlights Türkiye and South Korea's roles as middle powers, where the state behaves not only as a compliant of existing institutions. In this context, it is also a proof of willingness that MIKTA's fifth meeting of foreign ministers, resulting in a Vision Statement that acknowledges the similarities of members, was held in Seoul in 2015. "all MIKTA countries have both the will and the capability to contribute to protecting public goods and strengthening global governance, by playing a constructive role and exerting influence in the international agenda" (Schiavon & Dominguez, 2016, p500).

Compliance with the international system

Liberal democracy, which is the legitimating model in international institutions and treaties, is in a hegemonic crisis as Bukovansky (2007) argues. In a time when traditional hegemony is questioned, social and political concerns are vocalized by emerging states which demand to take up more space in the order they are critical of. When it comes to their place within the international system and how satisfied they are with it, a divergence presents itself. Middle powers like Türkiye and South Korea have to follow a deliberate balance between playing by the established rules that helped them secure their position whilst also pushing for reform and inclusivity. While both countries "have long been bound by Western institutions and practices" (Baydağ, 2021, p439), their relationship with the international system has some differences. Türkiye, for instance, has voiced its dissatisfaction with the UN system, criticizing its "representativeness" and "equality" (Gök & Karadeniz, 2018) of its structure. President Erdogan's critical stances at the United Nations or the World Economic Forum have been challenging the dominant and Western-centric discourse on issues ranging from the Syrian war to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, these critiques should not necessarily mean a

complete rejection of the existing global order as Türkiye continues to fully operate in international institutions. Rather, it could be argued that Türkiye is seeking to implement reforms from within the organizations rather than advocating for a complete overturn of the system.

In a stark contrast, South Korea adopts a more compliant approach. Deeply integrated into the liberal democratic model, it views the international order as a platform for sharing its own success story. While advocating for minor reforms to enhance inclusivity and reflect its growing influence, South Korea avoids outright confrontation. Instead, it leverages existing structures, maintaining strong ties with the US and actively participating within international institutions. This difference of compliance with the international order (by now it is apparent that this order is Western-centric) between two countries can be exemplified by their economic relationships with China. Both rely heavily on trade, but Türkiye's recent pivot towards China, a rising power often seen as a challenger, adds another layer of complexity whilst South Korea maintains a balance between its largest export destination (Woo, 2021) and its commitment to the US-led security structure in the Asia-Pacific region. Ultimately, South Korea's careful maneuvering positions it closer to the "rule-follower" image. While seeking a seat at the decision-making table and advocating for inclusivity, South Korea's rule-abiding position remains fundamentally in line with the existing order.

Contributions to the Literature

The existing literature on middle power focuses on behavioral and descriptive accounts of middlepowerhood, in which the patterns of behavior are explained through external means, such as institutional membership, foreign policy decisions or integration into global economy (see for example Jordaan, 2003; Robertson, 2007; Cooper & Parlar Dal, 2016). These works provide contextual and material data on middle power behavior or the policy areas where we see the manifestation of the accumulated power. While these aspects are necessary to understand as the criterion of being considered as a middle power, they fall short on explaining what drives and/or shapes these types of state behavior. *How* and *why* some states assume such a role in international relations is understudied, as the literature focuses more on

outcomes than the means. The missing part is the revelation of the internal process and the dynamics of the state that created certain conditions for it to acquire a middle power status in the international arena as well as the literature. It is argued that both the central state apparatus and various interest groups in society struggle for influence in foreign policy conduct, constrained by the style of state structure. This relation is also the outcome of the state transformation, with economic and political elements molding the state. This thesis will aim to cover the missing part in the literature through comparative cases of Türkiye and South Korea; and the research question is “what were the changes and driving sources behind the emergence of Türkiye and South Korea as middle powers in the 21st century?”.

Having discussed the key themes and debates in the existing scholarship, the research approach will be as follows: The second chapter will introduce a state-level analysis, informed by a neo-Gramscian theorization of the state, followed by the methodology of the thesis, Process Tracing. The third chapter will discuss empirical findings from both Türkiye and South Korea, in line with the state transformation argument and the middle power literature. The final chapter will make a conclusion by providing a thorough explanation of the ideas and the case studies of the thesis.

CHAPTER 2

DEFINING STATE TRANSFORMATION

This chapter focuses on the state, outlines the conceptual discussion around the notion of *state*, and in what ways it has evolved in the 20th century. Then, theoretical approaches (realist, liberal, constructivist, neo-Gramscian) are provided to bring different explanations to the emergence of middle powers. Finally, the designated method of the thesis, Process Tracing is introduced, and a specific model of state transformation is constructed for this thesis.

In order to understand the current foreign policy agencies and aspirations of both Türkiye and South Korea, we should first uncover the structural changes the state and national economy went through over the years, especially from the period of initial globalization. Because the main position of this work is to uncover the actor proliferation-driven structural change these states went through that brought out a middle power status in international relations, a thorough understanding of the main concepts and theoretical framework is essential. The transformation specifically in governmental structure (ie. the presidential system change in Türkiye and democratization process in South Korea) as well as the growing influence of economic interest groups have had an impact on the foreign policy decision making in both countries. Therefore, it is not possible to make a comprehensive comment on the “middle powerhood” of the states without analyzing the underlying history and conditions that gave way to their capacity rise first. This chapter will uncover the theoretical frameworks behind the concept of “state transformation” as well as commentary on different understandings of what a “state” is.

Conceptualizing the State

The 19th century saw a shift from fragmented political structures to consolidated nation-states, in which industrialization and urbanization brought the need for centralized administration in Europe. Max Weber approaches this change as a matter of efficiency and rationality derived from legal legitimacy. The mainstream state-building literature traditionally uses this Weberian approach as a starting point (Lemay-Hébert, 2013), in which a state is defined as “a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory” (Weber, 1948, p78). This approach prioritizes two aspects of the state apparatus: administration and security. Different from the right to rule derived from heritage or charisma, the legitimacy comes from the set of rules that govern the state. In order to maintain and enforce these rules, the state also holds the coercive capacity. The collection and allocation of public resources are designated by the government which also holds the necessary means and force to ensure security within its borders. As a public organization, the state’s authority falls upon all over a given territory and is legitimately recognized. In that sense, the state exists for the management of a social compact made by a human community.

The bureaucracy is indispensable for acquiring experience and finesse in administration, which also manages the complex economic structure of the state. The state’s economic structure is composed of numerous actors, from private companies to state-owned enterprises, each striving for more share and profit from the market. Just like how the individual people entrust their sovereignty onto the state to provide them security, the economic actors also expect the state to provide them space to flourish.

Therefore, this management of the social contract also manifests itself within the relation between the capital and the labor a state possesses. The Weberian-Westphalian state (coined by Hameiri and Jones (2016)) is a product of the Second World War and Cold War global institutions. Through the Bretton Woods system and Keynesian fiscal policies, the national welfare states were consolidated by developing their national industries. The Bretton Woods system, named after the conference in the USA in 1944, was a set of fixed exchange rates where a country’s

own currency was pegged to the US dollar. International trade was promoted through the fixed exchange rate, centering the US dollar, resulting in expansion of global trade and sustained economic growth in the Post-War era. The Bretton Woods system also gave way to the establishment of the International Monetary Fund to provide financial assistance and the World Bank to provide loans for infrastructure and development projects. Keynesian policies, developed during the Great Depression in the USA, favor state interventions to stimulate demand, increase the money supply and government expenditures in social programs and infrastructure projects. Keynes' ideas were popularized by the Western industrialized countries, as expansionary fiscal policies provided stable growth and low unemployment rates to those countries rebuilding their economic structure after the war. Certainly, these policies were not only the commonly accepted remedy for managing economic downturns but also the product of the political context of the time. "Unprecedented expansion of the welfare state during the immediate post-war decades was to some degree related to fierce regime competition in the bipolar world that emerged in the aftermath of the Second World War" (Obinger and Lee, 2013, p258). The newly-established states were also included in this global liberal regime through state development projects, mainly due to US help. US-initiated economic packages boosted capitalist production, combined with Western support to anti-communist authoritarian regimes. Thus the. Henderson et al. (2003) underline the sustained demand and rising wages of this era "as Weberianness contributes to growth, so it also contributes to the poverty reduction affected by that growth" (p99).

The Weberian nation-state is not a natural given for the structure of global relations but is a socially and politically produced historical element (Jessop, 2009). Once we recognize the man-made nature of the concept, we also realize how prone it is to change due to internal and external factors. In line with the historical context of a given period and dominant political discourses, what is expected from a state can vary. Depending on the conditions of time, the state can go from a law enforcer to benefit distributor, from sector creator to market regulator. One of the tangible examples of this shift of state performance can be found during the post-war period, as the states changed their focus from supplying the military industry to post-war economic restructuring. This restructuring was centered around strengthening national industries to supply the domestic demand as well as to keep up with the

competition in the global market. Therefore, the state-led incentives to boost production came at the expense of public welfare expenditures. Klaus (2013) argues that the Cold War was also an ideological tool that scared governments off from welfare policies in fear of “pushing society towards socialism/communism” (p228). This phenomenon can be visibly seen by the anti-communist propaganda of the military coups in Türkiye, 1960 and South Korea, 1961. In both cases, the military junta immediately aligned itself with Western institutions and denounced communist influences (Obinger and Lee, 2013, Öztan and Özekmekçi, 2014). Therefore, it is only natural for the state structure to change in line with the change of Western capitalism several times.

Another shift occurred during the 70s where the Keynesian policies were discarded due to rising debt, the gold-dollar convertibility was abandoned in 1971 due to economic imbalances, and the Cold War ideological competition between two camps was reaching its peak point. This time, the Western and the developing states have changed their structure once again to fit into the neoliberal economic thought, in which the government played the role of a limited intervener. In that context, the 70s economic crisis, doubled with the change of social fabric and political conflict, reconfigured the state’s role from development interventionist to a globally competitive actor (Cerny, 1997). By the late 60s the Bretton Woods system was facing dissatisfaction, the members were critical of the asymmetry of the system and the amount of circulating dollars was far more than the available gold reserve. Finally, in 1971, US president Nixon ordered cancellation of direct dollar-gold international convertibility and in 1973, the members decided to let their currencies float. This shift to a flexible exchange-rate system created turmoil in the currency markets, as the US dollar fell drastically (Hammes & Wills, 2005). This instability in foreign markets was aggravated with the 1973 oil crisis, when OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) announced an embargo on the countries who were supporting Israel in the Yom Kippur War. Newly industrialized countries saw some benefits during the time as the industrialized countries were grappling with the negative effects of the crisis and were suffering from high energy costs. Thus, economic growth slowed down during the decade globally. The stagflation combined with rising unemployment meant the politics had to be replaced with something that allows hot money to decrease trade deficit. The government-controlled public

enterprises were allowed more autonomy to increase performance, the import-substitution models were left for an industry-favoring free market policy. The leading corporations of the industrialization process were disassembled, and enterprises were privatized. In order to achieve these changes, the state as an entity, had to reconfigure its role within the economic system as well. Instead of a direct interventionist style to secure economic growth and development, the state took a back position and set directions for public and private enterprises through a regulatory model. The biggest driving actors were the IMF and the World Bank for the developmental states to industrialize and enter into transnational production networks. State restructuring, decentralization promotion and governance aid programmes, gave rise to a fragmentation of the state structure.

