



Facultad de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales  
Grado en Relaciones Internacionales

## Trabajo Fin de Grado

# Comparative Analysis concerning the evolution of North & South Korean relations with Spain since the end of the Korean Civil War (1950-1953)

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# **1. INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1) Purpose and Motives**

The main purpose of this paper is to carry out a comparative analysis concerning the evolution of North and South Korean relations with Spain since the end of the Korean Civil War (1950-1953). As we well know, the Korean Civil War ended with a ceasefire that never culminated in a definitive peace treaty, and, since then, both Asian countries have lived in a geopolitical limbo that has successfully tangled and unraveled without ever reaching a situation of true stability.

The maintenance of the division into North and South continued the climate of tension and border friction that remains to this day. North Korea has become a socialist political regime with a very strict and severe dictatorship, and has carried out an abysmal nationalisation of its economy. President Kim il-Sung maintained an alliance with China and the USSR, and in 1991, the UN approved the country's admission as a member of the United Nations. On the other hand, South Korea emerged from the Civil War as an agrarian country and has become one of the big "Asian Tigers". It is a capitalist, democratic country and a very stable ally of the United States. Foreign investment and technology have allowed it to become one of the most developed nations in the world. This radical transition and evolution that both countries have shown since the end of a civil war in which they both took part in, have triggered my attention into analysing it in more depth.

Since there are already many studies and analysis regarding the evolution of both countries and the Korean Civil War itself, we have decided to give it a personal touch of our own. We are going to concentrate in evaluating how both North and South Korea have initiated and/or maintained political, economic and diplomatic relations with Spain. We will analyse how Spain's relationship with each of these countries has progressed over time and whether they have improved, worsened, increased or decreased.

We have decided to investigate the relationship of both of these countries with Spain, because the author writing these lines, was born there herself. Although we are aware it may be difficult to find certain information, specially regarding the relations that North Korea and Spain may have, we believe this work will be different to all those studies carried out before.

## **1.2) State of the art**

The evolution of North and South Korea since the end of the Korean Civil War and the relationship between both countries, is a topic that has already been analysed and studied many times in the past few decades. There are a multitude of studies that not only try to explain the consequences of the Korean Civil War, but also its impact in the development of the Cold War. In many occasions, this war has been classified as the “forgotten war”, however, the last fifty years of the history of both countries, have been a target of many investigations in order to comprehend the complexity of the peninsula today.

Although many may think that due to the geo-strategic and political importance of North Korea today, there would be an abundance of research and literature related to this country, the truth is that there is barely no solid documentation for us to rely ourselves on.

In terms of research in relation to the Korean Civil War and the post war years, authors have developed different approaches that seek to understand it from different points of view. To start off, we would have to apply the “realist” theory. Realism explains international reality on the basis that the primary interest of states is maximising their survival, security or power. Here, it is important to differentiate the theories of classical realism and neorealism. Classical realism states that the behaviour of states is justified by the nature of man kind, and by this, they mean seeking to pursue their own selfish interests. This basically argues that, since states are ruled by humans, international relations are fundamentally constituted by the interests of the ones ruling them. Among these interests we may find: increasing the amount of power, improving security or enhancing national interests. On the other hand, the new theories of realism state that international relations are based on a third actor, focusing ourselves on a systematic level. They defend the idea that the structure of the system is what limits and conducts the development of international relations, and they also believe that states aim at maximising their power and security, but in response to the anarchic state of international relations.<sup>1</sup> In this sense, both realist theories see relationships with other countries through external politics as a tool to obtain their national goals and interests.

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<sup>1</sup> Pauselli, Gino. (2013). Teorias de las relaciones internacionales y la explicación de la ayuda externa

On the other hand, and in opposition to the realist theories, liberalism was born. Here, researchers believe that the international systems should be based on cooperation and a general context in which countries can progress together. The international system may be improved through the development of cooperation among the different actors in international relations. Liberals believe that wars are not the way to obtain goals, but rather that peace would be created through commerce and the evolution of democracies. The development of commercial relations creates strong bonds among countries due to the fact that the economic losses are larger on the scale compared to pursuing national interests. Furthermore, democracies do not provoke wars between them. Up until today, there are no two democratic countries that have declared war between them.<sup>2</sup> This theory will be developed in more depth further on in our analysis.

Thirdly, we would like to mention the constructivist theory in international relations. This theory focuses on understanding international relations on the evolution of the historical, cultural, political and social context of a country. Constructivists therefore believe, that states may have different interests and that those interests may vary according to a certain context. They also recognise the capacity of change of ideas which allows states to freely move from being competitive systems to becoming part of the cooperative system.<sup>3</sup> In other words, states have the possibility of varying from defending their own interests, or becoming part of the collective ones.

These approaches have been applied to the Korean Civil War by many researchers to attempt to understand both North and South Korea today. They have analysed the war from a more orthodox approach to comprehend the context of the war. They have also applied a more revisionist perspective to try to understand the war internally, the battles and consequences of the war on the Korean territory. And, last but not least, researchers have tried to gather all the information possible from that time in order to evaluate how both countries have developed in opposite directions.

As we have already mentioned, different theories of international relations are applied when trying to understand the outbreak and consequences of a war that has eternally marked a country. And in this particular case, the civil war drastically changed the

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<sup>2</sup> Burchill, Scott & Linklater, Andrew (2013). *Theories of International Relations: Liberalism*

<sup>3</sup> Pauselli, Gino. (2013). *Teorías de las relaciones internacionales y la explicación de la ayuda externa* (85-89)

outcome of both countries. However, this investigation will not be focused on analysing the evolution of both Koreas since the end of the war, but rather, it will be aimed at comprehending how the relationship of both of these countries has advanced with Spain. We will try to evaluate how the political, economical and social relations of both North and South Korea, have developed with Spain since the end of the Civil War back in 1953. We have tried to search and find recent studies of other authors that have focused on a similar topic to this, but we were unable to find any studies that have already been carried out. Therefore, we believe that this investigation will contribute as a different perspective to this particular field.

### **1.3. Theoretical Framework**

#### **1.3.1) Liberalism as a basis for international relations**

As we have previously mentioned, different theories in international relations are usually applied when trying to get a deep understanding of a certain historical event. We have given a broad definition and explanation of the main approaches, but we would like to dig deeper into the liberal perspective. We believe it is the most appropriate theory to carry out this investigation because we would like to analyse the relationship of Spain with both North and South Korea.

To start off, we would like to state that liberalism was born in response and as the principal alternative of the realist theory. Just as the realist theory, liberalism was founded to understand the world's context at a particular time. Although the liberal theory was initially created by famous philosophers such as Locke, Stuart Mill or Kant, it was truly applied for the first time after the First and Second World Wars.<sup>4</sup> During this period of time, the world was trying to explore the possibilities of a peaceful international order, governed by law and in which cooperation would be possible. The world was experiencing the outbreak of the Cold War, and in this context, there was a desire to create what was known as “the New World Order”.

Liberalism is based on the importance of liberty, rationality, human rights, democracy

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<sup>4</sup> Abad Quintanal, Gracia (2019). El liberalismo en la teoría de las relaciones internacionales: su presencia en la escuela española

and the limitation of power.<sup>5</sup> Not only this, but liberals were convinced that, contrary to the realists, conflict was evitable. They are true defenders of the fact that individual liberty and human right protections will only be safeguarded within the democratic state framework that functions under the rule of law. Moreover, they state that the interests of a state should be submitted to those accepted by the rest of the states.

At this time in history, analysts had realised that the desire to conquer resources, territories and their people, pushed states towards a militarisation phase, and, in response, led them to war. The liberal theory therefore opened a new opportunity to understand the international world in comparison to realists, and figured that peace may be pursued through international trade, the free movement of labour and capital, and the drive for interdependence. According to Andrew Harrell, Kant defended the creation of a global authority would reduce the anarchic international system, introduce a certain degree of regulation and the democratisation of the international order, pushing it to introduce mechanisms that would favour the peaceful settlement of disputes.<sup>6</sup> In other words, he defended the idea that only the existence of democratic forms of government in the states, would make wars evitable and impossible.

In this sense, they insisted on the growing need for international cooperation, not only to avoid war, but also in order to respond to problems that became increasingly common to many states. These problems should not and/or could not be addressed in isolation by one state, not even by the most powerful ones, but rather, required general cooperation and contribution. This led to the collective belief, that the creation of international organisations would help states to acquire their interests but through cooperative means. It is therefore, that liberalism is characterised by an interest in the study of regimes, cooperation and political economy.

As we already know, international theories help us to have an idea and to understand the behaviours of countries, however, they cannot be taken as true or false in their entirety, nor can any one of them explain the totality of the interactions in our globalised world today. Throughout this investigation, we are going to use the theory of liberalism to try to understand the evolution of both North and South Korea after the end of their civil

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<sup>5</sup> Burchill, Scott & Linklater, Andrew (2013). *Theories of International Relations: Liberalism*

<sup>6</sup> Hurrell, Andrew (1990). *Kant and the Kantian Paradigm in International Relations*

war, and comprehend the reasons why their relationship with Spain has evolved one way or another.

