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Has South Korea achieved smart power?

An analysis on South Korea's development
and its impact on its foreign policy

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*“I believe that every choice that we make
is the beginning of change,
not the end.*

*I hope that in this new world
we can say to each other:
‘Welcome.’”*

— Kim Namjoon

Abstract:

South Korea has experienced an unprecedented economic development followed by the “*hallyu wave*” that allowed the country to enter the popular scene, becoming more present in the international community. South Korea’s perceived image has changed from that of a war-torn dictatorship country, to that of an economic, technology and tourist hub. This analysis tries to prove if South Korea is trying to achieve smart power or if it rather is dependent on soft power. In order to do that, a study regarding South Korea’s history, politics, economics, culture and foreign policy is going to be made.

Key words:

South Korea, foreign policy, smart power, hard power, soft power, nation’s image.

Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	5
2. Purpose and motives	6
3. Literature review	7
3.1. Power theory	7
3.1.1. Soft power and liberalism.....	7
3.1.2. Hard power	11
3.1.3. Smart power.....	12
3.2. Foreign policy	12
3.2.1. Public diplomacy	13
3.2.1.1. A nation’s image	15
3.2.1.2. Nation branding.....	18
3.2.1.3. Cultural diplomacy.....	20
3.2.2. South Korea’s foreign policy.....	23
4. Research aims and questions.....	31
5. Methodology.....	32
6. Results: analysis and discussion	33
7. Conclusion and proposals.....	35
Bibliography	37

1. Introduction

In 1945, with its annexation from Japan at the end of World War II, ending decades of Japanese colonial rule, South Korea as a nation emerged. To this day, it remains divided from North Korea by the Parallel 38 as a consequence of the Korean War, which ended in 1953. South Korea emerged from the Korean War as one of the world's poorest and most underdeveloped countries. The subsequent years were marked by a series of authoritarian military regimes, and it wasn't until President Park's five year plan that South Korea started to experience modernization and economic growth. The transportation and agriculture sectors are amongst those that underwent the most drastic reforms. Furthermore, the rise of large multinationals lifted the economy to a greater extent and projected the country into a global scale. As of today, South Korea is considered one of the most industrialized countries in the world (Seth, 2017). South Korea is a country that, in the last few decades, has undergone a substantial process of development and modernization in every aspect, and is currently a world power player. In regard to its culture and heritage, although South Korea's customs are relatively traditional, its position as one of the most industrialized and innovative countries in the world has projected it in a global scale on account of its developments in technology and the music and cinematographic industries, amongst many others. This overall development positively affected the country's economy to which we could refer as the Korean miracle because they have experienced one of the biggest economic transformations of the last six decades from an agriculture-based economy to one of the largest economies in the world.

Besides the incredible economic growth and development experienced in South Korea, there has been a shift in focus in the international community towards this country part of that thanks to its economic and technological development, but more specifically due to its great nation building process and use of soft power to attract people to their country after a history of having closed doors to foreigners. South Korea has opened the doors of their country, their culture and history to the international community and has managed to captivate the entire world thanks to its focus on public diplomacy and soft power as main points of their foreign policy. The country has managed to be taken seriously in the international community as an economic and technological hub, but also as a political power while promoting its culture and traditions; in other words, South Korea has maintained its roots while developing and adapting to the new challenges of

the international community. This is what makes studying the south Korean country interesting.

The approach of this work is to study and analyze the south Korean foreign policy, its development and focus on soft power in order to determine if the country is dependent on it or not. On account of this we must assess the power theory to understand the different types of powers a country can make use of and how they work; then we must mediate over the foreign policy and everything it entails, specifically focusing on public diplomacy, nation branding and cultural diplomacy, with the purpose of being able to identify the evolution of South Korea's foreign policy focal point and determine whether nowadays they have achieved a balance between soft and hard power.

2. Purpose and motives

The goal of this paper is to examine South Korea's foreign policy development given the special situation of the Korean peninsula, it being a war-torn country with two political systems: a democracy and an authoritarian regime. This situation makes South Korea an interesting case to study since it must approach its international foreign policy with a democratic and liberal point of view but at the same time prepare and be aware of the possibility of an attack from North Korea, therefore the military service is still compulsory for men ages between 18 and 30 years old. Another reason studying the south Korean foreign policy is interesting is because the image they have portrayed has radically changed from that of a poor and badly damaged by war country, to an image of an economic and technological powerhouse. The Republic of Korea has managed to position itself in the international community as a member of several international organizations like the United Nations, the World Health Organization, OECD, G-20, among others; and, although it has yet to become a member of NATO, the international organization and the Korean country have deep diplomatic ties, being 2022 the first time a south Korean president attended NATO's summit in Madrid. In May 2022, Korea was also the first Asian country to join the Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence (CCDCOE) under NATO, while also being the only member state without NATO membership to join.

South Korea has managed to position itself as an important ally and member of the international community thanks to the soft power approach to its foreign policy.

However, in view of the ongoing war with North Korea and the constant threats from the northern part of the peninsula we must ask ourselves how the foreign policy of the country might change should the situation require it and how that change can affect its position in the international community.

3. Literature review

Approaching a study through a focus on theory is important since theories can make interpretation of events possible as they allow us to prejudge which factors are important and which ones can be filtered out as irrelevant, theories provide deeper explanations for events, rather than just making descriptions and theories can guide policymaking, providing advice. In this study, the focus will be on Nye's theory of power. Joseph Nye differentiates between two types of power: hard power and soft power, while the former can be defined as the ability to coerce or get others to act according to obtain what you want using threats (economic or military); the latter, is the ability to get others to want what you want, achieving goals by attraction and persuasion rather than coercion and without conflict. However, as important as soft power has become in the international community, it cannot replace, at least not yet, hard power, that is the reason why it is important to balance both, this is what Nye calls *smart power*.

“Nye uses a three-dimensional chess game (Nye, 2004a, p.136-137): on the top chessboard, military power is unipolar, with the hegemony of the United States. On the economic board, power is multipolar (...). And on the bottom chessboard, transnational relations are a dispersed power where no one leads.” (Gomichon, 2013)

It is the bottom of the chessboard, the transnational relations, the object of this study. Focusing on power as the ability to affect others and achieve one's own interests, this power has different manifestations and tools, some acquire the form of coercion and others the shape of attraction.

3.1. Power theory

3.1.1. Soft power and liberalism

The concept of soft power is close to the Liberal tradition, even if ‘there is no contradiction between realism and soft power’ (Nye, 2011, p.82, Gomichon, 2013). Soft

power emphasizes the possibility of cooperation through “the power of ideas”, closely related to the solutions proposed by liberalism: (i) democracies will not go to war against each other, hence democracies will be more inclined towards soft power; (ii) economic interdependence as a solution to war, although this assumption is considered weak given that economic dependence can also be viewed as coercion, thus this solution occupies a grey area solution between hard power and soft power depending on how it is used, for instance a free trade economy will attract others to its model therefore being a soft power tool; and (iii) international institutions by promoting cooperation and peaceful relations through common rules and goals, specifically this is one of the core neoliberalist ideas, in which these institutions are seen as a means to combat the effects of anarchy. Moreover, Nye (2005, p.10, Gomichon, 2013) states that “institutions can enhance a country’s ‘soft power’ since these institutions are more likely to enhance and promote the country’s values, policies, and ideas; therefore, if a country can shape international rules that are consistent with its interests and values, its actions will more likely appear legitimate in the eyes of others” (Gomichon, 2013).