Consequently, the current reality the states operate within is much more different than the traditional Weberian command model. According to Hameiri and Jones (2016), “under globalisation, states can no longer be understood as Weberian, sovereign monoliths, coherently ruling bounded territories. They are increasingly fragmented, decentralised and internationalised” (p78). As a result of this reconfiguration of state politics, the number and operating range of actors have increased. Influential individuals, non-governmental organizations, conglomerates, transnational corporations and so on take part in domestic politics. Arguably, instead of a hierarchical decision-making structure, there is a network of multilevel governance relations which have to be constantly negotiated both in the public and private spheres. This sort of decision-making requires regulation, instead of command, in order to maintain the harmony between interest groups. Therefore, the biggest difference of the regulatory state from the Weberian state is the decision-making network. As the number of social, political and economic agents diversified, the state has to share its power and negotiate authority. Both the state apparatuses and non-state agencies may pursue varying interests. These interests may contradict or overlap with each other, and their harmony (or compromise at times) should be “regulated” in order to ensure stable growth and articulation into transnational economic relations.

The dispersion of state power among new actors, reconfiguration of state identity and capacity, permeation of private capital into decision-making processes are all

interrelated changes that gave way for the state to acquire a new status in international relations. Jones and Hameiri (2021) distinguish three main vectors in explaining state transformation: fragmentation, decentralization and internationalization. Fragmentation is the redistribution of power and authority among multiple agencies instead of a central authority. This includes reform of state apparatuses, proliferation of influencing interest groups and enlarging the operation scope of the actors. Decentralization refers to the loosening of the hierarchical order and traditional command model, interest groups hold more resources and compete for state favors. Internationalization points to domestic actors extending their governance and acquiring an international presence, or joining transnational governance networks and take part in international cooperation.

Theoretical Explanations

Before continuing with the main strand of thought for this chapter, it is worth visiting alternative explanations (or the lack thereof) for the aforementioned state transformation. The biggest criticism for the mainstream IR theories regarding the “rising powers” literature is the lack of nuance, specifically their oversight of state transformation (Hameiri and Jones, 2016, Robinson, 2005). Although they recognize the fragmentation and decentralization of the state, the IR theoretical frameworks often overlook the reflection of dynamics between internal actors to the foreign policy decision-making, and tend to go for systemic models when explaining the emergence of rising powers.

The emergence of rising powers, according to realists, is explained by the acquisition of power as a means of improving their systemic position in international relations (Aytekin & Mikail, 2016). Because power is understood in material terms, economic growth is also regarded as a feeding source for military power (Hameiri & Jones, 2015). In that sense, the economic growth a state goes through indirectly upsets the balance of power, but this view does not have any comments on how said growth was achieved. Domestic factors and dynamics are unobservable. Although it acknowledges the transnational and deeply integrated networks, realism approaches with suspicion of dominance and power clusters when in fact these trading

dependence and economic alliances are mainly market preferences of domestic, translational interest groups.

Economic interdependence is more recognized and studied in the liberal framework, as integration into the global supply chains would yield mutual benefits for all participants. The free economic agents within the self-sustaining markets powered over the traditional distributive and allocative mechanism of the controlling state. Moreover, neoliberal framework is the most visible explanation stream about the transformation of the European welfare states (Ferrera, 2013) into the market-regulating states of today. The rise of the global economy has dissolved barriers before the movement of capital and labor (Clarke, 2003), the market-oriented free-trade agenda adopted by now neo-liberal governments from the 70s and 80s placed them under the reign of supra-national institutions like the IMF, World Bank and the WTO. Therefore, the relative dissolution of state control over the domestic production and industries can be partially explained by the liberal framework in which rising powers are understood through their ability to partake in economic interdependence and institutional cooperation. However, the liberal understanding of state transformation remains on the systemic level, eventually analyzing the level of integration into international institutions and economic dependence, and the adoption of certain international regimes.

Constructivists understand the states as actors whose identity and interests are shaped through interaction and socialization. The change a state and its institutions goes through can be explained by their desire to occupy the spaces they seem as important or beneficial. The state institutions both limit the actions of the actors as well as being altered by the same actors (Eleveld, 2016). While their identity is changing through the neoliberal transformation process, their interests are also changing along. What is valuable from the constructivist framework is the reminder that the roles states occupy in international relations are a construct of their socialization and identification, and are subject to interpretation (Müller & Albert, 2021). However, it should be underlined that there is not a direct distinction between the rising states and any other state for constructivists in the sense that the middle powers are the outcome of appropriating the identity and internalizing the expected behavior from their new status. We need to turn to a neo-Marxist, Gramscian

specifically, approach to capture the nuances in and the domestic power allocation born though the social conflict in order to explain the state transformation middle powers like Türkiye and South Korea had gone through.

For Gramsci, state is the expression of power relations. Social groups and classes operate through the state (Robinson, 2005) in order to realize their interests, which is also the framework utilized for this manuscript. The Gramscian analysis of state-society interactions identify the key social forces struggling over power and resources; how these forces relate to general patterns of ownership, control, investment, production and trade; and how social forces are organized into ruling coalitions and opposition forces, in hierarchical arrangements and particularly through means of economic concessions, political & ideological coercion. This theoretical explanation puts emphasis on “the position of middle powers in the global political economy and elite complicity in the neo-liberal project as explanatory variables” (Jordaan, 2003, p166). Developed by Poulantzas (1978) and Jessop (2008), the Gramscian state theory underlines that political-economy context is the root of conflict in social relations that constitute the state. No single group is able to dominate the decision-making structure because there are multiple interests and sources of power. The state cannot realize itself in a monopolized environment. As a result, alliances and oppositions are formed, “kaleidoscopically shifting and changing and where majorities are constantly forming and reforming” (Fontana, 2002, p167). Arguably one of the most visible of these groups is the transnational market oriented actors that were created and strengthened through globalization of the production process and enlargement of the capital market. Admittedly, this transnational group which dominates the decision-making process steer the states to integrate them into global capitalist structures. Moreover, state apparatuses are never neutral (Jones and Hameiri, 2021) as the power and resources across interest groups are distributed asymmetrically. The state transformation occurs as a result of this constant competition between interest groups and their dynamic positions within the state organizations. It is the state’s duty to regulate the continuous acts of negotiations, which brings us to the main concept of this chapter, “regulatory state”.

Regulatory state, as a successor to the welfare state, can be understood as a reaction of welfare states’ undermined capacity in the face of complex globalized

networks (Yeung, 2010). As aforementioned above, the reconstruction and redistribution policies of the Cold War era were discarded in favor of privatizing state-owned assets and the ownership of key industries. During this time of privatization, the majority of the key sectors were fiscally supported to modernize and globalize industries, resulting in monopolization of certain businesses and flourishing of conglomerates. Instead of ministerial direction and centralized planning, the privatized industries were now simply steered towards certain goals by the state.

The result of this privatization process is the proliferation of public and private actors; as well as fragmentation of power and resources (Jones and Hameiri, 2021). While the welfare state had direct intervention and social safety nets, the regulatory state has rules, negotiations and compliance. The state is no longer a monolithic entity (Rhodes, 1994), but a small nucleus and numerous organelles with varying autonomy. Interest groups not only interact with various government agencies but also have direct access to government itself and are capable of shaping public opinion. “The state could no longer rely on hierarchical authority arising from direct ownership of the resources from which many services had previously been provided” (Yeung, 2010, p67). The competition and uneven distribution of resources mean the actors have more space to move within platforms to realize their goals. The actors may seek to influence policies to their interests and agendas, bargain over the implementation of policies or interpret the guidelines according to their existing preferences.

The growing capital interconnectedness and the amplification of economic actors mean promoting trade and investment becomes the primary means of communication and dispute resolution. The liberal market policies of the post-Cold War era have created business interest groups with access to (if not created within) the government. Because they interact among themselves as well as with government agencies, these interest groups have influential capability in shaping policy conduct. Therefore, the decision-making process is now not limited solely to negotiations between diplomats and policy-makers, but also includes a range of interest groups exerting influence over public opinion. Foreign policy has evolved from a strictly bureaucratic event to a decentralized and fragmented constellation. Rosecrance

(1986) names this fragmented entity as the “trading state” in which interdependence works as a functionalist tool for diplomacy. Activities of business groups are now a concern of foreign policy. Integration of the state into the global economy, coupled with the support for export efforts of national businesses, compels the country to become a trading the state (Kirişçi, 2009). Hence, the foreign policy decisions and bilateral relations of the state can be studied with this change in mind. Another important aspect to underline is the state structure, in which the domestic actors find the living space to exist, bargain and influence foreign policy decisions. Arguably, a presidential system is the type which they most thrive in, as the execution is fast, efficient and amendable. The importance of this element will be mentioned again in thesis, the presidential system has its unique model of actor networks.

On Method: Process Tracing

The process tracing (PT) method can be utilized in Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) in order to lay the causal mechanisms in creating a studied outcome. Process tracing can also be understood as a set of procedures that tests the explanations of cases, or “the operation of the causal mechanism(s) at work in a given situation” (Mahoney, 2015; Checkel, 2008). Through the hypotheses posed by the researcher in order to uncover the causality behind political and social phenomena, PT is a qualitative method that allows the researcher to make a systematic explanation. However, it should be underlined that despite having a systematically explanatory model, PT does not bring any prescribed assumptions about how the world operates. On the contrary, the outcome of the model cannot be determined *a priori*. The outcome, as well as the complexity of the method depends on the actors’ activities and the influence of the setting conditions. Below, a more thorough explanation of the method and its components is discussed.

The generic premise of the process tracing model is put as such:

$$X \rightarrow Y \rightarrow Z$$

Which means “X was a cause of Y in case Z” (Mahoney, 2015, p203). The X is the “trigger”, a moving cause that is a necessary or contributing condition for the mechanism/sequence of events to fold out. The Y is the “mechanism”, particular events or variables that links the cause to the outcome. The Z is the “outcome”, the

given situation we are trying to uncover its existence. Therefore, the overall causal pathway connects the mechanism which relays the trigger to the outcome. The PT model inherently relies on sequential explanations, in which the causal relationship is not coincidental but consecutive.

Given the structure of the PT model, the mechanism needs to have the biggest portion attributed importance because *Y* is the whole sequence tying the trigger and the outcome. The general understanding, for the PT model to be considered as a qualitative method, is for the mechanisms to sustain some level of regularities. When given certain conditions and similarities in the machine, the causal mechanism should produce a similar outcome every time it is triggered (Beach & Pedersen, 2018). Certainly, scope conditions and contextual differences put limitations on the applicability. Nevertheless, the model should be applicable for different cases in order to be consistent, that is why the same model will be applied for two different countries, Türkiye and South Korea, in this study.

One important aspect about the mechanisms is that they are not the entire process and can exist in multiple numbers simultaneously in the given context. The researcher has to decide which elements to include in the mechanism and which elements to be left out of this tool. Therefore, a mechanism does not have the ability and claim to complete accuracy, but it helps communicate the trigger towards the outcome and guide the research. Consequently, a mechanism consists of entities that engage in activities (Machamer et al., 2000). For example, let's take privatization of domestic industries as a mechanism. The actor could be the president providing incentives and concessions for the industries to privatize as the activity. Therefore, a coherent analysis should study the conditions of characteristics of the mechanism that pushed the trigger towards the outcome, and should underline why this model is necessary for explaining the studied motion. "The analytical narrative... should focus on the mechanism and its causal relevance and thus on those entities that pushed, shoved, and moved-that is, that engaged in activities" (Van Meegdenburg, 2023, p411).