The world has shifted from authoritarian governments across the world in the 1930s to a constant search of liberal thoughts and ideologies during the 1970s, as a solution to the major escalations in tensions during the Cold War. Each of the countries mentioned have lived and experienced a completely different context since 1953 until today, trying to move towards a more democratic form of government, except for North Korea. Therefore, we are going to use the liberal lens to explain the evolution of relationships between these countries across the years, and highlight the importance of diplomatic and commercial relations in the world in which we live in today.

### **1.3.2) Post war North Korea (1953)**

As we all know, the Korean Civil War (1950-1953) left both Asian countries living in a geopolitical limbo that has never reached a true situation of stability, not only at a national level, but also at a international one. The war ended with a cease-fire that never really culminated with a final peace treaty.<sup>7</sup> In the past 60 years, both countries have moved from being constantly confronted to an imminent reunification, but it has never truly materialised itself due to the fact that North Korea lives under a permanent dictatorship with little moderation or dialogue and because South Korea has closely bonded with the United States, North's Korea longterm and eternal rival.

North Korea is known today as one of the most closed and isolated countries in the world, why is that? After the three long years of terrible war, a non aggression pact was signed between both countries and a new demilitarised boarder was created (250 km long and 4 km wide).<sup>8</sup> Although the conflict was just a "limited" war for the United States and the Soviet Union at the time, it was a total and devastating war for the Korean population. In order to achieve self sufficiency, North Korea based its economy on industrial and agricultural activities for the following years after the war. According to Charles Armstrong, the US Air Force estimated that North Korea's destruction was

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<sup>7</sup> Sandler, Stanley (1999). The Korean War: No Victors, No Vanquished

<sup>8</sup> Armstrong, Charles (2010). The Destruction and Reconstruction of North Korea, 1950-1960

proportionately greater than that of Japan in the Second World War, and that American planes had dropped 635,000 tons of bombs across the country.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, it is said that about 12 to 15% of the country's population died during the conflict. It is said that after the war, only two buildings were left standing in the city of Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea. After the war, not only was North Korea's population starving to death, but agriculture was devastated and about 8,700 factories, 5,000 schools, 1,000 hospitals and 600,000 homes had been destroyed.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, after the war, North Korea's situation was devastating and their path towards recovery seemed too far away. However, their pre-war industrial system and the support and resources sent by the socialist regimes surrounding them, allowed them to rapidly grow economically to the point that by the 1970's they had overcome South Korea. It is said, that the Soviet Union send a large group of experts over to North Korea to help with the country's reconstruction and recovery, and that China and East Germany were also key actors in helping them.

Almost all of the aid that was sent to North Korea during the years after the war by the socialist countries was denominated the "Fraternal Socialist Project".<sup>11</sup> At the time this project was a shocker due to the fact that it was the first time that Russia, China and the communist countries in Eastern Europe had aligned in an economic recovery plan in such a large scale. This also meant that tensions between the Soviet Union and China rose, because both countries wanted to increase their influence in the northern part of the peninsula. This period was also known as the "international socialist solidarity".<sup>12</sup> The aid, in all of its forms, that was sent from the socialist nations was remarkable due to the fact that: the USSR was still recovering itself from the Second World War, East Germany was fairly "new" and had to build up its system, and the socialist China was still paying the consequences of their civil war. In the annex we are able to see the amount of aid contributions sent by each ally. The general and industrial reconstruction

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<sup>9</sup> Armstrong, Charles (2010). *The Destruction and Reconstruction of North Korea, 1950-1960*

<sup>10</sup> Armstrong, Charles (2010). *The Destruction and Reconstruction of North Korea, 1950-1960*

<sup>11</sup> Armstrong, Charles (2010). *The Destruction and Reconstruction of North Korea, 1950-1960*

<sup>12</sup> Armstrong, Charles (2010). *The Destruction and Reconstruction of North Korea, 1950-1960*

of the country during the three years after the war, completely relied on the aid being sent from the USSR, China and East Germany (more than 80%).

By the beginning of the 1960's and only eight years after the civil war, the Korean population together with the foreign aid were able to rapidly stabilise and improve the countries economic conditions. The urban reconstruction heavily relied on all the aid that the communist countries sent them, and by the next decade, the North Korean government announced that they aimed at becoming self reliant and non dependent of foreign contributions. The country's economy had grown so much in such a little amount of time, that by 1960 it had become the second largest economy in Asia after Japan.

However, in the following years, Kim Il-Sung gradually began taking control and power over the country to the point that he eliminated any form of opposition. He governed North Korea from 1948 until his death in July 1994, when his son (Kim Jong-Il) took over. By 1968, the country began developing in terms of military and weapons and even tried to assassinate the president of South Korea, but failed. In 1980 it was announced that the Olympic Games (which were to be held eight years later) were going to occur in Seoul, which led to increased tensions with North Korea. The rivalry rose to a point that in 1988, year of the games, North Korea organised a terrorist attack in Seoul's airport in order to try and stop the games. Not only this, but they also shot a South Korean plain over the Andaman sea and boycotted the Olympic games.

From the 1990's onwards, the North Korean regime began to heavily decline. This is principally because the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 left North Korea alone without its main ally. Not only this, but another of its main ally's, China, decides to continue down a different path in terms of economic openness and change of reforms. Both big communist countries had followed a completely different path in comparison with North Korea. By 1992, the country had tried to get closer to the United States in diplomatic terms, but their fear of invasion only led them to proceed with their arms race and nuclear development. Just two years later, as we have previously mentioned, Kim Il Sung dies, and his son takes over. Kim Jong-Il faced a country whose economy was rapidly worsening and food scarcity was increasing due to major floods across the North Korean territory. This food scarcity even led the country to ask the "International Food Assistance" organisation for help, were even South Korea and the United States sent aid.

This leads us to the 2000's decade. The decade of the arms race for North Korea. Right after the terrorist attacks of 9-11 in New York, the United States did not only place Iran and Irak in their "Axis to Evil" list, but also North Korea. This led the country to feel threatened and decided to withdraw themselves from the Non Nuclear Proliferation Treaty in 2003.<sup>13</sup> A few years later, in 2006, the country began carrying out their first nuclear tests in their territory. By 2011, Kim Jong-Il died, and his son Kim Jong-Un takes over to further pursue their nuclear development and arms race. By 2016 the country announced that they had developed their research so much, that their were now counting with secure and stable nuclear weapons. The country has become increasingly isolated over the years, especially in the international framework. Bilateral and multilateral relations with the country have been extremely complicated due to its level of isolations- its has a few embassies in former or current communist countries. The only countries today that maintain "stable" relations with North Korea are of course Russia and China, the rest of countries and international organisations have sanctioned them on many occasions.

Furthermore, North Korea has been placed as one of the countries in the world with the worst human rights conditions and liberties. Within the human right violations in North Korea we may find the use of torture, the application of the death penalty, arbitrary arrest and detention, inhuman conditions of confinement and the total suppression of fundamental freedoms such as freedom of expression and movement. According to major satellites, more than 200.000 prisoners are held in over six concentration camps across the countries where they are forced to work under terrible conditions (close to slavery).<sup>14</sup>

### **1.3.3) Post war South Korea (1953)**

As we have previously mentioned, both North and South Korea faced major losses in terms of human lives, physical destruction and resource usage after the war ended. However, we do need to keep in mind that South Korea's recovery was much faster due

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<sup>13</sup> French, Paul (2013). North Korea: The Paranoid Peninsula: A Modern History

<sup>14</sup> Ortiz Generoso, Antonio Jose (2017). La violación de los derechos humanos en Corea del Norte

to the fact that they had the United States backing them up and constantly sending aid. Syngman Rhee governed South Korea from 1948 until 1960 under a nationalist movement, identified due to his conservative and anti-communist policies. He ruled the country during the civil war and through the post war years, but ended up being known for his authoritarian regime. By 1960 he had to resign because he was heavily accused of electoral fraud, which led him to exile. The 1950's decade was a period of major stagnation for South Korea, while, on the other side, North Korea was rapidly recovering itself. As we have already mentioned, the years right after the war meant major development in the industrial sector for both countries, to the point that between 1950 and 1970, North Korea's growth rate was one of the fastest in the world. The disparities began in the 1980's, when South Korea took the lead and catching up to them would be insurmountable for the North. The 1990's were marked by the fall of the Soviet Union which led North Korea into a major economic stagnation which, in consequence, enhanced major famine and mortality across the country. During this period, the South was emerging as a new world economic power.