Liberalism holds that the essential principle of individual freedom generates constitutional government, rule of law and representative democracy, and that these institutions are of universal applicability. This creates a need of cooperation and interdependence because there are multiple connections and mutual interests between states, proving that international politics are not based on a “zero-sum” game. From a liberalist point of view, military force is not as useful as cooperation, thus war between states becomes increasingly unlikely as their interdependence rises as a possible way of creating progressive change in the international system due to cooperation between actors and not through competition. With liberalism free trade, commerce, markets, and capitalism become incentives for cooperation acting as international pacifying effects; in this same line multilateral institutions, NGOs or multinational corporations become crucial non-state actors of international relations, since they help strengthen that interdependence between states.

Nonetheless, neoliberalism, although it shares a lot with neorealism by assuming anarchy, the centrality of states and the game theory, still defends that is possible for states to cooperate even in an anarchical system. Another important point is defining

globalization, a term that has come to mean different things to different authors, but for the purpose of this study we will observe the following definition:

“By globalization we mean the process of increasing interconnectedness among societies such that events in one part of the world have effects on peoples and societies far away. A globalized world is one in which political, economic, cultural, and social events become more and more interconnected and also have broader impact” (Lamy et al., 2015).

Therefore, globalization is a new phenomenon that means change to international politics and may even change the contemporary paradigm in which the state stops being the focus of governance and the primary international actor. For liberals, globalization brings new issues regarding the state and non-state-centric theorists, liberals note that globalization challenges the core of realism’s assumptions, bringing new issues whose scope and scale goes beyond the sovereignty and policy-making capacity of the nation-state. To cope with the new challenges, there has been a rise of transnational institutions of global governance and a wide range of non-state actors, also introducing new issues in the global agenda, relegating those of “high politics” typically assumed by realist thinkers such as power politics, military force, and security dilemma.

Soft power seeks to achieve a positive influence by building networks, compelling narratives, and drawing on the resources and characteristics that make a country popular and appealing to the outside world; we could say that soft power considers the interdependence of today’s international relations, becoming a tool used for aligning values, goals, norms and action. Nye established the three pillars of soft power: political values, foreign policy, and culture. But within these three categories, the individual sources of soft power are varied (Soft Power 30, 2022). Given the diversity of soft power tools today it is quite complex to analyze the soft power of a country, Soft Power 30 tries to do so by pondering the context of today’s global geopolitics. Consequently, based upon Nye’s three pillars, Soft Power 30 selected several indicators to study and try to define soft power in a way we can assess it, these are: government, engagement, education, digital, culture and enterprise. Within the first two pillars, political values, and foreign policy we can include the government index studies political values, effectiveness and other broad metrics like the Human Development Index scores; the engagement index

focuses on the States' diplomatic reach and their commitment to international challenges such as the environment and climate crisis. Also related to the pillar of foreign policy is the enterprise index that targets the attractiveness of the business models of the State, the capacity of their businesses to innovate and its regulatory framework. The third pillar is culture, here we find the culture index that measures the quality, international reach, and appeal of the State in question based on its cultural production (art, music, sports, tourism, film). Within the culture pillar we can include the education and digital index. The former considers metrics on higher education such as the quality of their universities, the ability to attract international students and their contribution to academic research publishing; and the digital index entails studying the digital connectivity, the effectiveness of online services, especially the governments and the use of digital diplomacy. In the latter, South Korea held the fifth place in 2019, with the fastest internet connection in the world (Soft Power 30, 2019).

The most recent results regarding this ranking are from 2019 so we must bear in mind that in the past years South Korea has experience a huge development regarding the so called "*hallyu wave*". The 2019 results from Soft Power 30 places the country in 19th place, it being the best overall rank with year-on-year improvement. With reference to the indexes explained, digital is one of South Korea's strengths taking the fifth place in that ranking, this index also affects positively the political one given that the government makes use of it to promote citizen participation as well as access to information and public services. Enterprise is another south Korean strength, it being in 2019 one of the countries with more expenditure in research and development, it being 4.627 % of its GDP according to the OECD as we can see in Figure 1; and with a high number of global patents filed regarding its GDP.

As a matter of fact, among the thirty-eight members of the OECD, South Korea, since 2012, is the country to expend the most on R&D, after Israel. If we look at the OECD total represented on the image below, we can see that South Korea's expenditure in relation to its GDP (in red) doubles it, being the latest data available that of 2020 with a 4.815 % of South Korea's GDP directed to research and development.

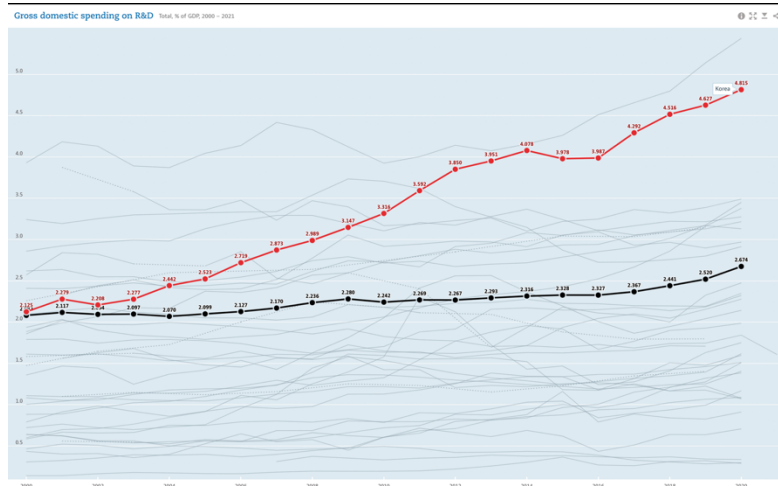


Figure 1: GDP spending on R&D 2000-2021

OECD (2023), Gross domestic spending on R&D (indicator). doi: 10.1787/d8b068b4-en

Surprisingly, in 2019 culture was deemed as a weakness by Soft Power 30 due to some scandals within the Korean music industry. This demonstrates how heavily South Korea depends on K-pop as one of its main soft power tools and the need for the country to branch out highlighting other parts of their society and culture such as their film industry and their history.

It is important to underline that South Korea, although having high rankings individually, comes 19th in the combined and final one, which poses the question of there being a gap within their soft power tools, we can even go further as to ask if there is a gap overall in their diplomacy between soft and hard power.

3.1.2. Hard power

Hard power is the oldest of all powers, it is the primitive form of power, hard power entails the use of force and threats to further one's interests, gaining and maintaining power. With soft power there are political and theoretical approaches depending on the context. Likewise, with hard power we find there are different interpretations and justifications for its use, most of them from realists that see the international arena as an anarchic environment where the state is the main actor, having to protect themselves from the rest creating othering narratives.

However, hard power, requires resources that differ from those of soft power in that whereas the latter is based on ideas and values, the former is based on physical

resources such as military force or economic superiority. Hard power needs for the state to accumulate as many resources as necessary to impose its will since the state's capacity of hard power depends not only on being able to threaten but on carrying out that threat or positive reinforcement, because if we are talking about economic power superiority that can be manifested positively and negatively. Thus, hard power exists when asymmetries between the actors manifest and one could say that the bigger the asymmetries, the more hard power the benefited state gains.