In order to test the hypothesis "X has caused Z through the case of Y" we need evidence from specific cases of the study. One way of hypothesis testing is a hoop

test to check the robustness of the claim (Mahoney, 2015). The hoop test demonstrates the necessity of the observations at hand in the case of a true hypothesis. In a hoop test, the specific within-case observations should end with an either true or untrue hypothesis, but the lack of the specific within-case observations should only end up with an untrue hypothesis. While this hoop test does not guarantee the observation verifies the hypothesis, it highlights the necessity of it for the model. If we take the trigger X as a necessary/contributing condition for the outcome Z, intervening events between them should be identified as a chain. When we go back to the example hypothesis, the arguments would be as such: Without going through a privatization and globalization process, the states would not have emerged as a middle power in international relations.

Finally, the argument as a whole should be strongly constructed to convince that an event is potentially essential for the studied outcome. Counterfactual analysis as a method involves a thorough understanding of whether the event could have turned out differently. This method requires a good grasp on the context, the historical background and selective importance of the studied case. “Good candidates for causes are events whose counterfactual absence is relatively easy to imagine and potentially would eliminate the outcome of interest” (Mahoney, 2015, p.213). If the case changes drastically with minimal rewrite, then the argument has significant value and a strong hypothesis.

In our context, the process tracing model is constructed as such below:

X/trigger (globalization) → *Y/mechanism* (state transformation) → *Z/outcome*
(middle power status)

In short, neoliberalization of markets, increased transnationalism and internationalization has triggered the case countries Türkiye and South Korea to enter into a period of privatization which in turn brought out the fragmentation of economic and political actors/decentralization of political power. The mechanism is totaled as the state transformation process and the outcome is the acquired middle power status in international relations.

CHAPTER 3

CONTEXTUALIZING THE STATE TRANSFORMATION IN THE MAKING OF TURKISH AND SOUTH KOREAN FOREIGN POLICIES

Türkiye had first passed the 100 billion US dollars GDP in the 1990s and reached 907.12 billion US dollars in 2022. Its population was around 50 million people in the 1980s and around 85 million in 2022. Türkiye provided USD 8.8 billion of Official Development Assistance in 2022, representing 0.79% of Gross National Income, whereas its provided ODA was 562 million US dollars in 2009, representing 0.11% of its GNI (OECD).

South Korea's GDP was around 97.51 billion US dollars in 1984, skyrocketed to 1.6 trillion US dollars in 2022. Its population was around 40 million people in the 1980s, and has increased to less than 52 million in 2022 (World Bank). South Korea provided USD 3.2 billion of ODA in 2022, representing 0.17% of its GNI; whereas its provided ODA was 1 million US dollars in 2009, representing 0.10% of its GNI. This data point to a gradual increase in the economic and human resources, reflected in the ability to influence foreign policy decisions and capacity.

To make sense of what these numbers mean, we need to understand the underlying political and economic conditions that enabled these two countries to enhance their financial capacity and share it with other countries in the form of foreign aid. Here, the “state transformation” concept should be reintroduced:

In order to understand how both states transformed themselves from aid recipients to global donors, we need to see not only the history of economic development but also how the power dynamics have evolved through that process. This chapter is as follows: After a brief historical context of both countries, the state transformation will be studied through a revised version of Jones & Hameiri's (2021) state transformation model. In their work, the three vectors “fragmentation”,

“decentralization” and “internationalization” help us understand the changes states have gone through while emerging as a middle power, thus contributing to the middle power literature from a combination point of domestic and foreign affairs. Although helpful, this model of state transformation needs to be revised because it has been tailored for the Chinese party-state. Similarly to their model, the idea of state transformation will be tailored for the Turkish and South Korean styles of capitalist development and state transformation. The main argument of reforms and capital accumulation leading to an increase of influential interest groups taking part in state structure (also sharing a Gramscian approach that puts emphasis on internal contestation for the decision-making process) will remain for the text, however, the differences will also be underlined to understand the nuances. The thesis argues that both Türkiye and South Korea have become regulatory states that monitor and moderate various sub-state actors’ competition in their own time and style. These nuances cannot be explained through the Chinese style of regulatory state. Therefore, it is necessary to go beyond the Chinese example of state transformation and bring Türkiye and South Korea as cases to see how this theory contributes to the middle power literature.

Once again, the state transformation formulation is *X/trigger* (globalization) → *Y/mechanism* (state transformation) → *Z/outcome* (middle power status). How power is exercised within the transformed state has an impact on the state’s foreign relations. The formulation hints at the idea that as the globalization process forces internal and external changes over the state, the nature of the state changes with contestation and uneven power/resource distribution. As a result, the middle power foreign policy emerges which is not a top-down decision but is the result of contestation. Transformation and ongoing struggles within the state shape the foreign policy (Jones, 2019) and the state transformation reveals the emergence and influence of diverse actors over the policy formulation and implementation process. This chapter will discuss the emergence of the Turkish and South Korean regulatory styles and their implications for the foreign policy, with empirical findings.

Türkiye's Transformation

Political History & Internationalization

Türkiye's political history, along with other domestic and international circumstances, was also heavily influenced by the change from a developmentalist state to a globalized and interconnected power. Until the 1980s, the strong-state tradition was dominant in Turkish politics (Keyman & Koyuncu, 2005). The Import-Substitution-Industrialization model, aims to develop domestic sectors to compete with imported goods and decrease dependence on developed countries. After the 1960 coup, the idea of planned economic development and the state as central planning actor gained momentum, following Keynesian welfare style. The ISI model required consumers to have adequate income to spend, and the high wages, through populist policies, sustained domestic consumer demand. The ISI model gave way to the rising industrialists who had started accumulating capital under 1950s protectionism. "Membership in NATO and the emergence of an increasing external demand for Türkiye's agricultural products during the Korean War enhanced Türkiye's integration into the global capitalist economy in the first half of the 1950s" (Sahin, 2023, p747). However, the state has faced a legitimacy problem of keeping its primary position as the coercive power, as the modernization and emergence of new actors asking for more inclusion in the public sphere diminished the state monopoly over decision-making process. The state's push for ISI model, clashing with the society's demands for revised distribution resulted in a balance of payments crisis as the import-dependence did not match with stagnant exports (Öniş & Senses, 2007), thus leading to the end of this style of industrialization in the 1970s. The increasingly globalized and interconnected world means international relations are now conducted beyond national units (Öniş, 2001). This crisis allowed external actors like the IMF, World Bank and the OECD to play a transformative role in the Turkish capital distribution.

As the country became dependent on external flows, the collapsed ISI model has left its place for a new export-oriented policy. The adoption of liberal economic policies in the 1980s with the Prime Minister Turgut Özal pushed Türkiye towards an era of globalization. The major boom in the 1980s, with the help of external actors, took place though big and small businesses benefiting from financial liberalization,

and became increasingly export-oriented. One criticism of this neoliberalization project was its fiscal instability and the absence of a regulatory framework (Öniş & Senses, 2007), which meant the state was susceptible for economic crises in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The 2001 economic crisis presented favorable opportunity for domestic actors to realize several reforms to provide macroeconomic stability (Bakir & Öniş, 2010). In this sense, the 21st century saw the rise of the regulatory state. Pioneered by the then-Minister of Economics Kemal Derviş, these regulatory reforms focused on strengthening regulatory bodies, guaranteeing central bank independence, and improving overall economic governance. After coming to power in 2002, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) continued this recovery programme, but gradually started to limit the activities of independent regulatory agencies like to recentralize economic power (Esen & Gumuscu, 2018a). “Total exports increased from less than 3 billion dollars in 1980 to 20 billion dollars in 1990 and more than 100 billion dollars in 2007” (Pamuk, 2008, p268) (*Figure 4*). Moreover, the influence of external actors was still present Bozkurt (2013) argues, as the AKP government still adhered to the IMF’s principles in its economic policies despite not signing a program after the 2008 crisis.

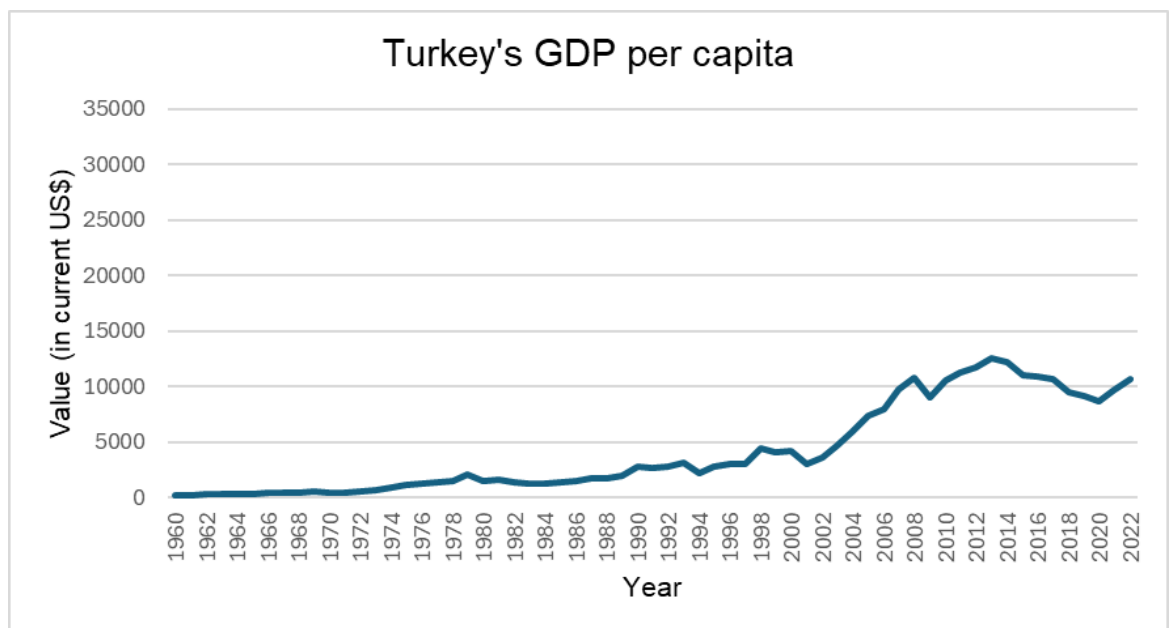


Figure 1. Türkiye's GDP per capita. Source: World Bank World Development Indicators

Turkish economy's steady path can be seen in Figure 1. The dipping points refer to 2001 and 2008 economic crises, and 2019 pandemic. Besides that, we can see major take-off starting from early 2000s, which coincides with JDP coming to power and EU accession talks.

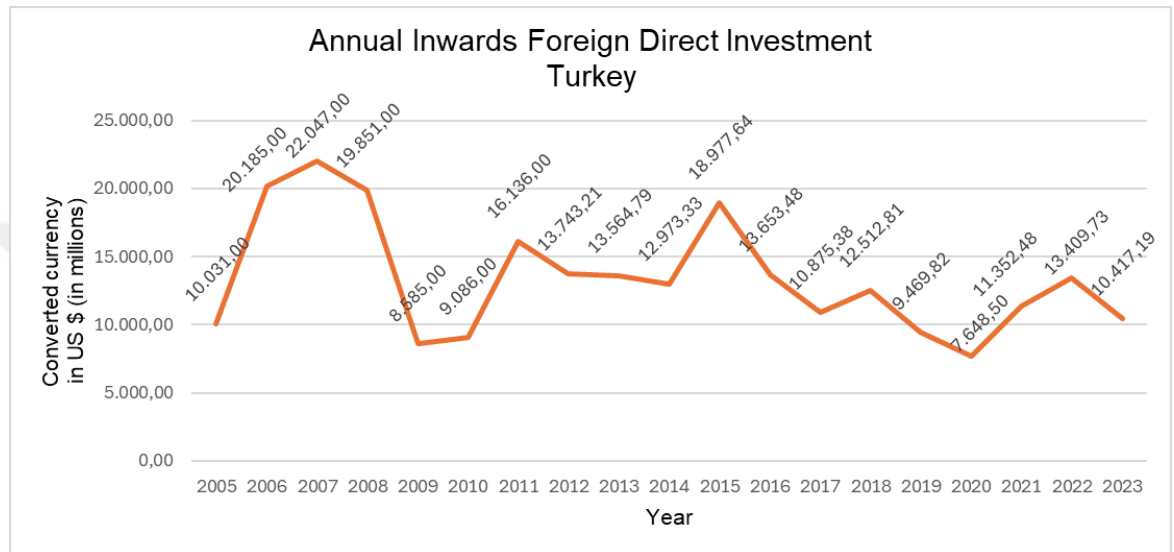


Figure 2. Türkiye's annual inwards Foreign Direct Investment. Source: OECD FDI main aggregates BMD4

The Foreign Direct Investment trends also reflect the 2008 crisis and 2019 pandemic; however, it is also understood that Türkiye starts losing or does not generate additional investing attraction in the late 2010s. Türkiye had somehow benefitted from the 2007-2008 financial crisis, as the central bank of the United States (the Fed) lowered interest rates and many investors fled to countries like Türkiye where investment rate was higher. This prevented economic damage even if the exports were decreasing see Figure 3).