So, what truly happened during the years after the war for the North to recover and develop faster than one of the world's most developed countries today? The post war years were marked by the authoritarian policies of Syngman Rhee. The major manifestations and revolts in 1961 by the south Korean population due to the electoral fraud, forced Rhee to resign and go to Hawaii with his wife to exile. This same year, Park Chung-hee ruled the country after a military coup that later on was condemned by the United States. Kennedy obligated the country to hold democratic and stable elections. It is publicly known, that he won the elections in 1963, 1967 and 1971 by bribing the peasants of the country with envelopes full of money if they went to vote.<sup>15</sup>

Despite this, in 1971 he was almost defeated by Kim Dae-jung. He was a pro democracy activist who obtained 46% of the votes. In consequence, Park Chung-hee decided to declare martial law and appoint himself president for life. Major demonstrations and revolts occurred during the following years. However, the most drastic one took place in 1979 when Kim Jae-gyu, the government's intelligence chief, shot Park Chung-hee at a dinner party. This incident was never really clearly explained or solved. Chun Doo-hwan, Park's protégé, assumed full power five months after the

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<sup>15</sup> Joong-Seok, Seo (2007). Contemporary history of South Korea- 60 years

death of the ex-president.<sup>16</sup>

The following years were marked by enhanced tensions and attempts of coups by the opposition. There were many complaints related to the fact that Chun had automatically obtained power, and major protests broke out demanding national democracy and legal elections. One of the most terrible and known revolts was the “Gwangju Massacre” in may 1980. Thousand of students, trade unionists and demonstrators were killed by the South Korean regime’s repression. More than 3000 people were detained, more than 154 were killed, 74 disappeared (presumed to be dead) and over 4141 people were injured during the demonstrations.<sup>17</sup> It is said, that this particular event, crucially marked the democratic movement that changed the history of modern South Korea. By 1987 the manifestations and revolts had spread throughout the whole country.

By 1992 elections had taken place, and Kim Young-sam had begun to truly introduce a democratic government. Some of the first measures that were taken were to launch an anti corruption crusade, free hundreds of political prisoners and take Chun Doo-Hwan into trial. He was condemned for treason and major corruption activity, which led to the first main victory of the democratic movement. In the next elections in 1997, Kim Dae-jung was elected president. South Korea was hit by a major economic and financial crisis that was taking place throughout Asia, but the president stood in the ideal position to ask the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for help, and in return, he would reform domestic policies. By 1999, the economy was growing and increasing once again. Furthermore, Seoul held the Summer Olympic Games in 1988, which impused them into the international community, and led the country to enter the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1996.<sup>18</sup>

The new century impused the South Korean president to adopt a new position towards the north. In 1998, Kim Dae-jung announced his “Sunshine Policy”, which was mainly focused on seeking reconciliation with the north, if not reunification. North Korea initiated various economic and cultural exchanges with the south, and in 2000, both presidents met together in a Summit Meeting for the first time since 1945. It has a

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<sup>16</sup> Min Lee, Sang (2012). History, Current Status and Future Prospects of Counseling in South Korea

<sup>17</sup> C Ch’oe, JW Choi (2005). The Gwangju uprising: the pivotal democratic movement that changed the history of modern korea

<sup>18</sup> Fowler, J (1999). The United States and South Korean Democratisation

historical moment. The president had accepted the fact that North Korea was not going to disappear, so it was best to accept their presence and improve their relationship with them. Kim Dae-jung won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2000 due to his implementation of the “Sunshine Policy” and his hard work in pursuing democracy and the respect of human rights, as well as trying to reconcile with his neighbour in North Korea. Between 2000 and 2008 thousands of south Koreans were able to travel to the northern part of the country to visit their families, some of which hadn't seen each other in the last 50 years.

Although the country faced a variety of military dictatorships between the 1950's and the 1960s, today it is one of the strongest liberal democracies in the world.

In 2002, Kim did not present himself to the elections, and instead Roh Moo-hyun won the presidency. He tried to pursue Kim's policies with the north, however, his popularity fell largely when he decided to send South Korean soldiers to Iraq. His economic policies were not being particularly effective, which led him to lose even more support. By 2007, another elections were held and Lee Myung-Bak became president but his presidency did not last very long, due to his loss of popularity because of opening the country to American beef imports.<sup>19</sup>

During the elections of 2012, Lee Myung-Bak was succeeded by Park Geun-hye (daughter of the dictator Park Chung-hee) and the first woman president of South Korea. She publicly apologised for the terrible and horrible activities carried out during his father's regime and positioned her self far away from his fathers ideology. During this period, we must not forget that in the north, in December 2011, Kim Jong-un was succeeding his father, Kim Jong-Il, after his death. This would lead to a new phase in the relationship between both countries. Park Geun-hye was impeached and removed from office in 2017 for abuse of power and corruption, and, in 2018, was sentenced to 24 years of imprisonment. She was succeeded by Moon Jae-in (member of the Democratic Party). His presidency, was marked by his rapprochement with North Korea in 2018.

Moon Jae-in continues to be the president of South Korea today. He is part of the Democratic Party of Korea and has continued to implement the so called “Sunshine Policy” towards North Korea. Today, South Korea has diplomatic relations with over 170 countries across the world and forms part of the United Nations since 1991. Furthermore, South Korea and the European Union have been negotiating since 2007 a

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<sup>19</sup> Fowler, J (1999). *The United States and South Korean Democratisation*

free trade agreement to reduce trade barriers. They have also been analysing these trade agreements with New Zealand and Canada. Moreover, the Development Assistance Committee accepted them as a member in November 2009 and Seoul became the hotter of the G-20 Summit.

In economic terms, South Korea is the fourth largest economy in Asia and the 13th largest in the world. It is one of the biggest trading partners of the world's largest economies: the third largest trading partner for China, the seventh for the United States and the eighth for the European Union.<sup>20</sup> Not only this, but Seoul is placed between the ten most important economic, financial and commercial cities in the world. According to Forbes, it is the sixth most economically powerful city in the world. In the second annex we are able to see South Korea's economic growth from 1952 until 2016, in comparison to the growth of North Korea.

In terms of the Human Development Index (HDI), it holds the best position in the whole of Asia and the seventh in the world.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, it is one of the most innovative countries in the world, counting with the highest technological infrastructures in the world. The South Korean economy is led by large conglomerates known as "chaebol" which include multinationals such as Samsung, LG and Hyundai/Kia.

#### **1.3.4) Spain in 1953 and their position towards Korea**

The point of this investigation is to understand and analyse the evolution of the relationship between Spain with North and South Korea from the 1950's until today. The idea is to interpret the context of each country at specific times in order to truly comprehend how their diplomatic, commercial and social relations today have evolved during the years. As we have already introduced the context of both North and South Korea up until now, we would like to present the context which the Spanish population was living during those same years.

As many of us know, Spain faced a terrible civil war between 1936 and 1939. The result of the war led to the establishment of a dictatorial regime led by General Franco from

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<sup>20</sup> Eichengreen, Barry and Lim, Wohnyuk (2020). The Korean Economy: From a Miraculous Past to a Sustainable Future

<sup>21</sup> Human Development Reports. | Human Development Reports. (n.d.). <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/KOR>.

1939 until his death in 1975. Spain's support towards the Axis powers during the Second World War, led to its international political and economic complete isolation. However, during the Cold War Franco's regime was tolerated and the Western Powers finally recognised them. This was because the major tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union during those years meant that any possible ally was accepted, and Spain stood up because of their anti-communist policies. In fact, the process of Spain being re-introduced into the international community began with the outbreak of the Korean Civil war in June of 1950. As soon as the news of the invasion of South Korea by North Korea came out, the Spanish government send a note to the US government saying: "Spain would like to help the United States of America to stop communism by sending forces to Korea".<sup>22</sup>

At the end of the 1950's, Spain's international isolation came to an end with the signing of various agreements with the US that allowed the installations of American-Spanish military bases in Spanish soil. Moreover, in 1955 the UN General Assembly approved Spain's entry into de organisation and in the following months, ambassadors returned to Madrid. It is also crucial to mention that during the 1950's, more specifically in 1956, Franco got involved in the Hungarian Revolution and send over 100,000 soldiers over to the war. That same year, Morocco obtained its independence and a plan for economic stabilisation was implemented. Morocco had been a Spanish and French protectorate during many years. The 1950's therefore marked the end of Franco's international isolation.

Spanish Guinea was granted their independence in 1968 by Franco, who also named Juan Carlos de Borbón (grandson of Alfonso XIII) his successor as king. We need to have in mind that, although Franco's regime maintained strict repression against any political expression during these years, between the 1960's and the 1970's, Spain experienced a crucial industrial and economic development. The growth of the 1960's, in a political environment of lack of basic freedoms, was hard on the working classes and on the Spanish society in general. Many families had to leave their homes and move to other regions to earn their living- but, industrialisation eventually raised the standard of living and transformed the country. In fact, in the 1960's, Spain was the European

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<sup>22</sup> Carlos Izquierdo, Javier (2016). Relaciones de España con Corea del Norte y Corea del Sur. Contexto geoestratégico

country with the highest industrial growth. Spain ceased to be an agrarian country and became an industrial and tertiary one. The country's society had been eminently rural and very polarised with a big minority with a very high standard of living, a small middle class and a large majority of citizens living in the lower class with few resources. During the 1960's, the generation of a large urban middle class evolved.<sup>23</sup> In the third annex we can see the way in which the "Stabilisation Plan of 1959" boosted economic growth in Spain.