3.1.3. Smart power

Contrary to other people's beliefs hard power is not enough to carry out a successful foreign policy, and we would be naive to believe that soft power will have the same results as hard power. That is why Nye introduces the concept of smart power, a combination of both soft power and hard power to achieve effective foreign policies, using each, when necessary, given that, in the long run, soft power has more positive results than hard power. That is not to say that hard power is not necessary or beneficial, it is legitimate and crucial in some circumstances to use hard power, but it is knowing when to use hard power keeping in mind the necessary and proportionate force of the threat or act.

“Effective strategies in the real world are a mix of hard and soft power, and that combination of hard and soft power in effective ways is what I call ‘smart power.’” (Nye, 2008) Smart power needs efficient tools that can be used when needed, but first a well-coordinated plan or agenda needs to be drafted to sort these soft and hard power tools by interests and goals. Thus, smart power needs of national and international institutions where it can be created and operate while also needing allies.

Notwithstanding that hard power and soft power can be defined as forms of power, smart power focuses on the method, on strategically combining the two in pursue of their own interests.

3.2. Foreign policy

Foreign policy is the articulation of national interests and the means chosen to secure these interests, both material and ideational, in the international arena (Lamy et al, 2015: 112). The magnitude of the power that is the object of the study is essential considering that depending on the size and amount of power there will be different tendencies. When

talking about South Korea, we are referring to a middle power in terms of the economy, the military and population. Hence, it tends towards more liberal economies based on trade. Therefore, the focus of middle powers will be on expanding its trade through a liberal policy and depending on multilateralism, while also aiming at extending the liberal order in political and economic terms.

3.2.1. Public diplomacy

Public diplomacy, as a modality of diplomacy, is essentially about communicating to obtain certain goals. This communication is not necessarily done by state officials, nor it is directed to them, but rather it is directed to the general public, people from other countries. This communication not being carried out by state officials entails a loss of control by the state in the message they are trying to send, this created the challenge of coordination and coherence, according to Bay Rasmussen (2014). Public diplomacy, in order to be effective, it needs to be coordinated and coherent with the message the country wants the world to received. For that effectiveness to happen it must also be considered the audience targeted, this means that the country needs to be aware of its own image abroad and adapt the message to what that image is and the one they want to portray. As stated, the message does not necessarily need to be sent by state officials, there are different channels of distribution thanks to globalization, companies, brands, TV, social media, and other forms of popular culture are strong and quick communication channels, this diversity of channels can generate contradicting or undesired messages and here is the challenge for public diplomacy and traditional diplomacy, needing to join efforts to try and coordinate the message as much as possible.

As we can see, to achieve the goal of public diplomacy, a must-preceded step is the correct measurement of the self-perception and perceptions of interests and ideas of the country from the inside and from the outside, in other words, a good understanding of its own national image is needed. Without knowing what the current national image is, it is difficult for any country to recognize progress or improvement through public diplomacy.

“Public diplomacy is the process of opening doors of communication and building positive international relationships. The objective of public diplomacy is to improve the understanding of a specific country, construct an appealing national

image, and ultimately influence the policies of foreign governments by affecting their citizen's opinion towards the nation" (Kinsey & Chung, 2013).

As explained by Bay Rasmussen (2014), there are several modalities of public diplomacy: (i) as a more credible alternative to official messages, since public diplomacy shows what the nationals of a country really do and believe in; (ii) building relationships, a concept really close to cultural diplomacy; (iii) communicating political issues, which basically are campaigns promoting a change of perception; (iv) propaganda and (v) nation branding.

For South Korea, public diplomacy was not a real practice until 2010, since then the Ministry of Foreign Affairs explains that their public diplomacy

“Entails promoting diplomatic relations by sharing our country's history, traditions, culture, arts, values, policies, and vision through direct communication with foreign nationals. By doing so, we enhance our diplomatic relations and national image by gaining the trust of the international community and increasing our country's global influence.”

South Korea, in terms of public diplomacy, we could say that has done a great job in the recent years by using the K-pop group BTS as “special presidential envoys for future generations and culture” by the president at the time Moon Jae-in before their third visit to the United Nations in 2021, when they spoke at the 76th General Assembly in New York for the second meeting of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) . Before that, BTS were invited by the UN in two more occasions; in 2018 the BTS leader, Kim Namjoon, gave a speech titled “Speak Yourself” and in 2020 BTS delivered an online speech for the 75th session of the UN General Assembly to encourage people during the COVID-19 pandemic. This falls in with the goals established in 2017 by South Korea's Public Diplomacy Act, a 2017-2021 plan to “communicate Korea's attractiveness to the entire world” and to materialize the “fascinate the world with Korea's charm” vision they have settled. The goals and strategy per goal established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to achieve that vision are to:

- i. Share Korean culture by spreading cultural attraction, elevating the national image

- through cultural assets, and strengthen the two-way communication through cultural exchange.
- ii. Deepen understanding on Korea by increasing the understanding on Korean history, tradition, and national development; and promoting Korean studies and language overseas.
 - iii. Gain global support for Korea's policies by increasing the understanding on Korea's key policies, expanding the scope of public diplomacy for Korea's policies; and promoting Korea's policies for foreign residents.
 - iv. Strengthen public diplomacy capacity by developing participatory public diplomacy framework.
 - v. Promote public-private partnership by establishing cooperation system among national and local governments and private sector; developing online platform for communications and information sharing; and strengthening public diplomacy through public-private cooperation.

The goals to achieve that were to enhance its national prestige and image by exploiting the cultural assets of the hallyu wave; to promote Korean studies overseas, including the Korean language; to create welcoming policies to foreigners in the country; and to improve the public diplomacy actors and create a cooperative system, Choi (2019, p. 19-20).

3.2.1.1. A nation's image

Not only is having a good understanding of a nation's own image crucial for an effective public diplomacy, but it is also very close to Nye's theory, this explains that there might be gaps in how a country sees itself, how it thinks it is being perceived from the outside and how it really is perceived. These gaps heavily affect the way the country approaches its foreign policy, hence the importance of being aware of the existence of those gaps to counterbalance them with an effective foreign policy.

This concept is very close to sociopsychology, Kunczik (1997) defines it as "the cognitive representation that a person holds of a given country, what a person believes to be true about a nation and its people." This means that the idea that we have of a country affects our attitude and actions towards that country, its people, its policies, and its products. Therefore, having a positive image entails that a country is exploiting its soft

power in order to attract others, becoming more relevant in the international community and having more influence. Today this is becoming more important as nations want to attract investment and have a more relevant position in the international affairs, so that their interests are represented and considered.

Furthermore, to create an appealing national image, the country needs to correctly assess the one they portray to the international community, so that they can create policies that match that image if that the one they want to have, or rather create new policies that help them change and improve their image. Fan (2006) proposes that national image includes factors such as place, natural resources, people, history, culture, language, political systems, economic systems, social institutions, and infrastructure. That are split into six groups: emotional appeal, physical appeal, financial appeal, leadership appeal, cultural appeal, and social appeal. These factors help to give answer to the following six questions that every nation needs to answer according to Fan (2008):

- “How does Nation A see itself?”
- “How does Nation A see Nation B?”
- “What does Nation A believe Nation B thinks of it?”
- “How is Nation A actually being perceived by Nation B?”
- “How is Nation A promoting itself to Nation B?”
- “How does Nation A want to be perceived by Nation B?”