State Transformation & Recentralization

Instead of “decentralization”, this subsection talks about the reorganization of state power, in an effort to understand how the loss of state monopoly over politics

due to globalization and proliferation of actors has been rekindled to an even more centralized model of governance with the change from parliamentary to presidential system. As mentioned above, opening up to the global market and economic reforms had resulted in the emergence and prominence of several interest groups in the politics, reflected both in the domestic regulations and Turkish foreign policy. Öniş (2006) names the EU membership process as the regional context of globalization, and argues this process has opened up operating space for moderate Islamist groups to enter into politics.

Since the failed coup attempt in 2016, President Erdoğan had been extensively using executive decrees under the emergency rule. His call for a “culturally authentic constitution” that emphasized harmony (Adar & Seufert, 2021) arguably gave fruit to the presidential system, concentrated executive powers in the hands of a single person. Esen & Gumuscu (2018b) argue that the switch to the presidential system in 2017 had institutionalized the centralization and monopolization of power at the hands of a single individual. This political system gives the executive power from the parliament to the president directly. “A state embedded within a consensus-oriented domestic political context is less likely to introduce changes than a state embedded within conflict-oriented domestic political context” (Grzywacz and Gawrycki 2021, p14).

Through a referendum held on 16 April 2017, Türkiye switched to a presidential government system. The executive power is concentrated in the hands of the president, who assumed the power of the prime minister and the cabinet. The president is the “sole center of power” (Adar & Seufert, 2021). The president can also be a member of a political party. Ministers are not chosen from the parliament but are appointed. The parliament’s legislative power is weakened as the presidential veto power is enlarged. The presidential and parliamentary elections are held simultaneously. Bedrihanoglu (2022) argues that the capital’s increased subordination of the state through financialization led to the separation of political and economic realms in favor of global markets. The presidential government system consists of offices, boards and ministries, whose division of labor is unclear and could potentially overlap. The centralized executive, weakened legislature and politicized judiciary are the main components of the system (Cilliler, 2021).

The president has control over cabinet appointments, can issue presidential decrees on a wide array of issues, can make changes in the administration system and make bureaucratic appointments without consulting the parliament (Esen & Gumuscu, 2018b). As seen in *Figure 3*, the presidential system is highly centralized in style, which means the state agencies involved in Turkish domestic and international politics need the President's approval to operate. The presidential model relies on "institutionalized personalism inherent to these systems" (Esen & Gumuscu, 2018b, p47), and the policies, although formulated in semi-autonomous institutions, eventually rely on the President's evaluation, appreciation and approval.

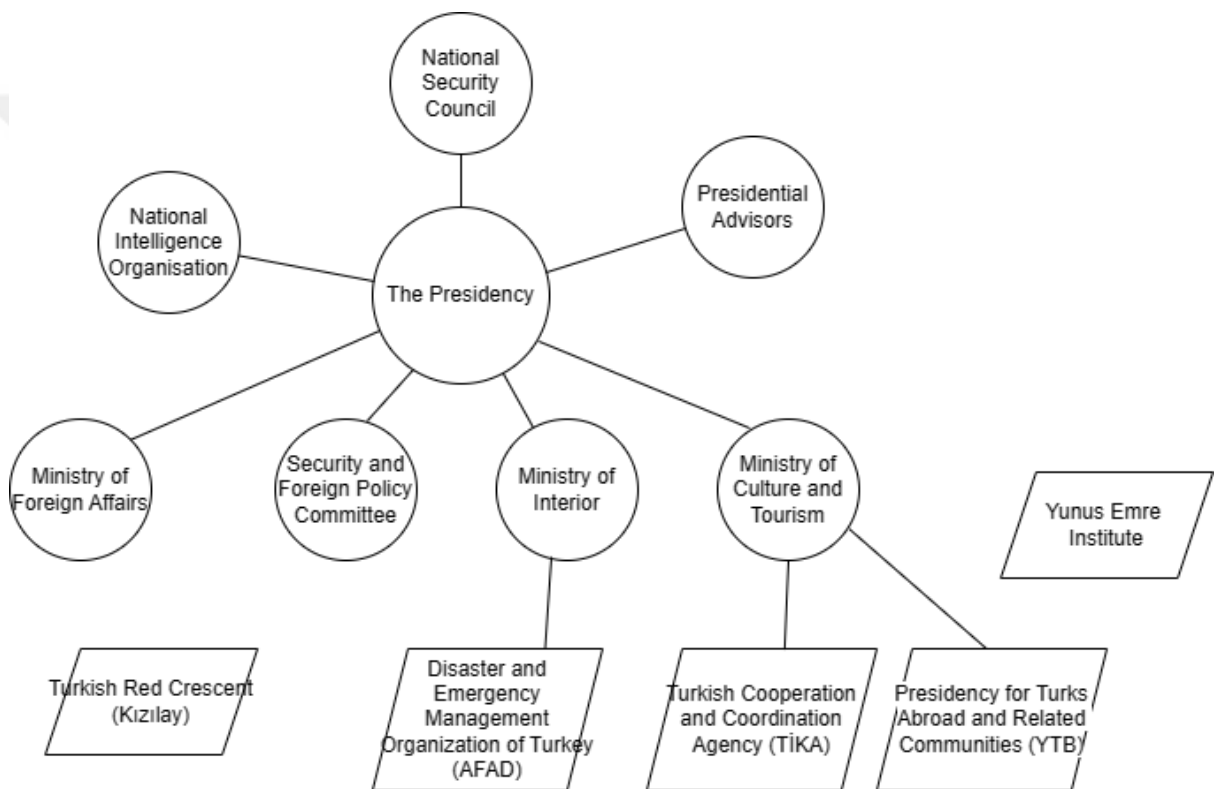


Figure 3. Structure and agents of the Turkish foreign policy decision-making process

As can be seen, not only the ministries but also soft power actors like TİKA and YTB are responsible towards the president. We can say that the emergence of these entities is born out of the necessity to engage with the world more. From aid to disaster relief, education to cultural diplomacy, Türkiye aims to represent itself and follow a relevant, and centrally-approved policy in the international arena.

Agency	Role
The Presidency	Head of state and government, chief of military, commander-in-chief for National Security Council.
The National Assembly	The parliament is the unicameral legislative body.
Presidential Advisors	A team of experts and executives, picked by the President.
National Security Council	Responsible for consideration and cooperation of security, military, foreign policies and reporting to the President.
National Intelligence Organisation	Gathers intelligence, under the provision of the Presidency.
Security and Foreign Policy Committee	Acts like an advisory board, convenes regularly.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	In charge of conducting foreign relations.
Ministry of Culture and Tourism	Promoting tourism and cultivating soft power.

Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA)	Responsible for Türkiye's official development assistance.
Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB)	Provides scholarships, cultural exchange programs for Turkish diaspora, international students, Turkic and Muslim communities.
Ministry of Interior	Responsible for domestic security affairs.
Disaster and Emergency Management Organisation of Türkiye (AFAD)	Responsible for disaster management and relief.
Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay)	Humanitarian charity foundation, affiliated with the International Red Crescent.
Turkish Industry and Business Association (TÜSİAD)	Non-governmental organization promoting private enterprise.
Independent Industrialists and Businessmen Association (MÜSİAD)	Non-governmental organization promoting trade and business connections.
Yunus Emre Institute	Promoting Turkish culture globally.

Table 1. Agencies involved in Turkish international affairs

Another interesting aspect of this reorganization is the emergence of metropolitan cities as global actors, as if they are creating a branding. For example, Istanbul has long been bidding to become a cultural hub and a political meeting point for the world, utilizing its unique geographical position. For example, solely in the year 2004, Istanbul has housed 154 festivals, with 10 of them being at the international level (Enlil et al., 2011). Moreover, Istanbul became the European Capital of Culture in 2010 (Alvarez & Yarkan, 2010). One reason is the existence of international airports on both sides of the city, directing the majority of European flights and popularization of Turkish Airlines, the flag carrier of Türkiye through sponsorships and extensive list of destinations. Istanbul has also housed politically important conventions, such as the 6th OSCE Summit in 1999, 17th NATO Summit in 2004, Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)'s 13th Islamic Summit in 2016, the 8th summit of The Organization of Turkic States in 2021 and the 4th Türkiye-Africa Business and Economic Forum in 2023.

Fragmentation & Interest Groups

Turkish economic and political transition has seen a dynamic connection between the state and interest groups. This connection is especially apparent starting from the AKP era, as the regulatory state became more involved in economics while the business groups got more influential over politics. The privatization of state assets and commodification of social services opened doors for politically connected investors to receive profitable business deals in the construction, energy, mining, tourism and health care sectors (Buğra & Savaşkan, 2014), which created a symbiotic relationship between the government and the interest groups that are aligned with the ruling party.

As discussed before, the neoliberal state had to regulate the interest groups that are in a competition to win over and utilize state sources. One example the exemption of several items in 2004, such as “port and airport construction, gold and silver mining, and diamond sales, from value-added tax (VAT)” (Esen & Gumuscu, 2018a, p358) which are the sectors many pro-government businesspeople are involved in. Certainly, this tax immunity is not done for charity reasons, as the

business actors return the favor by investing in pro-government entities and making donations to the party; overall fiscally keeping AKP in power.

Two of the most influential business groups, Turkish Industry and Business Association (TÜSİAD) and Independent Industrialists and Businessmen Association (MÜSİAD) provide great example of interest groups competing for space in the economic and political sphere. Formed in 1971, TÜSİAD is a pro-democracy non-governmental organization which represents the interests of the large Istanbul-based companies. MÜSİAD, more conservative and representing smaller to medium-sized enterprises, on the other hand, has risen out of the asymmetric distribution (Insel, 2003) and development in Anatolia, established later in 1990. The majority of MÜSİAD member firms were established during the late 1980s, parallel to the Turkish authorities adopting neoliberal policies after the 1980 military intervention. "MÜSİAD's rise coincided with Türkiye's shift towards a market economy in the 1980s" (Başkan, 2010, p403), when Islamic business circles were also in favor of an open market economy and integration with Europe. Öniş (2006) argues that during the AKP rule, MÜSİAD began emphasizing democratization, human rights, and European integration, reflecting a broader shift within Islamic thought towards embracing liberal values. This new "bourgeoisie," as Öniş terms it, sought greater political participation and access to resources (p138). MÜSİAD had influence over political economic decisions, for example lobbying for the government to create closer relations both with Islamic countries and with East Asian countries with large Muslim populations, such as Malaysia and Indonesia (Pamuk, 2008). The members participated with then Prime Minister Erbakan on his trip to East Asian countries and prepared a report to present. Being close to the conservative government, MÜSİAD still provides important economic policy thinking for AKP, such as proposals in its yearly research reports. TÜSİAD, on the other hand, has drifted away from the AKP government due to ideological differences, despite its members covering the majority of the Turkish exports.