The slight political opening and economic growth allowed the continuation of the regime until the dictator's death, as well as the peaceful transfer of power. In 1975 Francisco Franco died and Juan Carlos I was sworn in as King of Spain.<sup>24</sup> With the arrival of the new king, Spain began a process of political transition. The first president in the Spanish transition to democracy was Adolfo Suárez, whose government approved democratising measures such as: the recognition of fundamental freedoms, the legalisation of all political parties including the communist party, the recognition of the right to free unionisation and a general amnesty for political prisoners.<sup>25</sup> In 1978 the Spanish population enacted the Spanish Constitution which established a social and democratic state under the rule of law with a parliamentary monarchy as its form of government. The terrorist organisation ETA: Euskadi Ta Askatasuna ("Basque Land and Freedom", which had been fighting for the independence of the Basque Country since Franco's regime, does not accept and consider enough the granted autonomies and continues with its armed activities throughout the country.

For Spain, the 1980's were years of rapid economic growth and integration into the political and economic structures of Europe. By 1986, Spain had joined the European Economic Community and that same year, the Olympic Games were held in Barcelona. More recently, in the twenty first century, Spain began with a brutal terrorist escalation by ETA in 2000 and with the effects of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, which caused Spain to militarily support the US interventions in Afghanistan in 2001

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<sup>23</sup> Cayuela Sanchez, S (2014) *Por la grandeza de la patria: La biopolítica en la España de Franco (1939-1975)*

<sup>24</sup> Cayuela Sanchez, S (2014) *Por la grandeza de la patria: La biopolítica en la España de Franco (1939-1975)*

<sup>25</sup> Köhler, HD (1995). *El movimiento sindical en España: transición democrática, regionalismo, modernización económica*

and Iraq in 2003.

During the last few decades, Spain has increased its diplomatic and bilateral relations with the international community, especially with Europe and the whole American continent. Asia has been transformed in the last decade into the most dynamic center of global power. It is a region that encompasses 54% of the world's population and produces one third of our planets wealth. Spain's commitment to an increasingly better insertion in the political, economic, scientific and social dynamics has been one of the main objectives our country has worked on. Throughout the previous decades, Spain has tried to made an effort to strengthen their presence in the region and to adapt to the new realities of the Asian continent. Therefore, the Korean peninsula has been a hotspot for Spain in extending our presence and improving our relationships.

## **2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES & QUESTIONS**

The main objective of this investigation is to analyse the development of the relationship between Spain with both North and South Korea since the end of the Korean Civil War in 1953. As we have already seen in the theoretical framework section, each of the three countries has lived a very different context and situation from the 1950's until today. These contexts have either favoured or complicated the extension of further relations between each other over the years. It is therefore, that we would not only like to carry out a parallel analysis of Spain with South Korea, and on the other hand Spain with North Korea, but rather, we would like to compare them.

Although we know that North Korea is a totalitarian regime and probably the most isolated and inaccessible country on the planet today, we still believe that this investigation will offer a different analysis regarding the Korean peninsula. Throughout this investigation we will try to answer questions such as: When did Spain and South Korea begin to have any type of relationship and with what objective? Do Spain and North Korea have any sort of relationship today, and if they don't, have they ever had any type of approach to each other? How has the context of each country in the last few decades pushed them closer or apart into pursuing bilateral relationships with each other? In case there are any type of diplomatic or bilateral relations, to what extent do they benefit each of the country's? Why are these relationships important to either one of them or the other?

As secondary objectives, we would like to establish that we do not only want to focus on analysing their relationships in general, but rather break them down. For both of the cases, we would like to divide the analysis in different categories: diplomatic and/or political relations, commercial and/or economic relations and social and/or cultural relations. We believe it is important to analyse all of these aspects because one of them may be more developed than another in each of the cases.

Before getting into a deep analysis of the matter, we would like to state an initial hypothesis, and that is, that the political, economic and cultural relations Spain has with both Korean countries has increased since the end of the Korean Civil War in 1953. We also believe that, regardless their ideology, Spain has made an effort in enhancing their influence and presence in Korea due to the major boom the Asian continent has had on the global markets. It is important to have in mind, that Spain's will on maintaining

positive or negative relations with either North or South Korea may have changed since the country entered the European Union.

### **3. WORK METHODOLOGY**

Now that we have already clearly established the main objectives and goals of this investigation, we would like to state the methodology of how this analysis will be pursued.

First of all, a historical analysis (as we have already seen) of the three nations will be carried out, putting into background the reality of each of them during the last decades. Similarly, a qualitative analysis of different sources will be carried out throughout the work, in order to have relevant and updated information on the relations between the countries mentioned. For this purpose, we will have an extensive bibliography with compilations of studies and works related to Spain's relations with both North and South Korea. Not only do we want to have bibliography that directly relates to Spain, but we also find it interesting to read about the relations of both Koreas with the European Union and other European nations.

Within this literature, both primary and secondary sources will be combined, extracting the relevant theories and data for the construction of concrete implications and to be able to respond to the initial hypothesis.

## **4. ANALYSIS**

### **4.1. North Korean - Spanish relationships**

#### **4.1.1. Diplomatic and political relations**

In diplomatic terms, Spain maintains bilateral relations with Pyongyang since the 7th of February 2001, a joint decision which was carried out by the European Union members, except for France. It was in fact the 25th of December 2000, when the Cabinet of Ministers gave the approval to the establishment of diplomatic relations with the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea).<sup>26</sup> North Korea opened an embassy in Spain back in 2014, but does not exercise any consular affairs due to the fact that there are no North Korean civilians on Spanish soil registered up to date. On the contrary, Spain does not have an embassy in North Korea and has preferred to use their embassy in South Korea to operate for diplomatic affairs between the two countries.<sup>27</sup> In fact, any Spanish consular matter that must be taken care off in North Korea is managed through the Swedish Embassy in Pyongyang, under a bilateral Spanish- Swedish agreement. Spain uses their embassy in South Korea because they consider the entire territory of the north to be a zone of high risk for Spanish citizens travelling to this country.

With relation to the exchange of high level visits between the two countries, the relationship has been very scarce and limited. On the Spanish side two visits have been carried out at the vice minister level in 2007 and in 2014, and on North Korea's side, another two have taken place in 2001 and 2003. In the past, Spanish ambassadors have made trips to the capital city of Pyongyang, but the last contacts made with the North Korean authorities were back in 2016. In fact, the 19th of September 2017, Alfonso Dastis, the Spanish Foreign Affairs Minister announced that the country was going to expel the North Korean ambassador in Madrid, Kim Hook Chol, due to the launching of missiles to Japan.

It is crucial to mention the assault on the North Korean Embassy in Madrid in February 2019 when talking about diplomatic and bilateral relations between both countries. The group who attacked the embassy stole two USB flash drives, cell phones and a hard drive and handed them over to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the United

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<sup>26</sup> Oficina de informacion diplomática. Ministro de asuntos exteriores (2021): República Popular Democrática de Corea

<sup>27</sup> Izquierdo, J de Carlos (2016). Relaciones de España con Corea del Norte y Corea del Sur. Contexto geoestratégico

States.<sup>28</sup> The assault took place only a few weeks after the Singapore Summit between North Korea and the United States, and before the approach of the Hanoi Summit. It is important to have in mind here, that in April 2019 one person had been arrested in relation to the incident and two international arrest warrants had been issued by the Spanish Audiencia Nacional. The alleged perpetrator were second and/or third generation Koreans, citizens of Mexico, the United States and South Korea. However, all three governments directly argued that they had no connection whatsoever with the attack on the embassy.<sup>29</sup> The incident was catalogued as violent due to the fact that the attackers were carrying intense weaponry and various members of the embassy had to medically been taken care of after the assault. The Spanish National Police informed the media that the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was suspected but it could not be proven. They said, the attack was carried out to extreme accuracy and was professional. Of course, the CIA rejected and denied the accusations, and the North Korean government accused the attack as being an act of terrorism. In consequence, they demanded an international investigation, but no further information was provided by the diplomatic mission.<sup>30</sup>

In relation to the nuclear development in North Korea, Spain defends that the dialogue should lead to the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula and advocates that the pressure from the international community should continue until the complete denuclearisation of the peninsula is achieved. It is interesting here to apply the liberal lens and perspective previously explained, to analyse whether cooperation and dialogue are always the way to obtain a stable international atmosphere. It has been proven in more than one instance that pursuing cooperation with North Korea's regime today is close to impossible due to its isolated and closed position towards the international community. The arms race program and the radical ideology

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<sup>28</sup> González, M. (2019, April 24). Former US marine arrested over attack on North Korean embassy in Madrid. EL PAÍS. [https://english.elpais.com/elpais/2019/04/22/inenglish/1555917763\\_457001.html](https://english.elpais.com/elpais/2019/04/22/inenglish/1555917763_457001.html).

<sup>29</sup> González, M. (2019, April 24). Former US marine arrested over attack on North Korean embassy in Madrid. EL PAÍS. [https://english.elpais.com/elpais/2019/04/22/inenglish/1555917763\\_457001.html](https://english.elpais.com/elpais/2019/04/22/inenglish/1555917763_457001.html).

<sup>30</sup> Ortega Dolz, P. (2019, April 2). North Korea calls Madrid embassy break-in "a grave terrorist attack". EL PAÍS. [https://english.elpais.com/elpais/2019/04/01/inenglish/1554102005\\_237098.html](https://english.elpais.com/elpais/2019/04/01/inenglish/1554102005_237098.html).

that the North Korean government pursues, has made the country an international threat towards the ideals of freedom and democracy.