How does Nation A see itself? This question relates to the nation’s own identity and self-awareness. Given that countries have different dimensions, they challenge here is to choose the one they want to focus on without negating the rest of its identity since the international community is in constant change. This self-identification will determine the behavior of the nation and of the outside world.

How does Nation A see Nation B? National identity does not only depend on the country itself but also on what surrounds them, as aforementioned, the international community is in constant change and holds various influences and trends. According to Fan (2008), the “significant others”, the countries close to Nation A, will influence the most its identity. This means that there are two definitions occurring at the same time, while Nation A is defining itself, the outside world is also defining it, this needs to be taken into account as feedback and use it as a reference point to create its identity.

However, sometimes what the Nation A believes is seen as by other countries is not how they really see it, that's why it is important to ask: what does Nation A believe Nation B thinks of it? This is the construed image that influences a nation's self-perception. But how is Nation A actually being perceived by the outside world? This is the real image of the nation. In the perfect case, the construed image and the real image would match, but normally, there will always be a gap between the two. The last two questions refer to how the nation wants to be seen and what it does to achieve that, this is the intended image, it is the result of how the country is currently presenting itself and how it plans to present itself in the future.

In the recent years, Korea has undergone significant change. In only fifty years, it has gone from being a nation torn apart by war to a global economic and technological force. Korea has vigorously participated in global governance as a result of its booming economy, becoming a significant player on the international stage. This can create a gap between the reality and the image of the country, that is why the south Korean government should focus on narrowing this gap by showing the changes of the country and highlighting its culture.

According to the Korean Herald (2019) the results of a survey conducted by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism show that eight out of ten foreigners have a positive national image of South Korea. The survey shows that the areas of the south Korean culture people found more accessible were: contemporary culture (36.2 %), including Korean Wave and the arts; followed by the economy with 18.1%, security (17.8 %) and cultural heritage (10.7 %). It also showed that 47 % of foreigners gained information on South Korea through online media, 33.4 % did so through broadcasting and 9.5 % via newspapers and magazines; 40 % of the respondents called Korean cuisine the nation's most representative image, followed by K-pop at 22.8 %, Korean culture at 19.1 % and K-beauty with 14.2 %. As for the factors that have a positive effect on South Korea's image, 35.3 % cited contemporary culture, followed by the economy at 17.5 %, cultural heritage at 12.3 %, Korean products and brands with 12 % and the North Korea nuclear issue with 5.7 %.

3.2.1.2. *Nation branding*

With nation branding what countries are aiming for is longevity rather than ephemeral and short-term solutions, hence why for a successful nation branding process commitment is key, since it is only after years when one can see the results of the nation-brand strategy. For the purpose of this study, nation-brand can be defined as

“The unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences. This definition acknowledges the multi-faceted nature of the nation-brand, together with the need to integrate national identity dimensions.” Arnholt (2006, p. 15)

The definition introduces the key points of nation branding: culture, acknowledgement, and identity. Also, the concept of nation-brand and its strategy are closely related to the aforementioned concept of nation image and the possible gaps that need to be closed, this underlines the requirement of honesty and coherence demanded when approaching the nation branding process. The nation must acknowledge itself, answering the three main questions: “where is the country now? where does the country want to go? And how does the country get there?”. A way to do this is by discerning the perceived image foreigners have of the nation and determine which image wants to portray, for this the nation must establish the desired long-term future, its purpose and its values. Only by knowing its identity and destination can it draw up an efficient nation-brand strategy.

The national identity can be obtained from its constitution, its religion, laws and social interactions; and the country needs to be honest with their identity and the way they express it as it will have an impact in how successful the nation-brand becomes because foreigners will see the core values of the country and will not see lies or a production of something the country is not, meaning that the targeted audience will not perceive a portrayed image of the country that is real to the values of the country, and this is key since it is the only way to close the gap between portrayed image and the real image of the country. The identity is the essence of the something, what it really is, the image here stands for what is perceived from that identity, if the gap is too big this tends to be negative and it is when clichés, stereotypes, racism, or xenophobia comes and damage a country. Hence, why identifying that gap is important for creating the nation-brand that

will help erase misconceptions and reposition itself more favorably in a way that will make sending a coherent and honest message through its foreign policy. The benefits and goals of having a strong nation-brand are closely related and complementary to the country's foreign policy because it will have an impact on the country's position on the international community by having more international credibility, its partnerships will become stronger, and they will have more economic and diplomatic interactions.

For the national identity to be representative of the country culture is an essential feature that needs to be shown so that a dialogue between the nation and the targeted audience that leads to understanding can be started. Some examples of a country's culture are: language, literature, music, sports, art, companies, myths, history, among others. These fundamental features, according to Arnholt (2006, p.111-112) can be expressed through visual or sonic representations, and even through iconic individuals. Some examples of visual representation of a country can be the flag, the landscape and its military uniform; examples of sonic representation would be the anthem, accents, languages and dialects. These features should be displayed with the intention of showing the truth and honesty of what was and is, while showing development and an eye on the future.

In the case of South Korea, according to the Brand Finance Nation Brand Report from 2022, South Korea occupies the 10th place in the ranking, as a "very strong" brand. South Korea has managed to create the "K-brand" taking advantage of the country-of-origin or COO concept, in its case the "K-brand" can be used for tangible and intangible products, it is mainly focused on music (K-Pop), video (K-Drama), and beauty products (K-Beauty), respectively. However, there are a great variety of brands and products that are Korean and that foreigners do not usually connect to the country, examples are the two big tech companies Samsung and LG and the clothing brand Fila, among others. One brand that everyone knows is BTS, the K-Pop group that broke the language barrier and took over the American music industry. Before it has been mentioned that iconic individuals could be representatives of a nation's identity and this is the case with BTS, they promote Korean culture such as its foods, landscape, traditional instruments, clothes like the Hanbok, and cultural heritage. They do so through their own variety show called Run BTS! In which they are seen cooking traditional food, wearing the Hanbok, even doing some period episode in which they show the Joseon history. They also did this by

recording performances during the pandemic in the country's most estimated pieces of architecture such as the Gyeongbokgung Palace for a performance for the Tonight Show starring Jimmy Fallon. According to the Diplomat, in 2017 the 7 % of tourists in Korea were there because of BTS and in 2019 the president, Moon Jae-In praised them for their unmatched success and record-breaking numbers, views and engagement in all of their platforms.

Moreover, their company, HYBE, through Hybe Edu and the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies created a series of textbooks for BTS's international fans to learn the language, even the government is taking advantage of the group's popularity to further their soft power by partnering with them to sponsor classes with those books at foreign universities such as the Ecole Normale Superieur and EDHEC Business School of France.