State-affiliated institutions also emerged and diversified as a result of Türkiye's activism in humanitarian and development aid (Altunışık, 2019), such as Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) and Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD). Both have become very active as tools for foreign

policy, combining humanitarian aid with diplomacy. Humanitarian organizations form a symbiotic relationship with the state, in which the state uses them as tools for consent building in foreign relations, and these actors enjoy expansion of their geographical reach and activities in return.

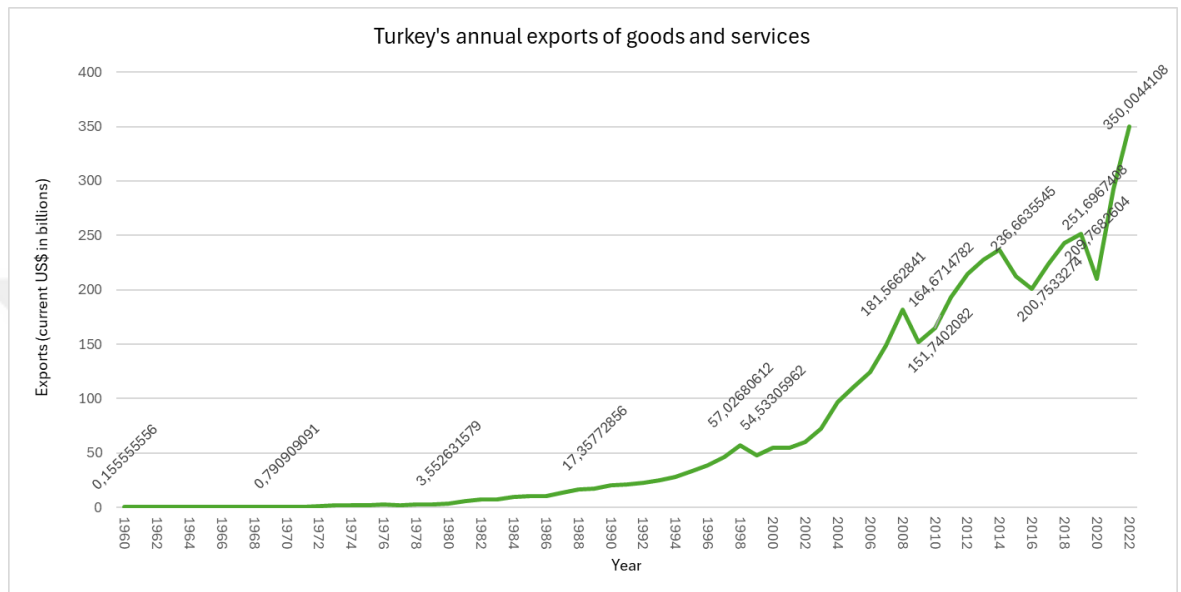


Figure 4. Türkiye's annual export of goods and services. Source: World Bank World Development Indicators

As seen from the figure above, the decision to open the country to foreign investment combined with the globalization trend and gave Türkiye and immense surge in the amount of goods and services exported. The main export products are raw materials and consumer goods.

Foreign Policy & Middle Power

Turkish foreign policy follows a complex structure, ambition overlapping or miscalculating influence at times. Oğuzlu (2023) argues that Türkiye is an “over-ambition middle power” the reason why is “the gap between Türkiye’s aspirations and the power capacity necessary to realize them” (p678). One example when this ambition manifested itself was the post-Arab Spring in the Middle East. Thinking that a new order was about to emerge in the region, Turkish policy elites took action

on the idea that Türkiye should lead that process. Instead of becoming an important broker, the Turkish aim to become an influential regional leader did not realize, and the overarching activism also strained relations with NATO allies, exemplified by the S-400 missile purchase (Kutlay & Öniş, 2021, p3060). Besides security and military concerns, the foreign policy conduct also has a tremendous effect on the Turkish economy, with diplomatic crises being reflected in currency fluctuations. Öniş & Kutlay (2017) highlight that economic reforms tied to strong external actors like the IMF created a period of stronger and predictable economic governance, which seems to be eroding as Türkiye adopts a “precious loneliness” approach in foreign politics.

One important element, which Türkiye has garnered worldwide attention, is humanitarian aid and mediation in global crises. Serving as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2009-2010 boosted Türkiye’s visibility and trustworthiness. Examples include facilitating talks between Israel and Syria in 2008 and mediating Iran's nuclear program negotiations (Oğuzlu, 2023, p681), hosting the 2010 Trilateral Balkan Summit and bringing Serbs and Bosniaks together, as well as the grain-export corridor between Russia and Ukraine in 2022. This "humanitarian turn" in foreign policy is also evident in the form of disaster relief and development assistance, the total amount reaching \$4.3 billion in 2013, compared to just \$133 million a decade earlier (TİKA source). Turkish NGOs actively provided aid during the Arab Spring uprisings and forwards, with the major recipients of Turkish foreign aid being from war-torn or fragile states (*Figure 5*). Türkiye’s NGOs became active in Yemen, Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt during and after their political revolutions, providing humanitarian assistance and assisting migrant populations (Gilley, 2015, p38). Türkiye also hosted the UN World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. According to Disaster and Emergency Management Organisation of Türkiye (AFAD), the country has spent 60.635.126 Turkish liras for international disaster relief and emergency aid in 2023.

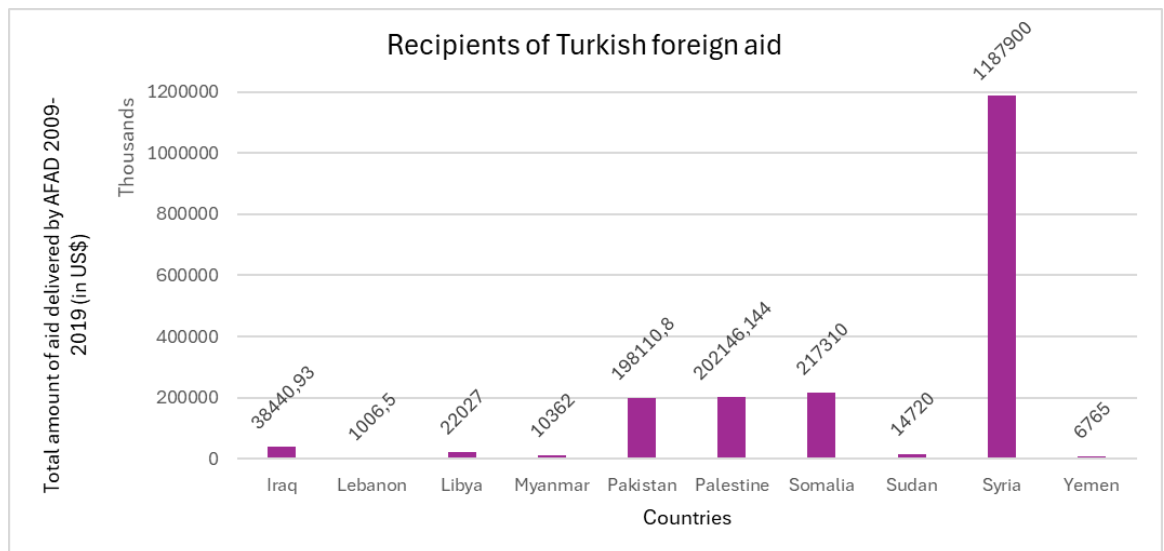


Figure 5. Major recipients of Turkish foreign aid. Source: INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN AID ANNUAL REPORT 2019, Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD)

Turkish foreign aid follows a humanitarian and needs-based approach. As the increased economy capacity allows it, Türkiye feels an increasing responsibility for contributing to global development and sustainable peace, which is translated into development cooperation. This “humanitarian foreign policy” rhetoric is not only used by AKP and President Erdoğan but also by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA) (Altunışık, 2019). This foreign policy goes beyond humanitarian aid because it also combines development projects and long term business/infrastructure agreements. For example, Türkiye not only has an overseas military training academy in Mogadishu, Somalia, but also maintains the airport and has signed other economic partnerships. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Türkiye also sees itself as an emerging development partner for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), hosting the Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries, in Istanbul on 9-13 May 2011.

South Korea's Transformation

Political History & Internationalization

“GDP per capita in South Korea in 1950 was only 876 Dollars... and therefore similar to the level of countries such as the Cote d’Ivoire” (Obinher and Lee, 2013, p259) while it had reached 32,422 \$ in 2022 (*Figure 6*). The Korean storyline follows a war-torn developing country realizing its “miracle on the Han River” and reinventing itself as one of the biggest and most innovative economies of today.

Supported through foreign aids that helped build the country from the Korean War’s ruins, the 1950s saw the implementation of the Import-Substitution-Industrialization model. Along with ISI, the country was also trying to increase its exports in order to build an open market, with the United States as its biggest donor and client. Despite the majority of the exports to the U.S. being labor-intensity products, the Vietnam War birthed the large conglomerates like Hyundai and Hanjin, thanks to demand for steel, transportation equipment and machinery (Woo, 2021). Arguably, these foundational years have given direction to the industrialization process of South Korea. The concept “miracle on the Han river” is the product of Park Chung-hee’s authoritarian rule, who seized power in the 1961 military coup and was elected as president in 1963. As a military dictator, his centralized and direct orders focused on developing transportation and infrastructure expansion which accelerated the nation's economic development and had a positive effect on international trade and industrial development. Park also had to show his anti-communist stance and keep close to the liberal order led by the U.S. Therefore, the 1960s were dominated by both domestic and foreign demand for South Korea to develop its heavy industries. Along with steel and metal, machine-building and electronics were also designated by the government as targeted industries to be centrally-developed. Construction, heavy and chemical industrialization (Rhyu, 2021) were given government subsidies and bank credits swiftly. “The production of producer goods had to substitute for imports at the same time that it had to be exported” (Woo, 2021, p112). The industrial deepening effort, motivated both by regional security concerns of the Cold War climate and by the desire to strengthen

the country, was successful thanks to the business subsidies of the government and bank credits given to favored businesses.

South Korea had its first democratically elected president, Roh Tae-woo in 1988 after the country had witnessed another coup in 1979 by Chun Doo-hwan. Roh administration had a major break from previous authoritarian conduct and put emphasis on political democratization. Roh's tenure was also the first time an official used the "middle power" concept to present its aspirations on the international stage (Shin, 2016). This change of aspiring foreign policy also had an opportunity to test itself when Seoul hosted the Olympics in 1988.

Political reforms were followed by economic reforms during Kim Young-sam's term who took measures to tackle corruption in corporations and enhance competitiveness in the global market. During that time the *chaebol* conglomerates were aggressively taking loans in order to fuel their expansion into the world economy. Increased borrowings and failed returns, coupled with the 1997 Asian Financial crisis revealed the excess debt and the vulnerability of the economy, not being able to pay off the IMF loans. The crisis brought Kim Dae-jung, a "Neoliberal Revolutionist," to power, who continued transparency reforms in conglomerate operations and followed a proactive foreign investment policy that helped the exports such as semiconductors, automobiles and mobile phones to recover. In the end, South Korea was able to pay off its IMF loans even before the due date. During this time, hosting the 2002 FIFA World Cup alongside Japan further solidified Korea's international image.

Roh Moo-hyun's "Peace and Prosperity Policy" also known as "Balancer Initiative" (Shin, 2016) continued the focus on globalization while promoting South Korea's position as a neutral and sensible bridge that can act as a balancer in the region. Roh actively pursued the KORUS Free Trade Agreement with the US and strived for improved relations with North Korea, even holding a historic summit with Kim Jong-il, becoming the first president to cross the border.

Lee Myung-bak's "MB Doctrine" had a pragmatic and market-oriented approach that aimed to focus on economic growth, increased income and green growth (known as Korea 7-4-7 plan). The most notable indicators of the success of this plan was South

Korea's admission to the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 2009 as a member, the only member that went from being a beneficiary to being a donor. During his term, South Korea also signed an FTA with the European Union in 2011. Lee Myung-bak's "MB Doctrine" emphasized a pragmatic "Global Korea" vision. He aimed to significantly increase GNI and propel Korea to become the world's seventh largest economy. His "MBnomics" strategy, including the "Korea 7·4·7" plan, pursued high economic growth, increased per capita income, and a focus on green growth. Notably, South Korea graduated from being an aid recipient to a donor nation in OECD-DAC, and signed a Free Trade Agreement with the EU in 2011.

Similarly, Lee's Global Korea campaign (Synder, 2009) was also of notable success, Lee's predecessor, Park Geun-hye came to power with promises of "happy people, secure Korean Peninsula, reliable and exemplary nation" (Presidential Office Archive, 2013) and focused on active engagement with the Asia-Pacific region, through initiatives like the Northeast Asia Peace and Co-operation Initiative (NAPCI) and signing an FTA with Australia. Park also made reforms in the structure of administration, launching new ministries.

Following the impeachment of Park, the next president Moon Jae-in had garnered international attention for his peaceful policy towards North Korea, which he was successful in bringing North and the U.S. together for denuclearization talks as well as reinvigorating the inter-Korean peace process. Moon administration was also popular domestically thanks to new implementations of raising minimum wages and lowering working hours. Moon's "New Southern Policy" aimed to diversify South Korea's economic partnerships and lessen dependence on China.

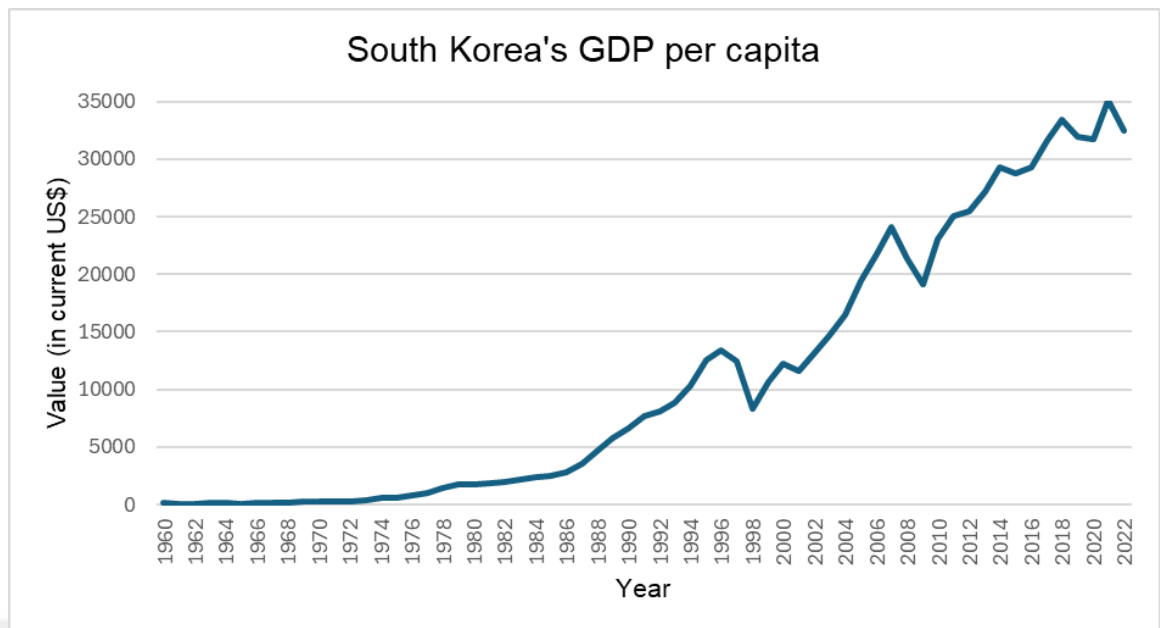


Figure 6. South Korea's GDP per capita. Source: World Bank World Development Indicators

Similar to the Turkish trend, South Korean GDP also saw an immense increase parallel to globalization and interconnectedness. The country managed to navigate the 1997 Asian financial crisis, with manufacturing sector emerging as more resilient. The 2000s also saw a steady upward trajectory as the country diversified its economy with technological innovations and the service sector.



Figure 7. South Korea's annual inwards Foreign Direct Investment. Source: OECD FDI main aggregates BMD4

Foreign Direct Investments play important role in stimulating South Korean economy, because the major powerhouses of electronics and machinery thrive with such interest. The government also encourages the investors with a stable market and tax breaks.

State Transformation & Decentralization

In 2006, Seoul Metropolitan Government released its vision and goals for Seoul to be a “World City leading the northeast Asian economy” (Ha, 2012). The vision included several aspects like culture, ecology and welfare. High tech industries, venture capital concentrated in Seoul. 1988 Summer Olympics, 2002 football World Cup. Lee Myung-bak’s tenure as the Mayor of Seoul between 2002-2006 can be regarded as a demonstration of his business-style politics which he then utilized for the whole country during his presidency.

South Korea’s foreign policymaking structure reflects the strong presidentialism with the President and the office (*Cheong Wa Dae*/Blue House). Although several ministries, the National Assembly, intelligence services and interest groups take part in decision-making and implementation, it is ultimately the president who is formally tasked with taking foreign policy decisions (Pacheco Pardo, 2021).

South Korea’s first constitution in 1948 had a presidential-parliamentary mixed system. With the Second Republic, the 1960 constitution was revised in favor of a parliamentary system, which was switched to a fully presidential system in 1962 with the Third Republic constitution. The president only serves for a single five-year presidential term, and has ample decisive power in key appointments. The election cycles are unsynchronized for the president and the national assembly members. Competition between executive and legislative majorities swings the government from between institutional gridlock and hyper-dominant presidency scenarios (Croissant, 2002). Because the elected president still remains a member of their political party after inauguration, he/ she is also able to exert influence over National Assembly decisions (Lee, 2022).

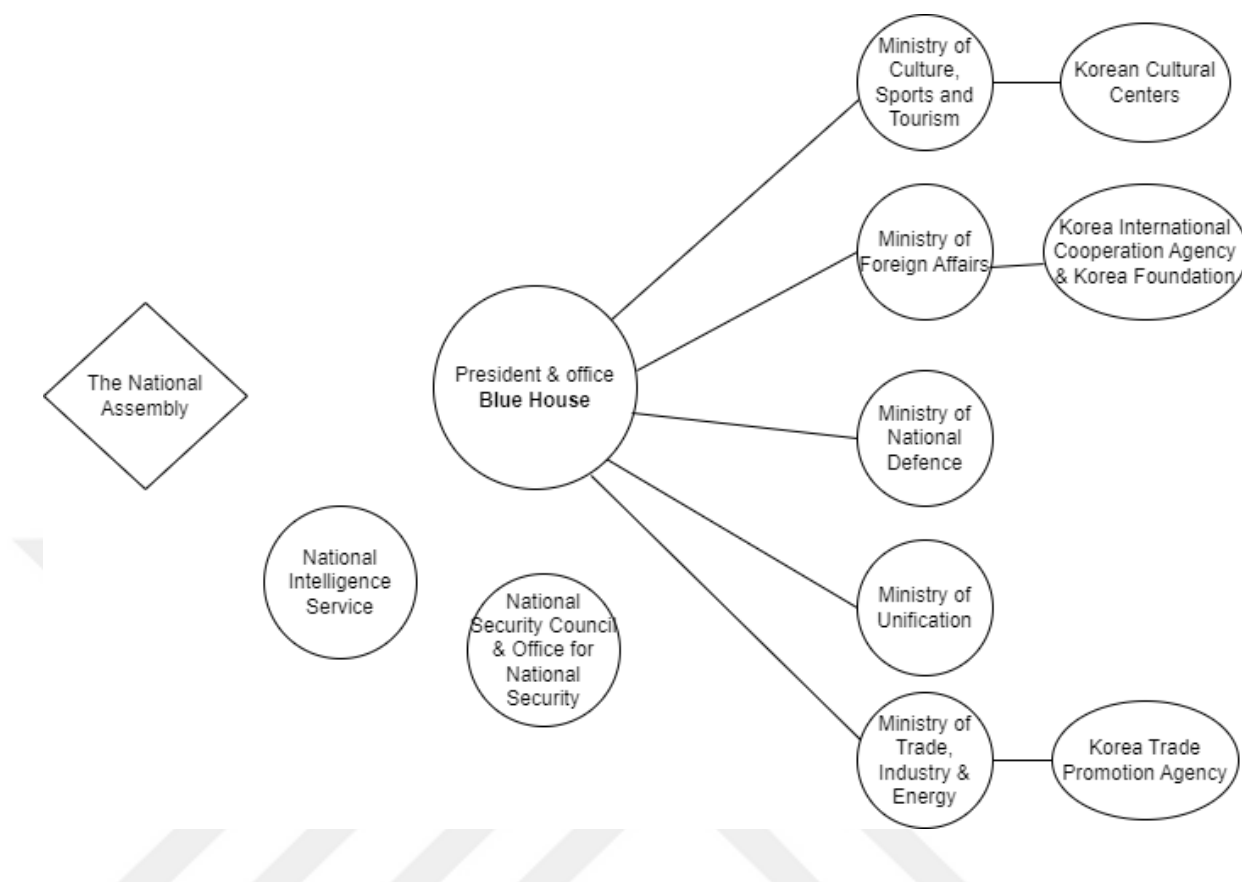


Figure 8. Structure and agents of the South Korean foreign policy decision-making process

Agency	Role
The Presidency	Head of state and government, commander-in-chief of Republic of Korea Armed Forces, leads the State Council.
The National Assembly	The parliament is the unicameral legislative body.

National Intelligence Service	Responsible for gathering intelligence about domestic and international affairs, as well as North Korea.
National Security Council Office for National Security	Advisory to the President on foreign, military and domestic policies related to national security.
Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism	Responsible for promoting tourism, culture, art, religion, and sports.
Korean Cultural Centers	Aims to promote Korean culture and international exchange, run by Korean Cultural Information Service under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	In charge of conducting foreign relations.
Korea International Cooperation Agency	Governmental organization for implementing Official Development Assistance.
Korea Foundation	Non-profit organization working for international communication and advancing South Korea's diplomatic relations.
Ministry of National Defence	Responsible from South Korean military branches.

Ministry of Unification	Promoting inter-Korean communication and cooperation.
Ministry of Trade, Industry & Energy	Regulates the economic policy, promotes foreign investment in Korea.
Korea Trade Promotion Agency	Carries trade and investment promotion activities.

Table 2. Agencies involved in South Korean international affairs

Mobilization of natural resources for industrial development and emergence of local actors meant the government was pushed for reforming the state-controlled institutions towards decentralization. Post-1987 South Korean politics has benefitted in practicing local democracy. “In addition to the popular election of local representatives (legislators and executives) at all levels, there has been a transfer of administrative and fiscal resources to lower levels of government“ (Bae, 2021, p492).