#### **4.1.2. Economic and commercial relations**

Spain's economic and commercial relations with North Korea are very scarce and limited. The sanctions and the precariousness of the North Korean economy have kept trade at very low levels. If referring to the bilateral relations, exports between both countries have shown an irregular trend, while imports have heavily declined over the last decade. This decline has been produced because of the large impact of the economic sanctions from the international community towards North Korea. In the fourth annex we are able to see the bilateral commerce between Spain and North Korea.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, there are no significant exchanges of tourists between the two countries. As we have previously mentioned, Spain has marked North Korea as a high risk region for its citizens, not only to live, but also to visit. The country is not only extremely isolated from the international community, but it is also very closed in terms of its frontiers and borders, and it is therefore not easy to enter. Apart from tourism, there is no other record of any other type of trade in services, except for those related to programming orders placed by Spanish animation of video game companies. Moreover, there are no cooperation projects between Spain and North Korea up to date.

As we have previously mentioned, trade relations between both countries are very scarce. In general, Spain exports 906.000 US\$ to North Korea from which: 77% corresponds to cranes, 10% to chemicals and plastics, 4% to air-conditioning compressors and 2.5% to pork products.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, Korea exports 1,83 million US\$ to Spain in terms of: 38% in chemicals (mainly medicines), 27% for magnesium and carbonate, and another 22% for different types of machinery and electronic devices. Among these electronic devices we may find telephones, computers and any necessary

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<sup>31</sup> Oficina de informacion diplomática. Ministro de asuntos exteriores (2021): República Popular Democrática de Corea

<sup>32</sup> Izquierdo, J de Carlos (2016). Relaciones de España con Corea del Norte y Corea del Sur. Contexto geoestratégico

office devices.<sup>33</sup>

Since there is not much analysis we can do in relation to the economic and commercial relations between Spain and North Korea, we believe it is interesting to briefly mentioned the impact of North Korea's relations with the European Union. The relationship that the country has with the organisation is of high importance when trying to understand how the economic and commercial interactions function with Spain. The European Union maintains a policy of "critical engagement" with Pyongyang, which combines pressure through sanctions (both multilateral and autonomous) with a willingness to engage in dialogue in order to facilitate a solution to the conflict.<sup>34</sup> The main objectives the EU has in relation to North Korea are: the complete denuclearisation of the DPRK, the reduction of global tension, the maintenance of the non proliferation regime and the improvement of the human rights situation in the country.<sup>35</sup>

The European Union has no delegation in Pyongyang and is therefore represented by some of the seven member states that do have an embassy in the country: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, Romania, Sweden and the United Kingdom. In return, North Korea has resident embassies in Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.<sup>36</sup>

#### **4.1.3. Social and cultural relations**

We have already analysed to what extend the political and economic relations get to, and now we want to analyse the social and cultural ones. The truth is that North Korea and Spain do not have a very close or intimate cultural relationship due to the closeness of the first country. Spain makes a special effort in foreign cultural action, because it is a major element of public diplomacy and aims to project an image or brand of Spain in accordance with its creative, plural and contemporary reality. In fact, Spain's Ministry of

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<sup>33</sup> Izquierdo, J de Carlos (2016). Relaciones de España con Corea del Norte y Corea del Sur. Contexto geoestratégico

<sup>34</sup> JS Lee (2005). The two faces of EU- North Korea relations

<sup>35</sup> Oficina de informacion diplomática. Ministro de asuntos exteriores (2021): República Popular Democrática de Corea

<sup>36</sup> Oficina de informacion diplomática. Ministro de asuntos exteriores (2021): República Popular Democrática de Corea

Culture aims at strengthening Spain's image abroad, promoting the dissemination of Spanish languages, their economic and cultural value and wants to promote cultural tourism in order to contribute to economic growth. However, North Korea's internal and external situation does not allow it to expand its national cultural traditions abroad, neither does it allow its citizens to leave the country and travel.

Travelling to North Korea is allowed, despite its secrecy and strict measurements for tourists. However, the long list of laws and regulations enlisted by the country must be complied, otherwise, the consequences can be very serious. Both American and South Korean citizens are prohibited from entering the country if they do not have another nationality. To get to the country, there are regular connections with China and Russia, but we must have in mind that it is not possible to travel from South Korea and viceversa. Once in the country, tourists can not move freely around North Korean soil, but rather they have to be accompanied all the time by a national guide. Furthermore, photographs and videos are only allowed to be taken, but it is strictly forbidden to photograph the military forces or works under construction. Interactions with the national population is also very controlled.

As we are able to see, tourism is highly controlled by the North Korean juche government. Cultural and social relations are very scarce and limited in general, not only with Spain. Due to the country's traditional isolation, it is not a popular international destination, with only about 5000 Western visitors per years, plus a several thousand additional Asians.

## **4.2. South Korean - Spanish relationships**

### **4.2.1. Diplomatic and political relations**

It was back in March 1950 when the first bilateral relations between Spain and South Korea were established. In fact, in 2010 the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations was celebrated, but it was really from 1996 onwards then the relations between these two countries truly intensified. This same year, both the King and Queen of Spain visited the South of the peninsula and subsequently, both presidents

of both countries have made state visits.<sup>37</sup>

Spain has an embassy in Seoul, as we have already previously mentioned, and South Korea has an embassy both in Madrid and in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. Both countries have strong bonds and friendly relations, to the point where South Korea's popular culture has been very important in Spain since the 1990's. We will develop this in more depth in the social and cultural section.

As we have mentioned, the state visit of their majesties the King and Queen marked a before and after in the bilateral relations between both countries. In October 2000, the Prime Minister José María Aznar visited the country once again which led to the intensification of exchanges. A few years later, in February 2007, President Roy Moo-hyun visited Spain to contribute to the consolidation of the bilateral relations between both countries, which also allowed the signing of important agreements. Miguel Angel Moratinos, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, visited South Korea on March 2009. Two major agreements were signed during his state visit: the Agreement on Judicial Assistance in Criminal Matters and the Agreement on the Protection of Classified Military Information.<sup>38</sup>

Although diplomatic relations were established in the 1950's, it was not until 1973 when the Spanish Embassy in South Korea was created. During the next couple of years, a variety of agreements were signed in relation to fishery in 1974, cultural cooperation in 1975 and the protection of industrial property in 1977 (which will analyse in more depth in the next section).<sup>39</sup> By 1987 the South Korean Constitution was modified which led the country to a system of pluralistic political system with democratic elections. A year later, the Olympic Games were held in Seoul, which intensely attracted the international community. Korean companies were having difficulties in finding financial aid since 1995, and by 1997 the Korean financial crisis officially broke out. During these years, Spain signed several agreements with South Korea in terms of air transport

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<sup>37</sup> Izquierdo, J de Carlos (2016). Relaciones de España con Corea del Norte y Corea del Sur. Contexto geoestratégico

<sup>38</sup> Benitez Rochel, José Juan (2010). Las relaciones económicas entre España y Corea del Sur

<sup>39</sup> Benitez Rochel, José Juan (2010). Las relaciones económicas entre España y Corea del Sur

in 1989 and on economic matters in 1994.<sup>40</sup>

The relations between the European countries and South Korea are determined by a late interest of the European community in the Asian reality. The current degree of the world's interdependence means that European countries cannot live on the sidelines of markets as dynamic and competitive as for example the Korean market. Once again, we are able to see reflected in this example the impact of the liberal theories in international relations in the last century. Cooperation and interdependence mark the international atmosphere. Although the European Commission marked their objectives and priorities in Asia's new politics in 1994, the Spanish government did so a couple of years later in the year 2000.<sup>41</sup>

Between 1996 and 2004, Spain's views and policies towards Asia and the Pacific radically changed. As we have already mentioned, in 1996 José María Aznar visited the capital of Seoul, which marked South Korea and Asia in general as a new priority for Spain. The development of the Asian-Pacific Framework Plan of 2000-2004 led to a reorientation of this diplomatic Spanish trend. Josep Piqué, the Minister of Foreign Affairs at that time stated the importance of improving relations with that region of the world as "the last frontier that Spanish diplomacy must overcome".<sup>42</sup>

Later on, between 2005 and 2008, the government ruled by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero elaborated the "Asia-Pacific Action Plan" prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation with the objective of increasing Spain's presence in the region.<sup>43</sup> By 2005, a new channel for dialogue between the parliaments of both countries was inaugurated as a channel for permanent communication between the two institutions. In Spain it was presented as the "Spanish-Korean Friendship Group". Furthermore, in June 2006 Ban Ki-Moo was received in Spain with the interest of preparing the EU-Korean Summit, whose main objective was a free trade agreement

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<sup>40</sup> Benitez Rochel, José Juan (2010). Las relaciones económicas entre España y Corea del Sur

<sup>41</sup> Ruecon Asia (2003) Claver para interpretar la política exterior Española y las relaciones internacionales en 2002

<sup>42</sup> Izquierdo, J de Carlos (2016). Relaciones de España con Corea del Norte y Corea del Sur. Contexto geoestratégico

<sup>43</sup> Izquierdo, J de Carlos (2016). Relaciones de España con Corea del Norte y Corea del Sur. Contexto geoestratégico

with the European Union.<sup>44</sup> By 2009, two new agreements were reached between both countries, one in relation to judicial assistance, and another based on the contributory benefits of the social security system.<sup>45</sup>

However, it is important to mention, that Korea and the European Union did not succeed in reaching a Free Trade Agreement until 2010, which was to enter into force provisionally in January 2011. This is one of the reasons why the Prime Minister of South Korea visited Spain; in order to pursue their interest in boosting bilateral trade agreements.