3.2.1.3. Cultural diplomacy

The exchange of ideas, information, arts and other forms of culture between nations and their people is what we call cultural diplomacy, it is very close to what has been explained about public diplomacy in that it is a way of communication for the states. Indeed, cultural diplomacy is a tool of public diplomacy to achieve the goal of mutual understanding, strengthening ties, exchanging ideas, values and traditions, in other words, support the foreign policy message of a state by showing a positive image of the state in question. According to Papaioannou (2018) it can be defined as a complex set of diverse activities, programs and initiatives led by the state with the assistance of the different channels of public diplomacy that also apply to cultural diplomacy.

Some of the characteristics of cultural diplomacy pointed out by Stelowska (2015) are: the active involvement of state officials on the design of these campaigns and projects by financing them and ideologically influencing them; they are usually targeting big foreign audiences; and substitutionally consists of music and art related activities. Cultural diplomacy can take the form of cultural gifts; cultural information with the intent of conveying something less popular to the target foreign audience; cultural dialogue; and cultural capacity building, that involves activities related to teaching and learning to promote understanding between nations. Similarly, to public diplomacy this subtype of diplomacy also has inconsistency challenges as well as lack of tools for the measurement of success of the policies practiced.

The south Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs estates that the goals for their cultural diplomacy are: spreading cultural attraction; elevating the national image through cultural assets; and strengthen two-way communication through cultural exchange. Some of the ways they are trying to achieve those goals are also shown in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website: exhibitions at overseas missions, which consists mainly of contemporary art exhibitions; strategic cultural exchange promotion program, that not only include taking south Korean culture overseas, but also foreign cultures brought to South Korea fostering mutual understanding; celebrating special diplomatic occasions such as anniversaries of diplomatic ties with other countries; Korea week, that combines political, economic and cultural elements “to enhance foreign public’s awareness of Korea and to promote Korea’s image as an advanced country”; sports diplomacy and promoting Taekwondo; people-to-people diplomacy community; K-pop world festival; cultural agreement and cultural joint committee, that consists on signing cultural agreement between two countries to create an intergovernmental cultural joint committee to discuss new ways to promote cooperation; and a close relationship with UNESCO since 1950. In the latest Good Country Index from 2022, South Korea is at 6th place at the cultural subindex, and 37th in the overall index. The Good Country Index takes into account science and technology; culture; international peace and security; world order; planet and climate; prosperity and equality; and health and wellbeing.

The 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul gave Korea the spotlight they needed and some may think that this is the beginning of its shift towards image and soft power. In 2012, “Gangnam Style” by Psy triggered the cultural wave by becoming the first Korean music video with 100 million views on YouTube and according to Kim (2012), Gangnam Style was number one on the two most important music charts of the world, the United States’ and the United Kingdom’s. After this, the next big thing for Korea was the four wins out of six Oscars nominations for the movie *Parasite* directed by Bong Joon Ho, becoming the first Korean movie ever to win four Oscars and the first foreign language film to ever win a top prize at the Oscars. Also “Baby Shark”, a children’s song uploaded on YouTube in 2015, has become one of YouTube’s most viewed videos and it has been translated to nineteen languages; the company, SmartStudy, soared 60 billion won in 2018 from this song only.

In the last years the interest of the public over beauty products have risen and ever since the pandemic there has been a growing interest in self-care, and many influencers and brands have been looking to Korean skin care. Brands like Dior have made K-Pop girl groups members their ambassadors, such as Jisoo from Blackpink, or Louis Vuitton that named BTS ambassadors in 2021, and more recently Dior has appointed BTS member Jimin as its Global Brand ambassador; Louis Vuitton appointed BTS member J-Hope and Bottega Venetta might appoint BTS leader RM as their first celebrity ambassador.

Out of the 3 Bs (Baby Shark, Bong Joon Ho and BTS) that can summarize South Korea's cultural diplomacy, we must underline the BTS and ARMY phenomenon. BTS is a Korean music group with members Kim Namjoon, Kim Seokjin, Min Yoongi, Jung Hoseok, Park Jimin, Kim Taehyung and Jeon Jungkook. They debuted in June 2013 and their career so far is very inspiring. After many struggles they have become the biggest artists in the world with more than 48 million followers on Twitter, they are topping the Billboard charts as a group and as soloist; winning countless awards in Asia and in North America, becoming the AMA's 2021 artist of the year. They have achieved things that were unimaginable, breaking all the records in the world and they did all of that without any type of privilege that any other artists from the West may have. They have broken the language barrier and helped Korea open to the world and the world open to Korea. According to Forbes, in 2019 they made up 4.7 billion of the country's GDP which goes to show that their impact goes beyond music. They have joined UNICEF in 2017 to create the Love Myself campaign and they have created the #ENDViolence project. They also donated to the Black Lives Matter movement and spread awareness about the most recent acts of hate towards the Asian community standing with the Stop Asian Hate movement sharing their own experiences with racism and xenophobia. They were invited to the White House by President Biden to talk about Asian hate and xenophobia in 2022. We could say that everything BTS does creates an impact in South Korea and in the world, they are global influencers, and this became clear when in 2018 they gave a speech at the launch of Generation Unlimited at the UN General Assembly and when in 2021 they attended the UN General Assembly as South Korea's special diplomatic envoys, to which more than one million people tuned in to the UN's YouTube channel to watch the live broadcast of the assembly.

3.2.2. South Korea's foreign policy

The south Korean transition to democracy in 1948 marked the beginning of its nation building process, according to Ien (2015), this transition was supervised by the UN to make sure the general elections took place in a democratic manner. With the election of Rhee Syngman, the Republic of Korea was established as a liberal democracy with the recognition of the UN as the only legitimate government in the Korean peninsula. However, in 1950 the northern part of the Korean peninsula, with Soviet aid, invaded the south triggering the war once again, this lasted until 1953 when both Koreas signed the armistice agreement. This three-year war left South Korea with more damaged and poorer than it was after the liberalization from Japan, having to face a great economic and overall development challenge. During this period, they focused on nation building, industrialization and modernization of the economy, since the economies were in the north, the south was left with an agricultural economy. It was during the sixties, according to the World Bank, that it experienced real economic annual growth of 7.3 % and 16 % between 1960 and 2019 of GDP.

This growth was thanks to Park Chung Hee, who took power after a coup d'état. His five-year economic plan that aimed to redirect the economy to an export oriented and industrial development to end with the country's poverty and end the economic dependence on the United States. In the aforementioned five-year development plan, according to Seth (2017), the country had set the goal to achieve 7.1 % growth between 1962 and 1966, and despite the skepticism of the public opinion the truth is that they achieved an unrealistic growth of 8.9 % what set them into a very fast modernization. What led to this unparalleled growth was their policy reforms targeting the opening of the country to the international market and since then, South Korea has become one of the top ten exporters in the world. Moreover, by incentivizing investment, the overall improvement of the business environment along with the special attention the country has given to technology by promoting research and education, has made South Korea one of the most competitive countries in international relations. This national modernization that took place during the 1960s and 1970s, puts the focus on cultural industries policies aiming to support international competitiveness in the context of globalization (Ien, 2015).

Despite the democratization movement to end the dictatorship of Park Chung-hee, Chun Doo Hwan succeeded Park Chung-hee's after his assassination in 1979 and continued with both, the dictatorship and the five-year plan, the South Korean economy matured during these next decades, exports became more diverse, and the economy started to change to a more capital economy and started to shift into a high-tech economy.