The 1997 Asian Financial Crisis exposed the weaknesses of South Korea’s centralized government and gave way for the rise of pro-local politicians, including Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun, as well as other reformists who called for decentralization. Deregulation and liberalization trends have shaped the overall direction of South Korea’s foreign economic policy throughout the 1990s and 2000s (Lee, 2021). In 1994, direct election of local government was put in place instead of central appointment, with the Local Autonomy act.

The 1997 economic crisis was the first major point that pushed South Korea to further decentralize, now including the economic sphere as well. 1998-2003 Kim Dae-jung administration popularized government reorganization programmes and downsizing central ministries (Kim, 2000). Kim Dae-jung administration’s reforms were furthered by the succeeding president Roh Moo-hyun. During his presidency

(2003-2007), Roh introduced the Special Act on Decentralisation (2004) which contained elements such as “rational allocation of authority between the central and the local governments, transferring” (Bae, 2021, p496). The successive Lee Myung-bak (2008–2013), Park Geun-hye (2013–2017), and Moon Jae-in (2017–2022) governments have continued to implement several reforms such as merging smaller cities for efficient economic output, Special Act on Restructuring of Local Administrative Systems (2010), and revision of the Local Autonomy Act.

What is interesting in South Korea’s experience with decentralization is, regardless of the implementation success of the proposals, each president of the post-democratization era has promoted varying measures to include local institutions and increase their fiscal capacities despite the strong presidential system.

Fragmentation & Interest Groups

At this point, there should be a specific space dedicated to *chaebols*, the family-owned conglomerates of South Korea that helped catapult the economy towards its success today. Established in the wake of the Korean War, the *chaebols* owe their growth to Park Chung-hee regime and the Five-Year Economic Development Plans in the 1960s (Rhyu, 2021). In order to quickly modernize and industrialize the country, the government adopted centrally-planned developmentalist policies. The state intervened to allocate the resources strategically, free market rules were not of primary concern.

President Park Chunghee’s declaration of heavy and chemical industrialization (HCI), which was announced on 12 January 1973. Park's focus on heavy and chemical industrialization, coupled with the "exportization of all industries" slogan, provided the groundwork for *chaebols* to flourish (Rhyu, 2021; Lim, 2012). The government strategically allocated resources and prioritized rapid industrialization over free-market principles, creating an environment where chaebols could become competitive large-scale investors and dominate the global market (Rhyu, 2021). Well-known companies like Samsung, Hyundai, Lotte and LG are the outputs of this state-favoritism. However, this close relationship with the state meant that the interest groups were extremely influenced and controlled by the

authoritarian state had a downside until the democratization in 1987 (Lim & Yeonho, 2021). The scarce resources allowed for selected industries meant the big businesses could not become fully independent actors in the public sphere in order to not lose the preferential treatment. After the democratization in 1987, interest groups and their range of motion gradually increased, and started acting as intermediaries to aggregate public and private demands, pressuring the government for consideration (You, 2020). Despite various attempts at institutional change and *chaebol* reforms, their presence in both the economic and political sphere remains strong. One example is a former-president himself, Lee Myung-bak who served as Hyundai Construction's CEO (Shin, 2016) and mayor of Seoul before running for the presidential office. *Chaebols* are the driving blocks of the South Korean economy with their branches in numerous industries and profits mostly from exports,

Along with professional organization and labor unions, the most prominent interest groups are economic organizations representing the business interests of South Korea such as (Federation of Korean Industries) (FKI) that works as the representative of *chaebols* and the Korea Federation of Small and Medium Business (KBIZ) that secures the interest of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). They are the organizations established during the authoritarian regime and have continued their existence by reforming themselves in accordance to the political shifts.

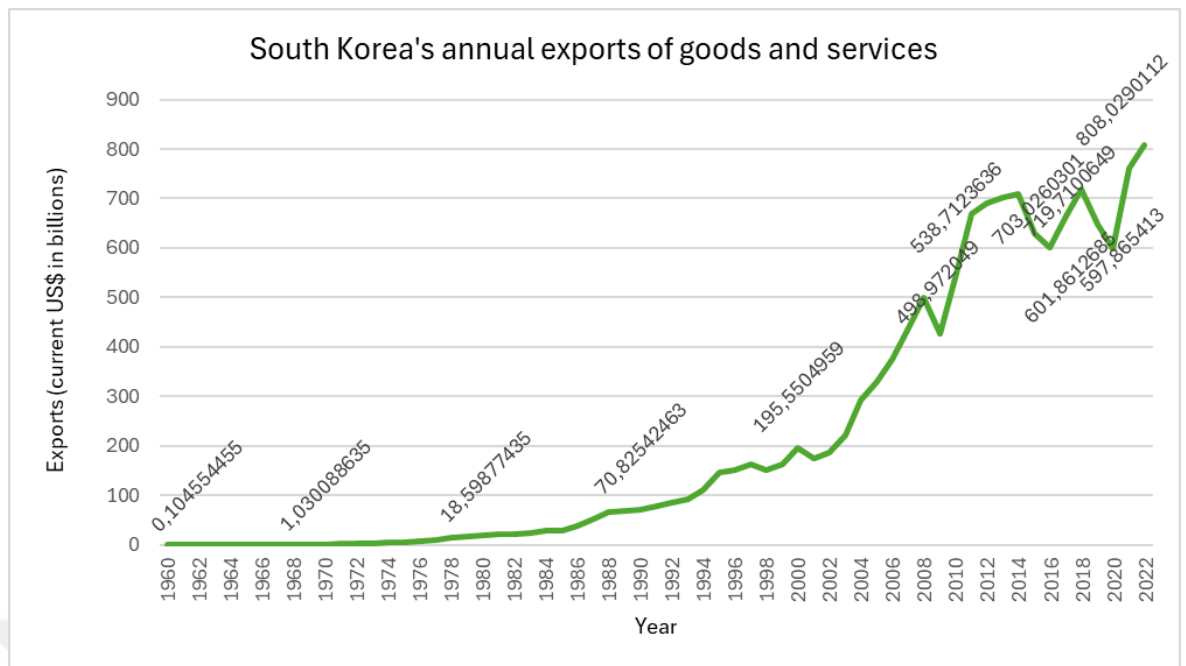


Figure 9. South Korea's annual exports of goods and services. Source: World Bank World Development Indicators

Primarily driven by electronics and automobile sector in the 90s, South Korea integrated itself into global supply chains. State investments in research and resources resulted in quality-assured exports and diversification of goods such as technology goods and appliances in the 2000s.

Foreign Policy & Middle Power

South Korea's concentration of power and economic capacity allows the president to pursue continuous foreign economic policies efficiently. Utilizing its economic capacity, soft power and efficient presidential system that favors neoliberal policies regardless of the incumbent president's party ideology, South Korea has actively pursued a middle power foreign policy strategy to show presence in world affairs. One example was the creation of the G20 group which provided Korea new possibilities for diplomatic activity (Cooper, 2013). The 2010 G20 Summit in Seoul, the first summit outside the Western world, in which Korea advocated for a development agenda and action plan, highlighting its position as a bridge between developed and developing nations. Kim & Lee (2013) argue that South Korea is

uniquely suited to play a “bridging” role between developed and developing countries or even between traditional and emerging global donors, thanks to its own experience and expertise in development cooperation and impartial stance. This perspective allows the country to offer "silent aid" (Woods, 2008) that becomes alternatives for aid-receiving countries beyond the IMF and World Bank.

Besides leading the region with climate change politics such as the "New Green Deal" (Kim & Nancy, 2021), one of the continuous issues with South Korean policy, more old and complex than anything else, is the inter-Korean reconciliation problem, which several presidents have created initiatives to realize. Kim Dae-jung’s “Sunshine Policy”, which he was later awarded a Nobel Peace Prize for, was one of the most important developments in that aspect. Roh Moo-hyun’s following doctrine also aimed to make Kore not only more active in inter-Korean relations but also assuming the role of balancer in Northeast Asia. removing the self-doubt stemming from being squeezed between great power politics, achieving a more independent and inclusive foreign policy beyond the Cold War mentality. Another important step in the inter-Korean peace process came during Moon Jae-in’s presidency with several cross-border meetings were held with the attendance of the U.S. President Trump. The process, despite failing due to leaders’ disagreements, showed South Korean initiative and influence over regional politics, one example being the North-South joint Winter Olympics in 2018.

In addition, the increased economic capacity of South Korea is also reflected in its position as an Official Development Assistance (ODA) donor. Again, South Korea is the only OECD member that has climbed from an aid-recipient country to donor status. Providing ODA not only benefits bilateral relations but also can be a tool for promoting regional or global influence. Jung et al. (2018) find in their research that South Korea also benefits from the support of its aid recipients in international institutions like the United Nations General Assembly, such as voting alongside Korea with nuclear and humanitarian issues. South Korea's ODA is strategically distributed to relatively small and weak economies in South Asia or Africa, not only severing African countries’ ties with North Korea but also in terms of diversifying global diplomacy (Hwang, 2014). *Figure 10* shows the gradual increase of annual ODA amount, which also coincides with the economic propensity

among the years as well as the diversification of foreign relations, especially starting from Lee Myung-bak's presidency.

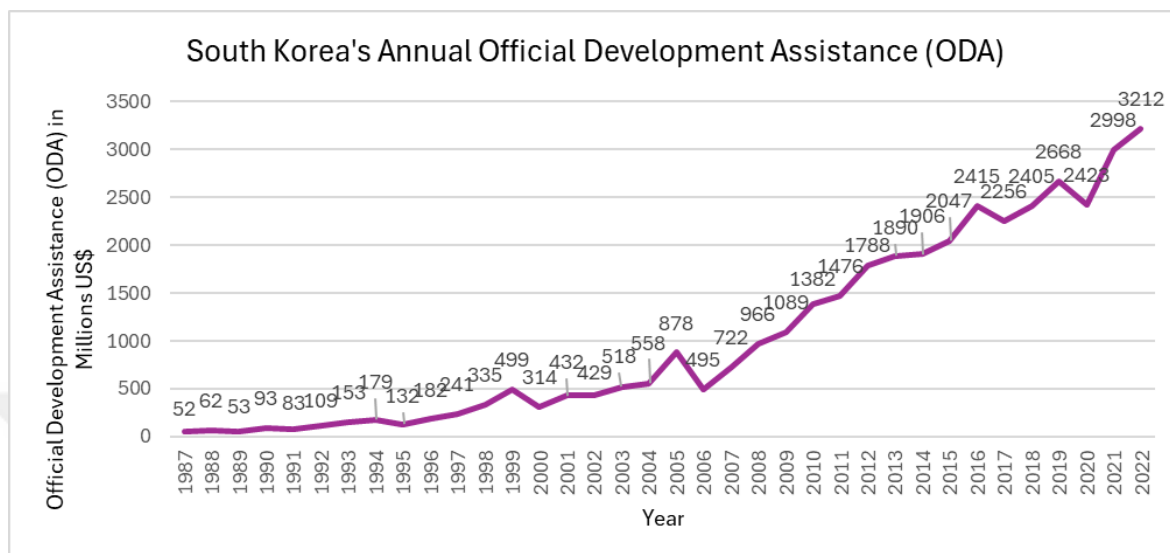


Figure 10. South Korea's Annual Official Development Assistance (ODA). Source: Flows by donor (ODA+OOF+Private) [DAC1], OECD Data Explorer

CONCLUSION

This final chapter makes a recollection of the drivers and the explanations behind the process. By using Process Tracing method, the thesis studied the economic and structural changes Türkiye and South Korea went through in the late 90s and 2000s. The reason was to find the domestic changes and factors that brought out the active foreign policy of these two countries. By doing so, it contributes to the middle power literature, bringing more nuanced explanation to actor identity beyond foreign policy behavior. It is argued that the internal dynamics, the demands of interest groups and the global networks have shaped the state away from its traditional understanding of Weberian style towards a more fragmented cumulative entity. Despite both being presidential systems and central-decision authorities, both states have to consider and guide the proliferated actors in the political domain in order to produce a coherent foreign policy. That is why the state has now acquired a “regulatory” position. The thesis has aimed to convey the transformation the states went through that gave way to the complex net of interests and competition for the decision-making structure, underline the domestic nuances that enabled said transformation and provide examples from foreign policy that shows middle power behavior.

Both Türkiye and South Korea have accumulated great economic power and capacity in the late 1990s/early 2000s which was then translated into a more proactive foreign policy. The entry of foreign investment and capital has immense growth on economy, which can be seen from GDP increase in both countries. This relationship, however, is twofold: the country becomes dependent on continuous foreign capital in order to keep up the upwards growth trend. The attraction of foreign capital is not only necessary for the state but also for the actors whose work involves foreign policy and relations. They also demand from the state to regulate these relations so that their operating space is more stable.

Türkiye has gone from a state-centered economy with strong central planning, to a globalized state integrated into the liberal international order. This transformation continued with the recentralization of power under the current AKP government, crowned with the shift to a presidential system. South Korea, on the other hand, transitioned from an authoritarian regime with centralized control to a more decentralized democracy, but did not lose its traditional presidential structure and the decision-making system. Powerful conglomerates, accompanied with the reorganization of power, provided remarkable economic growth.

At this point it is also useful to additionally comment on the current prominent actors within the state's decision making structure. The presidential system, historically introduced in the United States, consists of legislature, judiciary bodies and an individual elective selected for a fixed term (Yılmaz, 2018). Both Türkiye and South Korea operate within a presidential system in which the ministries are directly responsible towards the presidency and the top decision-maker is the president himself. Despite their contrasting trajectories and differences in the bureaucratic structure, a comparative analysis of Turkish and South Korean style of regulatory state offers valuable insights for the middle power and state transformation literature.

Contextual Findings and Contributions

The “middle power” literature, traditionally, notes an international status of state that is neither as influential as great powers nor small states with limited influence. Although there is not a universally agreeable definition of what a middle power is, it is undeniably tied to how a state behaves in the international arena. Evolving along with international politics, these states aim to take up more space within the system they are benefactors of. By promoting multilateral relations and diplomacy, the middle power states push for being more included and heard.

The term was first coined to represent states like Canada, Sweden, Japan and Australia, during the Cold War context, as a measure of military and economic improvement. At that time, tangible measures of capacity was seen as the source of moving from a small state to a middle one, implicating that if power is accumulated enough, they could also be considered as great powers. In the 21st century, however,

the meaning of the concept changed is the number of states in this position increased. Countries like South Korea, Mexico, India and Türkiye entered into stage as emerging middle powers that had joined the liberal international order, experiencing a rise in their material and immaterial (such as diplomatic) capabilities.

The literature begins with Chapnick's (1999) classification of middle power states into three approaches: hierarchical, functional and behavioral. The hierarchical approach underlines the specific position a state occupies within the international relations, which is determined by the GDP and military power; and the functional approach highlights which role the state can serve for the international society, such as a donor, mediator, peacekeeper etc. The behavioralist approach assumes that middle powers are identified by their characters and foreign policy behavior. The behavioralist approach takes off and the rest of the literature focuses on what elements constitute the identity of a middle power state. According to Robertson and Carr (2023), the most prominent values of this identity are: internationalism, multilateralism and being "Good Citizens". The more integrated and compliant they are, the more prominence they acquire.

Certainly, elements like economic capability, regional (in)stabilities, and domestic political trends have influence over the foreign policy behavior of middle powers. The economic capacity gives upper hand when offering aid or initiating negotiations. The regional (in)stabilities influence the maneuver capacity of the state among its immediate neighbors and the domestic political trends influence the level of engagement the state has with foreign affairs as well as the international responses to their foreign policy.

As for the policy implications, we see that humanitarian diplomacy has been useful for both countries in establishing a presence in global affairs. However, this role should be institutionalized and geographically diversified in efforts in order to embed long-term humanitarian policies with foreign policy objectives.

Methodological Findings and Contributions

The main aim of this study is to uncover the actor proliferation-driven structural change Türkiye and South Korea went through that brought out a middle

power status in international relations. Therefore, we should understand the idea of state transformation and its formulation, in order to apply to these two cases.

The traditional perspective, heavily influenced by Max Weber, defines the state as a centralized entity that holds the monopoly on legitimate violence within a defined territory. This legitimacy stems from a set of established rules and regulations. The state's primary functions are administration, security, and resource allocation; as the bureaucrats play an important role in the management of this interwoven system. The rise of the Weberian-Westphalian state came with the Second World War and its aftermath. The development of national welfare states that focused on internal economic growth were the outcomes of institutions like the Bretton Woods system and Keynesian economic policies. The Keynesian principles, encouraging the government to intervene with the economy to stimulate demand and promote social welfare, were supported with fixed exchange rates that facilitated international trade.

The 1970s, however, brought significant changes as the rising deficits, the collapse of the Bretton Woods system and the heightening of the Cold War adversary brought a new era of neoliberalism. State interventionism left its place for free markets and limited government involvement. The IMF and the World Bank played a formative role in bringing developing countries towards industrialization and global market integration. This expansion and globalization, thus, fundamentally altered the role of the state, which were no longer "Weberian, sovereign monoliths" (Hameiri and Jones, 2016, p78). The state is fragmented, decentralized, and increasingly internationalized. Along with the central authority, a network of actors, including NGOs, corporations, and influential individuals, now share the decision-making space. Therefore, this transformation process has reduced the state to a position of a regulator, seeking to maintain a balance between competing interests.

There are three key vectors of state transformation: fragmentation, decentralization, and internationalization. Fragmentation refers to the dispersion of power among various actors that compete for realization of their interests. Decentralization weakens the central state's grip, allowing regional and local actors greater influence over the decision-making process. Internationalization involves the state's participation in global governance networks and the extension of its influence

beyond its borders. Understanding this transformation is crucial for comprehending the dynamics of international relations in the 21st century.

Empirical Findings and Contributions

Türkiye

As the export-driven development model fueled the economic growth, the domestic interest groups demanded Turkish foreign policy to put emphasis on economic security. Esen & Gumuscu (2018a) argue that the government has gained the loyalty of the business class through a system of rewards and punishment. Here what is important to underline is that economic liberalization does not necessarily guarantee the maintenance of democratic practices. This section will reinstate the state transformation Türkiye has undergone through process tracing method, to uncover the causal mechanisms that gave way for the country to emerge as a middle power in international relations.

Prior to the 1980s, Türkiye has followed a strong state model, focusing on domestic development through Import Substitution Industrialization and state planning. This model, however, was challenged by the rising debt and the need for increased exports. Loans from the IMF and World Bank funds played an important role in pushing Türkiye towards the liberal global economy after the 1980s. In that sense the Turkish case of economic transformation follows the same arch of the state transformation model aforementioned.

Consequently, the adoption of neoliberal economic policies led to a major growth starting from the 1990s as the foreign investment was allowed and increased exponentially. One problem with this neoliberalization project was its susceptibility to international economic crises. For example, the 2001 economic crisis highlighted the fiscal instability and the lack of regulations.

The post-crisis era saw reforms and the rise of the “regulatory state”, that aims to limited regulation the market interactions and interest groups’ demands within complex international networks (Yeung, 2010). The globalization and the reforms led to the emergence of powerful business groups with growing political influence

such as TÜSİAD (pro-democracy, large Istanbul-based companies, Istanbul-based) and MÜSİAD (conservative, smaller businesses, Anatolia-based). The AKP government's policies favored certain business sectors aligned with the ruling party, creating a symbiotic relationship.

The JDP government had also initially continued these reforms but gradually recentralized the decisive power by limiting the autonomy of regulatory agencies and strengthening the executive. This trend reached its peak in 2017 as the country switched from parliamentary to presidential system, granting the president significant power over the decision-making process.

Circling back to the middle power concept, Türkiye highlights this role as behaving as an aid donor and/or mediator in international relations. However, Türkiye's foreign policy is also criticized for being overly ambitious as its role as a regional leader, which could exceed its actual capabilities.

South Korea

The South Korean case of state transformation and international status reflects the generation of a globalized foreign policy through economic security, guided by a traditionally strong presidential system. The history of democratization, coupled with the shift from capital accumulation to export-driven policy, laid the groundwork for South Korea to emerge as a competitive actor in global politics who could promote its development model as an example. The confidence to be more active in international matters comes from economic security, but surpasses that to include soft power and multilateralism. Self-identifying as a “middle power”, South Korea now pursues a more proactive approach in foreign policy, despite regional and political limitations such as the inter-Korean unification problem or the balance between the US-China nexus. This subsection will restate the state transformation South Korea has undergone through process tracing method, to uncover the causal mechanisms that gave way for the country to emerge as a middle power in international relations. It was argued and studied that the self-acclaimed middle power status is also accepted by the international society through mixed efforts between state agencies and interest groups pushing forward for an independent but

open and multilateral foreign policy. Despite a traditionally strong presidential system, the democratization process and the proliferation of actors brought out the South Korean foreign policy to operate akin to a business model. In order to pursue a more engaged foreign policy, the country highlights its economic capacity, technological innovations and soft power projection.

The pre-democratization era South Korea was governed by a strong and centralized government which gave limited autonomy to local bodies. This government model facilitated rapid economic growth through direct decrees and state focus on certain industries, specifically construction, heavy and chemical industrialization (Rhyu, 2021). However, this model lacked public accountability and participation, which became possible only after 1987 democratization efforts to empower the bureaucratic structure and the local governments. Along with the pro-democracy movements from the South Korean public, the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis was also a driver behind this decentralization process, in which the vulnerabilities of centralized control were exposed.

In order to understand the South Korean state transformation, we should also be looking at the concept of chaebols, the large family-owned conglomerates that emerged during the Cold War authoritarian regime. The central government support and centralized planning fueled their success in key industries as few businesses were able to get support and subsidies from the state. Thus, chaebols became the powerhouses that boosted the country's economic capacity. Certainly, chaebols were not free from scrutiny as they were criticized for their close ties with the authoritarian government and limiting the monopolizing the market. As a result, many Democratic presidents have attempted to introduce chaebol reforms since the democratizing, but their political and economic influence still remain significant.

When it comes to the foreign policy and the middle power behavior of South Korea, we see that the continuous tradition of strong presidentialism allows continuity in foreign economic policies and effectiveness in decision-making. The state utilizes its economic and soft power to pursue a middle power strategy, especially in the immediate region and in multilateral institutions. For example, South Korea advertises its own journey from being a beneficiary to a donor in foreign policy and engages to bridge the gap between developing and developed

nations. Moreover, the country also channels its economic capacity to lead regional initiatives or offering aid and loan alternatives (Kim & Lee, 2013). The Official Development Assistance (ODA) programs not only improve bilateral relations but also increase South Korea's international influence and diversified strategic partnerships.

In conclusion, this comparative study showcases the nuanced nature of state transformation and its sources of economic development and international politics. The text contributes to the “middle power” literature by analyzing the Turkish and South Korean foreign policies beyond the behavioral approach and surface-level analysis. The two cases bring valuable insights for understanding how internal dynamics and power competition, derived from economic capabilities, translate themselves as a certain role in international relations.

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