The context within each country over the years changed, and so did the diplomatic relations. During Mariano Rajoy's legislature, he visited Seoul in March 2012 for the Nuclear Security Summit. The year after, Park Gun Hye began her rule in South Korea. Moreover and in relation to military issues, it seems as if in this past years, the bilateral defence relationships, which were very low and with little continuity, have intensified. Some experts believe that South Korea is highly interested in maintaining close international relations with Spain in order to establish greater contact with the Ibero-American countries. On the other hand, the Spanish government has begun to pursue the triangulation of the Asian region and Latin American in order to address its foreign policies towards the Asia-Pacific.<sup>46</sup>

#### **4.2.2. Economic and commercial relations**

As we have already seen, there have been over 70 years of diplomatic relations between Spain and South Korea; two internationally recognised countries that maintain dialogues and positions of mutual cooperation to achieve sustainable economic and social development. It is therefore that Spain and South Korea have shown an above average performance in relation to their zone of influence. The increase in economic and trading relations has occurred in an uneven way, as the trade imbalance in favor of Korea is

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<sup>44</sup> Arnaiz, AJA (2011). Los acuerdos de libre comercio de la nueva era: el acuerdo Union Europea y Corea

<sup>45</sup> Izquierdo, J de Carlos (2016). Relaciones de España con Corea del Norte y Corea del Sur. Contexto geoestratégico

<sup>46</sup> Izquierdo, J de Carlos (2016). Relaciones de España con Corea del Norte y Corea del Sur. Contexto geoestratégico

steadily increasing.

South Korea became a member of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) in 1996, but immediately after joining, its world exports declined as a result of the Asian crisis in the 1990s.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, South Korea's economy has steadily grown during the 21st century, and the trade balance with Spain shows a clear surplus in its favour. The trade deficit between Spain and Korea reached its peak between 2006 and 2007. As a result of the reduction of our imports, Spain's deficit has been slowly decreasing over the past years. Spain's trade deficit with Korea amounted to 460 million ECU in 1997, while it stood at 2,569 million euros in 2005.<sup>48</sup> Part of this development is due to the increase in Korean exports since 1998, as a way of recovering from the 1997 crisis, and since then, the Korean economy has depended on foreign markets for its growth.

Spain's exports to South Korea in 2008 reached 115 billion USD, they declined in 2009 and since then, they have maintained a progressive increase until reaching 1,660 m USD in 2013.<sup>49</sup> This only accounts for 0,57% of Spanish exports during 2013. In terms of the main products exchanged we have petrol in the first place (253m USD in 2013) and chemical products in second place. Machinery exports are the fourth largest Spanish export to South Korea, rising from 45,7 TO 164 m USD. Precious metals stand in fifth place and vehicles and components stand in the sixth, reaching 106m USD in 2013.<sup>50</sup> For South Korea, the exports delivered to Spain account got 2.090m USD which is only about 0,37% of their total exports.

Spain established several agreements with South Korea on air transport (1989) and, above all, on economic matters in 1994. Here, we must mention the Economic Cooperation Agreement between the Kingdom of Spain and the Republic of Korea. This agreement recognises a most-favoured-nation treatment and the promotion and protection of investments. During that same year, a scientific and cultural cooperation

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<sup>47</sup> Hidalgo Vega, Álvaro (2007). Relaciones económicas bilaterales entre España y Corea: una oportunidad para crecer conjuntamente

<sup>48</sup> Izquierdo, J de Carlos (2016). Relaciones de España con Corea del Norte y Corea del Sur. Contexto geoestratégico

<sup>49</sup> Hidalgo Vega, Álvaro (2007). Relaciones económicas bilaterales entre España y Corea: una oportunidad para crecer conjuntamente

<sup>50</sup> Hidalgo Vega, Álvaro (2007). Relaciones económicas bilaterales entre España y Corea: una oportunidad para crecer conjuntamente

agreement was also established, which included the exchange of university professors and an automatic renewal every five years.

Tourism and the cultural industry has been strengthening between these countries. In fact, until 2019 there was an increase in the Korean population that visited Spain and also Spanish tourists who were interested in knowing and visiting the Asian country. However, we are going to elaborate in more depth on this point in the next section: social and cultural relationships.

The Free Trade Agreement between both nations was signed in 2011, which produced positive economic effects for both countries. Korea is currently the third country to which Spain exports and the sixth that supplies the country. As we all know, the trade exchanges during 2020 were heavily affected by the COVID 19 pandemic. The economic area was harshly affected, but the main export products were: meat (pork), pharmaceuticals, minerals and waste and finally, vehicles<sup>51</sup>

Spanish relations with the two Korea's are inseparable from the foreign policy of the European Union and the activity carried out by its External Action Service. Bilateral talks between the European Union and South Korea, specially focused for coordination and development matters, began in 2008 and were followed in meetings in 2012 and 2014. In 2010, the European Union's Free Trade Agreement with South Korea was signed.<sup>52</sup> This was the first agreement of this nature that the European Union signed with an Asian country. As we have previously mentioned, the agreement came into force in January 2011 and in September 2015 a summit was held in Seoul to discuss its development. Although there were many doubts on the signing of this agreement, in the long run, it has become a very positive balance for Europe in general. Vehicle exports to Korea have increased about 55% compared to 2010. The agreement basically resulted in the elimination of tariffs on almost all items, except for some particular products in the agricultural sector. This has in consequence led to an increase trade and investment flows between the two countries, making South Korea the third largest destination country for Spanish exports to Asia, after China and Japan. In the fifth annex we are able to see the main products exported and imported by Spain with South Korea.

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<sup>51</sup> Hidalgo Vega, Álvaro (2007). Relaciones económicas bilaterales entre España y Corea: una oportunidad para crecer conjuntamente

<sup>52</sup> Hidalgo Vega, Álvaro (2007). Relaciones económicas bilaterales entre España y Corea: una oportunidad para crecer conjuntamente

As we already know, the European Union is committed to the defence of peace, security and human rights across the world, but especially in North Korea. This can be proved by their support for their humanitarian needs: up to date, over 267 million euros have been sent through the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in collaboration with the Red Cross.<sup>53</sup> The EU works very hard on the promotion of peace and stability in the Korean peninsula, especially on the protection of human rights and security.

#### **4.2.3. Social and cultural relations**

Spain and South Korea celebrated in 2020 their 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. In 1950 both countries began a path of dialogue and cooperation that has been consolidated over time, not only in the institutional sphere, but also in the economic relations and economic exchanges. Both Spain and South Korea share values and strategic interests that strengthen both their present and future prospects.

The cultural relations between Spain and South Korea, apart from the state visits previously mentioned, began to develop after the liberation of Korea from Japanese colonialism, right after the Second World War. The initiation of these relations was the Spanish language. The “Dong Yang Institute of Foreign Languages” was created in 1948 where six different languages were taught, including Spanish. This institute was founded in the capital city of Seoul.<sup>54</sup>

The Korean Civil War between 1950 and 1953, was the event that truly produced the pioneering initiative for Koreans to start studying Spanish. In fact, the invasion of South Korea led to the arrival of a Colombian military contingent as part of the international force of 16 countries sent by the United Nations.<sup>55</sup> After the signing of the armistice in 1953, many missionaries began travelling and arriving to Korea. These missionaries studied the Korean language to correctly carry out their missions and with their presence and example they contributed to spreading interest in Spain and the Spanish language in

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<sup>53</sup> Pérez de las Heras, B. (2005). La ayuda humanitaria de la Unión Europea

<sup>54</sup> Asorey Brey, Enrique. (2019) España y Corea: 1950-2020. 70 años de relaciones: expansión y diversificación

<sup>55</sup> Asorey Brey, Enrique. (2019) España y Corea: 1950-2020. 70 años de relaciones: expansión y diversificación

the peninsula. This constituted one of the first moments of cultural contacts between the two countries.