It was in 1987 when Roh Tae-woo accepted the peoples' demands for democratization and elections, he was elected as president in 1988 and during his administration the country established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, China, and other communist countries in Eastern Europe. During his term, the two Koreas also joined the UN in September 1991. During this period, we can see the shift in focus from economy to foreign relations. In 1998 with President Kim Dae-jung, the government continued to develop their democracy and economy, in terms of relations with North Korea, they established the Sunshine Policy that was based in the following principles:

- i. No armed provocation by the North will be tolerated
- ii. The South will not attempt to absorb the North in any way
- iii. The South actively seeks cooperation

Following this policy, in the year 2000, the leaders of both Koreas held a summit in the northern capital, Pyongyang and made a joint statement to establish a system of reconciliation and cooperation. They also agreed on allowing family reunions and the overall expansion of the economic cooperation. Ever since there has been four more inter-Korean summits in 2007 with president Roh Moo-hyun, and three in 2018 with President Moon Jae-in.

In 1987 this economic development suffered another change with the democratization of the country, with these foreign exchanges began to rise and brought new interactions with sectors like tourism and luxury products that were not as active. With democratization also came a rise on consumption rates and capitalism. South Korea became a member of the OECD in 1996 which officially gave the country the status of a wealthy developed country, at least at the eyes of the international community because the truth was that nationally, South Korea still had some problems to address regarding the workers and the quality of life, which made it still a developing country. The new

president, Kim Dae Jung carried out several reforms regarding the liberalization of the labor market.

The government of Roh Moo-hyun began in 2003 and had three clear goals in its political agenda: democracy and the people's participation; achieve social development and cooperate in achieving peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia. In terms of ODA, since 1987, South Korea has been active in development activities, but it was with president Roh Moo-hyun when ODA gained popularity. In 2009 South Korea entered the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), becoming the 24th member and leaving behind the title of "recipient" becoming officially a donor country Hermanns (2013). In 2008 Lee Myung-bak was elected and during his administration the "global Korea" was created under the South-North Economic Community, that helped raise the ROK's multinational diplomacy while also tackling the global financial system and climate change, as we can see it goes beyond the security concerns of the peninsula, trying to establish itself as a responsible global player by tackling the economy and the environment. The first female president of the Republic of Korea was Park Geun-hye, elected in 2012 and launched the "people's happiness and the nation's development", focusing on developing the creative economy based on technology as the future of the Korean economy. In 2017 Moon Jae-in took power and really developed South Korea's international image, he held three inter-Korean summits in 2018, one summit with the United States and another with China.

In the recent years, thanks to presidents Park Geun-hye and Moon Jae-in that focused on the economies of the future, South Korea has gained a reputation for their technological innovations and has ranked as one of the freest countries in the world and with one of the best health and educational systems. Moreover, South Korea is also paying more and more attention to the entertainment industry mostly from a soft power point of view since popular culture is becoming a bigger part of their economy. We can appreciate the shift towards soft power, public diplomacy and nation branding around the early 2000s and the expansion of the hallyu wave and its extensions such as K-Pop, K-Drama or K-Beauty.

Furthermore, we are going to concentrate on the foreign policy approach the latest presidents of the Republic of Korea, Moon Jae-in and Yoon Suk-yeol in regard to the

main topics of South Korea's foreign policy: the United States, China, Japan and North Korea.

Throughout the campaign, Mr. Yoon and his foreign policy team expressed a desire to raise the nation to the status of "global crucial state." They believe that South Korea should become an "even more responsible and respected member of the international community" that "advances freedom, peace, and prosperity through liberal democratic values and substantial cooperation" Ma (2022). This seems a reminiscence of "global Korea," the foreign policy of the previous President Lee Myung-bak (2008-2012). This may be because, according to Ma (2022), many of the main officials of the new government's foreign affairs ministry previously worked for the Lee government.

The Yoon administration affirms that during the Moon presidency several mistakes regarding foreign policy were made, like declining to sponsor the UN Human Rights Council resolution condemning the repeated human rights violations taking place in North Korea or declining the support to the international community attempts to condemn the human rights violations in China. They also criticize the overall passiveness of the Moon government not wanting to get on anyone's bad side. Consequently, the Moon administration opted for dialogue and neutrality, to engage with Pyongyang, the Moon administration continued the so-called "Korean Peninsula peace process" by resuming the inter-Korean summits. During its administration, two summits between the two Koreas were held, as well as two further summits between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, were held between April 2018 and February 2019. The other approach the Moon administration took towards North Korea was trying to initiate a plan to build a railroad between the North and the South, but such project required exemptions from sanctions, and the United States was unwilling to exempt or reduce those sanctions unless there was a progress towards disarmament. Also, in order to resume the dialogue between the north and the south, Moon tried to create a political climate that embraced the idea of an end of war declaration. Thus, the Moon administration's approach towards North Korea focused on engagement and dialogue instead of pressure campaigns. However, despite its efforts, the administration was unable to achieve its goal of improving inter-Korean ties and the North Korean disarmament.

Yoon's administration, on the other hand, aims to emphasize deterrence and reciprocity, they take the realist approach and do not believe in the disarmament of the north. The new government's foreign policy puts the focus on alliances, especially the United States alliance to assure a nuclear umbrella as a means to dissuade the north since South Korea cannot ensure its security without the help of the United States given the north's arsenal. But in terms of reciprocity the focal point will be set on economic transactions. However, the Yoon government has made it clear that any dialogue must be based on mutual respect and a commitment to denuclearization. They have also stated that they will not tolerate any further provocations from North Korea, although North Korea has not stop sending threats and missiles towards the south.

Hence, regarding the strategic partnership with the United States, the goal is to rebuild and strengthen the alliance, since Yoon and his foreign policy team blames the Moon administration for alienating the country from the United States due to its fixation with North Korea and adopting a deferential attitude towards China. He also seeks to restart the joint military drills between the Republic of Korea and the United States attempting to consolidate the American Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) base in Seongju, in order to enhance the country's defense capabilities against potential missile threats from North Korea. While the THAAD anti-missile defense system was deployed in 2016, the base has been long delayed due to the examination of its environmental implications. Besides the military alliance, South Korea also seeks to work with the United States in developing technology and economic security issues.

As we can see the Yoon government has refocused its government towards foreign and security policy, Chongkittavorn (2022). To tackle the North Korea issue, its government has developed the "Audacious Initiative" that according to the MOFA (2022) it consists of three key features:

1. Pre-negotiation phase that consists of creating a strategic environment that leaves North Korea no choice but to return to denuclearization talks. In this sense, based on the MOFA, the initiative has been already set in motion by approaching this issue with deterrence, dialogue and diplomacy.

2. Negotiation phase, which will entail a comprehensive agreement from the south on the roadmap to the denuclearization process and a set of actions to help the people and the north's economy.
3. Complete denuclearization, during which the ROK is preparing a set of political, economic and military measures in order to help the country transition.

Given China's prominence in the South Korean trade, is important for the Yoon administration to balance its relationship with both the US and China to minimize any negative impacts on the Korean economy. This could involve seeking new trade partnerships or diversifying its supply chain sources, especially given the fact that China recognizes South Korea's partnership with the US as a certainty. South Korea will actively take part in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue's (Australia, India, Japan, and the United States) non-military activities such as vaccines, climate change, and emerging technology Chongkittavorn (2022). Regarding the South Korean approach to ASEAN, according to Chongkittavorn (2022): the new government has yet to expand on it, given that the Yoon government pledges to build a "Global Cooperation Network" that is specifically designed to each region but for the ASEAN relations, the government said that it would promote "win-win solidarity initiatives" and broaden the diplomatic ties with India and Oceania.

Despite the shift towards hard power, President Yoon is not giving up soft power, proof of this is the effort to host in Busan the World Expo 2030. For their pledge, they managed to appoint BTS, the world five-time Grammy nominee group, as honorary ambassadors for the expo as an attempt from President Yoon and Busan Mayor, Park Heong-joon, to gather international support. Among the promotional efforts, the free Yet To Come BTS concert in Busan took place last October. Many believed that the success of this concert would not only determine whether Busan had a chance to win the bid for hosting the World Expo in 2030, but also to exempt BTS from military services that is still compulsory for all young men. However, BTS decided before the government that they would indeed enlist. This represents soft power and hard power in South Korea, BTS as their main soft power tool that goes on hiatus until 2025 to help their country with the other type of power. BTS's hiatus, however, will cost South Korea. According to Business Insider (2022):

“BTS contributes over \$3.6 billion to South Korea's economy each year, according to a 2018 report by the Hyundai Research Institute, as first reported by The Korea Herald. That's the same as 26 midsize companies, researchers said.

In 2017, one out of every 13 tourists who came to South Korea was because of BTS, and in 2018, 7 % of foreign visitors, or about 800,000, came because of the group, according to the research institute. In 2017, its estimated \$1.1 billion of consumer goods exported from South Korea were related to BTS, like clothes and cosmetics, Yonhap News Agency reported.

The researchers estimated that if BTS keeps its popularity, the group could generate almost 42 trillion won, or \$29.2 billion, between 2014 and 2023.”

The theme of Busan’s bid for the World Expo is “Transforming Our World, Navigating Toward a Better Future” and aims to create an environment where radical transformation regarding climate change, polarization and digitalization can begin. The concept of radical transformation really fits the country given its history and rapid development, that is why they believe that radical change is what the major issues the world is facing today needs.

Besides, Korea Image Communication Institute (CICI) in a recent survey to foreigners and Koreans obtained the following results:

“When asked about what comes to mind when thinking about “Korea” 94.86 % of foreigners and 91.05 % of Koreans identified BTS as representing Korea.

About the Korean Wave, regarding whether they think the Korean Wave will continue in the future, the majority of Koreans (93.77 %) and foreigners (94.86 %) responded positively. Also, when asked about how long they think it will last if it continues, the majority of Koreans (83.66 %) and foreigners (83.18 %) predicted that it would continue for more than 10 years. And both Koreans (95.33 %) and foreigners (97.66 %) picked K-pop as the most representative content of the current Hallyu.”

Regarding the cultural diplomacy approach to North America, to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the ROK-US alliance, President Yoon Seok-yeol is visiting the American country and it’s said that Blackpink will perform in a joint concert with Lady

Gaga which is a great example and symbol of unity and cooperation between the two states through soft power. With the Korea-US Cultural Partnership, aimed at younger generations, both countries jointly prepared various activities, from programs organized by the National Library of Korea to discuss films and books, to visits to the demilitarized zone (DMZ). Performing arts will also be present in these activities through collaboration programs of classical and popular music as well as musicals and theatre performances in different US Universities. The Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Bo Gyoon, believes that this “will further advance the alliance between the two countries that share the universal values of freedom and solidarity, regarded as one of the most successful alliances in history, and drastically expand the scope of collaboration and exchange between the two countries”. According to the Ministry, KTV will air a three-part program regarding the Korea-US alliance “in terms of diplomacy, national security, economy, society, and culture”. During this 70-year alliance, Korea and the US have maintained close ties based on culture exchange, the Ministry portrays this by highlighting how young Koreans were introduced to American musical genres, such as jazz; while young Americans were introduced to the world of K-dramas. With time, BTS’ success at the Billboard Music Awards and Billboard Charts that paved the way for other K-Pop groups like Blackpink, Twice, Stray Kids and TXT; attest the worlds’ fascination with Korean pop-culture. This will also impact tourism exchanges between both counties, the Ministry explains that the success of BTS and K-dramas like Squid Game “drew over 540,000 Americans to Korea” and they expect to keep these numbers with this type of cultural exchange activities. In the same line, more than a hundred Korean companies of all sizes will accompany President Yoon Suk-yeol to the US, the majority of these companies, including Hyundai and Samsung, are engaged in high-tech industries, the aim is to advance the cooperation in these fields between both countries.

As for climate and technology, the south Korean Ministry of Science and ICT announced that at the end of April they will hold the Advisory Board meeting of Technology Mechanism under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change of the Climate Technology Center and Network (CTCN). This will be the first meeting outside of Europe, thirty-six countries will participate including Japan, the US, Canada, Nigeria, and Saudi Arabia, among others. They will try to focus on technology cooperation in relation to eight areas of technology support: Digitalization, Water-Energy-Food Systems, Energy Systems, Building and Resilient Infrastructure,

Technology Road Map, National Systems of Innovation, Technology Needs Assessment, Business and Industry. The goal is to help developing countries to respond to climate change through technological innovation by development cooperation and conducting capacity-building programs for government from developing countries.

Following this, the country seems to be focusing on climate change and environment following the energy crisis and looks to Europe to establish more alliances in the matter, example of this is the new agreement to strengthen cooperation on nuclear power and clean energy between the UK and South Korea, as well as the expressed hope by the Korean trade minister, Lee Chang-yang, on forging closer ties with Portugal in the renewable energy sector. Moreover, the European commissioner for Justice, Didier Reynders, hopes to boost bilateral cooperation in expanding privacy and personal data exchanges between both countries “to extend the scope of the adequacy decision to the financial services”, this is important for the transnational data flow, as we know the European Union only allows transnational data flow between non-member states that assure a high level of data protection. Data flows between the EU and South Korea began in 2021 with the decision on letting European data to be transferred to the ROK. Next May will take place the Seoul-Brussels summit where they will discuss this among other things like the war in Ukraine.

4. Research aims and questions

This research seeks to study South Korea’s foreign policy changes and development as its general objective. By using a soft power approach to its foreign policy, South Korea has been able to establish itself as a significant ally and member of the international community. Nevertheless, considering the continuous conflict with North Korea and the continued threats from the northern portion of the peninsula, we must consider what South Korea’s foreign policy might look like if the threats continue, for that reason the specific objectives of this research are to:

- i. Determine the dependency of South Korea in soft power
- ii. Confirm the effectiveness of South Korea’s foreign policy

Ultimately, this research will try to answer the question of whether South Korea is trying to achieve smart power or not.

5. Methodology

The methodology which with this study is approached is the historical and constructivist approach, the goal is to create a precise description that helps to understand decision that were made by key actors while keeping in mind that there is not a single narrative because the interests of those actors shape history in order to obtain and maintain power.

In this study the focus is on the study of the evolution of South Korea's foreign policy analyzing the trends and the possible gaps between the image they think they have and their portrayed image, for that the four levels of analysis are covered: individual, national, systematic and global. The individual factor considers the leaders' personal characteristics such as the degree of interest in foreign policy, the type of reaction to a crisis and the style of leadership. However, even if leaders are rational actors, there are still factors such as personality, experiences, beliefs and perceptions shape and influence their decision-making. Within the individual factor is important to consider the small group dynamics since many high-level policy decisions are taken in small groups, hence the distribution of power within the group, the type of role played by the members of the group and the dysfunctions of the group are details that need to be evaluate as well.

The national or domestic factors include the country's history, traditions, political system, military power geographic location and its economic, social and cultural structures. The systemic factors look at the system composed of all nation-states that creates the context for foreign policy behaviors, the distribution of power in the international system; traditions, norms, treaties, alliances and trade conventions that work as systemic constraints, also international laws that cannot be directly enforced are abided by the states because they expect others to do the same, even common goals can be seen as constraints. In contrast, global factors are not necessarily created by the states, but can be created by individuals and non-state actors such as media and popular cultural movements, revolutionary ideas and values and norms that transcend culture and time.

The complexities that this methodology implies are that by using multiple levels of analysis and information we pursue multicausal explanations; in addition, the actors and structures explained interact with each other, domestic and international actors are closely involved in foreign policymaking. We can examine the causal effects of actors

and structures using a one-level-at-a-time strategy with actors dominating the lower levels of analysis while structures become more general and abstract. The problem with that approach is that the interaction between levels is missing, this is called “agency-structure problem”, human actors and social structures are dynamically interrelated entities and hence, we cannot account for one without invoking the other. Therefore, explanations of foreign policy actions must be able to give accounts that do not exclude any of these actors. The especial complexity of foreign policy analysis lies in its double-side nature of foreign policy because it happens at the boundary between the domestic and external spheres of the state, increasing its analytical complexity. Thus, foreign policy analysis requires quantity and diversity of data and information to achieve an explanation, combining general causes identified through theories with the particulars of a given situation, and some data are likely to be missing due to various factors.

6. Results: analysis and discussion

Through foreign policy the States articulate a plan to achieve its own selfish interests in the international arena that will impact the national arena. So, foreign policy is not only security and diplomacy, but ideas, values and interests than can be material or intangible that allows the country to grow international but also nationally in terms of development and economy. These nation’s interests change and develop with time and with the challenges of the moment, thus changing the foreign policy of the country. While studying South Korea we can see that throughout its recent history, the country has become more open to the international arena either because of necessity and security or because of their own national pride and wanting to share their culture and ideas with the world. Another important aspect regarding South Korea is the fact that they have always been a very closed country even before the transition to democracy, it was then when they started to open up and really develop, managing to be the country we all know today in roughly sixty years.

With this work the objectives where to determine the dependency of South Korea in soft power and to confirm the effectiveness of South Korea’s foreign policy, in order to answer the question of whether South Korea is trying to achieve smart power or not. And as explained, South Korea does depend on soft power in the extent of becoming known and people wanting to visit and know more about its culture. Hence, the foreign policy is effective until that extend, south Korea is a second level power just as the

European union, but with the difference that Korea managed to do that in record time. We are experiencing the birth of an international power with ambition and capacity to take on the challenges and be a great international player.

With Lee's administration there is a shift from security concerns to intangible concepts like culture and values, which match the moment of the emergence of soft power and nation branding. Foreign policy from this moment is not just focused on security but now emphasizes the cultivation of soft power in order to improve the global reputation of South Korea. This includes the great variety of international events that started to be held in this country to show the international community that Korea had the infrastructures and capacity to be an equal member and player of the international community, raising its international profile. Examples of these events can be the G20 meeting of 2010 that not only attract high profile participants, but also shifts the attention towards the Asian country. Before Lee's government, the attention was on the protection of the local markets and domestic companies, but with his administration the things turned in favor of the expansion of their own companies and products overseas, especially given the fact that South Korea has always depended on exports and trade.

However, in terms of war and North Korea they have a big problem since they cannot be approached with soft power, or at least not only. Here is when the necessity to achieve a balance, smart power, rises. With the change of government, we can see a shift towards hard power while not leaving behind soft power. This situation of finding an equilibrium between both types of power can be seen in South Korea's approach towards their best representative according to the CICI survey, given that they are the best soft power actors of the country but had to enlist, instead of giving them the exemption from the military as it is done with football players and other musicians; it can be seen as a way of showing everyone how South Korea takes seriously its military.

It seemed like President Moon wanted to free South Korea from the image of being dependent of the United States and opted for neutrality and soft power to try and allow the country to be its own, it was not a failed policy, but it is true that it not gave the best results regarding the north Korean issue. Now President Yoon seems to want it all, to let Korea shine as a strong country, both in terms of culture and ideas, and in terms of being prepared for war if needed. To do this he is trying to focus on alliances once again,

seeking the United States help. It will be interesting to see how this shift affects South Korea regarding its economy, tourism and popularity, especially with BTS's hiatus.

Another important aspect we have seen is that the K-brand is key for the country's economy, tourism and diplomacy, that's why nation branding is so important in South Korea. Their nation branding is one of the best given the fact that it creates a filter that allows the general public to see only the good things about the country forgetting about the war or the social challenges in the country like feminism and the LGBTQ+ community. But within the concept of nation identity, there is an aspect that has been looked over by others is the fact that iconic individuals can be representatives of a nation's identity, which is the case of BTS that's why whatever they do impacts the country's image and economy completely.

So, all in all, given the country's recent history and its current position in the international arena it can be concluded that South Korea does depend on soft power, not only for its economy, but also I would dare to say that they depend on soft power in order to achieve hard power given the fact that with the new governments approach the plan is to strengthen the alliance with the United States, ASEAN and the Quad to have a strong system of allies and resources. To determine the effectiveness of the ROK's foreign policy one would have to wait and see how the next few years go for the new governments approach, it seems to want to achieve smart power which would make it a good and effective foreign policy.

7. Conclusion and proposals

The international community started to pay attention to South Korea in the recent years not only because of their incredible economic growth and development, but also because of its great nation building process and use of soft power to attract people to their country after a history of closing doors to foreigners. South Korea has welcomed and attracted the international community into their country, culture, and history, as a result of their emphasis on public diplomacy and soft power as main points of their foreign policy. The country has succeeded to establish itself as an economic and technological powerhouse in the international arena, while preserving its origins they adapted to the new difficulties we are facing today in terms of economy, technology, development and war.

Foreign policy is a strategy for advancing a country's selfish interests in the international arena and South Korea has been increasingly open to the international arena as a result of necessity and security, but also of national pride and a desire to share their culture and views with the rest of the world. There has been an increase on soft power policies since 2008, with President Moon the country started to understand that soft power was a very useful tool, but at times not enough especially with the shift the international community experienced ever since the war in Ukraine started that may also change things for the situation in the Korean peninsula. With the current President, Yoon Suk-yeol, hard power is becoming more present in the country's foreign policy without leaving behind soft power in order to try not being so dependent on it, thus we could affirm that South Korea seems to be trying to achieve the balance called smart power. It would be interesting to see how the situation in the north develops and the results of President Yoon's foreign policy at the end of his government. All in all, we are witnessing the rise of an international power with the capacity to face the new challenges and become a major international player than what it already is.

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