Following the establishment of the resident embassies in each of the two countries, bilateral cultural relations were institutionalised with the signing of a “Cultural Cooperation Agreement” in 1977, which replaced a few years later by the one we may find today. This new agreement entered into force the 17th of January 1994.<sup>56</sup> The agreement counts with 12 articles in which each country facilitates the establishment in its territory of cultural institutions of the other party. Under this article, the Korean government established a Korean Cultural Center in Madrid in 2011. On the other hand, the establishment of an “Instituto Cervantes” in Seoul has been developed for many years without reaching any solid agreement. To date, only two Instituto Cervantes classrooms have been set up, at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies and another one in Kyunghee University.<sup>57</sup> The Agreement signed in 1994 establishes that both parties must encourage the organisation of exhibitions and concerts, the exchange of artists, publications and cultural material as well as university professors, researchers, lecturers and other sort of experts. Both countries should also grant scholarships, youth exchanges and cooperation between their respective sport organisations. Every three years, the Spanish Korean Joint Commission for Educational and Cultural Cooperation meets to treat three areas specifically: the educational field, the cultural cooperation and the cooperation among the institutions of both countries. The commission is chaired on the Spanish side by the Director General of Cultural and Scientific Relations of the AECID and on the Korean side by the Director of Cultural Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>58</sup>

Despite the growing diversification of cultural exchanges between Spain and South Korea over the past years, language continues to be the main focus of interest between the two countries, especially the interest of the Spanish language in Korea. Cultural exchanges have also increased through film, video art, music (especially Korean pop

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<sup>56</sup> Asorey Brey, Enrique. (2019) España y Corea: 1950-2020. 70 años de relaciones: expansión y diversificación

<sup>57</sup> Asorey Brey, Enrique. (2019) España y Corea: 1950-2020. 70 años de relaciones: expansión y diversificación

<sup>58</sup> Asorey Brey, Enrique. (2019) España y Corea: 1950-2020. 70 años de relaciones: expansión y diversificación

music in Spain), television, video games and dance. The studying of Spanish in South Korea began almost 70 years ago, which means there is a first generation of Spanish speakers, whereas the studying of Korean in Spain is still a minority. The Korean Cultural Center was established in 2011 in Madrid to promote the expansion of traditional Korean culture around the world. The center holds a large variety of programs whose aim is to make information available to many people so that they can learn about the charms of Korean culture. Many Spanish universities, regardless of whether they offer courses on Korea or not, have signed collaboration agreements with Korean universities, forming a dense network of contacts.

Although we may count tourism as part of the economic relations between two countries, it is a vital component of the development of cultural relations. Asian tourism towards Spain has increased in the past decades mainly because of our high living conditions and their interest towards our history, culture and art. Over the last decade, the number of Korean tourists visiting Spain has multiplied by twenty. Back in 2009, Spain received 25,000 Korean tourists, in 2010 there were over 44,000, in 2014 167,000, in 2016 341,000 and in 2018 490,000 visited the country.<sup>59</sup> However, according to Korean sources, the number of Spanish tourists that visited the country in 2018 was just about 28,000 people. South Korea stands in third place of the Asian countries that visit Spain, right behind China and Japan. The south of the peninsula therefore constitutes an important client for the Spanish tourism industry.

On December 2017, the Spanish and Korean government signed an agreement establishing a youth mobility program to promote the exchange between young people from both countries and this foster a greater mutual understanding. This sort of agreements is of special interest for both countries because of the potential it implies for intensifying relations in the cultural and touristic fields, and in the economic sector as well in the medium and long term. In essence, the agreement consists of the two countries agreeing to issue a visa, valid for one year, to young people from the other country between the ages of 18 and 30, so that during that period they can enter, reside and work in the other country without having to obtain a specific work permit.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Informe sobre Turismo Asiático, Casa Asia, 2017 (pág.58) y MAEUEC, Oficina de Información Diplomática: Ficha País Corea del Sur (pág.7), abril 2019

<sup>60</sup> Asorey Brey, Enrique. (2019) España y Corea: 1950-2020. 70 años de relaciones: expansión y diversificación

Scientific and technological relations between Spain and South Korea were formalised, from the institutional point of view, with the signing of the “Basic Agreement on Scientific and Technical Cooperation” between both countries on July 14th, 1975. This agreement involved the cooperation of technical and scientific investigations, as well as the exchange of experts and scientists for the realisation of joint programs. The energy sector, a priority for the two oil deprived countries, is one of the sectors in which cooperation is most intense. In September 2009, Spain’s Institute for Energy Diversification and Saving (IDAE) and the Korean Energy Management and Saving Center (KEMKO) signed a memorandum of understanding for cooperation.

Some of the most promoted activities in Spain through the Korean Cultural Center are: events and cultural exhibitions, Korean cinema (Shiri), Hangul (native traditional alphabet) courses, Baduk (traditional Korean boardgame), Korean art (Sumukhwa, korean ink), Korean Hanji paper workshops: Korean Paper dolls and Origami0s, Korean traditional music (Janggo instrument) and K- Pop workshops (understanding the lyrics and its history). K-pop is a genre of music that includes various styles such as pop, hip hop, EDM, or rock, and refers to popular music from South Korea (not from North Korea because they have no Western-influenced sort of music).<sup>61</sup>

As we have been able to see, social and cultural relations between South Korea and Spain have increased over the past few decades and will continue to do so in the globalised world of today. Both countries use their own institutions to promote and enhance the presence of their national traditions and cultures across the world.

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<sup>61</sup> XV Meza & HW Park (2015). La globalización de productos culturales: un análisis webométrico de KPOP en países de habla hispana

## **5. CONCLUSION AND FINAL ANALYSIS**

Once we have carried out a full analysis of the political, economic and cultural relations between Spain with both North and South Korea, we would like to make a final comment in relation to our initial hypothesis: how different are the relations that Spain has with the North and the South? Have these relationships changed since the end of the Korean Civil War in 1953? Have they improved, worsened, increased or decreased? Has the context of each country during a specific moment marked the relationship with one another? How can the liberal theory in international relations be applied to these cases? And finally, are the relations that Spain has with these two countries marked by the policies of the European Union?

As we have seen, the Civil War in Korea (1950-1953) aroused some interest in the Spanish governmental and press media, among which a similarity was drawn between the Spanish Civil War, at the time presented as a crusade against communism and South Korea's struggle against the communist invasion. This mutual sympathy between the regimes of both countries led to the fact that, following the armistice in the Korean War and the overcoming of certain initial South Korean reluctance to have Spain represented in Seoul, the way was paved for the establishment of resident embassies in each of the two countries (Madrid in 1970 and Seoul in 1974). As we have been able to notice throughout the analysis, in the 70 years since Spain and Korea established diplomatic relations, contacts and exchanges between the two countries have been experiencing and diversifying, moderately during the first 30 years and with greater acceleration in the last four decades. The last decade has definitely marked a before and after in the relations between both countries, but specifically in the commercial sector and in the levels of tourism.

In our initial hypotheses we established that the relationship between Spain with North and South Korea had increased since the end of the Korean Civil War. As we have seen in our analysis, Spain's diplomatic, commercial and cultural relations with South Korea have rapidly increased over the past 70 years, however, their relationship with North Korea is stagnated. Although North Korea experienced a rapid recovery from the civil war and they stood in a better position than the south of the country, their historical and ideological position varies too much in comparison to that of Spain. In fact, the Spanish and South Korean populations lived a dictatorship in each country for many years that

ended pushing them to fight towards a democratised and free country. While, on the other side, North Korea followed the communist ideology and implanted it throughout the country, until 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed and the international isolation of the country began. Last year, in 2020, Spain and South Korea jointly celebrated the 70 years of cooperation and relations, while, North Korea has no relations with any country in the international community.

Despite the short 70 years that have passed since then, both North and South Korea have evolved in opposite directions, to a point in which North Korea has become one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world. South Korea, on the other hand, has evolved in a short period of time to become one of the strongest economies in the world thanks to an enviable democratic transition that today serves as an example for many other states in the process of democratisation. While South Koreans move up the international rankings, North Korea gets continuously denounced for its human violations, its secrecy and nuclear enrichment. It is therefore that we believe we can state that Spain's relationship with South Korea has improved and even increased over the last couple of years- especially in economic terms (bidirectional gains) and levels of tourism (more improvement for Spain). On the other hand, Spain's relationship with North Korea has maintained rather low and poor. The relations that are held between both countries are the least necessary, and managed through the embassy Spain has in Seoul.

As we have seen throughout the investigation, South Korea and the European Union signed a free trade agreement that entered into force at the end of 2011. Today, they are important trading partners to the point that Korea is the EU's ninth largest trading partner and the EU is Korea's second largest export market. In consequence, this means that Spain's relations to both North and South Korea is dependent on European Union's will. Spain cannot take any actions on its own when it comes to the international community without going through the EU. At the international level, EU membership strengthens Spain's position. In fact, the EU has more strength when it comes to imposing its position in an international negotiation than Spain would have acting alone. The European Union has made a crucial role when it comes to modernising Spain, both in the public and private sector. During Spain's transition, the EU membership project served as a beacon for democratic consolidation, while integration into the single market

opened up a world of possibilities for Spanish companies. The rapid expansion and growth of the Asian economies during the 1990's and the beginning of the twenty first century, pushed the European Union into negotiating and investing in a new region of the world. The large developed cities in Asian countries grabbed the interest of American and European enterprises to a point where dialogue and cooperation were necessary. In this case, South Korea became a hotspot for them. Spain and European countries in general were highly interested in enhancing their diplomatic, commercial and cultural relations in the region, and viceversa.

We must not forget to directly relate everything we have discussed to the liberal theory we initially talked about. Liberals argue that states should not only act based on their national interests, but rather should follow a path of dialogue to reach a win-win situation of cooperation in order to maintain a stable international scenario. As we previously mentioned, the theory of democratic peace should and can be applied to this particular investigation. Democratic peace theory argues that democracies have never gone to war with each other and have fewer conflict among themselves. We are able to see the effects of this theory in our investigation due to the fact that Spain maintains high quality relations with South Korea, but rarely any relations with North Korea. Spain's transition towards a democratic form of government during the 1970's and 1980's allowed the country to smoothly introduce itself into the international community. During those same years, South Korea was experience a similar situation, whereas the North of the peninsula was transitioning into one of the world's most radical and isolated dictatorships.

We would also like to finally highlight the negative effects in the economic and financial sectors when talking about international isolation. Figures on North Korea's development are almost impossible to obtain outside the secretive Asian country. North Korea's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth has wandered between negative and, to a small extent, positive numbers over the last decade. The structure of North Korea's economy is very fragile, so it has no sustained growth pattern. Despite international responses and high economic sanctions towards the country, North Korea continues to subsist. For future studies and investigations, we believe it would be interesting to analyse why international sanctions have not pushed North Korea to adopt a different position and how the country will evolve with a different leader. In relation to South

Korea, future investigations could be focused on analysing whether their relations with Spain and the European Union are going to continue on the same line, or whether they will improve or worsen.

To conclude, we would like to state that the end of the Korean Civil War marked a crucial point in defining the relationships between Spain with North and South Korea. The historical and political situation in each country has led them to where they are today: Spain as a member of the European Union, South Korea as one of the most developed countries in the world and North Korea as the most isolated and hermetic state today. South Korea's and Spain's transition to democracy has allowed them to maintain a constant rapprochement and improved relations over the years, whereas North Korea's communist regime has pushed the international community away in diplomatic, economic and cultural terms. The investigation has shown how countries who deny cooperation and dialogue in the globalised world we live in today leads them to complete isolation and in consequence negative economic and financial results. Furthermore, democratic countries pursue the liberal theories of international cooperation and show that through dialogue conflicts can be avoided and negotiations may be settled. The improvement of relations between South Korea and Spain has allowed them to pursue national interests abroad and has motivated them to continue maintaining such positive relations.

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## 7. Annex:

### Annex I: Aid contributions from Fraternal Nations to North Korea

Aid Contributions from Fraternal Nations (millions of rubles)

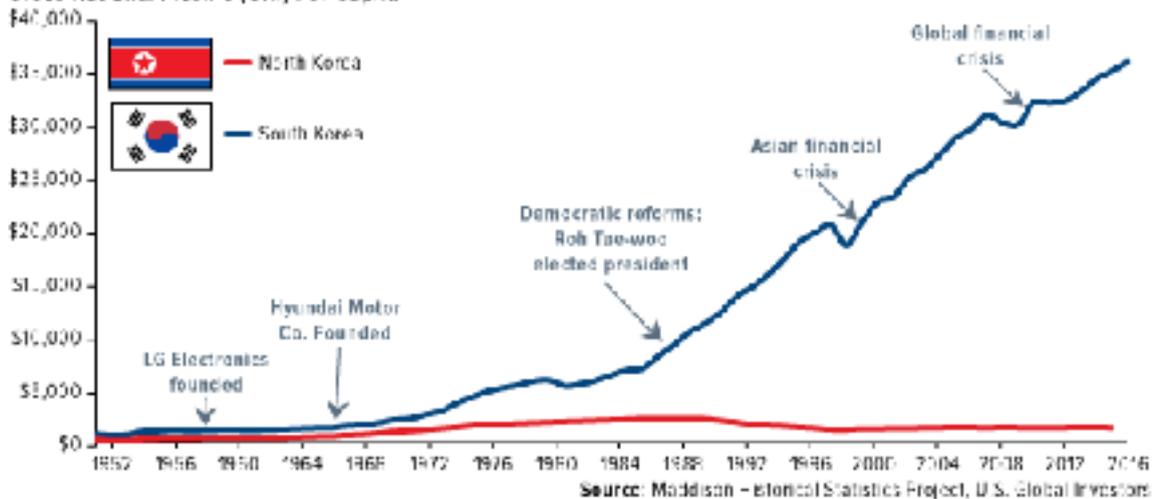
USSR	292.5
China	258.4
GDR	122.7
Poland	81.9
Czech	61.0
Romania	22.0
Hungary	21.0
Bulgaria	18.7
Albania	0.6
Mongolia	0.4
North Vietnam	0.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>879.3 million rubles</b>

Source: SSSR i Korcia (Moscow: USSR Academy of Sciences, 1988), p. 256

### Annex II: Economic growth of South Korea (1952-2016)

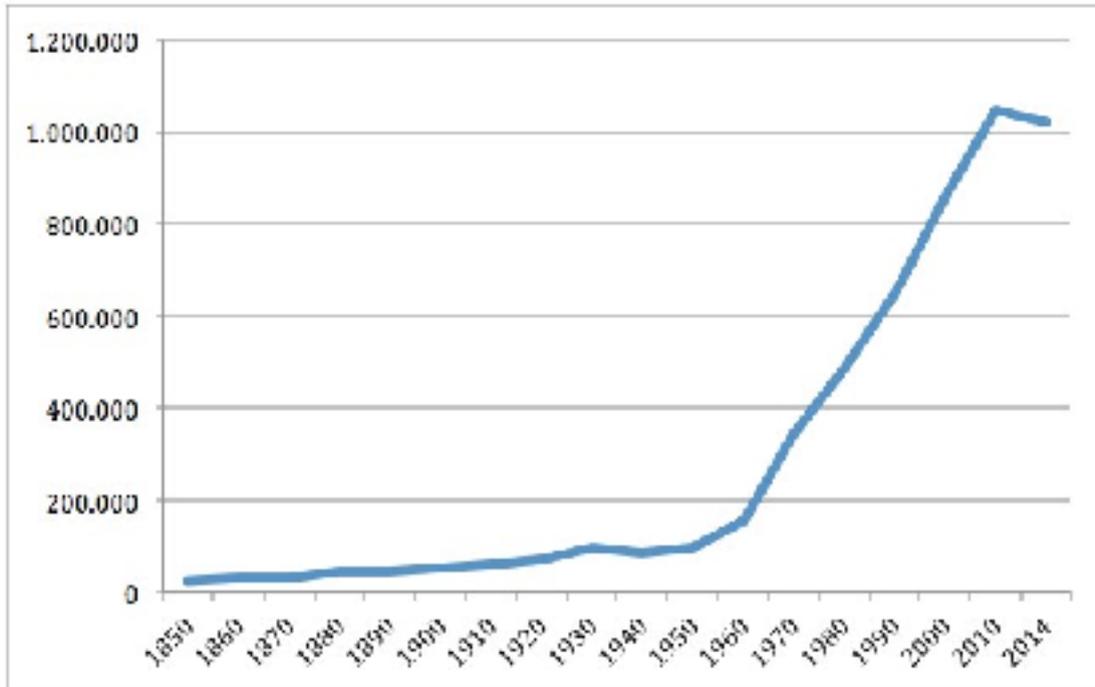
#### Miracle on the Han River, 70 Years Later

Gross National Income (GNI) Per Capita



**Annex III: Spain’s economic growth during the “Stabilisation Plan of 1959”**

**PIB de España, 1850-2015 (expresado en euros de 2010)**



**Annex IV: Bilateral commercial relations between Spain and North Korea**

**COMERCIO BILATERAL ESPAÑA - COREA DEL NORTE. DATOS EN MILES DE EUROS**

EXPORTACIÓN		IMPORTACIÓN		SALDO		
CAMBIO	VALOR	CAMBIO	VALOR	CAMBIO	VALOR	
	2015	250	98%	1.450	3%	-1200
	2016	712	184%	1.288	-11%	-576
	2017	833	17%	1.365	6%	-532
	2018	409	-51%	241	-83%	168
	2019	25	-94%	374	59%	-358
	2020*	123	392%	249	-33%	-126

*\*de enero a octubre. Fuente: Estacom -ICEX (2021)*

## Annex V: Main products imported and exported by Spain to South Korea 2014

### Principales productos exportados por España a Corea del Sur

Capítulos	20131 Miles de euros
Combustibles, Aceite mineral	259.585
Maquinaria y aparatos mecánicos	82.642
Productos farmacéuticos	78.368
Manuf. de fundición, hierro/acero	72.955
Mat. plásticas y sus manufacturas	62.597
Minerales, escorias y cenizas	59.582
Grasas, aceite animal o vegetal	44.443
Aparatos y material eléctricos	33.560
Carne y despojos comestibles	32.491
Vehículos automóviles	31.683
Productos químicos orgánicos	27.387
Prendas de vestir, no de punto	24.298
Aluminio y sus manufacturas	21.611

### Principales productos importados por España de Corea del Sur

Capítulos	2013 Miles de euros
Vehículos automóviles, tractores	510.221
Aparatos y material eléctrico	289.590
Máquinas y aparatos mecánicos	151.925
Mat. plásticas y sus manufacturas	138.098
Caucho y sus manufacturas	82.519
Fundición, hierro y acero	71.628
Filamentos sintéticos o artificial	54.688
Productos químicos orgánicos	48.584
Fibras sintéticas o artificiales discontinuas	24.526
Herramientas de cuchillería, cubiertos	23.191
Manuf. de fundición, hierro/acero	22.937

Fuente: Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad

