

Relations between Colombia and South Korea: An Analysis of Colombian Foreign Policy as a Geopolitical Strategy in the Asia Pacific

Jesús Eduardo Moreno Pelaez
Angélica María González González
(Editors)

Strategy, Geopolitics, and Culture Collection



Relations between Colombia and South Korea:

An Analysis of Colombian Foreign
Policy as a Geopolitical Strategy in
the Asia Pacific



Relations between Colombia and South Korea:

An Analysis of Colombian Foreign Policy as
a Geopolitical Strategy in the Asia Pacific

JESÚS EDUARDO MORENO PELÁEZ
ANGÉLICA MARÍA GONZÁLEZ GONZÁLEZ
(EDITORS)

Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto"
Bogotá D.C., 2025

Cataloging in publication – Escuela Superior de Guerra “General Rafael Reyes Prieto”

Relations between Colombia and South Korea : an Analysis of Colombian Foreign Policy as a Geopolitical Strategy in the Asia Pacific / Jesús Eduardo Moreno Peláez and Angélica María González González, editors. – Bogotá : Sello Editorial ESDEG, 2025.

172pages : illustration, maps and graphics ; 24 cm

Includes bibliographic references at the end of each chapter

ISBN (print): 978-628-7818-09-5

E- ISBN: 978-628-7818-10-1

(Strategy, Geopolitics, and Culture Collection)

1. International Relations - Colombia - Corea del Sur. 2. Geopolitics - Asia Pacífico region. 3. Foreign Policy - Colombia. 4. Colombia – Foreign Relations - Corea del Sur 5. Corea del Sur – Foreign Relations - Colombia. i. Galindo, Jaime Alonso, (preface) ii. Moreno Peláez, Jesús Eduardo, (editor and introduction) iii. González González, Angélica María, (editor). iv. Figueroa Pedreros, Erika Constanza, (author) v. Ortega Olarte, Óscar Isaac, (author). vi. López Niño, Desiderio, (author). vii. Castillo, Humberto Librado, (author). viii. Carrascal Jácome, Manuel Guillermo, (author). ix. González González, Angélica María, (author). x. Restrepo Montoya, Juan David, (author). xi. Farfán Castro, Fernando Enrique, (author). xii. Rodríguez Ruiz, Héctor Mauricio, (author). xiii. Colombia. Escuela Superior de Guerra “General Rafael Reyes Prieto” (ESDEG).

SCLC JZ1480.A55R45 2025

SCDD 327.51956123 2 23

Catalog Record SIBFuP 991361842307231

Downloadable file in MARC at: <https://tinyurl.com/esdeg991361842307231>



Relations between Colombia and South Korea: An Analysis of Colombian Foreign Policy as a Geopolitical Strategy in the Asia Pacific

First edition, 2025

Editors:

Jesús Eduardo Moreno Peláez
Angélica María González González

2025 Escuela Superior de Guerra
“General Rafael Reyes Prieto”
Office of the Deputy Director of Research
Sello Editorial ESDEG
Carrera 11 No. 102-50 Bogotá D.C., Colombia
www.esdeglibros.edu.co

Cover:

José Vicente Gómez based on images from Freepik

Strategy, Geopolitics, and Culture Collection

Print ISBN: 978-628-7818-09-5

Digital ISBN: 978-628-7818-10-1

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287818101>

E-book published through the Open Monograph Press platform.

Print run of 100 copies

Printed in Colombia

Translation of the book titled “Relaciones entre Colombia y Corea del Sur: un análisis de la política exterior colombiana como estrategia geopolítica en el Asia Pacífico”, resulting from research by the Escuela Superior de Guerra “General Rafael Reyes Prieto.”

The content of this book reflects the authors' views and is their sole responsibility. The positions and statements presented herein are the result of an academic and research exercise that does not necessarily represent the official or institutional position of the participating institutions, the Escuela Superior de Guerra “General Rafael Reyes Prieto,” the Military Forces of Colombia, and the Ministry of National Defense.



Books published by the Sello Editorial ESDEG are open access under a Creative Commons license: Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International.

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>



Vice-Admiral
León Ernesto Espinosa Torres
DIRECTOR

Brigadier General
Nestor Favian Nieto Rivera
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Colonel
Aldemar Serrano Cuervo
DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH



Colonel
Aldemar Serrano Cuervo
HEAD OF SELLO EDITORIAL ESDEG

Erika Paola Ramírez Benítez
EDITOR IN CHIEF OF SELLO EDITORIAL ESDEG

Jorge Hernando Aristizábal Gáfaró
PROOFREADER

Raquel Arianne Alvarado Candela
LAYOUT DESIGNER

Nathalie Barrientos Preciado
TRANSLATOR

Table of Contents

Preface MG Jaime Alonso Galindo	09-10
Introduction Retired LTC Jesús Eduardo Moreno Peláez Angélica María González González	11-12
Chapter 1 The Historical Process of Strategic and Geopolitical Relations between Colombia and South Korea Erika Constanza Figueroa Pedreros Óscar Isaac Ortega Olarte	13-34
Chapter 2 Trade Relations between Colombia and South Korea from the Signing of the Free Trade Agreement Desiderio López Niño	35-54
Chapter 3 Governance, Innovation and Competitiveness. Analysis of South Korea's Experience Humberto Librado Castillo	55-76
Chapter 4 Constitutionalism in Korea and Colombia: Comparing Decisions of Their Constitutional Courts that Affect National Security and Defense Manuel Guillermo Carrascal Jácome	77-102

Chapter 5

Geopolitical Reconfiguration of the Asia Pacific: From the Republic of Korea's Achievements to Colombia's Opportunities

103-122

Angélica María González González

Juan David Restrepo Montoya

Chapter 6

Soft Power in Colombian Foreign Policy. The Asia Pacific: A Light on the Horizon, a Lighthouse on the Other Side of the Ocean

123-142

Fernando Andrés Polo Puentes

Fernando Enrique Farfán Castro

Chapter 7

South Korea-Colombia Cooperative Relations: A Perspective from Ocean Governance

143-170

Héctor Mauricio Rodríguez Ruiz

Preface

Major General Jaime Alonso Galindo

Former Director, Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto"

The binational relationship with South Korea, which began with Colombia's participation in the 1950 war and is now 61 years old, presents us with an opportunity to analyze Colombia's achievements and prospects for expansion in the Asia Pacific. This project aims to examine Colombia's use of soft power in its foreign policy, specifically regarding South Korea, as a strategic platform to enter the Asia Pacific's geopolitical landscape and contribute to the nation's development as a secondary regional power through economic growth. The project enables us to explore *Colombia's projection in the Asia-Pacific region*, a subject matter that has been investigated by the Master's Degree in Strategy and Geopolitics at Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto".

This book is based on a literature review regarding the free-trade agreement (FTA) signed between the two countries. It provides an overview of the trading relations between the two States through FTAs, discusses governance and innovation projects, and examines the constitutionalism of their courts, as well as how these factors can affect security and defense. The book also explains how the geopolitical reconfiguration of the Asia Pacific has facilitated the economic and cultural development of South Korea, analyzing its actions in terms of foreign policy, and concludes with an assessment of the *ocean governance* environment of the region. The data presented here were obtained through interviews with various actors in the process and examined using qualitative and quantitative techniques.

The results will be presented to public servants, labor unions, and the academic community so that, in a tripartite manner, research and public policy proposals are formulated to strengthen Colombia's geopolitical position in the Asia-Pacific region, always in partnership with South Korea, thanks to the friendship that has been built over more than 70 years.

Introduction

Retired LTC Jesús Eduardo Moreno Peláez

Angélica María González González

Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto"

In the current context of critical geopolitics, the imperative need for States to guarantee their survival is recognized, directly linking this premise to the acquisition and application of power. Haushofer, Mahan, Spykman, Mackinder, and Kjellén contribute to a comprehensive analysis of the elements of today's international system, exploring the common interests among nations and the threats they face. In this context, it is noted that alongside the primary objective of ensuring subsistence, other interests of equal importance emerge in state actions, as reflected in FTAs, such as the one signed between Colombia and South Korea.

This study, part of the research conducted by the Master's Degree in Strategy and Geopolitics of Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto," focuses on Colombian interests in consolidating as a secondary regional power by considering its natural resources, which hold key geostrategic value. Colombia's geographical location, serving as an interconnector between Central and South America, facilitates communication between the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific, adding another dimension to its role in the region.

This context raises questions about the strategy Colombia should implement to consolidate its position as a power. Geopolitics in the Asia Pacific emerges as a conducive scenario due to its impact on global economic development and the concentration of various countries' interests, particularly China and the countries of ASEAN and APEC. In this regard, Colombia's participation in the Asia-Pacific region through the FTA with South Korea becomes the main challenge in addressing this project.

To understand the dynamics of the relationship between Colombia and South Korea, we refer to Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye's complex interdependence theory, which highlights the multiple channels connecting societies, the non-hierarchical nature of the interest agenda, and the minimization of military force

in complex interdependence situations. These elements are crucial for analyzing bilateral relations and diversifying the agenda between the two countries.

Joseph Nye's concept of soft power is introduced as a key tool in Colombian foreign policy towards South Korea, emphasizing the ability to achieve international objectives through attraction rather than the use of force. Finally, the neo-institutionalist perspective is employed to address the multi-thematic agenda in South Korea-Colombia relations, underscoring the significance of formal and informal institutions in shaping economic agreements and decisions.

This book aims to analyze the use of soft power in Colombia's foreign policy, specifically in its relationship with South Korea, a strategic ally, to strengthen its geopolitical position in the Asia-Pacific region. To achieve this, three goals are established in the present research. First, it seeks to identify the characteristics and attributes of soft power in Colombian foreign policy. Subsequently, it intends to conduct a specific analysis of Colombia's foreign policy toward South Korea, particularly after the signing of the FTA between the two countries, assessing the impact of this agreement on their bilateral relations. Finally, it discusses the geopolitical strategies implemented by Colombia to integrate into the Asia Pacific's dynamics.

The above is structured comprehensively to provide a deep understanding of the dynamics between the two countries and the influence of soft power in their diplomatic relations.

Chapter 1

The Historical Process of Strategic and Geopolitical Relations between Colombia and South Korea^{*}

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287818101.01>

Erika Constanza Figueroa Pedreros

Escuela Militar de Cadetes "General José María Córdova"

Oscar Isaac Ortega Olarte

Escuela Superior de "Guerra General Rafael Reyes Prieto"

Abstract: For Colombia, creating and maintaining strategic relations based on a geopolitical scenario with other countries is essential for its national interests. This chapter presents the historical process and relevant aspects of bilateral relations with South Korea after 1953. Consequently, theoretical, historical, documentary, and oral tradition sources are addressed to analyze in detail the various events of 70 years of diplomatic relations. We conclude that, based on the Colombian Military Forces' participation in the 1950 war, a strong alliance with the Asian country has been maintained, allowing for the strengthening of economic and social projects together.

Keywords: diplomacy; strategic alliances; Colombia; South Korea

* Book chapter derived from the research project *Relations between Colombia and South Korea: An Analysis of the Impact of National Foreign Policy on the Economic Development and Geopolitical Projection of the Country*, conducted by the Masa Crítica research group of Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto." This group is categorized as A1 by the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation (MinCiencias) and registered under code COL0123247. The views and results in this chapter belong to the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the participating institutions.

Erika Constanza Figueroa Pedreros

Master's in Military History, Escuela Militar de Cadetes "General José María Córdova," Colombia. Master's in History of the Independence of Latin America, Universidad Jaume I, Spain. Bachelor's in History, Universidad Industrial de Santander, Colombia.

Contact: erika.figueroa@esmic.edu.co; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6241-344X>

Óscar Isaac Ortega Olarte

Lieutenant Colonel of the Colombian National Army. Master's student in Military History, Escuela Militar de Cadetes "General José María Córdova," Colombia. Master's in National Security and Defense, Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto," Colombia. Specialization in Logistics Management, Logistics School of the National Army of Colombia. Specialization in Military Resources Management for Defense, Combined Weapons School of the National Army of Colombia. Bachelor's in Military Sciences, Escuela Militar de Cadetes "General José María Córdova," Colombia.

Contacto: oscar.ortega@buzonejercito.mil.co; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9507-8809>

APA Citation: Figueroa Pedreros, E. C., & Ortega Olarte, Ó. I. (2025). The Historical Process of Strategic and Geopolitical Relations between Colombia and South Korea. In J. E. Moreno Peláez & A. M. González González (Eds.), *Relations between Colombia and South Korea: An Analysis of Colombian Foreign Policy as a Geopolitical Strategy in the Asia Pacific* (pp. 13-34). Sello Editorial ESDEG.
<https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287818101.01>

RELATIONS BETWEEN COLOMBIA AND SOUTH KOREA: AN ANALYSIS OF COLOMBIAN FOREIGN POLICY AS A GEOPOLITICAL STRATEGY IN THE ASIA PACIFIC

Print ISBN: 978-628-7818-09-5

ISBN digital: 978-628-7818-10-1

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287818101>

Strategy, Geopolitics, and Culture Collection

Sello Editorial ESDEG

Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto"

Bogotá D.C., Colombia

2025



Introduction

As a result of 70 years of bilateral relations between Colombia and South Korea, in 2022, both nations decided to commemorate this significant milestone with a comprehensive diplomatic agenda (Cancillería de Colombia, 2022), encompassing political, economic, and cultural activities. This event, significant for both countries, demonstrated the good diplomatic relations and continuity in strategic alliances, reflected in the planning and execution of projects that have impacted both South Korea and Colombia.

The decision made in 1962 to join efforts for the benefit of each country's interests represented the starting point of this chapter. From that moment on, diplomatic relations between South Korea and Colombia became an attractive scenario for the international intentions of both nations, which they contemplated throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

According to this first scenario, the historical process of strategic and geopolitical relations between Colombia and South Korea from 1962 until the beginning of the twenty-first century invites us to analyze the effects caused, especially on the Colombian State. Hence, the present chapter proposes the following question: *What have been the most relevant aspects of strategic and geopolitical relations between Colombia and South Korea in terms of historical analysis?*

The problem lies in identifying and describing the relevant historical facts that shape bilateral diplomatic relations, considering each country's strategic and geopolitical projections, such as Colombia's focus on the Asia Pacific and South Korea's interest in entering the Latin American market.

The body of the chapter includes a theoretical section that accounts for several authors' proposals in light of geopolitics, framed within a specific context

that aids in understanding the historical process under analysis. These theoretical references are directly linked to the indicated methodological framework, based on the guidelines provided by historiographic research, which are further developed in the results: a timeline highlighting key milestones or events of significant impact for both countries. In describing each event, we aimed to identify the relevant aspects that shape the geopolitical and strategic relationship between Colombia and South Korea.

Finally, the conclusions emphasize the importance of—and, more importantly, the need for—maintaining the diplomatic channel between the two nations. Despite the significant geographical distance separating them, they share a profound connection through economic and social projects.

Theoretical Framework

The study of geopolitics dates back to the era of classical thought. The issue of territorial space has been framed in a relevant context, generating various theories, not only political but also economic. Therefore, it is necessary to mention authors such as Cohen (2015), who presents, through five stages, the evolution of the concept: “(1) the race for imperial hegemony, (2) German *geopolitik*, (3) geopolitics in the United States, (4) the cold war and (5) the post-cold war era” (Cohen, 2015, pp. 16–33).

For Valdivia, regarding Cohen's proposal, the first two stages are categorized as part of classical geopolitics, which emphasizes concerns about the survival of empires and States. Its foremost exponent was the geographer Friedrich Ratzel (1975), the virtual father of the term, which associates it with “power” as the most important attribute of a State. He defines it as the science that establishes the geographical characteristics and conditions and, primarily, the great spaces that play a decisive role in the life of States, where human society and the individual depend on the dreams they fulfill, letting their destiny be determined by the laws of geography (p. 13).

Specifying the phenomenon of human territoriality pointed out in Ratzel, Bilbao (2015) highlights in his article the intrinsic relationship among the State, institutions, and individuals, noting that a scientific theory must include inquiries regarding the origin and evolution of the State, the relationships between the State and other institutions, the interactions among different social classes, and the objectives of

the State, all of which are essential for understanding society in general (Bilbao, 2015, p. 66).

Friedrich Ratzel introduced the concept of vital space into the vocabulary of geopolitics and international relations. Although he did not provide an express definition of "vital space" (*Lebensraum*), it can be inferred that he considered it a geographical region where living organisms existed (as cited in Cairo, 2012, p. 340). In turn, following Karl Haushofer (1975), it is significant to note that he focused his analysis on space as a key factor in determining the history of humanity; hence, its importance in adapting to the population's needs (Haushofer, 1975, p. 85). During the interwar period, his postulates were aligned with continental pan-regionalism, which was based on the close relationship between natural resources and the people (Cohen, 2015, p. 25).

Halford Mackinder (1919), as cited in Cohen, presented Eurasia as the world's economic and political hub, referring to it as the "Heartland," which would serve as the *pivot of the world* for its maritime supremacy. He further affirmed: "Who rules Eastern Europe commands the Heartland: Who rules the Heartland commands World-Island: Who rules World-Island commands the world" (as cited in Cohen, 2015, p. 19). This theory was crucial for understanding the time; specifically, part of the twentieth century witnessed Mackinder's thesis, as two World Wars were fought for the *Heartland* of Eurasia.

In the book *Geopolitics: The Geography of International Relations* by Cohen (2015), it is also argued that Alfred T. Mahan contributed to the geostrategic analysis focused on Eurasia because, like Mackinder, he placed Russia as a dominant power due to its geographical location, despite some disadvantages regarding access to the sea. Years later, he asserted that global domination fell to the geographical interests of the United States and its influence on the Pacific Islands (Cohen, 2015, p. 23).

The contribution of German *geopolitik* in the second stage of the classification of modern geopolitics highlights the necessity of analyzing States based on their geographical positions to understand their strategic interests in gaining political power. The theories proposed by German authors played an essential role in the historical events that shaped the first half of the twentieth century, particularly during the two World Wars.

Within the third stage of Cohen's classification, as of 1942, we find Nicholas Spykman, considered an exponent of the American geopolitical postulate, who took into account Mahan's theory and was inspired by Mackinder. He asserted

that "the Eurasian coastal lands (including maritime Europe, the Middle East, India, Southeast Asia, and China) were the keys to world control because of their populations, their rich resources, and their use of interior sea-lanes" (Cohen, 2015, p. 26). However, he consistently advocated for American hegemony and national security through the strengthening of naval military bases to prevent the power imbalance in Eurasia (Valdivia, 2017, p. 71).

The fourth stage outlines the Cold War, which, in the words of Brzezinski (1997), introduced a new geopolitical dimension to strategic interests, pitting North America against Eurasia in the global dispute. "The winner would truly dominate the globe. There was no one else to stand in the way, once victory was finally grasped" (Brzezinski, 1997, p. 6).

At the end of this bipolar order, the last stage of modern geopolitics, as identified by Cohen and evidenced in the nascent theoretical debate within the discipline, was presented. A central point is determined by the object of study itself and by the classification of some authors in relation to categories of the same geopolitics: for example, Mamadohud (2015, as cited in Valdivia, 2017, p. 75) warns of the existence of other geopolitical approaches: geostrategy, geoeconomics, post-structuralist, subversive, feminist, neomarxist, and political geography.

Along the same lines, Gearóid ÓTuathail (1996) introduced a reinterpretation of geopolitics from a theoretical problematization, abandoning the classical European accusations. He criticized in depth the object of geopolitics and the discourses on the geographical characteristics of international relations. This approach belongs to a broad school of postmodern social sciences involved in discourse analysis.

The extensive knowledge of the concepts mentioned earlier and their authors in classical and critical geopolitics reached South America through two major avenues. On the one hand, the influence of attachés and military exchanges, particularly from the German perspective, which initially showed signs of this discipline's emergence, notably during the first half of the twentieth century in countries such as Brazil, Argentina, and Chile, before spreading to the rest of the continent. On the other hand, it was also shaped by the interpretation of geopolitical writings produced during the Cold War, especially those concerning shifts in the political landscape and the specific interests of nations (Child, 1979).

As mentioned by Cabrera (2017), geopolitics was directly associated with the arrangements made by the Armed Forces (AFs) of countries, particularly in the Southern Cone, where each State assimilated geopolitics according to its own needs, understanding it as a tool that, in one way or another, allowed for the

explanation of social phenomena within the conflict scenario, including those countries with common disputes.

In the power game that accounts for the historical, political, and ideological processes of border conflicts in Latin America during the second half of the twentieth century, Cairo and Lois (2014) analyze how the region was an epicenter of territorial confrontations among different nations due, above all, to geopolitical causes linked to the bipolar dispute of world powers at the time. However, with the passage of time, in the last two decades of the twentieth century, the opening to a competitive and globalized world changed the geopolitical and strategic direction of several Latin American countries. In some cases, this shift was for the benefit of internal stability, while in others, it aimed to avoid international armed confrontations.

Methods

The methodological perspective for treating the chapter focused on the qualitative stage, which enables the analysis of the research object's complexity through various techniques. One of these—infallible in historical research—is the documentary review. Some authors point out that the qualitative methodology "is not based on a unified theoretical and methodological concept. Various theoretical approaches and their methods characterize the discussions and the research practice" (Flick, 2009, p. 16). Others argue that qualitative research is interpretive; it maintains a hermeneutical conception, and its collection methods allow for access to data that can be observed, described, and interpreted (Ñaupas et al., 2014, p. 350).

Topolsky (1992), on the other hand, emphasizes the need for the field of interest in historical research, pointing towards the historian's reflections on the same object of analysis: "past events," which in this case are the diplomatic, geopolitical, and strategic relations between Colombia and South Korea for a certain period. In line with the previous premise, Arostegui (1995) notes that the historical event serves as the decisive nucleus and determining element in the historical process. The event is, metaphorically speaking, the agent of history (p. 115). Hence, this approach also directs its gaze to the various historical facts that comprise the diplomatic relations between the two countries, which are taken into account to build the research object for the chapter.

In the historical research methodology, Ramírez Bacca (2010), an expert historian in historiographic research, emphasizes the distinction between method

and technique to avoid confusion within the comprehensive methodological process. For this chapter, the historical-critical method addresses the problem posed: it is characterized by the chronological succession of events in different stages, allowing for the understanding of the evolution and development of the research object. It historically contextualizes or problematizes the phenomenon or case under study. Moreover, this method reveals the history of the phenomenon or case and facilitates the analysis of the concrete projection of a hypothesis or theory within a specific historiographic context (Ramírez Bacca, 2010, p. 43).

Regarding the technique employed for developing the chapter, the criticism of historical sources enables the interpretation of the different historical events we aim to examine. This allows us to identify the significant aspects and effects in the geopolitical and strategic relationship between Colombia and South Korea from 1953 to 2010. Various historiographic schools have approached source criticism with care; perhaps, the most orthodox were the positivists, who categorized some underlying principles of general criticism, emphasizing the historian's need for a responsible and argumentative assessment of their value judgments.

The historical sources used to develop the chapter have various characteristics, including an institutional approach (applied to the Official Gazette and the Ministry of War reports) and personal memories from individuals involved in specific historical events between Colombia and South Korea. These sources are assembled with previously published academic texts.

Results

In the mid-twentieth century, the world was divided by World War II and the onset of the Cold War. Colombia was no stranger to this international reality, as it experienced a period of contest between the two traditional parties: liberal and conservative. Following the murder of liberal leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán on April 9, 1948, the country was plunged into serious political polarization, which further exacerbated violence of partisan origin (Barbosa, 2004).

By 1950, the global political order had become highly complex. The expansionist and containment strategies of the power blocs shaped future diplomacy, generalizing the struggle against communism in certain regions. The United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the two powers that divided global dominance, defined the era of post-war distrust, while political tension intensified the looming threat of the Cold War.

Seeking to avoid another world conflict, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR, as it is known by its Spanish acronym) were established, a development that strengthened international relations in the region. For instance, between 1944 and 1948, the United States facilitated the incorporation of Latin America into the new power structures. Following that, opportunities for participation from other continents emerged. The selection of Colombian Alberto Lleras Camargo as the first Secretary-General of the OAS was no coincidence: He was one of the most prominent representatives of the Latin American political elite willingly integrated into the new world order. Drekonja (1983) notes that, with this background, a chain of events unfolded that would ultimately lead to Colombia's participation in the Korean War.

Many historians agree that, as a result of Colombia's participation in the Korean War, the *respite polum* doctrine, coined in 1914 by the diplomat Marco Fidel Suárez, later became the main objective of Colombian foreign policy. This development fostered Colombia's unwavering loyalty to Washington, which emerged with the signing of the Thomson-Urrutia Treaty in the 1920s, along with various reparations acts by the United States. This tradition has retained its constituent elements to this day (Arango, 2010; Drekonja, 1983).

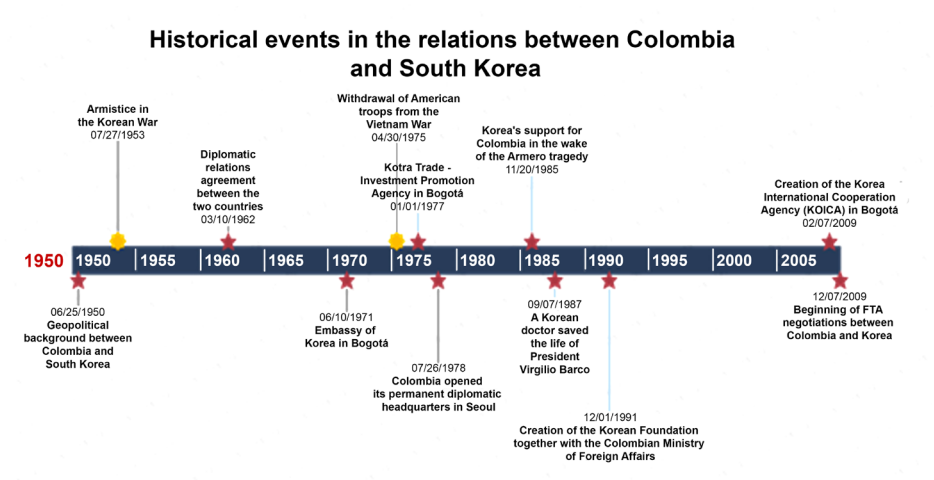
The doctrine stated that Colombia should guide its foreign policy in alignment with the United States. According to Tokatlian (2000), the north of our foreign policy must be there, in that powerful nation, which more than any other is decisively appealing to the peoples of America (p. 140). Contradictorily, paying \$25 million in gold as compensation for the secession of Panama allowed Colombia to gain American economic influence. The capital of the northern country achieved the gradual withdrawal of British investments; the Kemmerer Commission provided Colombia with a modern administrative and financial structure, enabling the South American State to be oriented by the U.S. dollar (Drekonja, 1983b).

Colombia not only experienced American interference in its foreign policy but also exhibited it through the implementation of socio-economic programs from other parts of Latin America. For instance, in the development policies of the fifties, it assured the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC) that it would pursue industrialization via an import substitution policy. During President Carlos Lleras Restrepo's administration (1966–1970), the country sought to enhance and expand ECLAC's recommendations, with a focus on promoting exports and regional integration.

Colombia opened a new door to South America in 1966 and, in March 1967, another door to Europe and Asia with Decree-Law 444, "On the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Scheme," exploiting its geopolitical power and its significant position as a Caribbean (with a coast on the Pacific), Amazon, Western, Andean, Equatorial, and South American nation, featuring three major mountain ranges and four important watersheds, but with limited production in the geopolitics area. According to Londoño (1949), Colombia is a country with weak geographical awareness, which appears to overlook the fact that the course of history is largely determined by space (p. 8). This situation, commonly referred to as geopolitical "short-sightedness," has diminished the importance of geographical position due to internal problems affecting the country.

However, due to the country's need to establish large-scale international relations, a strong political and economic bond with South Korea has developed over time, dating back to the mid-twentieth century, and it remains as of today. Thanks to the participation of the Colombia Battalion No. 1, which fought within the framework of the United Nations forces in the Korean War in 1950, diplomatic relations between the two countries were cemented.

Figure 1. Historical Events between Colombia and South Korea



Source: Own elaboration based on the historical sources consulted.

Geopolitical History between Colombia and South Korea

Colombia played a significant role in the United Nations (UN) during the first five years following its establishment on October 24, 1945. This period was significant, occurring after the end of World War II and the subsequent beginning of the so-called Cold War, a scenario that undoubtedly shaped the international system for four decades. In fact, during this time, the UN established its institutional policies, which had a considerable impact on Latin America (Bermúdez, 2010).

In this same historical context, on the other side of the Pacific, on Sunday, June 25, 1950, the North Korean tanks crossed the 38th parallel, marking the beginning of the confrontation that lasted until the armistice of 1953. This is how

The Truman administration reacted almost immediately [...] On June 27, Truman authorized General MacArthur to use U.S. air and naval forces at his disposal to support the ROK Army. [...] he went directly to the United Nations and called for a resolution giving the United States authority to intervene. This passed quickly [...] The UN Security Council resolution called for the withdrawal of forces by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and called for UN members to assist the ROK. On July 7, the UN Security Council established a unified military command under the United States. (Seth, 2011, p. 346)

Colombia responded to the UN's call in October 1950, with President Laureano Gómez already in office, who had spoken in favor of U.S. intervention and offered his government's full support for the defense of South Korean "democracy." Both Valencia Tovar and Torres del Río agree that in the final months of that year, Colombia maintained constant communication with the Pentagon regarding military backing for national troops in the Korean conflict. In fact, the newspaper *El Tiempo* stated that, during the Korean War, the Colombian nation would align with the forces of democracy and the brave American army, and that Section 43 of the San Francisco Charter would need to be implemented, which established that UN members would provide their armed forces and necessary aid to the Security Council upon request, including the "right of passage" through their territories to maintain world peace and security (Torres, 2010, p. 168).

On December 26, 1950, Laureano Gómez, the Colombian president, established an infantry battalion called the Colombia Battalion through Decree No. 3927, with the goal of sending troops to Korea to fulfill international commitments stemming

from Law 13/1945 (Valencia, 2003, p. 62). The conservative government, which was ideologically anti-communist and pro-USA, decided to dispatch troops to the Korean War in support of anti-communism and the free allies, amidst a backdrop of political chaos caused by political violence.

Diplomatic Relations Agreement between the Two Countries

Relations between South Korea and Colombia began after Colombian troops were sent to the Korean War in 1951, which led to the establishment of diplomatic channels on March 10, 1962. On July 10 of that same year, the South Korean ambassador to the United States, Jung Il-Gwon, was appointed as the deputy chief of mission to our country. On July 9, 1964, the then-ambassador to Japan, Enrique Molano Campuzano, was designated as the deputy chief of mission to South Korea (Guido, 2014, p. 78).

As time passed, the necessity for the Korean embassy in Bogotá became increasingly clear. In June 1971, Ahn Jin-seng presented his credentials to Colombian President Misael Pastrana (Guido, 2014), marking the consolidation of diplomatic relations between the two countries in political and economic matters. By the 1970s, Korea had begun a substantial program to enhance its manufacturing production and exports.

Two socially impactful events marked this significant historical moment for the two countries: the Korean government built a commemorative pagoda featuring the names of 213 soldiers who died in the war, to be installed in downtown Bogotá. Additionally, by 1976, it constructed the Colombia Memorial Park in the center of Incheon (Guido, 2014, p. 79).

These two architectural constructions reflect the closeness between the two nations and the positive socio-economic projects that may arise from diplomatic relations.

Korea's Support for Colombia in the Wake of the Armero Tragedy

During the eighties, diplomatic relations between the two countries held significant geopolitical and strategic importance, according to their respective interests, both

for the Asia-Pacific region and for Colombia in Latin America. As noted by Professor and former Ambassador Song Guido (2014), several bilateral agreements were concluded on visas, scientific and technical cooperation, trade, and education.

At the same time, a significant moment occurred between the two nations due to the tragedy caused by the eruption of the Nevado del Ruiz volcano in 1985. The Colombian President stated in writing that among all the distant countries, the greatest help for the victims came from Korea (R. C. Zambrano, Personal Communication, June 17, 2022).

On November 13, 1985, Korea became aware of the Armero avalanche tragedy. Immediately, many South Koreans expressed sympathy, to the point that the Colombian embassy was overwhelmed by the influx of donors who brought everything from flashlight batteries to cash. It became necessary to open an account at the Korean First Citizen Bank to receive donations from cities and villages across Korea. During this time, the Korean Foreign Ministry contacted the Colombian embassy daily to learn about the situation and to encourage its government to increase aid (R. C. Zambrano, Personal Communication, June 17, 2022).

In the streets and squares of Seoul, groups of singers collected won's for their Colombian "blood brothers." Similarly, an art exhibition donated by its creators was opened, and in the main hall of the Lotte Hotel, a grand beneficence dinner was organized, featuring performances by the country's best-known artists and singers.

In response to so much solidarity, the Colombian ambassador sent multiple thank you statements and, to reach unknown donors, the same emissary wrote the poem of thanks *Corea en la tragedia colombiana [Korea in the Colombian Tragedy]*, which, translated into Korean, was published in the main newspapers of the city and the provinces. His verses communicated the binational brotherhood arising during war and Korean generosity in our tragedy, which was reflected in two of its stanzas, as follows:

Omaira Sánchez al cerrar sus ojos en Armero,
lleno de lágrimas los rostros seulitas,
de empresarios, de banqueros, de empleados;
motivó cantos sentidos y plegarias puras,
agitó manos cargadas de pan y esperanza,
y una ayuda emotiva a partir desde el oriente,
llevando un abrazo a mi país distante.
Desde Seúl, desde Pusán y desde Kuangyu,

gentes amables donaron sus bahjis, sus chinas;
en las escuelas los niños colectaron wones;
pintores subastaron sus cuadros de escenas orientales;
universitarios cambiaron monedas por canciones
y una nueva avalancha ya no de lodo sino de corazones
golpeó esta vez el alma de Colombia.¹ (Zambrano, 2014, p. 256)

Gratitude means remembering Korea's recognition of Colombia for its participation in the war. The monuments in Incheon, Bogotá, and Cartagena, along with the scholarships and trips received by some Colombian veterans of the war and their descendants, attest to this (Zambrano, 2014).

A Korean Doctor Saved the Life of President Virgilio Barco

In September 1987, the streets of Seoul were adorned with Colombian flags to welcome the president of Colombia to Korea. On the eve of his arrival at Kimpo Airport, *Las brisas de la Pamplonita* played in the background, as Virgilio Barco, the Colombian president, was born in a municipality of Norte de Santander, and Ambassador Chang aimed to surprise him with 300 female voices perfectly singing this bambuco (Zambrano, 2014).

This ruler from Cucutá attended the magnanimous encounter; however, he suffered medical difficulties that forced him to leave the event in less than an hour for the Shila Hotel, where the Colombian president received president Chun Doo-hwan for 20 minutes, after which Barco could bear no more and succumbed to acute diverticulitis, with symptoms that began during the flight to the East, from Alaska. The Embassy decided to take him to the Seoul National University Hospital, and given his serious health condition, with a significant risk of death, a guest professor from Harvard University performed a high-risk surgery to save his life.

¹ Omaira Sánchez, when she closed her eyes in Armero, / filled with tears the eyes of Seoulites, / entrepreneurs, bankers, employees; / she inspired heartfelt songs and pure prayers, / she incited hands laden with bread and hope, / and emotional aid from the East, / carrying a hug to my distant country.
From Seoul, from Pusan, and from Kwangju, / friendly people donated their *bajis*, their china; / children collected won in schools; / painters auctioned their paintings of oriental scenes; / university students exchanged coins for songs / and a new avalanche of hearts instead of mud / hit the soul of Colombia this time.

This significant event represented another step in the friendship between Colombia and South Korea. Undoubtedly, it promoted the fraternity ties that were established through the heroic work of the soldiers during the 1950 conflict. This foundation has enabled the development of socioeconomic strategies for the country's growth; however, within the framework of initiatives proposed by successive governments, some have not achieved the expected success.

Initiatives that Never Came to Fruition

For retired Major Ramiro Zambrano Cárdenas, former ambassador and current president of the Colombian Academy of Military History, relations between the two countries began after the armistice of Panmunjom, with a consulate in Tokyo. Following that, the embassy was established in Seoul. From the outset, the diplomatic relationship has consistently sought to improve economic and social conditions, particularly for Colombia, with proposals aimed at advancing the country's development (R. C. Zambrano, Personal Communication, June 17, 2022).

The first ambassadors were military figures, responding to the same dynamics that war produced. Ramiro Zambrano reminded the authors of this chapter of significant events within the historical context of the geopolitical and strategic scenario among countries; indeed, he was one of Colombia's first ambassadors in Seoul.

The strong diplomatic link produced excellent business proposals. One of them, conceived during the government of Virgilio Barco (1986–1990), was the project to connect the Caribbean Sea with the Pacific Ocean. It consisted of a railway line that would unite the Colombian coastlines between Bahía Ceverá in the Atlantic and Punta de Aguacate in the Pacific. The project would be 221 km long and include 8 km of tunnels. An investment of \$3.5 billion was contemplated, and if realized, it would have been crucial for the country's economic development, as significant investments would have followed the project. However, it was not executed (Mundo marítimo, 2011, para. 14).

Zambrano was responsible for presenting the project to the president of South Korea after Virgilio Barco became the first Colombian president to visit that country. As a civil engineer, the president from Norte de Santander conducted a detailed study. As a result of this work, Korea promised to finance the project, while Holland would handle technical analysis and supervision. This project was designed in three compendiums: a railroad, a road, and a pipeline, to complement the Panama Canal.

At the time, the canal was already operational due to its locking system; in fact, when there was insufficient water, the transit of large-draft ships was halted, creating a need for a complementary canal that would benefit the Department of Chocó. Unfortunately, this huge project ended up on the shelves of the Central Bank because, according to Zambrano, the Gaviria government was not interested in projects from President Barco and therefore ordered the architectural proposal to be put on hold (R. C. Zambrano, Personal Communication, June 17, 2022).

Creation of a KOICA Office in Colombia

After the armed confrontation in Korea, by the second half of the twentieth century, the Asian country gradually began to position itself in the international market; Suh and Chen (2007) mention that “45 years after the full-scale, government-led industrialization drive that started in the early 1960s, Korea's GDP per capita has increased more than 12-fold, [...] which is on par with the medium economies of the European Union” (p. 4).

In fact, since the 1970s, Korea has faced the need to transform its economy. Its agricultural and industrial base was then organized around the *knowledge economy*, described by experts as the tool that “uses knowledge as the key engine of economic growth. It is an economy in which knowledge is acquired, created, disseminated, and used effectively to enhance economic development” (Suh & Chen, 2007, p. 3).

In his article, López (2016) presents the country's economic transition and its impact on the international market. He affirms that in the 1980s, the Korean nation took a pioneering leap when establishing the Economic Development Cooperation Fund, a move that enabled it to create KOICA four years later. In 2010, Korea was accepted as a member of the Development Aid Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (p. 12).

With the opening of KOICA in Colombia in February 2009, planning, organization, and implementation of large-scale projects began to benefit the most vulnerable Colombian populations. Today, the agency has opted for sustainability, clean energy management, industrial development, and agricultural productivity. Some of the projects that are underway include (KOICA, 2023):

- Resilient rural communities: a commitment to rural development through training, partnership, and innovation
- Establishment of the activation of the foundation for the Colombian shipbuilding industry

- Strengthening the agricultural economy of the Department of Putumayo, through the cultivation and commercialization of alternative crops
- Project for women's empowerment, food security and nutrition, and rights in post-conflict areas

A few years ago, as a sign of the strong friendship linking the two countries and as evidence of their excellent cooperation, KOICA offered valuable support from the Korean Government for the development of important projects in Colombia. For example:

- The construction of a comprehensive rehabilitation center for members of the Public Force: This project was financed with over \$11,500,000 to support the rehabilitation of wounded soldiers and police officers in Colombia amid the armed struggle, which has lasted for more than 60 years. Construction of the rehabilitation center commenced in February 2013 and was completed on August 29, 2016. It features 56 residential rooms to accommodate 94 people, a dining room for 200, an adapted pool for rehabilitation exercises, a psychological treatment room, an audiovisual room, and additional facilities. Additionally, it will be equipped with the latest technological devices, taking into account the mobility and transportation challenges faced by wounded soldiers and police officers. Currently, it is the responsibility of the Ministry of National Defense (Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, 2014).

Beginning of Conversations about the Free Trade Agreement between Colombia and South Korea

Reflecting the dynamism of bilateral relations between the two countries and taking advantage of the meeting between leaders Álvaro Uribe Vélez of Colombia and Lee Myung-Bak of Korea during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in Lima on November 21-22, 2008, the announcement was made to start negotiations for an FTA with the Asian nation.

According to the regulatory and contextual framework between the two countries, as set forth in Law 1747/2014, negotiations for the FTA began in December 2009 in Seoul (Congreso de la República, 2014). In this initial encounter, the negotiating leaders of Colombia and South Korea outlined the structure, modes, and scope of

the agreement. Conversations that highlighted industrial, energy, and information and communications technologies had already begun (Legis Comex, 2013, para. 3).

As of March 2009, the feasibility study for the Colombo-Korean FTA began, and its completion occurred in August 2009. Subsequently, the first round of negotiations between the two governments took place in Seoul from December 7 to 9, 2009. The results included a preliminary presentation of the issues to be negotiated, the definition of objectives, principles, and structures to guide the negotiations of this agreement, and the selection of the date for the next round of negotiations, which was held in Bogotá from March 1 to 5, 2010.

This round concluded with agreements in certain sectors, including online services and businesses. Likewise, matters concerning transparency, commercial competence, and tariff exemption were clarified.

As reported in the press, Colombia and South Korea signed their FTA in 2013. The trade pact, which required approval from the parliaments of both countries before taking effect, eliminated tariffs on 96.1 percent of Colombian products in South Korea and 96.7 percent of South Korean goods in Colombia for 10 years (El Espectador, 2013, para. 3).

Relationship of the Duque Administration with South Korea

The relationship between Colombia and the Republic of Korea during the government of Iván Duque Márquez (2018–2022) was very positive. In August 2021, President Duque made a state visit to South Korea, where he met with President Moon Jae-in and other political and business leaders from that country (El Tiempo, 2021). During that visit, various agreements were established in areas such as trade, technology, education, and culture. In addition, in October 2021, both nations issued a joint statement emphasizing the importance of strengthening cooperation in key sectors, including the economy, science, technology, culture, and education. In June 2020, President Duque expressed his gratitude for the scientific assistance provided by South Korea in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic (Asociación de Estudios Coreanos en Colombia, 2021).

In March 2022, the sixtieth anniversary of diplomatic relations between Colombia and South Korea was celebrated at an event where Duque highlighted Colombia's historical involvement in the Korean War and his state visit to the Asian country in 2021. Overall, the relationship between the two nations has focused on strengthening

commercial, technological, and cultural ties, as well as collaborating on global issues, such as the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic (Cancillería, 2022).

Conclusions

Without a doubt, between Colombia and South Korea, there have been signs of political, diplomatic, and economic maturity throughout history, not to mention the evolution in science and technology, as well as the design of public policies for project execution. The relatively short time elapsed between the two countries has allowed for the recognition of the strategic importance of alliances, as evidenced by the various historical events that occurred between Colombia and Korea from 1953 to 2013.

1. Geopolitical history between Colombia and South Korea
2. Diplomatic relations agreement between the two countries
3. Korea's support for Colombia in the wake of the Armero tragedy
4. A Korean doctor saved the life of President Virgilio Barco
5. Initiatives that never came to fruition
6. Creation of a KOICA office in Colombia
7. FTA conversations and signing between Colombia and South Korea

Currently, the relationship between South Korea and Colombia has been strengthened not only by the dynamics of exchange between the two governments but also by the significant interest in doing business among entrepreneurs from both nations. This is reflected in the large number of trade missions and two-way business-to-business meetings, which have led to a more balanced trade exchange, increased investment levels, and a higher influx of tourists.

During his state visit to South Korea in September 2011, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón stated that "the Colombian people are willing to help one and a thousand times in situations in which Korean sovereignty is threatened." This statement reflects Colombian pride in participating in such a noble cause and reaffirms the strong bilateral relationship currently in place (Zambrano, 2014).

The responsibility that Colombia and Korea share before the world regarding peace and security, the fight against poverty, and climate change signifies that their partnership in economic matters is founded on similar commitments to addressing global issues. This is reflected in how both countries supported their roles as non-permanent members of the UN Security Council: Colombia (2011–2012) and South Korea (2012–2014). Then, South Korea became Colombia's gateway to Asia, and Colombia became South Korea's connection to Latin America and the Caribbean.

References

- Arango, C. C. (2010). Respice polum: las relaciones entre Colombia y Estados Unidos en el siglo XX y los usos (y abusos) de una locución latina*. *Historia y Sociedad*(19), 175–201. <https://n9.cl/rp0k1>
- Asociación de Estudios Coreanos en Colombia. (2021). *Declaración Conjunta de Colombia y Corea del Sur*. <https://n9.cl/3ty1j>
- Barbosa, F. (2012). Colombia y Corea: un camino sin recorrer. *Revista Análisis Internacional (Cesada a partir De 2015)*, 1(6), 12. <https://n9.cl/tmv7c>
- Bermúdez Torres, C. A. (2010). Inserción de Colombia en las relaciones internacionales, en el contexto de la segunda postguerra mundial. *Civilizar*, 10(19), 135–152. <https://doi.org/10.22518/16578953.45>
- Bilbao, A. (2015). Los aportes de Friedrich Ratzel y Halford Mackinder en la construcción de la geografía política en tiempos de continuidades y cambios. *Revista de Geografía Espacios*, 5(9), 64–81. <https://doi.org/10.25074/07197209.9.372>
- Brzezinski, Z. (1997). *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*. Basic Books.
- Cabrera, L. (2017). Geopolítica en América del Sur: desde la militarización de la disciplina a la necesidad del debate académico. *Revista Chilena de Derecho y Ciencia Política*, 8(2), 167–188.
- Cairo, H. (2010). Comentario: "El pivote geográfico de la historia", el surgimiento de la geopolítica clásica y la persistencia de una interpretación telúrica de la política global. *Geopolítica(s). Revista de estudios sobre espacio y poder*, 1(2), 321–331.
- Cairo, H. (2011). La Geopolítica como "ciencia del Estado": el mundo del general Haushofer *Geopolítica(s). Revista de estudios sobre espacio y poder*, 3(2), 337–345. <https://n9.cl/bpk1p>
- Cairo, H., & Lois, M. (2014). Geografía política de las disputas de fronteras: cambios y continuidades en los discursos geopolíticos en América Latina (1990-2013). *Cuadernos de Geografía: Revista Colombiana de Geografía*, 23(2), 45–67. <https://doi.org/10.15446/rcdg.v23n2.39578>
- Cancillería. (2022). *Colombia y la República de Corea celebran el 60° aniversario de relaciones diplomáticas*. <https://n9.cl/63gzi>
- Child, J. (1979). Geopolitical Thinking in Latin America. *Latin American Research Review*, 14(2), 89–111.
- Cohen, S. (2015). *Geopolitics. The geography of international relations* (3rd ed.). Rowman & Littlefield.
- Deciancio, M. (2017). La construcción del campo de las relaciones internacionales argentinas: contribuciones desde la geopolítica. *Revista de Relaciones Internacionales, Estrategia y Seguridad*, 12(2), 179–205. <https://doi.org/10.18359/ries.2316>

- Drekonja, G. (1983). Colombia: en búsqueda de una política exterior. *Revista de Estudios Internacionales*, 4(2), 259–280.
- El Espectador. (2013, February 20). *Colombia y Corea del Sur firmaron el TLC*. <https://n9.cl/zq2vr>
- El Tiempo. (2021, August 26). *Las conclusiones de la visita de Iván Duque a Corea del Sur*. <https://n9.cl/iq5u4>
- Embajada de la República de Corea en la República de Colombia. (2010). *Promesa cumplida: La República de Corea, 60 años después de la Guerra*. <https://n9.cl/oaj3e>
- Flick, U. (2009). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (4th ed.). Sage.
- KOICA. (2023). *Proyectos*. <https://n9.cl/aebv8>
- Legis Comex. (2013). *Antecedentes de la negociación*. <https://n9.cl/tpf6c>
- Ley 1747 de 2014. Por medio de la cual se aprueba el "Acuerdo de Libre Comercio entre la República de Colombia y la República de Corea", firmado en Seúl, República de Corea, el 21 de febrero de 2013. Diciembre 26 de 2014. <https://n9.cl/jmelsb>
- Londoño, J. (1949). *Geopolítica de Colombia*. Imprenta del Ministerio de Guerra.
- López Aymes, J. F. (2016). Corea y el sistema de cooperación para el desarrollo: la internacionalización del desarrollismo. *Miríada*, 8(12), 11–51.
- Mackinder, H. (1919). *Democratic Ideals and Reality. A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction by the Right Honourable Sir Halford J. Mackinder*. National Defense University Press Publications.
- Meléndez Camargo, J. D. (2015). Colombia y su participación en la Guerra de Corea: Una reflexión tras 64 años de iniciado el conflicto. *Historia y Memoria*, (10), 199–239.
- Ministerio de Defensa Nacional. (2014). *Política de Discapacidad del Sector Seguridad y Defensa*. <https://n9.cl/3asfj>
- Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Embajada de Corea en la República de Colombia. (2014). *Colombia y Corea: Naciones Hermanas. Cincuenta años de relaciones diplomáticas*. Imprenta Nacional de Colombia.
- Mundo Marítimo. (2011). *Estudian unir el Pacífico y Atlántico colombiano a través de un canal seco*. <https://n9.cl/u4jy8>
- ÓTuathail, G. (1996). *Critical Geopolitics*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Ratzel, F. (1897). *Politische Geographie*. Oldenburg.
- Ratzel, F. (1975). *Antología geopolítica*. Pleamar.
- Rivarola, A. (2011). 'Geopolitics of Integration' and the Imagination of South America. *Geopolitics*, 16(4), 846–864. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2010.549863>
- Seth, M. J. (2011). *A history of Korea. From antiquity to the present*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Suh, J., & Chen, D. (2007). *Korea as a Knowledge Economy: Evolutionary Process and Lessons Learned*. World Bank Institute. <https://documentos.bancomundial.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/923361468327364601>

- Tokatlian, J. G. (2000). *Globalización, narcotráfico y violencia: siete ensayos sobre Colombia*. Norma.
- Torres, C. (2010). *Colombia siglo XX: Desde la guerra de los Mil Días hasta la elección de Álvaro Uribe*. Norma.
- Valdivia, L. (2017). Una mirada académica a la disciplina geopolítica para el siglo XXI. In G. Pérez-Gávilan, A. Gutiérrez del Cid, & B. Pérez (Coords.), *La geopolítica del siglo XXI* (pp. 59–79). Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana.
- Valencia, Á. (2003). *En Corea por la libertad y por la gloria*. Imprenta y publicaciones de las Fuerzas Militares.
- Valencia, Á., & Sandoval, F. (2001). *Colombia en la Guerra de Corea: la historia secreta*. Planeta.
- Vieira, E., & Roldán, A. (2016). *Colombia y Corea del Sur: hacia una asociación estratégica de cooperación*. <http://hdl.handle.net/10726/2394>
- Zambrano, C. R. (2014) Colombia y Corea. Vivencias de una relación binacional. In *Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores Colombia y Corea: naciones hermanas. Cincuenta años de relaciones diplomáticas*.

Chapter 2

Trade Relations between Colombia and South Korea from the Signing of the Free Trade Agreement*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287818101.02>

Desiderio López Niño

Escuela Superior de "Guerra General Rafael Reyes Prieto"

Abstract: This chapter presents the results of research into the development of trade relations between Colombia and South Korea within the framework of the free trade agreement signed by the two nations. Its aim is to explore a Colombian institutional leap that promotes public policies leading to industrialization through international production networks, considering the relationship between cultural values and decision-making in the process of internationalizing organizations, with the goal of enhancing competitiveness as a cooperation factor between the two countries to strengthen their position in the international system. This new perspective is necessary, as it has been found that the components of trade volume between the two countries exhibit a static situation regarding the types of goods and services sold. Likewise, the inertia-driven markets have proven elusive in generating a network of dynamic processes.

Keywords: Colombia; South Korea; free trade agreement; industrialization; national culture

* Book chapter derived from the research project *Relations between Colombia and South Korea: An Analysis of the Impact of National Foreign Policy on the Economic Development and Geopolitical Projection of the Country*, conducted by the Masa Crítica research group of Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto." This group is categorized as A1 by the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation (MinCiencias) and registered under code COL0123247. The views and results in this chapter belong to the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the participating institutions.

Desiderio López Niño

PhD in Management, Universidad de Celaya, Mexico. Master's in Public Management, Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, Mexico. Bachelor's in Economics, Universidad de América, Colombia. Lecturer, Doctorate Program in Strategic Studies, Security and Defense, Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto," Colombia. Contact: desiderio.lopez@esdeg.edu.co; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3797-0249>

APA Citation: FLópez Niño, D. (2025). Trade Relations between Colombia and South Korea from the Signing of the Free Trade Agreement. In J. E. Moreno Peláez & A. M. González González (Eds.), *Relations between Colombia and South Korea: An Analysis of Colombian Foreign Policy as a Geopolitical Strategy in the Asia Pacific* (pp. 35-54). Sello Editorial ESDEG. <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287818101.02>

RELATIONS BETWEEN COLOMBIA AND SOUTH KOREA: AN ANALYSIS OF COLOMBIAN FOREIGN POLICY AS A GEOPOLITICAL STRATEGY IN THE ASIA PACIFIC

Print ISBN: 978-628-7818-09-5

ISBN digital: 978-628-7818-10-1

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287818101>

Strategy, Geopolitics, and Culture Collection

Sello Editorial ESDEG

Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto"

Bogotá D.C., Colombia

2025



Introduction

Under the research line "Lessons Learned from the Korean War" of the Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto" (ESDEG), and in line with the "Covenant for Entrepreneurship, Formalization, and Productivity," which aims to capitalize on international markets, attract production investments by identifying products, services, and companies with high export potential, and enhance production efficiency in Colombian enterprises, as outlined in the 2018–2022 Development Plan "Pact for Legality" (Planeación, 2021), this chapter presents the findings of research into the development of trade relations between Colombia and South Korea within the framework of the free trade agreement (FTA) signed between the two nations.

The data representing the amounts of trade serve as the basis for analyzing the various interactions that have contributed to strengthening relations between the two countries. This analysis involves observing the potential behaviors of economic actors and exploring strategies to increase their presence in global markets. For this, we take as reference the rise of Korea's production and commercial sectors over the last 60 years, placing the Asian country among the top ten exporters in the world (Cámara de Comercio de Bogotá, 2021), as described in Chapter 3 of this book.

Research on the trade dynamics between Colombia and South Korea is based on the premise that today's world necessitates that the internal conditions of a country maintain some coherence with the international context, particularly with the countries of the Asia-Pacific. These countries are grouped in several organizations, such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which represent more than half of the world's population and economy. If national institutions in any country ignore global developments, they risk falling behind, which can have adverse

effects on their diverse economic, legal, social, and political aspects. Therefore, FTAs, as facilitating mechanisms, need to be signed among countries with varying potentialities, underpinned by cooperation and complementarity. This framework led to the agreement between Colombia and South Korea, signed on February 21, 2013, although it took more than three years to come into effect on July 15, 2016. Nonetheless, it was established with the bonds of friendship between the two peoples in mind, aiming to enhance living standards and promote economic growth and stability.

According to KOTRA data, in 2016, the year the FTA agreement took effect, Korea's exports to Colombia were \$853 million; by 2020, they had dropped to \$487 million. Additionally, Colombia's exports to Korea in 2016 totaled \$433 million, and by 2020, they had increased to \$584 million; these figures are atypical due to the economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. It is noted that in 2016, Colombia had a negative trade balance, which turned positive by 2020. These data regarding trade amounts and volumes among countries that have signed FTAs have sparked discussions from various perspectives and, at the same time, prompted higher education institutions to investigate the relevance and practicality of these agreements (García, 2018). This process has given rise to diverse opinions and numerous academic works in Colombia, reflecting the interest in analyzing FTAs as a means to achieve better levels of development.

Empirical evidence shows that FTAs, from an economic perspective of increasing wealth through rising trade amounts and volumes, are insufficient because their purpose extends much further: to improve levels of development (García, 2018). It is important to distinguish between means and ends, ensuring that the FTA between Colombia and Korea realizes the motivations stated in the preamble of the agreement, namely, enhancing living standards and promoting economic growth (Mincit, 2018). The gap between the principles of the FTA and the actions taken to achieve them raises the question: *To what extent can the performance figures of the FTA between Colombia and South Korea inspire a Colombian institutional leap, as it did in Korea, that fosters international production networks based on the relationship between cultural values and decision-making in the process of internationalizing organizations, allowing for a greater share in the global market?*

To answer that question, we will first analyze the export and import data between the two countries for the period from 2015 to 2020. Next, we will explore public policies aimed at Colombian industrialization to "promote the competitiveness of companies in global markets" (Mincit, 2018), where production develops through economies of

scale and its production structure can diversify. In this regard, Colombia can learn a lot from Korea's experience, as detailed in Chapter 3 of this book. Furthermore, we will consider that industrialization requires encouraging interactions between public and private actors. The objective of this chapter is to explore a Colombian institutional leap that promotes international production networks based on the relationship between cultural values and decision-making in the process of internationalization of Colombian organizations, allowing for a greater share in the global market. This is another element that Colombia can learn from Korea.

Theoretical Framework

The processes involved in FTAs present several levels, defined by the elements that comprise them: from the gradual or immediate elimination of tariffs to the transfer of state powers to supranational institutions. Although the agreement signed between Colombia and Korea emphasizes the creation of a broader and safer market, the preamble highlights the promotion of the competitiveness of their organizations and the importance of creating opportunities for economic development. In this context, the study was conducted from an institutionalist perspective within the framework of the clauses of the TLC signed between Colombia and Korea, focusing on the harmonious relationship between entrepreneurs and officials. This follows Correa and Manchón (2016), who discuss how States and private actors operate with different yet interconnected logics. The former aim for the free participation of each citizen under the principle of public interest, while the latter operate under the principle of private interest, which they must defend in a politically structured market based on the right to private property (p. 9).

This chapter expands on the previous postulate, incorporating Pérez's (2009) proposals for the region regarding business and industrial development in a commercially competitive environment fostered by institutionalization, with the aim of enhancing the contribution to human development.

These pillars that promote development through trade have been discussed by treatise writers such as Moe-Lobeda and Spencer (2009), who argue that trade agreements lead to economic prosperity, political democracy, and personal liberty and even generate resources to eradicate poverty and protect democracy (p. 686).

The dynamics generated by FTAs enable the latter to mitigate disputes between States and markets, thus facilitating the construction of consensus scenarios between public and private actors, allowing their countries to gain greater influence

within the international system. This shift comes as internationalization is now more accessible and less risky, prompting an increasing number of entrepreneurs to focus on it (Tan et al., 2018). The international orientation of companies is becoming increasingly common among entrepreneurs.

The literature on FTAs highlights the development policies that countries must implement in accordance with the level of internationalization they are experiencing. For example, Jesuit and Sych (2012) argue that borders should not be a barrier to balanced development; rather, it is important that measures are adopted that favor free trade in such a way that not only trade relations are strengthened (p. 474) but also the way governance is built between private and public actors of the States that participate. In this context, the works of Conteh (2012) and Correa (2016) agree that development can be achieved not only through the use of capital and technology but also by considering the capacities of the companies and people of the countries that sign an agreement when they are summoned to participate in the design, performance, and control of FTAs. The expansion of markets creates new scenarios, actors, and competition factors in the international field; however, the environment that gives rise to the particularities of the national culture in which companies are based cannot be ignored (Castellanos & Ramírez, 2013, p. 156).

If we delve into the inquiries about the characteristics and attributes of FTAs, we will find relationships between national cultural values and decision-making in the strategic process of internationalization of Colombian organizations. This exploration enables us to demonstrate that decision-making in organizations is, in some cases, based on rational processes, while at other times, it is intuitive, with the national culture of the country where the company is established serving as a backdrop (Dimitratos et al., 2011, p. 198).

Free trade has created a space that invites diverse groups of businesses, including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to participate in addressing new challenges such as the growing consumer demand for goods and services (Pawęta & Zbierowski, 2015). Here, strategies and decisions depend not only on objective conditions but also on subjective behaviors such as the attitude, perceptions, motivation, and personality of the entrepreneur (Hutchinson et al., 2006, p. 527). All of these characteristics have marked a notable difference between Koreans and Colombians in their ventures into international markets. Their actions are determined by both national culture and the environment created by economic, political, and social institutions in each territory, which characterize the productivity and competitiveness of the goods and services that are commercialized in different

markets. These attributes frame the qualitative analysis needed to achieve the purpose of the FTA signed between Colombia and Korea.

Method

The data presented in this chapter are part of the project *Relations between Colombia and South Korea: An Analysis of the Impact of National Foreign Policy on the Economic Development and Geopolitical Projection of the Country*. Since the FTA between Colombia and Korea has been in effect for six years, including two years of the pandemic, this study is exploratory in nature. It is framed within an interpretive research paradigm. Using mixed techniques from quantitative data, qualitative interpretations are made (Hernández Sampieri & Mendoza, 2018).

The research was conducted in two phases. The initial phase was divided into three stages. During the first stage, a review of Colombia's institutional statistical data on exports and imports with Korea, as published by the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Tourism (MinCIT), was carried out. In the second stage, the Korean student Park Zaborowski Ju Hee compiled information on trade between Colombia and Korea, using the Trade Office of the Government of Korea as a source (KOTRA, 2022). In the third stage, the data from the two sources were compared descriptively.

In the second phase, based on a review of the literature on competitiveness (the latter understood as a factor for cooperation), the State-market relationship, and the internationalization strategies of companies, courses of action were explored that allow Colombia to enter the geopolitical scenario of the Asia-Pacific project and, in this way, contribute to the positioning of the nation as a secondary regional power through economic development, in harmony with the objective of the project that guides the various chapters of the book.

Results

Colombia and Korea have strengthened their political relationship, as expressed in these chapters. Similarly, their economic relations have been revitalized over the past decade. Colombia has much to learn from Korea: the transformation of the Asian country in the last 50 years has been exemplary because it was one of the so-called "Asian Tigers," along with Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, which demonstrated

that countries other than the “developed” ones can also industrialize and achieve sustained growth levels.

Korea has transitioned from an economy reliant on labor to one focused on capital and technology, and subsequently to a knowledge-based economy. This is the path followed by countries with a market system within accumulation patterns, ranging from the classic models of the eighteenth century to the globalizing ones of the twenty-first century (Basuardo, 2019). This pathway has been forged through innovation, entrepreneurship, and the promotion of market creation and green energy industries (Cámara de Comercio de Bogotá, 2021). Additionally, this route has been traveled by various countries in the Asia Pacific, which has thus become a promising region in economic and commercial fields on a global scale, yet remains elusive for Colombian interests, as it has not been possible to enter APEC or to sign a trade agreement with any member country of ASEAN. Hence, the importance of the agreement signed by Colombia with Korea. This country represents a gateway for Colombia to that region, given the relations that Korea maintains with the countries of the Far East: not only with China and Japan but also with the American Pacific, particularly with member countries in the Alliance for the Pacific, such as Chile, Peru, and Mexico.

To observe the behavior of the agreement, data published by the MinCIT were used and compared with the data reported by KOTRA.

Exports from Colombia to Korea

In 2015, the year before the agreement’s entry into force, Colombian exports to Korea reached only \$229.4 million (Mincomercio, 2021), as shown in Table 1. The following year, 2016, when the agreement entered into force, there was a 75% increase, resulting in a sum of \$402 million for the same item. This growth maintained an upward trend during 2017 and 2018, resuming in 2020, despite the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1. Colombian Exports to Korea

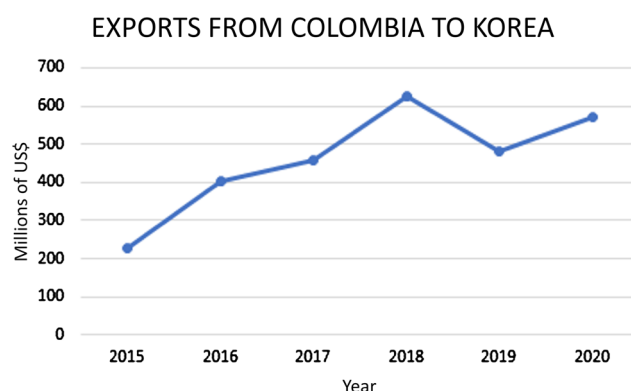
YEAR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Exports in millions of U.S. dollars	229.4	402.1	457	627.4	482	571.9

Source: DIAN-DANE-MinCIT (2021).

The products that represented a greater share in Colombian exports in 2015 were bituminous coal, briquette, crude oil, and bituminous crude, as well as copper waste and ferroalloys. They were followed by coffee, bananas, and flowers, as well as smaller quantities of papers, cardboards, and toys with wheels (Mincomercio, 2021).

The growing trend is observed in Figure 1. It is striking how, despite bituminous coal and briquette continuing to have a significant share, growth is primarily driven by a substantial increase in volumes of coffee, bananas, and flowers.

Figure 1. *Colombian Exports to South Korea*



Source: Own elaboration based on DIAN-DANE-MinCIT (2021).

The data reported by KOTRA (2022) on Korean imports of products from Colombia are different from those of Colombian exports to Korea, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. *Korean Imports from Colombia*

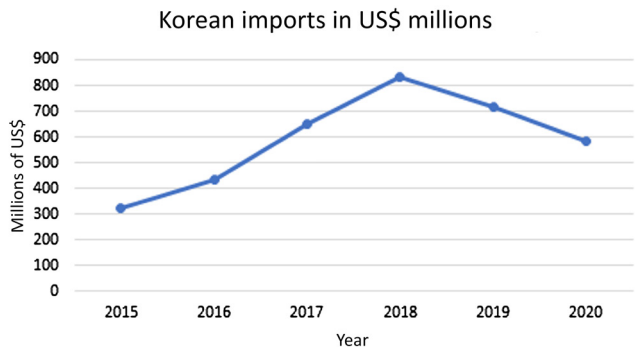
YEAR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Korean imports in millions of U.S. dollars	323	433	651	834	718	584

Source: KOTRA (2022).

The Korean agency reports that in 2015, the year prior to the entry into force of the FTA, Korean imports totaled \$323 million, a higher figure than the \$93.6 million reported by MinCIT. In 2020, the final year of the study, the difference between the two sources was less than \$12.1 million (KOTRA, 2022).

When comparing Figure 1, which shows exports from Colombia to Korea, with Figure 2, depicting imports from Korea to Colombia, a growing trend is evident from 2015 to 2018. In both cases, the data for 2019 show a decline, but compared to 2020, the Colombian data indicate a slight recovery in Colombian exports. This recovery does not align with the Korean data, which records a new decrease in Korean imports of products from Colombia.

Figure 2. Korean Imports in Millions of U.S. Dollars



Source: Own elaboration based on KOTRA (2022).

The products accounting for the largest share of Colombian exports to Korea are the same ones that represent the greatest share of Korean imports from Colombia. These include bituminous coal, briquettes, crude oil, bituminous crude, copper waste, ferroalloys, as well as coffee, fruits, and flowers.

Imports from Colombia to Korea

In 2015, Colombia's exports to the Asian country totaled \$1,085.3 million, a figure that had been declining until 2020, when imports fell to only \$676.4 million (MinComercio, 2021), as shown in Table 3, according to data from Colombian public institutions that process foreign trade information.

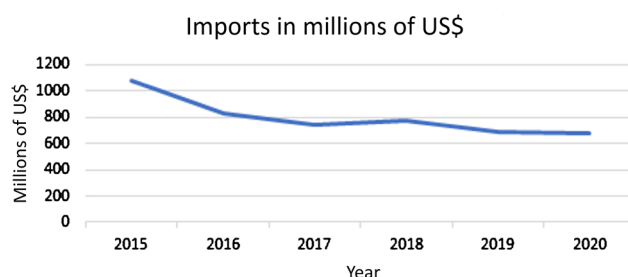
Table 3. Imports from Colombia to Korea

YEAR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Imports in millions of U.S. dollars	1,085.3	833.5	746.2	776.4	687.1	676.4

Source: DIAN-DANE-MinCIT (2021).

These data are primarily composed of purchases made by Colombia for cars used in tourism and passenger transportation, as well as polyacetals and mixtures of alkylbenzenes, tractor parts and accessories, and tires. These goods were regulated by the FTA, which presents a downward trend, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Imports in Millions of U.S. Dollars



Source: Own elaboration based on DIAN-DANE-MinCIT (2021).

If we compare the KOTRA data on exports to Colombian consumers presented in Table 4 with Colombian data, the figures differ, as does the data on Korean imports of Colombian goods in Table 2. In other words, the data from KOTRA and that from Colombian institutions do not match.

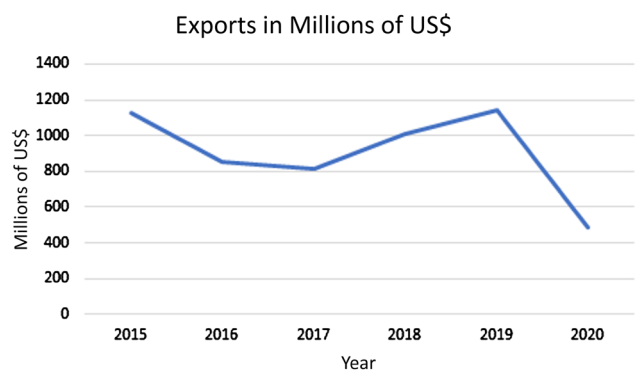
Table 4. Korean Exports to Colombia

YEAR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Exports in millions of U.S. dollars	1,129	853	814	1,012	1,143	487

Source: Kotra (2022).

While the 2015 data shows some similarities between the figures reported by Colombian agencies and the Korean agency, the same cannot be said regarding the trend: when comparing Figure 3 and Figure 4, the former shows a consistent decline in Colombian purchases, while the latter demonstrates fluctuations, and again, a decrease in the sequential analysis of imports and exports.

Figure 4. Exports in Millions of U.S. Dollars



Source: Own elaboration based on KOTRA (2022).

Trade Balance

What can be affirmed from Mincomercio (2021) and Park (KONTRA, 2022), the two sources of information used in this chapter, is that since the FTA between Colombia and Korea came into force, the trade balance between the two countries tends to be favorable for Colombia over time, as shown in Table 5. The trade deficit in 2015 was \$855.9 million, the highest for Colombia, while in 2020, the last year under study, the deficit was only \$104.5 million, representing a decrease of \$751.4 million in the initial five years of the FTA.

Table 5. Trade Balance Viewed from Colombia

YEAR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Exports	229.4	402.1	457	627.4	482	571.9
Imports	1,085.3	833.5	746.2	776.4	687.1	676.4
Trade balance	-855.9	-431.4	-289.2	-149	-205.1	-104.5

Source: DIAN-DANE-MincIT (2021).

It also aligns with the data provided by KOTRA: the trade balance tends to be favorable for Colombia, although differences between the figures remain evident, according to the source, as shown in Table 6. Nevertheless, the period under study begins with a surplus for Korea of \$806 million, and by 2020, it has a \$97 million deficit.

Table 6. *Trade Balance Viewed from Korea*

YEAR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Exports	1,129	853	814	1,012	1,143	487
Imports	323	433	651	834	718	584
Trade balance	806	420	163	178	425	-97

Source: KOTRA (2022).

The data for 2020—among those provided by Colombian institutions, which show a Colombian deficit of \$104.5 million, and the figures supplied by Park (KOTRA) for the same year, indicating a Korean deficit of \$97 million—raise questions about the techniques used to measure trade volumes, which could be a focus of future research.

Aside from the data from 2020, which reflects an unusual situation in the world economy due to the coronavirus pandemic, the period under study shows a growing trend in the transaction values resulting from trade between the two countries. In 2015, these transactions reached \$1,452 million, and by 2019, the total had grown to \$1,861 million, representing an increase of \$409 million, or a 28% rise in trade figures.

In the literature review, three fields were identified as fundamental issues for analyzing the presence of nations in the international system, particularly during the stage of globalization. These include competitiveness (as a factor for cooperation), the State-market relationship, and the internationalization strategies of companies.

Competitiveness (Cooperation Factor)

The components of the trade volume between the two countries under study indicate a static situation regarding the types of goods and services being commercialized: primarily, bituminous coal, briquettes, crude oil, bituminous crude, copper waste and ferroalloys, followed by coffee, bananas, and flowers, with a smaller amount of paper and cardboard (Cámara de Comercio de Bogotá, 2021). Colombia does not seem to be promoting its competitiveness to encourage cooperation. Companies and markets continue to follow traditional paths and use the same management tools, which have not allowed for the integration of complexity that could generate strengths for organizations trading with Korea.

State-Market Relationship

Similarly, markets move through inertia and have been elusive in creating network and dynamic systems, where the strategic model aims to foster change while acknowledging that the dynamics between the market and the State are not always linear, but continually adapt to new environments and remain flexible. Competitiveness now has a new, necessary companion: *flexibility* in pursuit of being a component of cooperation. It is crucial to remember that the advantages that once led to an organization's success can vanish in a new context (Brown & Eisenhardt, 2002).

Internationalization Strategies of Companies

The type of product that characterizes the trade relationship between Colombia and Korea has been constant; there are no strategic lines within the policies implemented that allow for the internationalization of companies or products. Innovation has been elusive; the participation of science or technological development is not perceived as a means to diversify the scientific relationships that systematically solve problems and improve the processes and products exchanged.

Discussion

A data analysis of exports and imports between Colombia and Korea from 2015 to 2020 confirms the necessity of implementing public policies that create value in the national economy, promoting Colombian industrialization. This approach involves developing production through economies of scale, thus diversifying its production structure. It is essential to recognize that industrialization requires fostering interactions between public and private actors, facilitating an institutional leap that encourages the development of international production networks. This acknowledges the close relationship between cultural values and decision-making in the internationalization process of Colombian organizations, allowing for the diversification and enhancement of commercial exchanges between Colombia and Korea.

Colombian industrialization must be characterized by innovation, as Korea did, because the success of modern companies increasingly depends on their ability to innovate, which serves as an engine for market share and survival (Stojcic et al., 2018). In this regard, business innovation is a crucial variable for creating value.

Consequently, industrialization leads to the innovation of production systems, as well as the development of new product lines and processes, which enable organizations to create and preserve value. *Business innovation*, as defined in the Oslo Manual (OECD, 2018) in its fourth edition, refers to new and improved innovations of business products and processes (or a combination thereof) that have been introduced into the market or have been put into use by the company, differing from bituminous coal, briquette, crude oil, bituminous crude, copper waste, and ferroalloys.

Along these lines, research and development (R&D) are fundamental components of the industrialization process in the Colombian production system. This process requires addressing the complexities arising from the interrelationships among the various stages, ranging from the State's promotion of public policies in this area and entrepreneurs' decisions to innovate, to investment in R&D, the emergence of creative ideas that enhance the market, and the technological challenges encountered, to the translation of innovations into improved performance and international competitiveness (Stojcic et al., 2018). Thus, multiple factors and elements are evident that merit consideration in Colombian industrialization.

R&D, as Korea did at the time, ensures the development of human resources, the management of innovation, and the achievement of national strategic objectives (Castellanos, 2003). All of these factors lead to new knowledge and equip us to tackle the challenges posed by the implementation of FTAs within a framework of complementarity and cooperation among the signatory countries.

Industrialization involves creating international production networks that encompass the supply of raw materials to the manufacturing and sale of final products. Therefore, it is crucial to develop public policies that promote connections among small, medium, and large distributors, linking suppliers with marketers (Kotler et al., 2013), to motivate Colombian entrepreneurs to enhance their interactions with Korean organizations, taking into account the behavior of nationals in the decision-making processes they undertake in internationalization projects.

The results of this research align with several studies on entrepreneurial decisions regarding the internationalization of trade operations, emphasizing the significance of the entrepreneur's behavior in their organization's participation in international business. These studies agree that knowledge, experience, and the development of business networks impact the decision to engage in trade operations abroad; however, there are notable differences between the literature

reviewed for the Colombian case and the findings of studies in other countries. The culture of each entrepreneur's place of origin influences their decision to internationalize operations.

Decisions stem from the behavior of the entrepreneur or manager. Several authors (Andersson & Evers, 2015; Francioni et al., 2015; Pauluzzo & Shen, 2018b; Tan et al., 2018) note that individuals have diverse international experiences, which yield varied perceptions of market opportunities, as well as the relative risks and benefits. This diversity generates multiple decisions that align with the experiences of entrepreneurs and their behavioral traits. Pauluzzo and Shen (2018^a) claim that entrepreneurs "mold their environment" according to their experiences, competencies, and skills, all of which must be considered in the negotiation scenarios based on Colombian industrialization designed to enhance relations between Colombia and Korea, aiming for complementarity and mutual benefit for both countries.

The literature review confirmed that discussions about the advantages and disadvantages of FTAs extend indefinitely. Regarding the former, defenders (Andersson & Evers, 2015; Francioni et al., 2015; Pauluzzo & Shen, 2018b; Tan et al., 2018) argue that possibilities for new business lines are expanding, thereby creating more options for finding investor partners. On the other hand, some (Basualdo, 2019; García, 2018) believe that national governments have adopted public policies recommended by multinational organizations without considering the peculiarities of SMEs. Nevertheless, some entrepreneurs have reported an increase in the production of the goods they sell, as they gain greater access to capital goods, raw materials, and supplies that contribute to their production processes, thereby enhancing their market share nationally; they also experience an uptick in their trade operations abroad. However, other entrepreneurs contend that these agreements have negatively impacted them, as the Colombian market has become saturated with goods produced abroad, and they feel displaced, leading to a trade creation effect, as described by Balassa (1980). In the case of Colombia-Korea, the automotive sector is one that makes such a statement (Cámara de Comercio, 2021).

These market variations, arising from FTAs, lead entrepreneurs to structure their actions in specific ways. Their behavior is influenced by three determining factors: 1) *cross-cutting* factors, which encompass cultural patterns rooted in the core structures of the human spirit of ancestors, beliefs, and perceptions of globalization, as noted by Pauluzzo and Shen (2018a), confirming earlier

assertions by Dimitratos et al. (2011); 2) *rational* factors, including argumentation, cognition, experience, and intuition, following the research of Francioni et al. (2015) and Hutchinson et al. (2006); and 2) *emotional* factors, which encompass various motivations, feelings, and desires learned by both men and women engaged in international business, as discussed in studies by Collinson and Holden (2005) and Hanlon (2011).

Thus, the institutional leap required by Colombia to promote international production networks should consider the relationship between cultural values and decision-making in the internationalization process of Colombian organizations to achieve a greater share in the global market. The industrialization described here to strengthen relations with Korea—and, more broadly, with the countries of the Asia Pacific—must take into account the attitudes, cognitive competencies, management skills, expertise in international business, and the personality of national entrepreneurs. This identification allows for determining the extent to which they can overcome the difficulties of negotiating with individuals from different cultures, characterized by diverse norms, customs, and ways of thinking and acting, both socioculturally and organizationally. As stated by Hofstede (2011), “culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one human group or category from another” (p. 13). Therefore, organizations in each nation are distinguished by specific value systems, which influence the types of strategies they adopt to strengthen their operations in international markets. Korea serves as an example of this. The strategic processes they developed generated behavioral patterns that have led them to hold a significant share in global trade.

Conclusions

This research presents an interesting examination of the strategies that allow Colombia to strengthen its presence in global markets. Guided by our allied nation, Korea, the proposed path has already been traveled: a Colombian institutional leap, achieved through public industrialization policies that foster international production networks. It is not about simply adapting the Korean strategies and policies of the past. Rather, the proposal focuses on understanding that only through a national identity, which embodies the relationship between cultural values and decision-making in the process of internationalizing organizations, can greater participation in increasingly diverse markets be achieved.

This research needs to be complemented with empirical evidence through interviews with Colombian and Korean entrepreneurs. The former helps identify the elements that constitute national identity, its cultural values, and the components necessary to develop industrialization policies that align with the thinking of Colombian entrepreneurs. Meanwhile, the experiences of Korean entrepreneurs provide valuable knowledge and insights that facilitate the development of strategies tailored to a world characterized by uncertainty, volatility, complexity, and ambiguity.

The trade behavior between Colombia and Korea, as demonstrated by the signed FTA, indicates that Colombia requires an institutional leap that promotes international production networks, similar to what Korea achieved in the 1960s, as detailed in Chapter 3 of this book. The proposed institutional modernization is based on Colombian industrialization, considering the strengthening of interactions between public and private actors of all sizes, that is, small, medium, and large entrepreneurs.

To learn from the Korean experience, it would be beneficial to initiate research on various topics. The first topic compares the extent to which a Korean entrepreneur adapts to the cultural environment of a specific market and the resulting economic performance achieved in that market, with the adaptation of a Colombian entrepreneur to the same cultural environment and their economic performance in that market. The second topic involves the existence of multiple preferential systems among entrepreneurs, where each entrepreneur has their own cognitive process and, as a result, assigns different importance to argumentation, cognition, experience, and intuition as behavioral factors concerning participation in the markets between the two nations. The third topic is the emotional harmony of the entrepreneur, achieved through a continuous observation of their feelings, desires, and needs, as well as their social connections, which allows for adjustments to both their motivations for and aversions to commercial activities between Colombia and Korea.

With these studies, the outcomes of the FTA between Colombia and Korea would be enhanced, as complementary points could be identified in future strategies that benefit the two nations in the face of globalization and regionalization.

References

- Andersson, S., & Evers, N. (2015). International opportunity recognition in international new ventures—a dynamic managerial capabilities perspective. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, 13(3), 260–276. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10843-015-0149-5>
- Balassa, B. (1980). *Teoría de la integración económica*. UTEHA, S.A. de C.V.
- Basualdo, E. (2019). *Fundamentos de Economía Política. Los patrones de acumulación, de los clásicos al neoliberalismo del siglo XXI*. Siglo XXI editores.
- Brown, S., & Eisenhardt, K. M. (2002). *Competir al borde del caos. Estrategias para enfrentar los cambios vertiginosos* (1st ed.). Juan Granica S. A.
- Cámara de Comercio de Bogotá y Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores. (2021). *Hoja de Ruta Colombia – Corea del Sur: Hacia un mejor aprovechamiento del Tratado de Libre Comercio*.
- Castellanos, O., & Ramírez, D. (2013). *Competitividad. Apropiación y mecanismos para su fortalecimiento*. Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
- Collinson, S., & Houlden, J. (2005). Decision-Making and Market Orientation in the Internationalization Process of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises. *Management International Review*, 45(4), 413–436. <https://n9.cl/rwxip>
- Conteh, C. (2012). Public management in an age of complexity: regional economic development in Canada. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 25(6/7), 464–472. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09513551211260649>
- Correa, A., & Manchón, L. (2016). *Gobernanza de las integraciones regionales* (1st ed.). Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana.
- Correa, M. A. (2016). Inversión extranjera directa y cadenas globales de valor México - Estados Unidos. En A. Correa & L. Manchón (Eds.), *Gobernanza de las integraciones regionales* (pp. 141–180). Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana.
- Dimitratos, P., Petrou, A., Plakoyiannaki, E., & Johnson, J. (2011). Strategic decision-making processes in internationalization: Does national culture of the focal firm matter? *Journal of World Business*, 46(2), 194–204. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2010.05.002>
- Francioni, B., Musso, F., & Cioppi, M. (2015). Decision-maker characteristics and international decisions for SMEs. *Management Decision*, 53(10), 2226–2249.
- García, P. (2018). *Globalización y regiones. El diálogo Asia-América Latina y el Caribe*. Universidad Externado de Colombia.
- Hanlon, P. (2011). *The Role of Intuition in Strategic Decision Making: How Managers Rationalize Intuition*. <http://arrow.dit.ie/buschgracon/6/>
- Hernández-Sampieri, R., & Mendoza, C. (2018). *Metodología de la Investigación: las Rutas Cuantitativa, Cualitativa y Mixta*. McGraw-Hill.
- Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context. *Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2(1), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>
- Hutchinson, K., Quinn, B., & Alexander, N. (2006). The role of management characteristics in the internationalisation of SMEs: Evidence from the UK retail sector. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 13(4), 513–534. <https://doi.org/10.1108/14626000610705723>

- Jesuit, D. K., & Sych, L. (2012). Local economic development and cross-border networks. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 25(6/7), 473–482. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09513551211260667>
- Kotler, P., Burton, S., Deans, K., Brown, L., & Armstrong, G. (2013). *Marketing*. Pearson Higher Education. <https://n9.cl/ouih8>
- Mincit, oficina estudios económicos. (2018). *Comercio exterior colombiano: Seguimiento a los acuerdos comerciales*.
- Ministerio de Comercio, Industria y Turismo. (2021). *Perfil de Corea del Sur*. <https://n9.cl/efuvz>
- Moe-Lobeda, C., & Spencer, D. T. (2009). Free Trade Agreements and the Neo-Liberal Economic Paradigm: Economic, Ecological, and Moral Consequences. *Political Theology*, 10(4), 685–716. <https://doi.org/10.1558/poth.v10i4.685>
- OECD. (2018). *Oslo Manual 2018 Guidelines for Collecting, Reporting and Using Data on Innovation 4th Edition*. The Measurement of Scientific, Technological and Innovation Activities. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264304604-en>
- Ortiz Bojacá, A. (2021). *Fundamentos de Finanzas Públicas*. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv23dxb62.8>
- KOTRA (2022). *Performance analysis of the fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Korea-Colombia FTA and promising export products*. *Korea-Colombia FTA and promising export products*.
- Pauluzzo, R., & Shen, B. (2018a). The Impacts of Management on the International Development of SMEs. *Impact of Culture on Management of Foreign SMEs in China* (pp. 69–90). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77881-5_3
- Pauluzzo, R., & Shen, B. (2018b). The Internationalization Processes of SMEs. *International Series in Advanced Management Studies Impact of Culture on Management of Foreign SMEs in China*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77881-5_2
- Pawęta, E., & Zbierowski, P. (2015). Individual-Level Determinants of International Orientation of a Firm: A Study Based on Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Data. *Journal of Intercultural Management*, 7(1), 43–58. <https://doi.org/10.1515/joim-2015-0003>
- Pérez, J. (2009). *Integración y Desarrollo: Buscando alternativas para América Latina*. Miguel Ángel Porrua. Cámara de Diputados.
- Stojic, N., Hashi, I., Orlic, E. (2018). Creativity, Innovation Effectiveness And Productive Efficiency In The UK. *European Journal of Innovation Management*, 21(4), 564–580. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJIM-11-2017-0166>
- Tan, A., Brewer, P., & Liesch, P. (2018). Rigidity in SME export commencement decisions. *International Business Review*, 27(1), 46–55. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2017.05.002>
- Yan, H., Wickramasekera, R., & Tan, A. (2018). Exploration of Chinese SMEs' export development: The role of managerial determinants based on an adapted innovation-related internationalization model. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 60(4), 633–646. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tie.21969>

Chapter 3

Governance, Innovation and Competitiveness. Analysis of South Korea's Experience^{*}

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287818101.03>

Humberto Librado Castillo

Escuela Superior de "Guerra General Rafael Reyes Prieto"

Abstract: This chapter aims to analyze the overall process of economic growth in South Korea from the 1960s to the present. It will explore the various strategies employed by the government and key economic actors that have emphasized innovation and competitiveness as crucial elements in defining the economic miracle of this Asian Tiger. Based on these factors, the chapter will present guidelines to leverage opportunities for bilateral cooperation between South Korea and Colombia through the various agreements established between the two countries.

Keywords: governance; innovation; competitiveness, South Korea

* Book chapter derived from the research project *Relations between Colombia and South Korea: An Analysis of the Impact of National Foreign Policy on the Economic Development and Geopolitical Projection of the Country*, conducted by the Masa Crítica research group of Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto." This group is categorized as A1 by the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation (MinCiencias) and registered under code COL0123247. The views and results in this chapter belong to the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the participating institutions.

Humberto Librado Castillo

PhD candidate in Political Studies and Master's in Analysis of Contemporary Political, Economic, and International Problems, Universidad Externado de Colombia. Bachelor's in Political Science, Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Lecturer, Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto," Colombia. Contact: humberto.librado@esdeg.edu.co; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8431-8611>

APA Citation: Librado Castillo, H. (2025). Governance, Innovation, and Competitiveness. Analysis of South Korea's Experience. In J. E. Moreno Peláez & A. M. González González (Eds.), *Relations between Colombia and South Korea: An Analysis of Colombian Foreign Policy as a Geopolitical Strategy in the Asia Pacific* (pp. 55-76). Sello Editorial ESDEG. <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287818101.03>

RELATIONS BETWEEN COLOMBIA AND SOUTH KOREA: AN ANALYSIS OF COLOMBIAN FOREIGN POLICY AS A GEOPOLITICAL STRATEGY IN THE ASIA PACIFIC

Print ISBN: 978-628-7818-09-5

ISBN digital: 978-628-7818-10-1

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287818101>

Strategy, Geopolitics, and Culture Collection

Sello Editorial ESDEG

Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto"

Bogotá D.C., Colombia

2025



Introduction

The relationship between Colombia and South Korea dates back to the military cooperation provided during the Korean War in the 1950s. Colombia, under the government of Laureano Gómez, decided to participate in one of the first confrontations of the Cold War era, supporting the forces of the South, which were aligned with the Western bloc. This military assistance was required after the North Korean army's occupation of Seoul.

This milestone in the bilateral relationship contributed to establishing a reciprocal relationship, particularly one of a diplomatic nature, which has endured uninterrupted to this day. However, many potentialities of this relationship have only recently begun to be explored, especially the relevance that Colombia's foreign policy has given to East Asian countries, promoting various types of cooperation agreements in areas such as health, technology, communications, and development (Barbosa, 2012).

In this scenario, the pace of South Korea's economic growth since the end of Japanese occupation has captured the world's attention, along with the characteristics of its industrialization strategies and the expansion of its export capabilities. This growth has allowed Korea to achieve convergence with the industrialized countries of the West, moving past its low levels of industrialization that, in the 1950s, were comparable to those of sub-Saharan Africa (Acaravci et al., 2009).

This growth, analyzed from the Latin American region, is of great importance, as the lessons learned from their experience can help develop policies and actions that enable better integration of the countries in the region—and of Colombia, in particular—into global markets. This should leverage the multiple current agreements and strengthen the existing close relations between the countries for the benefit of economic growth.

In this regard, this research chapter aims to analyze the characteristics of the measures taken by South Korea to promote its economic growth since the 1960s. To achieve this, it prioritizes a characteristic recognized in the literature on Korean economic growth, emphasizing that this is not only the result of the country's economic conglomerates, or *chaebols*, but also linked to a series of policies from the State that have allowed for the development of governance strategies promoting industrial sectors to seek routine systemic competitiveness for its economy (Campbell et al., 2002).

Thus, the questions this chapter aims to resolve can be summarized as follows: *How are the major trends in South Korea's economic growth from the 1960s to the present described? Under these policies, were governance initiatives developed that connected the public, private, and cooperative sectors? How did these policies affect the promotion of innovation and, consequently, the competitiveness of South Korean companies?* Finally, how can this knowledge be applied within the framework of the agreements between Colombia and South Korea?

The chapter illustrates how the enduring trends of South Korean growth are linked to the central government's proactive role in forming five-year plans and initiatives, resulting in favorable outcomes for national companies that will enhance the country's economic sectors. These policies were not solely aimed at a State-led economy; they also emphasized the development of national economic groups and citizens' engagement in adapting to a routine of innovation and the growth of systemic competitiveness, which enabled them to capitalize on globalization. From this perspective, the cooperation agreements established between Colombia and South Korea represent a significant opportunity for knowledge transfer and synergistic strategies that mutually benefit the consolidation of the economies of both countries.

For the development of this document, the following sections are expected: first, the development of some conceptual elements related to governance, competitiveness, and innovation; second, the general description of the research methodology; third, the presentation of results, with the following sections: 1) the growth policies led by South Korea between the 1960a and the present; 2) the role of initiatives in proposals characterized by governance in the process of innovation and competitiveness of companies in South Korea; and finally, a series of general guidelines on the opportunity representing the current agreements between the countries for growth and industrialization.

Conceptual Elements

For the development of this chapter, it is essential to consider three central concepts: *governance*, *innovation*, and *competitiveness*. These concepts have gained greater prominence within the framework of the current transformations, which aim to deepen the modernization strategies of the region's countries, as well as identify the types of state mediations that are fundamental to this transformation (Lechner, 2005). Such a process is embedded in a dimension of change and central to the discussion of government action, within a framework where the welfare State model has evolved into a labor State, in which it is crucial to provide conditions for utilizing global markets (Jessop, 2008).

Regarding the concept of governance, it is essential to recognize that it primarily emerges in a scenario of governance crisis, resulting from the fiscal crises experienced by States due to changes in the international architecture and regional debt, as an approach to the management and practices aimed at solving social problems while creating opportunities that, within traditional governance, are quite complex (Kooiman, 2008). Although presented as a global approach, it is worth noting that definitions of *governance* vary. A key notion comes from Joan Subirats' (2010) work. For this author, governance serves as a systemic adaptation mechanism to enhance governance in highly complex societies through the management of social coalitions (p. 12). In this context, Whittingham's (2010) perspective is crucial for understanding governance within the framework of political relations among various actors involved in making, executing, and evaluating decisions on public interest matters—a process that can be characterized as a power game, where competence and cooperation coexist as possible rules, encompassing both formal and informal institutions. The form and interaction of the various actors reflect the quality of the system and impact each of its components as well as the system as a whole (p. 222).

From a broad perspective, the work of Luis Felipe Aguilar (2008) emphasizes the process through which the actors of a society determine their objectives for coexistence—fundamental and circumstantial—and the methods of coordinating to achieve them: their sense of direction and their capacity for management (p. 14).

These visions are complemented by the works of Jan Kooiman, who represents governance as a form of interaction in which public actors, companies, and organizations of a cooperative nature within human communities come together. Thus, Kooiman (2015) states that this perspective of governance centers on different forms of socio-political interaction, establishing various distinctions, such

as those among self-governance, co-governance, and hierarchical governance and among governance levels including the first level, which involves solving problems and creating opportunities, the second level that considers institutional conditions, and meta-governance, which pertains to the principles that guide governance itself (p. 171).

Within the framework of these visions, various international organizations, including the OECD, the World Bank, and the UNDP, have strongly supported the adaptation of measures and strategies for developing governance-oriented policies. This understanding acknowledges that these initiatives enhance societies' ability to achieve their coexistence objectives and, in turn, establish the means to realize them by considering the involvement of different types of actors, not just political and institutional ones.

In terms of competitiveness, this concept has a significant relationship with the idea of *creative destruction*, which is essential for understanding the development of the capitalist system in its current form. From this relevance, we can outline various approaches to understanding competitiveness. For instance, according to Verano (2019), we can identify different characteristics: a company's competitiveness corresponds to its share in a competitive market; a country's competitiveness is defined as its economy's ability to provide its population with a high, growing standard of living and elevated employment levels on a sustainable basis; the most intuitive definition of a country's competitiveness is the share of its products in global markets; competitiveness encompasses the institutions, policies, and factors that determine the country's productivity level; and competitiveness represents a country's ability to achieve a high and sustained growth rate of GDP per capita (p. 20).

Another approach to competitiveness relates trade dynamics to its real contribution to economic growth and general well-being. In this context, competitiveness is related to a nation's ability to produce, distribute, and provide goods and services in the international competition scenario, aiming to promote a better quality of life (Porter, 1990).

Next to this definition is what the OECD (1996) has developed, which states that competitiveness reflects the extent to which a country, in scenarios of free trade and fair market conditions, can produce goods and services that meet the standards of international markets while maintaining the real income of its economy.

In this discussion, a fundamental element of a country's competitiveness is *productivity*, which relates to the capabilities of industrial sectors to develop a

series of technological innovations, producing innovative process routines that enhance their productivity and, consequently, global competitiveness.

On the other hand, when considering the dimensions of measurement and the definition of competitiveness from a microeconomic perspective, there is a foundational basis in how various economic agents participate in markets, as reflected in their productivity indicators, costs, profit margins, and net benefits. In this regard, industrial competitiveness is defined as the ability of an industry to produce goods with specific quality patterns required by certain markets, using resources at levels equal to or lower than those prevailing in similar industries around the world for a certain period (Grupo Consultivo sobre la Competitividad, 1995, p. 5).

In a contemporary context, the current approach often refers to the concept of *systemic competitiveness*. This dimension not only considers company variables and the discussion about productivity but also deepens the complex nature of competitiveness. Therefore, in the sense proposed by Saavedra et al. (2017), systemic competitiveness could be understood as a multidimensional definition that includes, in addition to internal factors, economic, political, and social determinants in the development of the industry. With an environment based on the collective effort of companies, the joint initiative of business associations, the State, and other social actors can quickly lead to the development of competitive advantages (Saavedra et al., 2017, p. 180).

Regarding innovation, it is crucial to understand how Schumpeter's pioneering work emphasized the relationship between innovation and economic development. The perspective on the introduction of new goods and services, production methods, logistics methods, sources of raw materials, and different forms of improvement clarifies this development (Schumpeter, 1942, as cited in Mella, 2018).

However, because of the importance of innovation and the revenue generated by companies and organizations, there is rapid obsolescence. This means that only those organizations that establish routine innovation processes and integrate them into their culture can maintain dominant market positions.

In the words of Robayo (2016), this pattern is characterized by what he called "creative accumulation," which creates entry barriers stemming from competition in large-scale projects, their production, and financial resources, thus making knowledge the most significant barrier (p. 4).

In this sense, the importance of innovation is emphasized in terms of strategy and competitiveness, as its absence leads to an inability to create new products and processes. Therefore, organizations must implement actions aimed at

managing what are known as innovation processes within their strategy, allowing them to develop greater adaptability and, above all, the ability to anticipate and even instigate changes that enable them to renew their competitive advantages at the right time (Robayo, 2016, p. 5).

Therefore, recognizing that contemporary innovation processes unfold within the global contexts previously described, it becomes evident that cultivating innovation skills must account for the challenges and opportunities presented by globalization, and that the economic development process necessitates the integration of this knowledge.

Methodology

The research was conducted from a qualitative perspective, analyzing secondary sources through an analytical-descriptive approach. In general terms, articles and scientific documents related to economic growth policies in Korea were examined, and from there, a spatiotemporal horizon was established spanning from the 1950s to the current era, encompassing the period of industrialization.

This literature was used to investigate the categories of explanatory analysis recurring in the South Korean growth hypothesis, resulting in a collection of categories related to governance, innovation, and competitiveness.

Considering these categories, we gathered information related to the policies targeting each one and then verified what the literature reported about their effects. Subsequently, based on the cooperation agreements signed between Colombia and South Korea, we proposed guidelines to leverage these agreements by fostering a relationship among governance, innovation, and competitiveness.

Results

This section of the document presents the main findings established in the review of secondary sources related to economic growth and its policies in South Korea. The section is divided into the following parts: first, an overview of the general trajectories of economic growth in South Korea and the key growth policies from the 1960s to the present; next, a discussion on how these policies aimed to enhance the innovation and competitiveness of companies and the South Korean market through governance practices.

General Trajectories of Economic Growth Policies in South Korea

Background of the Industrialization Process

The situation of Korea in the world during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was marked by the tension between China and Japan, the powers surrounding the Korean Peninsula. Japan underwent significant changes after the Tokugawa period, and the advent of the Meiji dynasty led to the emergence of Japanese militarism, which in turn led to direct intervention in neighboring countries, including Korea. In this way, Korea was compelled to open to the world after the signing of the Kangsha Treaty in 1876 and the Japanese triumph over China in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895. In turn, the Japanese victory over Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905 marked Japan's supremacy, which it imposed as a protectorate in 1905 and ultimately adopted as a colony in 1910. Despite the independence efforts since 1919, Japan's control would persist until the end of World War II (Gupta et al., 2013).

The Japanese occupation period marked a time of growth in the Korean economy at an annual rate of 3.5%. However, this growth primarily benefited Japan, as the main source of it was the production of rice by the Koreans, which was mainly intended for Japanese consumption. Despite this situation, surpluses in agricultural production enabled the initial expansion of a manufacturing sector, particularly during the 1930s, through the creation of light industry on Japanese initiative and the development of a nascent agricultural infrastructure, including railroad construction and the building of ports and hydroelectric power plants (Gupta et al., 2013).

After the end of the Pacific War, Korea experienced a period of significant uncertainty. Influenced by Cold War dynamics, the two Koreas became divided. In South Korea, a fragile democracy was established under President Syngman Rhee, who founded the First Republic of Korea. On June 29, 1950, the war began when North Korea invaded the south. The United States, along with the United Nations, intervened to defend South Korea. The war inflicted severe human and economic damage on the Peninsula. It is estimated that more than 6 million people died and that about 80 % of the country's industry was destroyed.

In the midst of postwar tensions, President Rhee attempted to be re-elected in 1956, but student movements thwarted his efforts. Amid political and social

instability following a coup d'état, the so-called Third Republic was established with the rise of General Park Chung-hee. During this period, a process of industrialization for import substitution and the advancement of agrarian reform occurred in the country. Similarly, the nation's growth was largely supported by the United States, which accounted for a third of South Korea's economy, focusing on financing exports and imports as well as educational development (Romero et al., 2018).

Economic Policies of the 1960s. First and Second Five-Year Plans

At the start of the 1960s, South Korea faced significant economic challenges. The growth seen during the 1950s came to a halt due to limited local demand. Furthermore, the economic aid from the United States during the war began to diminish throughout the decade. Against this backdrop, the Park Chung-hee government launched an industrialization strategy aimed at boosting exports and focusing on the external sector.

This choice aligned with the interest in accessing a much more extensive market that could enable Korean-origin competitive products to be available globally. The strategies of that decade prioritized South Korea's comparative advantage in its abundant labor; therefore, a growth strategy based on light industry and assembly industries was established. This vision was framed in the first two five-year plans (1962–1966 and 1967–1971).

Generally, the vision of the industrial policy during this period, according to Aquino (2000, p. 130):

- Established the legal framework with regulations to finance exports and the Industrial Sites and Development Act for the export industry. These laws defined which industries were considered export-oriented, thus providing them with favorable financing at low interest rates. The KOTRA was also created.
- Issued laws in order to create an adequate framework to attract foreign investment, seeking foreign financing for export efforts.
- Expanded the industrial infrastructure by establishing communication routes and building ports and hydroelectric power plants.

These industrial policy measures aimed to create a supportive environment that would steer light industry production towards the external market by removing administrative hurdles to exporting products and sustaining a favorable exchange rate.

The policies implemented by South Korea allowed for historical growth. In the case of the first five-year plan, the domestic economy achieved an average annual growth rate of 8.5 %. For the second five-year plan, which was in effect between 1967 and 1971, the annual growth rate was 9.7%.

Two events that contributed to Korean industrial growth during the 1960s are related to South Korea's bilateral relations during this decade. First, due to the U.S.'s need to import goods to continue the Vietnam War, South Korea's national production increased. This growth, in turn, facilitated a significant flow of currency resulting from payments made to military personnel participating in that conflict. Secondly, the restoration of diplomatic relations with Japan in 1965 meant compensation payments would be made to the Korean government for the colonial occupation of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Borda, 2022).

Economic Policies of the 1970s. Third and Fourth Five-Year Plans

In the 1970s, South Korea modified key elements of its industrial policy. The third and fourth five-year plans emphasized heavy industry, aiming for products with greater competitiveness and higher added value. At that time, industries such as steel, machinery, automobiles, ships, electronics, and petrochemicals were prioritized.

This type of capital-intensive industry requires an increase in internal debt and external financing to support sufficient investments and advanced technology. During that time, the South Korean government bolstered financing for major national industries, consolidating economic groups (*chaebols*) such as Hyundai, Samsung, and Daewoo.

Foreign investment could only be made in the form of a joint venture to enhance the effectiveness of controls for protecting local industry. At that time, South Korea faced an unprecedented level of debt, incurring \$2.3 billion in 1970 and \$29.4 billion in 1980. The government then implemented a dual strategy; for the light industry, industrialization policies were sustained through export promotion (Borda, 2022).

In the case of heavy industry, the formula was developed from an import industrialization approach that supported the protection of local industries. However, it did not protect everyone; it was selectively designed to benefit companies with certain development potential. Partnerships were sought with these companies, such as the collaboration between Hyundai and Mitsubishi from Japan to produce cars. Additionally, efforts were made to strengthen the steel sector through the

investment and establishment of the Pohang Iron and Steel Corporation, which is considered one of the most competitive steel companies in the world (Aquino, 2020).

Aquino (2020) highlights the surprising outcomes of the industrial policy from the 1970s, summarizing it as follows: during the 3rd Five-Year Plan (1972–1976), the economy experienced an average annual growth rate of 10.1 %, and during the 4th Five-Year Plan (1977–1981), it grew at 5.5 % per year. The primary exports of this time were light industry products, such as textiles, but other items, including electronics, began to be exported in large quantities. In 1977, exports exceeded the \$10 billion mark (p. 131).

A decisive aspect of Korean industrial policy was the relationship between China and the United States in the 1970s. This situation created the possibility of withdrawing U.S. military forces from the country, making the strengthening of heavy industry for defensive purposes an imperative for the South Korean government (Snyder, 2009).

Policies of the 1980s and 1990s. Rationalization of the Industrialization Process and the Financial Crisis of 1997

The transition to the 1980s was marked by a slowdown in Korea's economic growth. This slowdown was attributed to several factors that affected the country's economy. First, there was an oversaturation in the financing of industrial projects, which favored heavy industry and contributed to the fiscal deficit. The expansion of this deficit caused industries to postpone their development capacity, making the repayment of loans from the State much more complicated. Second, the rise in global oil prices increased general production costs and intensified inflationary pressures. Third, since 1979, a series of poor harvests have impacted local agricultural production, leading to decreased consumption. Finally, there was political instability following the assassination of President Park (Borda, 2022).

Following this challenging start to the decade, the vision of Korean industrial policy focused on rationalizing industrial development and growth processes. The five-year plans from this era reflect a keen interest in optimizing the industry. To achieve this goal, several measures were implemented. Concerning the number of companies producing the same product, incentives were reduced to promote the development of economies of scale among a few firms, thus enhancing competitiveness. Similarly, the government decreased loans to business groups and stated that no sector could monopolize but should rather concentrate on activities within the same areas. These groups were also encouraged by

management to enhance their competitiveness. The economy began to liberalize through ongoing privatizations, which included the partial privatization of several banks and service firms.

The measures focused on achieving the necessary stability for markets to respond, resulting in a more competitive industry for the country. These measures contributed to a reduction in the inflation rate and an improvement in the economic situation. During the five-year plans, there was significant growth: between 1982 and 1986, the annual average growth rate reached 9.8 %, and in the 1987–1991 period, it was 10.1 % per year. Similarly, exports increased, and the share of heavy industry products rose at the expense of light industry products. Thus, the \$60 billion in exports was exceeded in 1988, maintaining a commercial surplus that lasted until 1989. The decline in oil prices, combined with access to credit from falling international interest rates and the won devaluation, enabled exports and lowered production costs (Aquino, 2000).

In 1987, a shift occurred in the country's policy development with the election of General Roh Tae Woo. When President Tae Woo took office, the liberties of the population increased, and there was a greater demand for wages and the organization of unions in industrial sectors. The Korean currency was also revalued against the U.S. dollar, impacting the country's competitiveness, especially in sectors with intensive industries, where labor costs had risen due to the reforms introduced (Borda, 2022).

The 1990s marked a significant transformation in the Korean economy, shifting from a low-cost economy based on labor-intensive products to an export-oriented one centered on capital-intensive industries. This situation developed to the extent that the international community pressured South Korea to open its economy, removing barriers to imports and trade. These measures influenced the design of the five-year plan from 1992 to 1996 (Stanley, 2017).

In this open and liberalized scenario, the 1997 Asian financial crisis emerged, starting with the devaluation of the Thai currency. The won underwent significant devaluation, and the Stock Exchange index fell from 758 to 305 during the same period, largely due to the massive indebtedness of Korean companies that could not meet their credit obligations. The crisis compelled South Korea to seek assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the amount of \$21 billion. As a result, the economy declined by 5.8 % in 1998.

Regarding the causes of the crisis, some sectors attribute it to the reforms of the financial market and the negative effects associated with the liberalization of

the financial sector (Sachs et al., 1998). Others consider that the crisis was related to the negative role played by the *chaebols* of Korea and the capitalist model of competence behind this (Krueger et al., 2002).

This second version represented the dominant vision in the measures taken by South Korea as it set its economy on a new neoliberal path. The government aimed to advance the restructuring proposed by the IMF plan. The business sector bore the brunt of the IMF’s recessionary policies, as the credit crisis left local companies with limited funds (Lee, 2010).

Corporate investment finally collapsed in 1998, with fixed investment contracting by more than 20 %. Accepting the IMF’s advice, the Korean authorities continued implementing liberalization and deregulation measures (Noland, 2012). In this context, the promulgation of the Foreign Investment Promotion Act (FIPA) and the approval of the Foreign Exchange Transaction Act (FETA) marked the dawn of a new era, permitting all capital account transactions except those expressly prohibited (Kim & Yang, 2010). The \$21 billion rescue package granted was the largest in IMF history and represented Korea’s limit under the IMF.

Despite implementing these measures, IMF loans became questionable due to the extent of changes in corporate governance in Korea and the country’s financial restructuring.

The subsequent period of the Korean economy was marked by sustained growth in the industrial sector, which facilitated the consolidation of central economic groups such as the *chaebols*. This phase reflects a revitalization over the last two decades, during which these groups have capitalized on market liberalization and opening, although they have not achieved the growth rates seen in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Notable years of growth include 2000 and 2010. These overall figures are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Evolution of GDP Growth in South Korea (1961–2016)

YEAR	ANNUAL GDP GROWTH %
1961	6.882
1965	7.184
1970	9.997
1975	7.864
1980	-1.701
1985	7.75

YEAR	ANNUAL GDP GROWTH %
1990	9.811
1995	9.571
2000	8.924
2005	3.924
2010	6.497
2011	3.682
2012	2.292
2013	2.896
2014	3.341
2015	2.79
2016	2.828
2017	3.20
2018	2.91
2019	2.2

Source: Banco Mundial (2020).

The Role of Governance, Innovation, and Competitiveness of the Policies Developed in South Korea

Governance

When discussing governance, we emphasize the necessity of establishing government networks that engage private actors (companies, unions), state actors, and community actors to address social needs and alleviate the uncertainty inherent in a State-centric approach to economic reforms. In this regard, several characteristics examined in industrial policies are evident, as presented in the previous section. This form of network governance, based on actor coordination, highlights interesting traits, as demonstrated below.

First, the Korean model has successfully designed, implemented, and promoted a developmental State that transformed a poor country into a prosperous one. According to McNamara (2003), the combination of political governance with government bureaucracy's economic interventions provided a comprehensive concept that reflects the interpenetration of politics and economy in the Korean case (p. 12).

Regarding the crucial political leadership necessary for developing these governance strategies, it is observed that the president's role has been central. South Korean politics are viewed as being focused on the leader; the presidency has been the heart and mind of the country.

This situation can be observed in the five-year plans of Park from 1961 to 1979, which created a stable and trustworthy political environment. The presence of these characteristics within the framework of the regime's authoritarianism is striking, especially considering that its leader, despite these traits, was regarded as an active and capable figure with strong will and commitment. He prioritized economic development, thereby gaining significant popular support until the end of his regime (Sorin, 2018).

Another relevant attribute of governance is evident in the close and extensive cooperation between the government and companies. The maintenance of the political order is linked to rapid economic growth, particularly through the establishment of industrial and trade zones, which enabled the success of Korean companies (Lall, 2003).

Additionally, the chaebol approach to the economic system constitutes an interesting peculiarity. Greatly influenced by Confucianism—for example, the father-son relations—and with the support of the State, the chaebols were powerful and rigidly hierarchical companies that dominated the Korean market. Over time, chaebols such as Samsung and Hyundai have become competitive on a global scale.

According to Lim (2022), the South Korean model combines a strong State with a strong society, facilitating commitment between institutions and the State, along with its capacity to create an environment that encourages citizen participation. The same author highlights that the 1997 crisis, which impacted the Korean economy, did not necessarily lead to the neglect of crucial issues such as social protection and solidarity in the country's policies (Lim, 2022).

Innovation and Competitiveness in the Industrial Policy of South Korea

As presented in the Korean industrial policy overview, the country's dynamic growth is closely tied to a vision centered on innovation. The practice of routinizing innovation processes—first in the light industry and subsequently in the heavy industry—evolved through the understanding of creative destruction, which enabled companies to better adapt to global markets.

It is worth noting that for a country to be perceived as innovative, certain aspects must be ensured. For example, the methodology of the Bloomberg Innovation Index includes: 1) Research and Development, 2) Manufacturing, 3) High-Tech Companies, 4) Postsecondary Education, 5) Research Personnel, and 6) Patents (Bloomberg, 2022)

Regarding these aspects, the Innovation Index in the latest measurements has placed South Korea in a prominent position. In 2021, it regained the title of the nation with the most technologically advanced economy. In this context, the best performance metric for South Korea is the number of patents, which has allowed it to maintain its top position in the world. South Korea ranked second in both research and development intensity and gross added value in manufacturing, as well as fourth in the density of high-tech companies, and third in the concentration of researchers. South Korea is home to companies such as Samsung, LG, and Hyundai (World Population Review, 2022, para. 2).

Along with these considerations, Korea boasts 11 industries among the top 20 experiencing the highest global growth. These include information and communication technologies (ICT), semiconductors, healthcare-related technologies, and the Internet of Things.

In addition to its innovation efforts, South Korea has advanced a plan called the New Korean Agreement, which addresses environmental sustainability and digital transformation issues.

This digital new deal sets goals for: integrating data, smart networks, and artificial intelligence (AI) into the economy; digitizing education infrastructure; establishing 15 new big data platforms; enhancing cyber security, improving high-speed internet access in rural areas, increasing the capacity for data collection and usage, and applying AI in industry and government; creating a smart network system to conserve energy; and training 100,000 people in AI and software (Rosales, 2021).

The factors related to competitiveness have been essential in South Korea's industrial growth process. During the latter half of the twentieth century, development in this regard was driven by leveraging the country's abundant labor, which propelled the sectors associated with light industry. After the 1980s, the focus shifted to heavy industry within strategic sectors (Rosales, 2021).

This characteristic of abundant labor with low wages ceased to be a viable option since the 1990s, with the increase in real wages of South Korean workers and the democratization of society. Such a situation led to a surge in the highly technological sector. Thus, investment in research and development, as well as the

formation of human talent associated with avant-garde technologies, became key to South Korean competitiveness (Rosales, 2021).

Another important aspect of developing South Korean competitiveness is the use and projection of *foreign direct investment* (FDI). This has been facilitated by the liberalizations and deregulations implemented by the country, following the recommendations of the Doha Development Agenda and the content of the Uruguay Round of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

As Sakong and Koh point out, this liberalization has spurred remarkable growth. In the 2000s, FDI in the services sector surpassed that in the manufacturing sector, and the gap between them widened even further from that point onward. By 2008, the services sector accounted for 70 % of FDI, while the manufacturing sector comprised 30 %. There was significant FDI in the financial, insurance, distribution, and business services sectors (Sakong & Koh, 2018, p. 209).

In turn, South Korean competitiveness has been enhanced by the government, particularly in terms of the impact of imports on economic growth and competitiveness improvements. For several periods, the country's imports exceeded its exports, leading to the promotion of industrial machinery imports and intermediate supplies, which allowed for better production costs and improved quality of final products.

Conclusions

As presented in this document, the industrial growth process of South Korea serves as a reference of great interest when considering the experiences and good practices that enable countries to achieve substantial improvements in competitiveness and innovation, as well as their relationship with governance practices.

The experience of this Asian country illustrates how the vision found between pro-market and pro-business paradigms—some favor the liberalization and deregulation of markets, opting for a conservative state role based on stability, while others endorse the concept of an interventionist State that guides the industrialization process—cannot be viewed in absolute terms. South Korea has demonstrated, despite numerous challenges, the ability to adapt its policies pragmatically, thereby enhancing its standards and addressing contemporary issues, and has achieved high levels of competitiveness and innovation.

Thus, the opportunities that arise for Colombia from this learning are extremely valuable, as they seek to deepen relations with South Korea. These relationships

not only support bilateral cooperation but also open up possibilities for partnerships that promote advancements in high-tech areas through knowledge transfer.

It is essential to highlight the significant opportunities that these areas present, as exemplified by the memoranda of understanding signed by the current government in the fields of ICT and digital government, because their implementation can help narrow the digital divide between Colombia and the leading technologically advanced countries. As is known, Korea has made notable progress in these areas, particularly in sectors such as 5G and high-speed internet.

In turn, South Korea's expertise in designing and implementing public policies for transformation enables Colombia to recognize an ally that facilitates development in this area.

Among the priorities outlined in the first memorandum are the promotion of sectors such as telecommunications infrastructure, including fiber optics, internet networks, cybersecurity, and AI, as well as their application for digital transformation and the creation of new services. Additionally, the memorandum encompasses other areas, including the Internet of Things, big data, occupational thought, and startups (National Radio, 2021).

In the case of the memorandum on digital government, the center facilitates the exchange of experiences among governments in the digital government sector. The document establishes that the agreement is committed to sharing good practices, personnel exchanges, and conducting joint studies, in addition to providing political and technical advice for digital government, its rules, and related institutions (Radio Nacional, 2021).

It will be possible to take advantage of the opportunity presented by these memoranda as long as the national government and private and cooperative solidarity actors acknowledge their potentials and collaboratively establish paths for the immense task of understanding the implications of globalization for emerging economies such as Colombia, recognizing which initiatives fall within this framework of cooperation. It is essential to develop a clearer agenda for the country's industrialization and to consider the policies undertaken in light of the actual effects of growth, beyond the ideological tensions that the political use of the measures to be implemented may cause.

References

- Acaravci, S. K., Ozturk, I., & Acaravci, A. (2009). Financial development and economic growth: Literature survey and empirical evidence from Sub-Saharan African countries. *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences*, 12(1), 11–27.
- Aguilar, L. F. (2008). Gobernanza: normalización conceptual y nuevas cuestiones. *Cuadernos de Liderazgo*, 17(1), 1–17.
- Aquino Rodríguez, C. (2000). *Introducción a la economía asiática. El desarrollo económico de Asia Oriental y lecciones para el Perú*. AUKI EIRL.
- Barbosa, F. (2012). Colombia y Corea: un camino sin recorrer. *Revista Análisis Internacional*, 1(6), 12. <https://n9.cl/tmv7c>
- Borda, G. (2022). Corea Fundamentos económicos del tránsito del subdesarrollo al desarrollo en menos de un cuarto de siglo. *Oriente y Occidente*, 6(1/2). <https://n9.cl/za3s5>
- Campbell II, T., & Keys, P. Y. (2002). Corporate governance in South Korea: the chaebol experience. *Journal of Corporate Finance, Elsevier*, 8(4), 373–391.
- Grupo Consultivo sobre la Competitividad. (1995). *La mejora de la competitividad europea, Primer informe al Presidente de la Comisión Europea, los Primeros Ministros y los Jefes de Estado*.
- Gupta, N., Healey, D. W., Stein, A. M., & Shipp, S. S. (2013). *Innovation Policies of South Korea*. Institute for Defense Analyses.
- Gupta, P., & Sharma, A. M. (2014). A Study of the Impact of Corporate Governance Practices on Firm Performance in Indian and South Korean Companies. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 133, 4–11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.04.163>
- Jamrisko, M., Lu, W., & Tanzi, A. (2021, February 2). *South Korea Leads World in Innovation as U.S. Exits Top Ten*. Bloomberg.
- Jessop, R. (2008). *El futuro del Estado capitalista*. Los libros de la Catarata.
- Kim, S., & Yang, D. Y. (2010). *Managing capital flows: the case of the Republic of Korea*. ADBI Discussion Paper 88.
- Kooiman, J. (2005). Gobernar en gobernanza. In A. Cerrillo (Coord.), *La gobernanza hoy: 10 textos de referencia* (pp. 57–82). Instituto Nacional de Administración Pública.
- Krueger, A. O., & Yoo, J. (2002). Chaebol Capitalism and the Currency-Financial Crisis in Korea. In S. Edwards & J. Frankel (Eds.), *Preventing currency crises in emerging markets* (pp. 601–662). University of Chicago Press.
- Lall, S. (2004). *Reinventing Industrial Strategy: The Role of Government Policy in Building Industrial Competitiveness*. United Nations.
- Lechner, N. (2005). Estado y sociedad en una perspectiva democrática. *Polis, Revista Latinoamericana*. <https://n9.cl/gxmp9>
- Lim, S., & Alsford, N. (2022). *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary South Korea*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

- McNamara, D. (2003). *Market and society in Korea: interest, institution and the textile industry*. Routledge.
- Noland, M. (2012). Korea's growth performance: Past and future. *Asian Economic Policy Review*, 7(1), 20–42. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-3131.2012.01212.x>
- OECD. (1996). "Globalization and competitiveness": Relevant indicators. STI Working papers 96/5.
- Porter, M. (1990). The Competitive Advantages of Nations. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://n9.cl/gxmp9>
- Radelet, S., Sachs, J. D., Cooper, R. N., & Bosworth, B. P. (1998). The East Asian Financial Crisis: Diagnosis, Remedies, Prospects. *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, (1), 1–90. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2534670>
- Radio Nacional. (2021, August 25). *Colombia firmó seis acuerdos de cooperación con Corea del Sur*. <https://n9.cl/aw0j0v>
- Robayo, P. (2016). La innovación como proceso y su gestión en la organización: una aplicación para el sector gráfico colombiano. *Suma de negocios*, 7(16), 125–140. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sumneg.2016.02.007>
- Romero, J. A., & Berasaluce, J. (2018). *Corea y México. Dos estrategias de crecimiento con resultados dispares*. El Colegio de México.
- Rosales, O. (2021). La experiencia económica de Corea del Sur: lecciones y desafíos. *El trimestre económico*, 88(352), 1247–1273. <https://doi.org/10.20430/ete.v88i352.1341>
- Saavedra García, M. L., Tapia Sánchez, B., & Aguilar Anaya, M. D. L. A. (2015). La competitividad sistémica de la pyme del Distrito Federal, México. *Faedpyme International Review*, 4(6), 19–33.
- SaKong, I., & Koh, Y. (2018). *La economía coreana. Seis décadas de crecimiento y desarrollo*. Instituto Coreano de Desarrollo. Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL).
- Snyder, S. (2009). *China's rise and the two Koreas: politics, economics, security*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Sorin-George, T., & Andreea Simona, S. (2018). Lessons in Economic Development from South Korea. In M. Bezpartochnyi (Ed.), *Transformational processes the development of economic systems in conditions of globalization: scientific bases, mechanisms, prospects* (pp. 53–61).
- Stanley, L. (2017). *Emerging Market Economies and Financial Globalization Argentina, Brazil, China, India and South Korea*. AnthemPress.
- Suárez Mella, R. P. (2018). Reflexiones sobre el concepto de innovación. *Revista San Gregorio*, 1(24), 120–131. <https://doi.org/10.36097/rsan.v1i24.575>
- Subirats, J. (2010). Si la respuesta es gobernanza, ¿cuál es la pregunta? Factores de cambio en la política y en las políticas. *Ekonomiaz. Revista vasca de Economía*, (74), 16–35.

Whittingham, M. V. (2010). ¿Qué es la gobernanza y para qué sirve? *Revista Análisis Internacional*. <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12010/891>

World Population Review. (2022). *Most Innovative Countries 2023*. <https://n9.cl/3f3mo>

Chapter 4

Constitutionalism in Korea and Colombia: Comparing Decisions of Their Constitutional Courts that Affect National Security and Defense*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287818101.04>

Manuel Guillermo Carrascal Jácome

Escuela Superior de "Guerra General Rafael Reyes Prieto"

Abstract: Two geographically distant States, united by the 1950 War, have undergone recent democratic constitutional transformations: South Korea in 1987 and Colombia in 1991. Korea ratified its constitution through a popular referendum, while Colombia did so via a National Constituent Assembly. In both cases, constitutional courts were established to resolve cases related to the promotion and protection of fundamental rights in recent decades. However, in Korea, the Court has been conservative when faced with conflicts between rights and national security and defense, supporting norms that address the threat posed by North Korea. In contrast, decisions in Colombia are progressive, aligning with the theory of new constitutionalism, without weighing the potential impact on national security and defense rights to ensure the State's survival. Constitutional Courts have facilitated the maintenance of an open economy and the respect and promotion of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, even as decisions concerning security and defense have been made with varying levels of caution.

Keywords: constitutional law; comparative law; legal relations; fundamental rights; security; national defense

* Book chapter derived from the research project *Relations between Colombia and South Korea: An Analysis of the Impact of National Foreign Policy on the Economic Development and Geopolitical Projection of the Country*, conducted by the Masa Crítica research group of Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto." This group is categorized as A1 by the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation (MinCiencias) and registered under code COL0123247. The views and results in this chapter belong to the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the participating institutions.

Manuel Guillermo Carrascal Jácome

Retired Lieutenant Colonel of the Colombian National Army. PhD in Law, Universidad Libre de Colombia. Master's in National Security and Defense, Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto," Colombia. Bachelor of Laws, Universidad Militar Nueva Granada, Colombia. Lecturer and researcher, Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto," Colombia. Contact: manuel.carrascal@unimilitar.edu.co; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5130-3229>

APA Citation: Carrascal Jácome, M. G. (2025). Constitutionalism in Korea and Colombia: Comparing Decisions of Their Constitutional Courts that Affect National Security and Defense. In J. E. Moreno Peláez & A. M. González González (Eds.), *Relations between Colombia and South Korea: An Analysis of Colombian Foreign Policy as a Geopolitical Strategy in the Asia Pacific* (pp. 77-102). Sello Editorial ESDEG. <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287818101.04>

RELATIONS BETWEEN COLOMBIA AND SOUTH KOREA: AN ANALYSIS OF COLOMBIAN FOREIGN POLICY AS A GEOPOLITICAL STRATEGY IN THE ASIA PACIFIC

Print ISBN: 978-628-7818-09-5

ISBN digital: 978-628-7818-10-1

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287818101>

Strategy, Geopolitics, and Culture Collection

Sello Editorial ESDEG

Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto"

Bogotá D.C., Colombia

2025



Introduction

The decisions of the Korean Constitutional Court regarding civil liberties, particularly when they impact legal norms that restrict national defense and security, hold significant political importance and relevance. The security conditions of the Peninsula have historically been precarious, especially since the Korean people were divided into two States. Therefore, this chapter presents a study on the constitutional changes and reforms undertaken by the South Korean State during its recent period of republican life. Throughout this time, the fundamental rights of its citizens have been bolstered by the decisions of the Constitutional Court, without this recognition undermining aspects of national security and defense. When a conflict of rights arises, the Court has opted to thoroughly examine the implications that amending laws, which empower the Government to counteract external threats from its northern neighbor, would have on defense.

This constitutional evolution in South Korea occurred before the end of the Cold War, which largely led to the political division of the Korean people in 1950, due to the legitimate claims of the Korean people against the authoritarianism of the previous decades. At another time, it would not have been possible to grant the constitutional guarantees of fundamental rights in the manner achieved with the 1987 Constitution, which recognized civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights with greater legal force. In the Colombian case, the National Constituent Assembly of 1991 facilitated a significant advancement in the protection of rights by incorporating a legal and political framework aligned with the needs of the people and by developing legal mechanisms and institutions for the promotion, protection, and guarantee of fundamental rights, without issues of scope and projection concerning social and economic rights. The two States pursue a path that the theory of new constitutionalism refers to as the *constitutional State*.

Colombia established its permanent relations with South Korea after participating in the Korean War from 1950 to 1953 by deploying troops. It later strengthened its commercial ties and cooperation in defense and cultural exchange. In terms of legal relations, there are similarities and affinities regarding the creation of constitutional courts at the end of the twentieth century, resulting from constitutional reform processes that have positively impacted fundamental guarantees and the development of legal norms and interpretations through constitutional case law.

This chapter presents the scope and consequences of the constitutional decisions on national security and defense, analyzing each court's decisions regarding conscription and conscientious objection. The goal is to examine and present conclusions about the differences between the courts, highlighting the conservative stance of the Korean court and the progressive nature of the Colombian court in cases where legal decisions impact national security.

A contrast is presented between the conservative decisions of Korea and the progressive decisions of the Colombian Constitutional Court, which may have future implications for the security and defense of the Colombian State, especially due to the ongoing violence in various parts of its territory, despite multiple peace processes undertaken over the past 20 years, particularly as the total peace concept is pursued now. This divergence is largely due to the persistent threat faced by South Korea from North Korea, an external adversary that truly jeopardizes its survival, primarily because of North Korea's nuclear development. Conversely, in Colombia, the threat is internal; within its borders, there are limited dangers centered on several regions of the country involved in drug trafficking, co-optation of state power, and organized crime that control various illegal revenues.

This legal analysis examines the intersection of Korean and Colombian constitutionalism to address the question: *Should the legal reasoning of the South Korean Constitutional Court's decisions be applied in cases where individual fundamental rights conflict with the right to national security and defense?*

As a working hypothesis, it is proposed that the Constitutional Court of South Korea, being more consistent with decisions of this type, produces results in economic development, political stability, and social benefits for its citizens. This is due to its greater sensitivity to decisions that may affect state security, considering the threat posed by North Korea, while also protecting fundamental rights, as long as it does not compromise national security regarding general and collective guarantees. Therefore, there is potential for the Colombian Court to utilize the legal argument of the Korean Court through appropriate contextualization, in order to

prevent progressive decisions from undermining the State's security and defense structure. This is critical, as there is a mistaken belief that, since they are internal threats, they do not pose a risk to the State's survival when individual rights are prioritized over the collective right to national security and defense.

The chapter is organized as follows: first, the theoretical framework describes the theories on which the research is based to understand the decisions of the Korean Constitutional Court regarding national security and defense. The research method is then outlined. Subsequently, the results are presented, where the reader will find the historical evolution of Korean constitutionalism, along with a brief description of the constitutional reforms implemented by the Republic of Korea leading up to the 1987 reform. Next, we analyze the case law of the Constitutional Court regarding conscription and conscientious objection, identifying the argumentative differences in the decisions, particularly in relation to national security and defense. Lastly, we discuss how these decisions in Korea may be relevant to reviewing the decisions of the Colombian Constitutional Court concerning national security.

The conclusions emphasize that the legal and political evolution of Korea has enabled the country, over the past three decades, to move away from the historical period of authoritarianism and enter a legal framework that respects the Constitution. This shift has increased the guarantees for citizens through the decisions of the Constitutional Court, which, despite its significant regulatory development in defense of fundamental rights, still considers national security to be such an important juridical right that it must be protected from potential undermining and the discomfort this causes to citizens, who experience certain limitations on their rights. This consideration acknowledges Korea's geographical location and geopolitical circumstances, in addition to the ongoing war that began in 1950, which still poses a threat to its survival as a free, republican, and democratic State with a capitalist economic model.

Theoretical Framework

To advance the research, the epistemological status of the philosophy of law was examined, which prescribes the need for a fundamental norm that accommodates various complementary interpretations. The first perspective is through political philosophy, which determines the degree of legitimacy. The second is through legal theory, which assesses the degree of validity. The third is through legal sociology,

which evaluates the degree of effectiveness. Thus, national constitutions require an analysis of the legitimacy, validity, and effectiveness of legal norms. To understand Korean and Colombian constitutionalism, it is essential to consider these three epistemological aspects.

In various research works, articles, and books, Oscar Mejía Quintana discusses the epistemological status of the philosophy of law. For example, the book *Filosofía y teoría del derecho* studies the “ius-philosophical and ius-theoretical paradigms throughout modernity” through a historical exploration of different cultures and “contemporary legal schools,” facilitating the analysis of the Constitution, democracy, and peace, as seen in this research. Additionally, legal theory can reconstruct legal philosophy through a dialogue that also aligns with constitutional theory, drawing on the transdisciplinarity that connects three issues: legitimacy, validity, and effectiveness. These issues are examined, in turn, through complementary social sciences, making it crucial to understand the relationship among political theory, legal theory, and sociology, while establishing normative levels of acceptance in modern society. This *threefold* relationship addresses the constitutional norm to genuinely produce the necessary impact on people and on social and political organization. An appropriate balance of these aspects will enable society to achieve, to a greater or lesser extent, its national interests, social welfare, and happiness (Mejía, 2016).

When studying national constitutions comparatively, it is essential to outline the theoretical framework that supports this approach. The *theory of new constitutionalism* explains the decisions of the Constitutional Courts of Korea and Colombia regarding the conflicts between individual fundamental rights and the right to national security and defense. New constitutionalism emerged at the end of the twentieth century in various parts of the world, particularly in Latin America, as the global bipolarity of the Cold War came to a close.

Martínez Dalmau argues that the evolution of modern constitutionalism requires direct participation from the people in significant societal decisions. While the constituent power can shape the people's stance through interpretation and reform, it is also crucial that, in modern societies, individuals have the ability to define power and make decisions that directly impact their lives. This research considers *modern legal and constitutional theory*, which developed in the nineteenth century and was adopted by States with republican political organizations, as seen in Korea and Colombia.

To understand the decisions of the Korean and Colombian Constitutional Courts and to establish the reasoning for prioritizing one principle/right over another

concerning national security and other human and fundamental rights, the *theory of legal argumentation* by Robert Alexy was employed. This theory allows for the recognition of similarities or differences between the decisions of each court. It should be noted that the development of the theory of legal argumentation within the Constitutional Courts involves a process of weighing values and rights. This process enables magistrates to make the best decision for the specific historical context, considering both national and international political circumstances that influence such determinations. Therefore, the theory of legal argumentation is crucial to this study, through which the rulings related to conscientious objection in each State regarding conscription for national security will be analyzed.

Through analyzing the aforementioned rulings, we can determine whether there has been a legal transnationalization or if it is required. This will provide important elements to strengthen the proposed working hypothesis, which suggests a hybrid transplant from Korea to Colombia. This is contingent on the research concluding that there is divergence in case law decisions regarding the guarantee of national security and defense. Furthermore, it aims to identify how a Korean norm could be adapted in the Colombian context to enhance security and more effectively address issues of violence and human rights abuses, appropriately aligning these norms with our own culture, society, and economy.

In conclusion, this study encompasses three theoretical elements that will be considered in the corresponding results and discussion presented later. These are the theory of new constitutionalism, the theory of legal argumentation, and the transnational theory of law.

Methods

This chapter, the result of research conducted by the Escuela Superior de Guerra (ESDEG) of Colombia as part of the Master's Program in Strategy and Geopolitics, examines the connections between Colombia and Korea and suggests ways to strengthen their cooperation and understanding. Despite the geographical distance, the efforts go beyond simply identifying similarities and shared values; through detailed and sensitive inquiry, we discover convergence in various social, political, economic, military, and legal aspects. When these aspects are correctly analyzed, understood, and applied, they can lead to better solutions for current and future challenges faced by both nations. This chapter focuses on the constitutional and legal aspects. The aim of this research is to present initial findings that compare

the constitutional rulings of the Korean Court with those of the Colombian Court, providing a significant perspective on the themes outlined in the introduction. Further development of these results will occur in the discussion section.

The research approach is qualitative-interpretive, involving the collection of information through documentary searches and consultations of various bibliographic references that report on significant aspects of legal thought and the constitutional paths of Colombia and Korea. The case law from Korea and Colombia related to conscientious objection and conscription was also examined to identify the similarities and differences in this type of legal decision and how these similarities or differences could impact national security. This analysis enabled a comparison of both cases and the drawing of conclusions regarding the legal assessment that each State makes of these types of rights and values. The sources—mostly primary—were consulted directly from the work of their authors. However, several are indirect citations or translations, particularly those from Korean texts.

The study and analysis of judicial decisions from the Constitutional Court in each country, particularly those concerning a conflict between individual fundamental rights, such as conscientious objection, and the right to national security, is the focus of this research. Given the legal nature of the issue, it is noteworthy that, in reviewing constitutional rulings, a descriptive, qualitative methodological approach was combined with legal comparison and the analytical method pertinent to the subject matter.

Through an analysis of the normative decisions of the case law of the Korean Constitutional Court on conscientious objection related to national security, we can understand the path taken since the late 1980s that now allows for adequate conditions of social sustainability and respect for, guarantee, and protection of fundamental rights, without their interest in survival being threatened by the North. Additionally, comparing this case law with the decisions of the Colombian Constitutional Court on the same issue serves as the key method, supported by legal and political history, to obtain the results and discussions that follow.

Considering the output of law through constitutional interpretation decisions has an impact on the social process of any State and obliges us to incorporate historical elements as a method of analysis. Historical-legal references from the past enable us to partially understand the legal-political actions and decisions of the present, clarifying and delimiting the facts and concepts discussed in each of the cases analyzed by the constitutional courts. Highlighting these aspects is important because it shifts our perspective on rights from a static and immutable

concept to one that requires, as has been demonstrated over the past half-century, interpretation and argumentation as a specific case of general practical discourse. In this context, the grounds for judicial decisions are revisited as a legal methodology, enabling the substantiation of fundamental rights and human rights and forming the basic theory of the “democratic constitutional State” (Alexy, 1995).

The law is not merely the product of straightforward legislative action or the case law of magistrates and judges; rather, it requires a broader and more constructive perspective on its social relationships. Therefore, this research examines the connections between legal theory and the real social issues faced by Colombian and Korean societies through an analysis of case law, using conscientious objection as a case to highlight aspects of autonomous will and the commitment to State security. Additionally, there are legal concepts that significantly impact society, such as nationalism and the militarization of public order, which are prevalent in both Korea and Colombia, and which create links between war and peace.

In summary, this is a descriptive, qualitative study grounded in the philosophy of law that examines social problems requiring constitutional interpretation and argumentation. Additionally, it conducts a legal comparison to contrast the decisions of the constitutional courts of Korea and Colombia regarding conscientious objection and national security, aiming to identify legal convergences or divergences in recent constitutional case law. It also relies upon constitutional history, as it is essential to delve into the facts under study based on social reality and integrate different branches of science. Using the historical method, conclusions are drawn by analyzing and synthesizing the contexts of each country, examining how both countries advanced in constitutionalism to provide the necessary context in each case. From there, the synthesis clarifies the relevant facts regarding national security and defense through interpreting constitutional rulings in each country.

Results

Relations between Colombia and Korea have evolved through various stages since Colombia, in the mid-twentieth century, sought to strengthen its ties with the United States and the international community by militarily supporting South Korea in its war against North Korea. The internal situation in the country was problematic due to the violent political process; therefore, President Gomez viewed the Korean case as an opportunity to join the multinational force defending South Korea from the Northern invasion, aligning himself with the United States, the natural leader at

the onset of the Cold War. This decision allowed Colombia to enhance its internal political standing, in addition to achieving the professionalization of the National Army, which would subsequently enable a better security service to consolidate the national territory.

The beginning of these relationships resulted from war circumstances mediated by third parties, but their subsequent relations have evolved through a slow yet consistent process of diplomatic approaches centered on commercial exchange. This approach requires navigating cultural, academic, scientific, and social contexts that can benefit both States. Therefore, this chapter emphasizes the need to implement, based on international public law, the necessary tools for this to occur, one of which is the comparative study of constitutional court decisions. Consequently, one particular aspect has been chosen: the decisions of both States regarding conscription, to determine how such decisions impact national security and defense in each of the countries under study.

The results obtained in the study, as mentioned in the introduction, are as follows: first, the historical evolution of Korean constitutionalism; second, a brief description of the constitutional reforms of the Republic of Korea leading up to the 1987 reform; and finally, an analysis of two courts' rulings related to conscientious objection to conscription, highlighting the argumentative differences in decisions regarding national security and defense.

Before starting the constitutional historical overview, it is important to note that the Korean people are ancestral, with their own culture; they have preserved their traditions and language, as well as political independence, despite having been a Vassal Monarchy of China for centuries and enduring Japanese colonialism in the early twentieth century and American influence after World War II. Similarly, the Code of Ethics and Confucian behavior, compiled in the *Analects*, have been reflected in Korean constitutional history, influencing the interpretation and analysis of current legal decisions. This is because it incorporated social and bureaucratic norms of behavior into the people's way of thinking and their national identity, structured elements of the State, and proposed methods to navigate political processes, thus shaping much of Korean history (Chung, 1997).

Korea adopted Confucianism in the tenth century, a philosophy that aims to improve the world by establishing filial norms. These norms, along with the traditions and respect for ancestors, create a hierarchy and reproduce patterns of authority within society and government systems. This philosophy supported the consolidation of political and social processes that had been initiated centuries earlier on the Peninsula. It was further strengthened by the rise of the Joseon Dynasty in 1392, which, with clear and organized authority, laid the foundations

of the Korean kingdom, altering customs, religious practices, and social relations down to the family level (Kuhn, 2018); subsequently, it evolved into Chu Hsi's neo-Confucianism, which introduced new aspects of a social and political nature (Cumings, 2004).

As Kuhn (2018) states, legal regulations are the fruit of norms created by many generations that consolidate a certain legal system for an established society or several societies over time. The historical process that led to the current Korean constitutional rights began several centuries ago, when the Korean Peninsula was a Confucian and hermit kingdom (p. 22).

The history of Korean constitutionalism is relatively recent, dating back to its independence from China in 1895, which was marked by the presence of monarchical and imperial elements. We can affirm that this constitutional moment was not popular and, within a few years, led to Japanese interference that significantly influenced the region following Japan's victory over Russia in the 1904 war. This, in turn, allowed for the annexation of the Peninsula as a protectorate in 1910, lasting until the end of World War II, at which point the Soviet Union and the United States managed the process of Japanese surrender, partitioning the Peninsula and dividing Korea into two: the north, supported by the Soviets, and the south, supported by the United States. This situation replicated one of the early episodes of the Cold War, albeit with limited characteristics, as it manifested at the borders of the influence of the two superpowers, particularly in internal conflicts (Hsü, 2000).

In 1948, South Korea, with the support of the emerging United Nations System, carried out its first constituent process by promulgating the Constitution on June 17, electing its first president on July 20, and finally proclaiming the Republic of Korea on August 15. This marked the beginning of its main challenge with the invasion of North Korea, which sparked the war in 1950 and continued until the signing of an armistice in 1953, which remains in effect to this day.

The inception of the Republic of Korea coincided with the end of the war and the adoption of a liberal, constitutional framework, marked by the promulgation of the 1948 Constitution. However, the influence of the two victorious powers in World War II was already apparent when the 38th parallel was established as a de facto ideological boundary. Consequently, this republican foundation was marred by the Korean War of 1950, which resulted in the division into two States: one under Soviet influence, characterized by a dictatorial and absolutist government system, and the other under U.S. influence, adopting a democratic and capitalist system with liberal principles. In both instances, the impact of the Confucian system came to an end (Kuhn, 2018). Military tensions persisted for seven decades after the war; the truce remains in effect, albeit constrained by an armistice (Montville, 2006).

The historical process surrounding the birth of the Republic of Korea is fraught with threats to its survival, resulting in its democratic institutions never having the opportunity for tranquility and peace to consolidate their structures and engage the people in decision-making. Consequently, its political process was characterized by weakness, which permitted authoritarian regimes, such as the one that emerged after the 1961 military coup, to seize power. This regime transformed the legislature and judiciary into instruments that endorsed and supported government policies, a situation that persisted until the democratic transition of 1987 (Gonzales, 2013).

Following the 1961 military coup, there was discussion regarding the country's concentrated militarization, which was viewed as a response to citizen control and authoritarian policies aimed at securing a geopolitical position in the event of the imminent continuation of the war with the north. This authoritarianism led to the enactment of the Anti-Communist Act, which constrained the enjoyment and promotion of fundamental rights, as the principles of national security were considered to be of greater importance (Gonzalez, 2013). Compton (2000) states that the potential communist threat from North Korea became a manipulable symbol to justify a strong army and the declaration of martial law, thus serving as a reason not to tolerate the characteristic polarization of democratic and parliamentary regimes (pp. 149–159).

With the arrival of the 1972 Constitution, notorious violations of fundamental rights emerged, particularly regarding Article 32, which is discordant in its two subsections. The first states that “the existence of liberties and rights cannot be denied, under the pretext that they are not contained in the Constitution.” The second claims that “the restrictive laws of rights and liberties will be approved only for reasons of national security,” thereby imposing the duty of national defense on all citizens (Article 34). In practice, the Constitution established a *de facto* dictatorship in which President Park justified his draconian measures—resulting in violations of human and labor rights—as necessary in light of the unstable situation in East Asia (González, 2013, p. 234).

In the 1980 constitutional reform, the legislature became unicameral. The president's political powers were reduced, and the form of election was made indirect. At that time, General Chun Doo-hwan rose to power, recognized as a president who helped drive economic growth through support for foreign trade and the implementation of rights, which improved the living conditions of citizens. However, authoritarianism continued to be rooted in the restriction of liberties (Juárez, 2021).

The Chun government repressed, above all, unionized workers, students, politicians, and journalists who opposed the current power. In April 1980, Chun

declared himself the head of the National Intelligence Service, and in May, he established martial law, which resulted in the closure of universities, the dissolution of legislative power, and the prohibition of political party creation (León, 2006). According to the general pronouncement, in May 1980, many people took to the streets to demonstrate against the authoritarian government, and these protests had implications for human rights, leading to the deaths of thousands in the Kwangju region, located in the southwest of the country (Compton, 2000).

These events were justified by laws that impacted the effectiveness of protecting the fundamental rights of citizens. For example, the National Security Act and the Anti-Communist Act were both established long ago during the regime. However, opponents argued that these laws did not serve as effective instruments against potential aggression from North Korea. Instead, they were seen as legal tools to maintain authoritarianism and to punish those who opposed the government, particularly those accused of taking actions advantageous to the north, the so-called “violent radical” South Koreans (Cho, 2003, p. 51).

Table 1. *Laws of South Korea Considered Authoritative*

KOREAN LAW	ENACTMENT DATE
National Security Act	December 1948
Anti-Communist Act	July 1961
*These two laws were merged in 1980.	

Source: Own elaboration based on Gonzáles (2013).

In 1987, thanks to the constant protests, a door was opened for a new Constitution in Korea, which initiated a stage of protection for fundamental rights and liberties. This period was notable for the impact of the case law from the newly established Korean Constitutional Court, which created a balance between fundamental rights and national security (Gonzáles, 2013).

The Constitution of 1987 of South Korea not only strengthened the protection of fundamental rights but also paved the way for democracy by enabling the election of the President through direct popular vote, granting a five-year mandate to ensure the Executive Power, and establishing the Constitutional Court in 1988. The Constitutional Court allowed for the creation of laws to be subordinated to it, ensuring that these laws are compatible with the Constitution. The development

of South Korean constitutional law, viewed as a process led by the Constitutional Court, has been remarkable, with its origins rooted in the democratic transition and the adoption of the 1987 Constitution (González, 2013, pp. 227–228).

González (2013) raises the thesis that when any element related to national security is present in a dispute to be decided by the Court, it prioritizes the notions of legal order and national security over the protection of human rights (p. 228). Due to its permanent state of risk—characterized by an ongoing conflict, despite an armistice being signed, the war did not officially end—it necessitates addressing national security with vehemence and great care. Consequently, its military forces emerged as the most respected and affluent institution following these agreements. This dynamic causes the Constitutional Court to carefully monitor aspects related to the National Security Act and the Anti-Communist Act in its decisions. It is essential to recall that Korea's geopolitical condition, due to its location on a peninsula surrounded by China and Japan, has led to approximately 900 invasions throughout its history (Gonzales, 2013, pp. 229–230).

By the time the constitutional reform process began in 1987, a Special Committee for Constitutional Revision had been appointed, consisting of four lawmakers from the ruling party and four from the opposition parties. The key proposals focused on strengthening the legislature, implementing direct presidential elections, and establishing an effective constitutional control system through the Constitutional Court. The draft reform was presented to Parliament in September and approved in October. It was then put to a popular referendum on October 27, 1987, where 93 % of voters supported the reform. The new constitutional text was promulgated on October 29, and since then, the 1987 Constitution has served as a symbol of the transition to democracy after three decades of authoritarian rule (Saxer, 2002, p. 66).

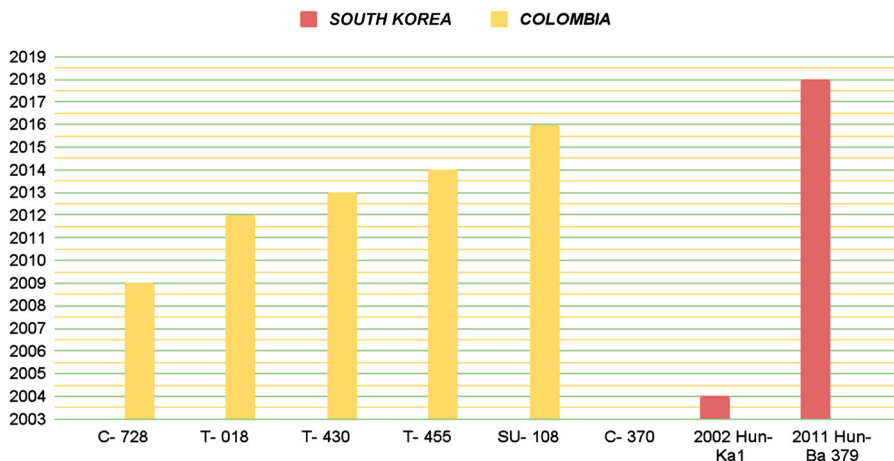
On June 29, 1987, presidential candidate Roh made a public statement in which he promised to promote constitutional reforms that would lead to greater democratic openness (Saxer, 2002). Specifically, the then-candidate, who was later elected president for the period 1988–1993, pledged to eliminate the obstacles that South Koreans faced in participating in the electoral process; in other words, he promised to facilitate direct presidential elections. The new Constitution, resulting from the agreement between the government and its opponents, symbolizes the transition and progress in South Korea, as it marked the first step toward overcoming three decades of authoritarianism and also toward protecting constitutional rights through the Court.

In 1997, with the onset of the economic crisis, the political democratization of South Korea was impacted, and during the presidential election, Kim Dae-jung emerged victorious. These elections marked the beginning of the transformation of the State through economic liberation, bureaucratic reform, and the pursuit of an economic and political approach with North Korea, a policy referred to as the "Sunshine Policy" (León, 2006).

In 1999, Kim Dae-jung published the article "Loyalty and Filial Piety: Thought and Twenty-First Century Korea," in which he stated that the object of piety and filial loyalty can no longer be the authoritarian officials, rulers, and patriarchs that thrived in South Korea's past, but rather the citizens who are part of a modern democratic society (Oropeza, 2021).

Considering the historical context of South Korea, we encounter two rulings from the Constitutional Court that shed light on conscientious objection to conscription: 2002 Hun-Ka 1 and 2011 Hun-BA 379. In Colombia, several rulings have been issued over the years, thanks to the new constitutionalism, including C-728/09, T-018/2018, T-430/13, T-45/14, and SU-108/16; some of these will be analyzed in depth later in the discussion.

Figure 1. Case Law on Conscientious Objection to Conscription in South Korea and Colombia



Source: Own elaboration.

Note. The figure highlights the differences between the case law of Colombia and South Korea, establishing that Colombia has a variety of rulings regarding conscientious objection to conscription, while Korea's decisions in this area are limited.

Discussion

Legal and constitutional decisions can affect a State's safety and defense, as highlighted in this study regarding Korea: its court, which is conservative and a guarantor of rights, has decided to take a strong stance against conscription established in its laws, due to the potential impact of regional threats on national security and defense, particularly those posed by North Korea.

Instead, Colombia is more progressive regarding conscription, as it allows individuals to decide whether to enlist in the armed forces. Therefore, we conclude, amid the discussion, that the Colombian Court best protects the fundamental rights of its citizens and, in turn, maintains national security. We will compare the decisions of the constitutional courts of the two countries regarding the conflict between conscientious objection and conscription, based on the security situations in their respective geopolitical contexts.

Compulsory enlistment in South Korea is outlined in the Conscription Act, which was enacted after the truce in the Korean War in 1953 and has been in effect since then. However, there are several exceptions to conscription in this country, such as individuals with physical or mental health issues that prevent them from fulfilling their military obligations, as well as musicians or athletes who have won international competitions. Additionally, conscientious objection was recognized as an exception after 2018.

Ruling 2002 Hun-Ka 1¹ of August 2004, issued by the Constitutional Court of Korea, addresses conscription and conscientious objection. The Court's decision was based on the argument that conscription is an irreplaceable duty of its citizens, as the Republic must uphold national security and defense capabilities due to the ongoing threat from North Korea, a nation that possesses nuclear weapons. This situation represents a significant risk if the commitment to civic duty weakens, as South Koreans must fight for the general interests of their society and protect their shared values (Corte Constitucional de Corea del Sur, 2004).

According to the Conscription Act, any person who fails to enlist may be fined and could face a prison sentence of up to 18 months. Consequently, a citizen submitted a petition to review the law, claiming it contradicts freedom of conscience and the State's duty to protect individual expression, as provided in Article 19 of the Constitution of this country. The petition was accepted and

¹ According to the case law of the Constitutional Court of Korea, the Hun-Ka rulings refer to constitutional revisions of regulations.

examined by the Constitutional Court, which emphasized that the right to freedom of conscience must be assessed in two ways: it is first an absolute right, but when a citizen expresses it through personal actions, it becomes a relative right, as this could impact the rights of others. Accordingly, the Court noted the lack of priority that freedom of conscience holds in relation to national security regarding the obligation of South Korean citizens to enlist in the armed forces (Constitución de Corea del Sur, 1989).

The Court also reiterated that the purpose of the questioned law, as previously mentioned, is to ensure the country's national security, which is constantly at risk due to the possibility of an external war with North Korea. This purpose is considered a pre-constitutional value since its positive manifestation is not necessary to guarantee this security. Therefore, as established in Article 37 of the Constitution, the liberties and rights of citizens can only be restricted by law when necessary for national security, public order, or public welfare. Even when this restriction is imposed, no essential aspect of freedom or law will be violated.

That is, no fundamental right can be contrary to the State and the legal system. Finally, this law was considered constitutional (Constitución de Corea del Sur, 1989).

According to the decision, a few years later, the Human Rights Committee intervened, which has the function of applying the so-called International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This committee observed that the right to freedom of conscience, enshrined in Article 19 of the South Korean Constitution, must be respected by the State, as it believes that respecting this right promotes a stable and cohesive pluralism in society, and the use of compulsory force can seriously conflict with freedom of conscience and every human being's right to express individual beliefs (Naciones Unidas, 2012).

In 2018, the Constitutional Court issued a ruling that many consider historical regarding conscientious objection: Ruling 2011 Hun-Ba 379 of June 28, 2011, in which the plaintiff, Park Sang-hak, challenged the Conscription Act on constitutional grounds after being sentenced to prison for opposing enlistment based on his religious beliefs (Corte Constitucional de Corea del Sur, 2018).²

In this ruling, the Court recognizes conscientious objection as a fundamental right protected by the Constitution and established that Article 5 of the Conscription Act was unconstitutional because it did not permit alternative options to enlistment. Therefore, it ordered the government to introduce an alternative civil service for

² According to the case law repository of the Korean Constitutional Court, Hun-Ba sentences refer to the appeal for unconstitutionality under Article 68(2) of the Constitutional Court Act.

conscientious objectors and also directed the legislature to amend the law by the end of 2019, which reflected the aforementioned ruling of 2004. Not only was the Constitutional Court responsible for this ruling, but the Supreme Court of Justice of South Korea also weighed in, with its chair emphasizing that punishing those who reject conscription due to their religious faith—or, in other words, their freedom of conscience—constitutes an excessive restriction on individuals' freedom of conscience (Myeong-su, 2018, para. 7).

This ruling clearly states that conscientious objection will not be a reason for South Korean men to avoid enlistment; rather, they may be required to fulfill national defense obligations through alternative forms of service, such as non-traditional military training. In addition, the final decision allowed for the resolution of the constitutional issue regarding the criminal punishment imposed on conscientious objectors and addressed the legislative and interpretive challenges arising from the amendments to the Conscription Act concerning its incompatibility with the Constitution and the punishment of conscientious objectors (In-hyeok, 2019).

Conversely, Colombia has experienced progressive constitutional evolution over the years. Regarding conscription, the country has leaned more towards recognizing its citizens' right to conscientious objection than prioritizing national security, grounded in the social rule of law; that is, it is legitimized by anthropocentrism, which places humans at the center of the State and ensures their rights, thereby serving as a guarantor.

Article 165 of the 1886 Constitution stated that enlistment was mandatory for all Colombian men, who were required to take up arms when public security demanded it to “defend national independence and institutions.” This article was further developed in Law 1/1945. Article 17 of this law established that every Colombian man was obliged to enlist in the military upon turning 19 and to provide a bail of COP 300 to ensure compliance. Additionally, men between the ages of 20 and 50 were obligated to enlist in the armed forces; likewise, according to Article 32, Colombians must pay a military compensation fee to the National Treasury if they do not enlist (Ley 1, 1945).

Under Article 20 of this law, members of the Catholic clergy, members of Catholic congregations, seminarians, theology students, and those who are absolutely unfit are exempt from paying the military compensation fee but are required to register. The sons of widows who support the household, fatherless sons, sons of parents who are disabled, over 60 or lack any livelihood, the brother or son of a man who died during conscription and whose work was essential for their family's livelihood, married men, as well as fatherless sons with single sisters

or minor siblings, are also exempt but only in times of peace. Lastly, at that time, the penalty for violating the conscription provisions ranged between COP 10.00 and COP 500.00, convertible into arrest (Ley 1, 1945, art. 20).

With the arrival of the Political Constitution of Colombia in 1991, conscription remained as established by the previous Constitution, which stated that “all Colombians are obliged to take arms when public needs demand it to defend national independence and public institutions” (Const., 2023, art. 216).

The emergence of the new Political Constitution and the establishment of the Constitutional Court in 1991 determined that the Colombian State serves as a guarantor of fundamental rights, such as freedom of conscience, as endorsed by Article 18, which provides the basis for objecting to conscription on the grounds of conscience. Consequently, citizens examined the laws that established conscription at that time and concluded that they do not align with the freedom of conscience. As a result, they commenced filing lawsuits for unconstitutionality to seek recognition that, due to their religious, ethical, social, and philosophical beliefs, they are unfit for conscription and bearing arms (Const., 2023).

The basis of the foregoing is Ruling C-728-09, in which the petitioners challenge the constitutionality of Article 27 of Law 48/1993. This article establishes that individuals who are physically and sensorially disabled, as well as Indigenous people residing in the territory and preserving their culture, are exempt at all times from conscription and from paying the military compensation fee (Ley 48, 1993).

The foundation of the petitioners' argument was that exempting only these two groups of Colombians violated their rights to freedom of conscience, religion, and equality; therefore, the legislator incurred a relative legislative omission by not including conscientious objectors in that group. The Court's decision was to declare the article feasible, because conscientious objectors are a group of people who have a constitutional right for reasons of “tribunal of conscience,” and not because they share common objective characteristics, like Indigenous people. Therefore, conscientious objection does not represent a relative legislative omission regarding the violation of the mentioned rights, and the Court urged the Congress of the Republic to enact laws that could regulate conscientious objection to conscription (Corte Constitucional Colombiana, C-729 de 2009).

On the other hand, Ruling T-455-14 showcases how citizens, through the tutela mechanism (an action for the protection of fundamental constitutional rights), assert their rights. In this case, the petitioners filed it because their rights to freedom of conscience and religion were violated. The first petitioner referenced his

active and permanent membership in a ministry of the Evangelical Church, whose situation was ignored by the National Army Recruitment and Reserve Control Division in his request for exemption. The second petitioner was approached at a public transportation station, even after expressing his Christian faith and his fear of wielding a weapon to take the life of another human being (Corte Constitucional Colombiana, T-455 de 2014).

The National Army Recruitment and Reserve Control Division stated that recruitment authorities ruling on situations based on assumptions not supported by legal provisions contradict the aims and principles of the administrative function (Corte Constitucional Colombiana, T-455 de 2014). In the same vein, the Court specified that the fundamental rights of freedom of conscience and religion were violated by the military authorities. It therefore revoked the rulings where those rights were not recognized and ensured their protection. Similarly, the Court ordered the Head of Recruitment of the National Army to initiate the necessary actions so that those in charge of recruitment receive directives pertaining to the process of conscientious objection, which may not be denied in any application, even if the citizen is already confined to barracks (Corte Constitucional Colombiana, T-455 de 2014).

Consequently, even when rulings exist that guarantee freedom of conscience in refusing conscription, many still violate the protection of this right because there is no legal framework compelling officials to respect each person's individual liberty. Therefore, in compliance with the Order of the Constitutional Court in C-728/09, the Congress of the Republic issued Law 1861 on June 14, 2017, which recognized conscientious objection as a right that exempts individuals from conscription in Article 4. This legislation emphasizes that individual convictions must be genuine and substantiated; that is, it establishes that enlistment is mandatory as a duty to serve the country when necessary, except for those who exercise the fundamental right to conscientious objection (Ley 1861, 2017, art. 4).

Article 12 of this law provides a lengthy list of reasons that exempt individuals from conscription: only children, motherless or fatherless sons who must support their siblings, sons of parents unable to work or over 60 years old, brothers or sons of a person who died in combat, sons of noncommissioned officers, soldiers, or others who have passed away due to their duty, clergymen and members of a religious order, married men or those in a domestic partnership, men with disabilities, Indigenous men who demonstrate to be so, individuals who are no longer identified as male on their birth certificate, and, of course, conscientious objectors, among others (Ley 1861, 2017, art. 12).

That is, it is now clear that the application for conscientious objection or any other type of exception must always be genuine and not merely an excuse to avoid fulfilling a duty to the homeland.

Based on previous law and current case law, we have C-370 of 2019, which challenges Articles 77, 78, 79, and 80 of Law 1861/2017 as unconstitutional. The Court's decision was to deem all the articles valid, as it is clear that conscientious objection is an autonomous and recognized right established in Article 18 of the Constitution. Although the legislator does not specify the characteristics that beliefs must possess, any sincere and deeply held conviction opposing conscription can be acknowledged and, therefore, exempt individuals from fulfilling that duty. This right also entails the protection of equality and the necessities of defense and security of the State (Corte Constitucional Colombiana, C-370 de 2019).

By 2022, 18 congressmen from the Republic of Colombia finally introduced a bill that sought to eliminate conscription "in times of normality" and amend Article 216 of the Political Constitution, making enlistment mandatory only when the country is in a state of external war or civil commotion. The main objective of this bill was for Colombians to provide *universal national service* focused on public, social, and environmental work, intended to strengthen the sense of national belonging, construct democratic societies, and eradicate social inequality among Colombians, as underprivileged citizens are the ones required to serve, unable to afford the military compensation fee. Furthermore, eliminating conscription in times of normality allows citizens to enlist voluntarily by prohibiting forced recruitment (Congreso de la República, 2022).

In November 2022, Congress of the Republic enacted Law 2272/2022, which amends, adds to, and extends Law 418/1997, known as the "Total Peace Act," and guarantees human security through the resolution of the armed conflict in Colombia. Under the law, the national government may pursue two types of processes. The first involves negotiations with armed groups operating outside the law. The second entails engaging in talks with these armed groups or structures involved in high-impact crime. Additionally, Chapter Three of this law established the Social Service for Peace as an alternative to conscription, including promoting digital literacy in rural or urban areas, assisting victims of the conflict, supporting peace agreements, advancing peace policies, protecting the environment, and fostering ethnic and cultural peace, among other initiatives (Ley 2272, 2022).

Based on the above, the Centro Democrático party, represented by Senator María Fernanda Cabal, submitted a proposition to abolish social services, which

was approved by the Senate. This proposition asserts that Articles 10 and 11 of Law 2272/2022 violate the principle of conscription, which safeguards the nation's critical infrastructure, citizen security, and prison security. As a result, the legislative initiative has a negative impact on the institution (Cabal, 2022, p. 2).

Conclusion

The legal-political evolution of Korea has allowed the country to abandon its historical period of authoritarianism and enter a legal framework that respects the Constitution. This framework increases the guarantees for the people through the decisions of the Constitutional Court. Despite its significant normative development in defense of fundamental rights, the Court still considers national security a legally protected interest so vital that it must be defended against potential threats and challenges that may limit certain citizens' rights; this consideration is taken in light of its geographical location and geopolitical conditions.

Colombia, being a more "progressive" State compared to South Korea, has allowed for the primacy of fundamental rights justified by national security within the framework of the Social Rule of Law. This is despite knowing that there are several internal threats in the country, such as armed groups operating outside the law, which threaten, kill, kidnap, and displace many Colombians. This situation is caused by a context of violence that has persisted in the country for many years.

Therefore, in response to the legal issue raised in this research, it is essential to consider whether it is necessary to analyze the legal arguments underlying the decisions of the Korean Constitutional Court and apply them to Colombia to achieve suitable transnationalization. This aims to prevent progressive decisions from undermining the State's security and defense structure, given the mistaken belief that internal threats, such as armed groups in Colombia, will not jeopardize the State's survival, while prioritizing individual rights over the collective right to national security and defense.

Both in Korea and Colombia, issues like the absence of peace, political, social, and economic exclusion, and a lack of pluralism, among other democratic deficits, are evident. However, regarding conscription, there are several notable differences. For instance, the case law concerning the acceptance of conscientious objection as an exemption from military enlistment is highly diverse. In Colombia, conscientious objection has been permitted for years; therefore, every Colombian is exempt from

enlisting in the military due to their sincere and justified conscience, whether based on ethical, religious, cultural, or other grounds.

In Korea, on the other hand, there is only one ruling that permitted conscientious objection as an exemption, issued five years ago, which is considered historical for South Korean objectors. Nevertheless, the Court's decision at that time did not aim to prevent the objectors from enlisting in the armed forces, as it did in Colombia. Instead, it allowed them to provide alternative services, such as administrative and office work, without undermining the duty of national defense.

Colombia, both before the 1991 Constitution and today, allows Colombian men to be exempt from conscription in exchange for economic compensation, even if they do not qualify for exemption under one of the specified causes. South Korea does not have a military compensation fee, as the country prioritizes national security and ensures that its citizens feel a sense of belonging while recognizing the potential threat of attack from the North. Consequently, those who cannot enlist in the military can engage in alternative service, as previously mentioned.

As previously mentioned, the causes for exemption from conscription in Korea are quite limited: physical and sensory disabilities, international recognition, and conscientious objection, thanks to the 2018 ruling. Most exempted citizens are objectors due to their religious beliefs, but, generally, South Koreans prefer to enlist, viewing it as a sign of patriotism rather than merely a duty, because they recognize that the peace with North Korea is unstable and could lead to war at any moment. For example, the members of the K-Pop band BTS announced in 2022 that they would enlist. Although they were given the opportunity to postpone their enlistment due to their status as world-famous artists, the band members stated in a press release that it was an honor for them to serve their homeland.

In Colombia, however, there are many exemptions from conscription, in addition to the military compensation fee. This demonstrates its "progressive" side, due to the primacy of the fundamental rights of its citizens, including the Indigenous community, as a subject of protected rights in the country, which is crucial to ensuring the constitutional principle of pluralism. However, it overlooks national security and the well-being of its citizens.

Finally, the two States agree that freedom of conscience is a constitutionally protected fundamental right and that the recognition of this right should be amended through the constitutional courts and other mechanisms to enforce their rights, so that the convictions of individuals regarding conscription or other practices that contradict these beliefs prevail.

References

- Alexy, R. (1995). *Teoría del discurso y derechos humanos*. Universidad Externado de Colombia. <https://n9.cl/2okua>
- Cabal, M. F. (2022). Proposición para la eliminación de los artículos 10 y 11 del proyecto de Ley No. 160 del 2022 "Por medio de la cual se modifica adiciona y proroga la ley 418 de 1997, se define la política de paz de Estado, se crea el servicio social para la paz."
- Congreso de la República. (2022). *Proyecto de Acto Legislativo "Por medio del cual se elimina el serviciomilitar obligatorio en tiempos de normalidad y se modifica el artículo 216 de la Constitución Política."* <https://www.camara.gov.co/sites/default/files/2022-11/P.A.L.268-2022C%20%28SERVICIO%20MILITAR%29.pdf>
- Cho, K. (2003). Korean Criminal Law under Controversy after Democratization. *The Review of Korean Studies*, 6(2), 49–65.
- Chung, C. (1997). Korean Confucian response to the west: a semiotic aspect of culture conflict. *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 24(3), 361–399.
- Compton, R. (2000). *East Asian democratization: impact of globalization, culture, and economy*. Praeger.
- Constitución de 1972 de Corea del Sur. (1972). <https://n9.cl/relx6>
- Constitución de Corea del Sur [Const.]. (1989). Corea del Sur. <https://n9.cl/11u96>
- Constitución Política de Colombia [Const.]. (1991). *Artículo 216. [Capítulo 7 de la Fuerza Pública]*. Gaceta Constitucional No. 116 de 20 de julio de 1991.
- Corte Constitucional de Colombia. Sentencia C-728/09. (M. P. Gabriel Eduardo Mendoza Martelo; Octubre 14 de 2009). <https://n9.cl/tuly7>
- Corte Constitucional de Colombia. (2019, August 14). Sentencia C-370/19. [M. P. Gloria Stella Ortiz Delgado]. <https://n9.cl/541n3>
- Corte Constitucional de Colombia. (2014, July 7). Sentencia T-455/14. [M. P. Luis Ernesto Vargas Silva]. <https://n9.cl/rxwvk>
- Corte Constitucional de Corea del Sur. (2004). *2002 Hun-Ka 1*.
- Corte Constitucional de Corea del Sur. (2018, June 28). *2011 Hun-Ba 379*.
- Cumings, B. (2004). *El lugar de Corea en el sol: una historia moderna*. Comunicarte Editorial.
- González, R. (2013). Derechos Humanos y seguridad nacional en la jurisprudencia de la Corte Constitucional Surcoreana. *Revista Chilena de Derecho*, 40(1), 225–257. <https://n9.cl/djko1>
- Hsü., I. C. (2000). *The Rise of Modern China*. Oxford University Press.
- Inhyuk, S. (2019, January 17). [Análisis de precedentes importantes por ámbito en 2018] 1. Constitución. *Periódico Legal*. <https://n9.cl/eg9of>
- Juárez, A., B. (2021). *Introducción a la Historia del Derecho Constitucional en Corea del Sur: una legitimidad en disputa*. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

- Kuhn, S. (2018). La constitución de 1895: el fin del Reino Ermitaño. In L. Bolinaga, & B. Bávoleo (Comps.), *Procesos políticos, económicos y sociales en la península coreana*. Teseo, UAI Editorial.
- León, J. L. (2006). Autoritarismo y democracia en Corea del Sur: teoría y realidad. In R. Cornejo (Comp.), *En los intersticios de la democracia y el autoritarismo. Algunos casos de Asia, África y América Latina* (pp. 45–72). CLACSO, Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales. <https://n9.cl/3ad7s>
- Ley 1 de 1945. Sobre servicio Militar Obligatorio. Febrero 19 de 1945. <https://n9.cl/6tzhn>
- Ley 1861 de 2017. Por la cual se reglamenta el servicio de reclutamiento, control de reservas y la movilización. Junio 14 de 2017. <https://n9.cl/bvknf>
- Ley 2272 de 2022. Por medio de la cual se modifica, adiciona y prorroga la ley 418 de 1997, prorrogada, modificada y adicionada por las leyes 548 de 1999, 782 de 2002, 1106 de 2006, 1421 de 2010, 1738 de 2014 y 1941 de 2018, se define la política de paz de Estado, se crea el servicio social para la paz, y se dictan otras disposiciones. Noviembre 4 de 2022. <https://n9.cl/0j156>
- Ley 48 de 1993. Por la cual se reglamenta el servicio de Reclutamiento y Movilización. Marzo 3 de 1993. <https://n9.cl/8b0i4>
- Mejía, O. (2016). La tensión epistemológica entre la filosofía del derecho y la teoría jurídica. Hacia una teoría crítica del derecho. *Revista Filosofía UIS*, 15(1), 107–136. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18273/revfil.v15n1-2016005>
- Montville, J. V. (2006). Restoring the Divided Korean Identity [Review of Divided Korea: Toward a Culture of Reconciliation, by R. Bleiker]. *International Studies Review*, 8(3), 510–512. <https://n9.cl/5kya5>
- Myeong-su, K. (2018, November 1). *La justicia surcoreana permite la objeción de conciencia al servicio militar*. SWI. <https://n9.cl/04wfr>
- Naciones Unidas. (2012). *Objeción de conciencia ante el servicio militar*. <https://n9.cl/cz156>
- Oropeza, G., A. (2021). *Corea. Una visión jurídica y geopolítica en el siglo XXI*. Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. <https://n9.cl/mzayp>
- Saxer, C. (2002). *From Transition to Power Alternation: Democracy in South Korea 1987-1997*. Routledge.

Chapter 5

Geopolitical Reconfiguration of the Asia Pacific: From the Republic of Korea's Achievements to Colombia's Opportunities^{*}

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287818101.05>

Angélica María González González

Escuela Superior de "Guerra General Rafael Reyes Prieto"

Juan David Restrepo Montoya

Escuela Superior de "Guerra General Rafael Reyes Prieto"

Abstract: This work examines the geopolitical configuration of the Asia Pacific by analyzing the historical division of the Korean Peninsula at the onset of the superpowers' confrontation during the Cold War, the establishment of South Korea, and the opportunities available for Colombia in its political, diplomatic, trade, and military relations with the Asian nation. The turbulent historical events in South Korea, including the war with North Korea and the intense geopolitics on the Peninsula during the twentieth century, were leveraged by South Korea to establish itself as a regional middle power. Due to its rapid national development and strengthening, South Korea has emerged as a significant strategic ally for the Republic of Colombia, which can learn from the Korean experience and decisions and apply these lessons to its own national power strategy.

Keywords: geopolitics; Asia Pacific; South Korea; Colombia; geostrategy; economy; national power

* Book chapter derived from the research project *Relations between Colombia and South Korea: An Analysis of the Impact of National Foreign Policy on the Economic Development and Geopolitical Projection of the Country*, conducted by the Masa Crítica research group of Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto." This group is categorized as A1 by the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation (MinCiencias) and registered under code COL0123247. The views and results in this chapter belong to the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the participating institutions.

Angélica María González González

Master's in Strategy and Geopolitics, Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto," Colombia. Bachelor's in Political Science with an emphasis on Security, Peace, and Conflict, Universidad del Rosario, Colombia. Contact: angelica.gonzalez@esdeg.edu.co; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0881-5530>

Juan David Restrepo Montoya

Master's in National Security and Defense, Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto." Bachelor's in Political Science with an emphasis on Geopolitical Studies, Universidad de Antioquia, Colombia. Contact: juan.restrepo@esdeg.edu.co; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-8715-9261>

APA Citation: González González, A. M., & Restrepo Montoya, J. D. (2025). Geopolitical Reconfiguration of the Asia Pacific: From the Republic of Korea's Achievements to Colombia's Opportunities. In J. E. Moreno Peláez & A. M. González González (Eds.), *Relations between Colombia and South Korea: An Analysis of Colombian Foreign Policy as a Geopolitical Strategy in the Asia Pacific* (pp. 103-121). Sello Editorial ESDEG. <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287818101.05>

RELATIONS BETWEEN COLOMBIA AND SOUTH KOREA: AN ANALYSIS OF COLOMBIAN FOREIGN POLICY AS A GEOPOLITICAL STRATEGY IN THE ASIA PACIFIC

Print ISBN: 978-628-7818-09-5

ISBN digital: 978-628-7818-10-1

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287818101>

Strategy, Geopolitics, and Culture Collection

Sello Editorial ESDEG

Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto"

Bogotá D.C., Colombia

2025



Introduction

The Republic of Korea, also known as South Korea, is currently viewed as a formidable political, military, and economic player in the complex geopolitical landscape of the Asia-Pacific region. The division of the two Koreas and the ensuing war on the Korean Peninsula, the second major conflict of the Cold War following the Greek Civil War, has shaped the country's geopolitics ever since. Surrounded by significant geopolitical powers like China, Russia, and Japan, along with the ongoing presence of American influence in the Pacific and the persistent threat posed by North Korea—one of the most isolated countries in the world, marked by inherent instability and possessing nuclear capabilities that could spark a conflict at any moment (Brzezinski, 1998)—South Korea is positioned long-term as a geopolitical focal point of considerable strategic importance and a key element in the balance of power within the Asia-Pacific.

This condition means that the small country of fifty million inhabitants cannot put its own security at risk. This is why it has focused on gradually enhancing its capacity and projection to strengthen its national power, which has led to a concentration on becoming an economic power that supports a significant military force. This allows it to confront the aggressive stance of its neighboring country while maintaining a deterrence capacity and geopolitical influence in a region where numerous economic and military powers converge, such as the Asia Pacific, as illustrated in the map in Figure 1.

According to Brzezinski (1998), the region is characterized by economic dynamism, coupled with significant political uncertainty stemming from its economic growth. While prosperity can obscure the region's political vulnerabilities, it may also affect the order that maintains peace among military powers. The Asia Pacific features densely populated areas within a small territory, alongside intense

nationalism and a lack of effective multilateral organizations. In this context, Asia's geopolitics fosters a potential clash between the United States and China, currently the leading superpowers, with several key players, including Japan and the Korean Peninsula, at the center of this geopolitical dispute (Brzezinski, 1998).

In this way, the region is presented as a primary scenario for the main world confrontation, alongside Eastern Europe. Although on this regional chessboard, South Korea and Japan are under the protection of American power and work, along with Taiwan, to contain Chinese expansion, Koreans and Japanese have maintained a historical and territorial enmity; in the latter case, this includes the dispute over the islets of Dokdo and Takeshima (Kaplan, 2017). These differences have historically been shaped by various events during which the Japanese government intervened on several occasions, attempting to seize control of the entire Korean peninsula. The Japanese returned in the twentieth century, annexing the entire country and preparing to destroy its culture. The Korean language was prohibited, along with the teaching of Korean history, and worship in the Shinto shrines became mandatory. The decades of repression left a legacy that continues to impact relations between Japan and the two Korean States (Marshall, 2017, p. 260).

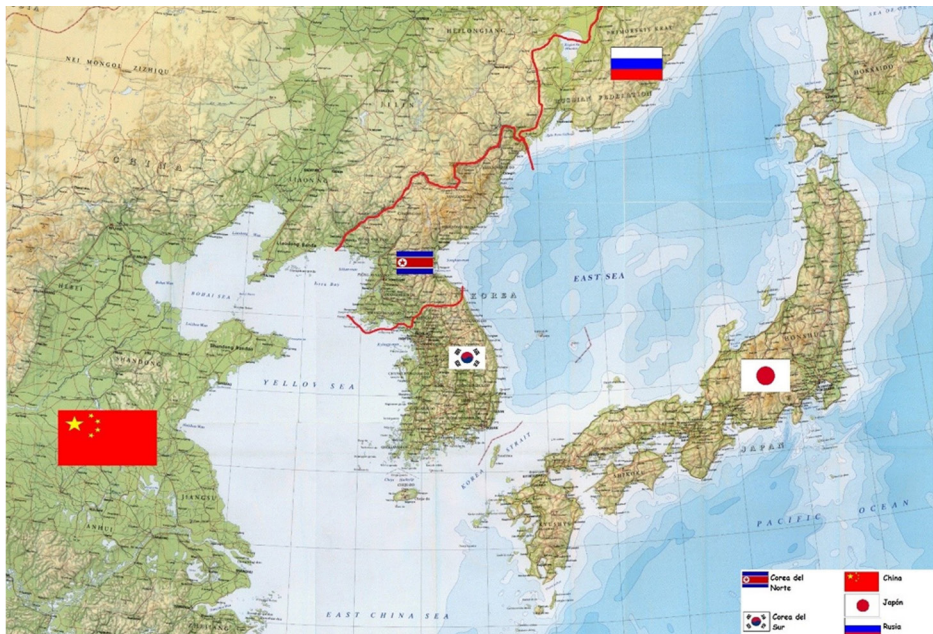
After a history of ongoing conflicts with their neighbors and following the division of the Peninsula due to the Cold War and Japan's defeat in World War II, the Peninsula's history is similarly divided, like how war divides and pits millions of Koreans against one another. Having overcome war and survived under American protection, South Korea is now a vibrant and integrated member of the world's nations, with a foreign policy that is capable of meeting challenges. With open waters to the west, east, and south, and limited natural resources, it has prioritized building modern naval forces over the last three decades, enabling it to venture through the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea to protect the country's interests (Marshall, 2017, p. 267).

The relations between South Korea and much of the world have been shaped by the outcomes of the Korean War and the significant role of commercial exchanges in its national production. One of the relationships that resulted from these factors was the diplomatic, commercial, military, and formal interactions between South Korea and the Republic of Colombia. Both countries established formal diplomatic relations only in 1962; however, they had already collaborated closely, as Colombia was the only country in South America that sent troops to support South Korea against the communist invasion from the North. In this way, Colombia and the Republic of Korea have developed strong ties in every area, with Colombian support during the Korean War serving as a foundation for the establishment and consolidation of good economic and trade relations between the two nations (Kyeongsun, 2019).

Relationships between the two countries have been strengthened since then through more substantial commercial exchanges, highlighted by the signing of a free trade agreement (FTA) in 2013, along with strong military and diplomatic cooperation. The expansion of relations between the two nations, the concentration of major geopolitical players in the Asia-Pacific region, and Colombia's potential given its direct access to the Pacific, as well as its approach to South Korea, can serve as a starting point and opportunity for the country to achieve greater commercial, diplomatic, political, and military ties with the primary global geopolitical tension zone, thus enhancing its own interests in this area and ensuring a position of power, while also bolstering the country's economy through trade with the region's key powers.

In this context, the present work aims to briefly analyze the geopolitical configuration of the Asia Pacific through a rapid historical review of the period surrounding the division of the two Koreas. This analysis seeks to understand how South Korea capitalized on this geopolitics to become a regional middle power and how Colombia can leverage this experience and its relationship with South Korea as an opportunity to comprehend strategies for national progress and to consider them as part of its own national strategy.

Figure 1. Map of the Korean Peninsula and Geopolitical Powers of the Region



Source: Historiadores Históricos (2010).

The New Geopolitical Configuration in the Asia Pacific

Historically, the Asia-Pacific region has experienced various complex geopolitical configurations, making it an extremely conflictive area, yet one of great significance for the formation of powerful and highly populated States. First, it served as a strategic geographical zone for the region's powers in the nineteenth century: China, Japan, and Russia. Second, it became a battleground for ideologies and political forces after World War II. Finally, it operated as a space where political forces tended to establish channels for action in a post-industrial era following the Cold War (Villareal Gonzáles, 2007, p. 22).

The global context of the Cold War heightened awareness among the strategists of major powers that Europe was not the only crucial scenario in facing the new threats after World War II. Consequently, the Asia Pacific gained prominence following the emergence of communist governments and the rise of Mao Zedong's China on the world stage. The necessity to implement the policy of containment against the Soviet Union and monitor Communist China turned defeated Japan and the Korean Peninsula into a geostrategic area for the United States, which emerged as the principal player in this eastern landscape, eventually involving the actions of the new Russian Federation and post-Mao China (Solórzano Tello & Carrier García, 2018).

After the containment of North Korea due to the war on the Peninsula, as illustrated on the map in Figure 2, and the onset of the war in Indochina, South Korea remained the primary American bastion in continental Asia. Then, the defense of its ally became a geopolitical imperative for the United States, which also sought to support its European allies. However, the United States made every effort to further solidify its established strength in the Pacific to counter any Soviet intentions to capitalize on its growing military might. This involved establishing a containment line stretching from Alaska, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Indonesia to eliminate any strategic opportunities for the Soviet Union and China. In this context, the development of U.S.-aligned countries in Asia was crucial for the success of the geopolitical strategy, necessitating the enhancement of their economies to ensure they could resist communist influence both militarily and ideologically (Lopes da Cunha & Appel, 2014).

After the 1960s, South Korea and Taiwan adopted aggressive industrial and commercial policies, emulating Japan's consolidated economy. This approach,

supported by U.S. officials, bolstered the economies of Washington's allies in the region and advanced U.S. interests during the Cold War (Lopes da Cunha & Appel, 2014). Unlike other nations caught in the ideological conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, these countries developed differently due to the immediacy of what was termed *development upon invitation*. At times, the United States sacrificed its own interests to promote the collective growth of the capitalist bloc, thereby solidifying its long-term geopolitical interests in the region (Lopes da Cunha & Appel, 2014). U.S. foreign policy in this context remained in effect long after the Cold War ended, at a time when the Soviet power ceased to be a direct threat to Europe and gradually diminished in the Asia Pacific.

Following the collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1991, the ideological landscape in the region shifted, but its geopolitical dynamics remained unchanged. The United States did not intervene directly in the development of its allies but sought to influence their foreign policy to continue safeguarding its interests in the Asia-Pacific. Primarily, this was directed at China, the emerging economic power, which had undergone a significant internal transformation under Deng Xiaoping's directives. China's rapid economic development, coupled with the growth of its military strength, has made Washington keenly aware of its next geopolitical competitor, prompting it to take the lead in addressing issues in the Asia-Pacific region.

Similarly, the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the region—where China and Russia, two countries near the Korean Peninsula, possess nuclear weapons, and following North Korea's acquisition of atomic capability—makes the geostrategic balance much more complex and delicate, due to the ease with which nuclear warfare can occur from even the smallest calculation error. These factors, combined with South Korea's geographical position, make defining Korean foreign policy in Asia crucial for understanding the balance of power in this region (Pérez Gavilán, 2017, p. 213).

The nuclear capabilities of North Korea compel South Korea to strengthen and maintain its defense ties with the United States. This consideration is explored in greater detail through the examination of the White Book of South Korean defense, which focuses on actions to establish robust military relations with the USA (Ho, 2020) to enhance national security and deterrence against North Korea. Additionally, the increasingly concentrated economic production in the Atlantic Basin shifting to the Pacific—driven by Chinese development and the so-called "Asian Tigers"—necessitates a global strategy focused on this area (Serbín, 2018). Thus, China's economic boom, changes in Japanese security policy, the Korean

crossroads, and the new Indian diplomacy are among the most significant forces reshaping an order that has been dominated by the USA for half a century (Serbín, 2018, p. 15).

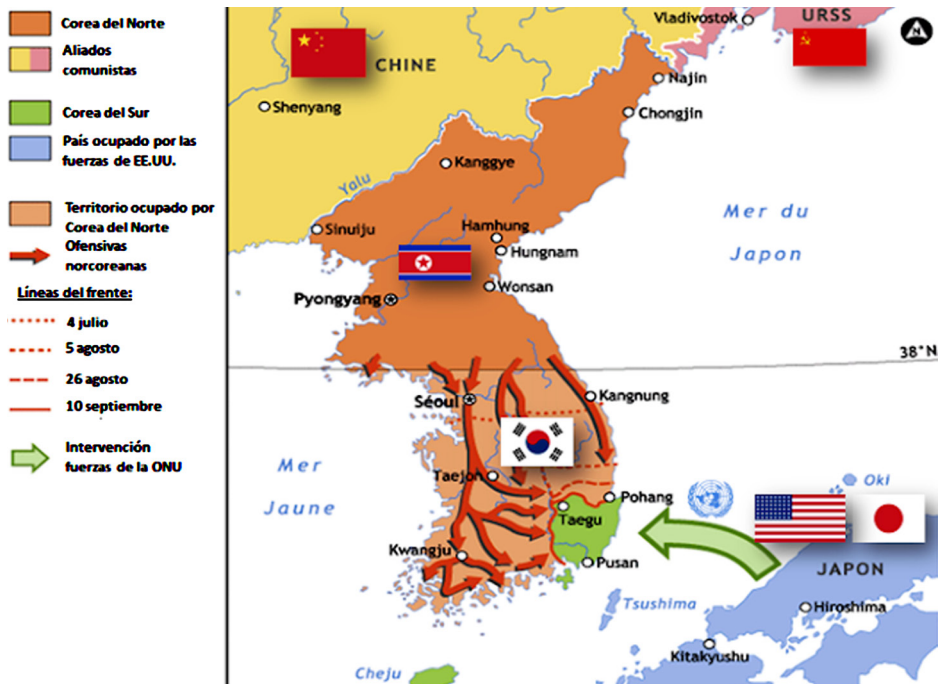
The North Korean nuclear program and China's rise compel Japan and South Korea to align their political and military objectives with those of the United States in Asia (Serbín, 2018). This alignment has resulted in a new geopolitical reconfiguration of the region, characterized by a clash between Washington's forces and interests and those of Beijing, with the two Koreas positioned at the center of this tension, Japan eager to engage more actively, and several neighboring powers, mainly Russia and India, which, limited by their distant geographical positions, can merely observe. Consequently, the interests of private actors align with their capabilities, prompting them to seek support from their respective powers. In this context, Seoul faces a strategic dilemma, exacerbated by its leaders' conviction that the country cannot realize its full potential in the international arena without a non-conflicting relationship with Pyongyang and a more balanced relationship with Washington. The pursuit of these objectives in the new Asian geopolitical landscape has led South Korea to redefine its national strategy, with the primary aim of resolving the conflict with the North and progressing toward reunification. Achieving this goal would not only eliminate the main threat to its security but also enable Seoul to end its dependency on the United States (Serbín, 2018, p. 19).

In this line of thinking, Seoul aims to maintain an alliance with the United States while securing economic cooperation with China to become a genuine pivot in Northeast Asia. This position can significantly enhance South Korea's geopolitical capacity, as the Peninsula, particularly Seoul, would function as a balancing zone between the two superpowers (Serbín, 2018). However, South Korea's and Japan's foreign relations and policies indicate that there is no cohesive Asian power, both politically and militarily, due to the lack of Chinese-Japanese integration. The rivalry among neighboring powers renders an Asian project unfeasible, a situation that is exploited by the United States. Despite the tensions among Asian economic powers, South Korea seeks to establish a policy of *détente* with Pyongyang to ensure its safety and maintain a strategic balance with China. Koreans do not anticipate complete Chinese hegemony in the region, but they are aware of the diminishing influence of the U.S. in the area (Carretero, 2005).

The new geopolitical configuration of the Asia Pacific reflects an American power that aims to maintain its influence over Korea and Japan while countering Chinese claims in the region. However, South Korea and Japan harbor differences

and distrust toward each other, making these divergences a key issue that American foreign policy must navigate in the geopolitics of the area. With the concentration of Russian power in Europe, the rise of Indian influence, and the escalating confrontation between China and the United States, the geopolitics surrounding the Korean Peninsula serves as the pivot for the new and future geopolitical shifts in the region.

Figure 2. Korea War Map (1950–1953)



Source: León Pérez (2016).

From War to the Republic: The Transformation of South Korea in the Twentieth Century

South Korea is a country that, in just fifty years, has undergone significant transformations in political, economic, and military aspects. This nation could easily be compared to certain Latin American or African countries; however, over the years, it has emerged as an undeniable economic power and, in fact, ranks

as the tenth-largest economy in the world. In 1960, South Korea was one of the poorest countries in the world. In just half a century, it has transformed into a global player, boasting a robust industrial base and a remarkable presence in new technologies. The primary lesson from the Korean case is that convergence in per capita income with industrialized economies is attainable, and thus, the immediate concern is to investigate the policies and contexts that have facilitated this significant achievement (Rosales, 2021, p. 1248).

The so-called "Miracle on the Han River" was a process that involved strong macroeconomic foundations, including high savings rates and a qualified workforce. The application of active industrial policies and the strengthening of technological advances aimed to translate competitive exports into external markets, consolidating the external market and replacing imports from other countries, primarily China and Japan. However, the process of the economic miracle and the strengthening of South Korea's national power was influenced not only by the sensible economic decision-making of competent officials who correctly applied economic models, but also by turbulent political episodes that the country suffered.

In 1961, a coup d'état led to General Park Chung-hee, head of a provisional military board, seizing power. By 1963, Park was elected president and initiated a shift in the development strategy. Aimed at increasing the growth rate and decreasing reliance on external financing, the first five-year plan was established in 1962 to promote manufacturing exports through protectionist measures. This plan concentrated on stimulating new industries in essential infrastructure and sectors with significant growth potential, primarily focusing on manufacturing exports. The political counterpart of this economic miracle was authoritarianism, corruption, and the persecution of opposition leaders, which included extended periods of martial law and the suspension of civil liberties and freedom of the press (Rosales, 2021, p. 1252).

However, General Park Chung-hee has been criticized as a merciless dictator who imposed political oppression without restrictions. Nevertheless, many of his critics and analysts also highlight that his administration significantly contributed to economic growth (Camacho, 2017). Park held the presidential office until his assassination in 1979. After his death, South Korea became a highly developed country with one of the world's fastest-growing economies, and by 2009, it ranked as the ninth country with the highest income from its exports (Camacho, 2017).

Along with boosting economic production, the quality of South Korean education served as a crucial factor in implementing significant advances

in innovation and new technologies through a highly skilled workforce. The enhancement of educational attainment and substantial investments in this area allowed companies to access a prepared labor force with reasonable flexibility, enabling them to eliminate production sectors that were not entirely competitive.

On the other hand, the government intervened in certain strategic sectors of the economy. It maintained key corporate alliances with major companies, thereby strengthening export processes and reducing imports in the domestic market (Álvarez, 2016). Interest in the education process, linked to consciousness and national projects, has also focused on relations with North Koreans and the potential reunification exercises that could occur between the two countries. Since 1953, the idea of reuniting with northern brothers has been latent in Seoul. In 1969, the Ministry of Unification was established to create pillars of trust between the two Koreas and ensure peace on the Peninsula, thereby facilitating subsequent reunification (Álvarez, 2016).

The geopolitical factor that influenced the development of the South Korean economy was fully leveraged by Seoul, which was aware of U.S. interests and what could be achieved, given that the Peninsula was at the center of the Asian geopolitical landscape (Lopes da Cunha & Appel, 2014). The South Korean State's interest in promoting its economic power was rooted in avoiding political, military, and economic adversities, as the progress of this project was not an end in itself but a means to eliminate limits on projections of national power and ensure the State's survival against adjacent threats (Lopes da Cunha & Appel, 2014). In this way, the alignment between the private and public sectors, which concentrated the Korean political and economic elite, capitalized on the benefits of its geopolitical context and the international financing from the capitalist bloc in line with the interests of Seoul. Ultimately, Korea was able to develop its own interests while also promoting the interests of the United States in the region, thus consolidating its economic power and geopolitical position for the twenty-first century.

Colombo-Korean Diplomatic Relations: Colombia's Opportunities in the Geopolitical Reconfiguration Stage of the Asia Pacific

After analyzing the new geopolitical configuration of the Asia-Pacific region and the transformation that South Korea has undergone, as well as understanding

the current capabilities of Asian countries regarding their economic development and technological advancements—which represent the primary interests of these countries today (Gaitán, 2021)—it is crucial to assess how Colombia can leverage this geopolitical opportunity through its relations with South Korea while also considering strategic advantages.

In geopolitical terms, South Korea views itself as an island due to its land isolation from North Korea and its surrounding bodies of water, including the Sea of Japan, the Yellow Sea, and the South China Sea. Colombia's geopolitical position is notable for its access to both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, making it one of the most strategically important countries on the American continent and affording it the best geostrategic position in South America. Consequently, the geopolitics of South Korea and Colombia share similar conditions that can be approached with common strategies. The geopolitical landscape of South Korea necessitates a strong naval presence given its artificial island status. This maritime strategy, along with American geostrategic support and the previously mentioned elements—such as a strong commitment to educating its population, technological development, and an industrialization plan—were crucial for South Korea's transformation (Kyeongsun, 2019). In terms of maritime development, the establishment of maritime universities, a highly capable maritime logistics system, and the creation of a robust shipping industry, framed within a technological focus on long-term competitiveness, represented a concerted effort by South Korea's maritime capabilities, in addition to advancements in next-generation armament (Kyeongsun, 2019).

With the signing of the FTA between Colombia and South Korea in 2013, the exchange of technology, goods, and services between the two countries intensified, strengthening their diplomatic and trade relations. This commercial approach allows Colombia to act as a bridge for Korea's advancement in Latin America, and vice versa, with Korea serving as a bridge to East Asia (Kyeongsun, 2019, p. 32). However, despite the advantages that can be gained from collaboration between Asian countries and Colombia, specifically Korea, certain observations must be considered to analyze these approaches in greater detail. According to Palomares García and Londoño (2015), at least four elements should be taken into account:

1. An advantage of Colombia over other Latin American countries is that Colombia is less prone to international crises, since its performance has not been closely linked to its exports.

2. The Republic of Korea serves as a gateway to Asia, not only due to the vibrancy of its economy but also because it has fortified relationships with neighboring countries through trade agreements.
3. The appeal of investment opportunities in high-tech sectors, aimed at generating wealth and employment.
4. The export of primary sector products to Korea is favorable due to its large population relative to its small territory and the advantages that Colombia has for entering the South Korean market with these products.

In general, Colombia has competitive advantages in various products, including high-quality coffee, flowers, fruits, and meats, making the South Korean market highly attractive for these national products (Yepes & Ruiz, 2017). However, Colombia must seek other export products with greater added value and more industrial processing if it truly aims to influence Asian markets, beginning with South Korea. Overall, according to Arévalo (2014), theory and empirical evidence indicate that international trade and economic integration are crucial for promoting economic growth, enhancing the organization of the production base, and effectively utilizing resources—all factors that contribute to generating wealth and modernizing a nation's industrial infrastructure (p. 162).

Globalization and international trade have been facilitated by reduced production costs due to improved transportation systems and enhanced communication networks. Globalization scholars consider it an opportunity for developing countries to leverage elements that can boost their economies, such as the adoption of technology from other countries and foreign investment in general (Arévalo, 2014). In this regard, Colombia has the potential to capitalize on the benefits of its entry into the Asian economy, particularly by focusing efforts on implementing optimal public policies to improve infrastructure, education, and ethics to combat public and private corruption, invest in science and technology, and understand international economic relations (Arévalo, 2014).

The economic and production weakness of Colombia, characterized by its reliance on the primary sector for export, combined with the lack of competitiveness in these products due to insufficient infrastructure and capital for low-volume, wide-scale production, limits the country's ability to influence the international market, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region and through South Korea. Given this situation, agreements with South Korea represent an economic opportunity for Colombia to penetrate the Asia-Pacific market (Ho, 2020). Nonetheless, the vast expanse of the Pacific, as indicated on the map in Figure 3, along with the

challenges it presents for establishing connections with Asia, necessitates that Colombia adopt a bold and proactive maritime strategy to navigate the unfavorable geographical factors (Kyeongsun, 2019).

Thus, South Korea's technological development enables it to overcome the challenges of its geography, making the South Korean experience valuable for Colombia, which lacks the technological capacity to address its geographical difficulties. The logistical ease in South Korea for transporting products in the international market, through investment in railways, roads, ports, and airports, aims to ensure the country's competitiveness (Ho, 2020), providing Colombia with an example to model its infrastructure investments on for navigating its complex geography.

The ambitious and extensive infrastructure projects, along with investment, have garnered support from South Korea's defense sector. Therefore, Colombia must also view this sector as a critical area for maneuvering within its industry, as it involves millions of dollars and showcases the markets of countries that successfully consolidate innovation and new technologies in this field. Meanwhile, the ongoing cooperation between South Korea and Colombia in the armaments industry, including the provision of ships and Colombia's acquisition of the C-Star missile, has reinforced the military ties between the two nations and primarily bolstered Colombia's strategic capabilities. However, despite these advancements, Colombia has lagged behind in enhancing its military capacity, unlike South Korea, which has made significant progress and maintained deterrent capabilities in conventional warfare against its northern adversary, while refraining from using its nuclear forces.

South Korea has greater geopolitical incentives to guarantee and strengthen its national power, given the imminent threat posed by another State. Although both nations were once a single country for centuries, they also experienced one of the bloodiest armed conflicts after World War II. The 1950 confrontation with North Korea, the arms race, and the constant clashes between the two countries have shaped both States and defined the character of the Republic of Korea. War shapes States, their structure, and the nationalism of their populations, thus influencing national power with this objective in mind. In the absence of war, it becomes challenging to cultivate a strong sense of nationalism; therefore, it is essential to develop government institutions that monopolize the use of force and taxes (Centeno, 2002, p. 21).

War creates States; war has always been a constant companion of humanity. It existed before the emergence of the State and plays a crucial role in its development

(Orenstein, 2018). Consequently, the South Korean configuration has been further solidified due to its external adversary, with which, as previously mentioned, it originally shared the same State. The communist ideology has shaped the differences and led to war between the two nations, unlike Colombia, where the conflict involves communist guerrillas, resulting in civil war and struggles within the same population and State.

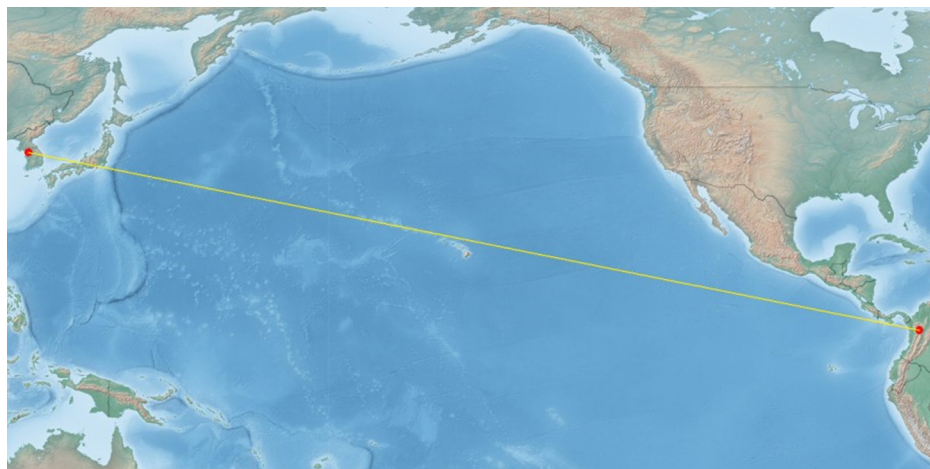
In other words, war compels the establishment of modern and efficient administrative structures that can direct the population's resources toward a "common" use. It is evident, then, how the lack of geopolitical pressures in South America may have contributed to the persistence of historically weak States, which are fragmented and lack legitimacy in the eyes of the population (Lopes da Cunha & Appel, 2014, p. 101).

Civil wars ultimately undermine a country's strength and divide its forces, not only on the battlefield but also in terms of political will and resolve. South Korea has successfully mobilized its population against its external enemy, and in this respect, it has been quite effective, given the nature of that external enemy. However, Colombia will struggle to concentrate its own national power and unify its population, as it lacks an external enemy or adversary; the primary focus of its national security is internal. This situation keeps its population divided and even hostile toward the State, which, in turn, results in a continual internal weakness that has persisted due to the prolonged nature of its civil wars and the current internal conflict.

Even the militarized governments of South American history seem to have identified internal actors rather than external ones as their primary enemies, thereby further contributing to the fragmentation of power. Even during the Cold War, the United States' support for South America primarily went to right-wing authoritarian governments, whose main opponents were internal popular forces. This situation is very different from that of the Eurasian board, where capitalist and communist countries fought against each other. It reveals how compliance with the United States' ideological line, on the one hand, stifled South America's integration into a development-friendly environment, and, on the other hand, facilitated Eastern Asia's integration into it (Lopes da Cunha & Appel, 2014, p. 102).

Ultimately, this situation highlights one of the primary geopolitical differences between Colombia and South Korea: the dynamics of external and internal conflict. The cohesion of Korean society has facilitated its development processes, while the division within the Colombian nation is the root of the problem and manifests in various symptoms that reflect national weakness.

Figure 3. *Maps of South Korea and Colombia*



Source: Distancia (<http://distancia.1km.net/co/bogota/kr/seoul/>)

Conclusions

The Asia Pacific has become the primary global geopolitical focus, and this situation is likely to intensify as powers direct their attention to the region due to its economic and political significance. In this way, the strategic importance of the Asia Pacific will increase as the region's economic weight gradually grows (Mindreau, 1997). The global trade center, the main geostrategic tensions, and the shifting of production areas to this region compel countries to make strategic decisions in this new world landscape, closely monitor the economic and geopolitical movements of the area, and seek the most effective methods to influence, intervene, or establish points of understanding within the region.

South Korea is a pivotal point in the region, located halfway between three major geopolitical powers—Russia, China, and Japan—which makes its foreign policy both sensitive and influential. Korea emerges as a promising and autonomous nation amid territorial disputes between historical powers, namely Japan and China. From being a Chinese tributary State to a Japanese colony and satellite State, the division of the Peninsula for the interests of the Cold War and the subsequent confrontation between the two new countries has shaped history since then (Lopes da Cunha & Appel, 2014).

Despite a century of occupation and 70 years of conflict, including three direct and 67 indirect armed conflicts as well as constant tension, South Korea has managed to strengthen its national power and maintain control over its complex geopolitical landscape due to the country's economic and military development. Effective and ambitious economic policies, framed around technological advancement, innovation, and high-value-added manufacturing, alongside decisions focused on education and invaluable U.S. support, have strengthened the country and enabled it to meet its geostrategic challenges in the Asia-Pacific region.

Despite the vast distance between them, caused by the size of the Pacific Ocean, as illustrated on the map in Figure 3, Colombia and South Korea share their primary commercial access through this ocean. South Korea is more developed than Colombia, which continues to focus on the Atlantic. This situation presents Colombia with a strategic and commercial opportunity in the Pacific, provided that it explores the potential to develop its economic and strategic capacity in this ocean. By doing so, Colombia could exert influence in the region through its relationship with South Korea and help shape the new region, which will in turn impact global geopolitical designs.

References

- Álvarez, R. (2016). *Corea del Sur: política exterior*. Policy Briefs. Korean Study Center Program.
- Arévalo, G. (2014). La alianza Pacífico: geopolítica e integración económica. *Revista VIA IURIS*(16), 159–172. <https://n9.cl/1hkip>
- Brzezinski, Z. (1998). *El gran tablero mundial. La supremacía estadounidense y sus imperativos geoestratégicos*. Editorial Paidós.
- Delage, F. (2005). La nueva geopolítica asiática. *Anuario Asia-Pacífico*, (1), 15–23.
- Gaitán, L. A. (2021). *El pacífico: una región estratégica para el Ejército colombiano*. Boletín generador de Fuerza. Ejército Nacional.
- Giroux, H. (1997). La pedagogía de frontera y la política del postmodernismo. *Revista Intrínsecas*, (6), 33–47.
- Ho, K. (2020). *Análisis comparado de las fuerzas militares y geopolítica entre Corea del Sur y Colombia* [Master's thesis, Escuela Superior de Guerra "Rafael Reyes Prieto"].
- Kaplan, R. (2017). *La venganza de la geografía: la geografía marca el destino de las naciones*. Editorial RBA.
- Kyeongsun, C. (2019). *La relación entre Corea del Sur y Colombia: la mejor dirección para el desarrollo de ambos países enfoque militar, económico y oceánico* [Master's thesis, Escuela Superior de Guerra "Rafael Reyes Prieto"].
- Lopes da Cunha, G., & Appel, T. N. (2014). Geopolítica e trajetórias de desenvolvimento comparados: América do sul e Leste da Ásia. *Revista Científica General José María Córdova*, 12(13), 89–105. <https://n9.cl/gamgf>
- Margalef, L., & Arenas, A. (2006). ¿Qué entendemos por innovación educativa? A propósito del desarrollo curricular. *Perspectiva Educativa, formación de profesores*, 1(47), 13–31. <https://n9.cl/as60y>
- Marshall, T. (2017). *Prisioneros de la geografía: todo lo que hay que saber sobre política global a partir de diez mapas*. Ediciones Península.
- Mindreau, M. (1997). Asia-Pacífico: ¿hacia un nuevo balance estratégico? *Apuntes: Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, (41), 35–58. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21678/apuntes.41.461>
- Orenstein, H. (2018). La guerra contemporánea y asuntos actuales para la defensa del país. *Revista Profesional del Ejército de los Estados Unidos Edición Hispanoamericana*.
- Palomares García, J. R., & Calonje Londoño, N. (2015). Tratados de libre comercio Colombia-Asia: cuestión preliminar y perfiles de negociación. *Revista IUSTA*, 2(43), 17–41. <https://n9.cl/wlojk>
- Pérez Gavilán, G. (2017). Corea del Sur en la geopolítica del siglo XXI. In J. L. León-Manríquez (Comp.), *Corea, ayer y hoy. Aportaciones latinoamericanas* (pp. 197–214). Korea Foundation. Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana. <https://n9.cl/i3ef8>

- Rosales, O. (2021). La experiencia económica de Corea del Sur: lecciones y desafíos. *El Trimestre Económico*, 88(352), 1247–1273. <https://doi.org/10.20430/ete.v88i352.1341>
- Roselli, N. (2011). Teoría del aprendizaje colaborativo y la teoría de la representación social: convergencias y posibles articulaciones. *Revista colombiana de Ciencias Sociales*, 2(2), 173–191. <https://n9.cl/wz13q>
- Serbín, A. (2018). La configuración de la Gran Eurasia y su impacto en la gobernanza global. *Anuario CEIPAZ*(10), 121–140.
- Slavin, R. (2002). *Aprendizaje cooperativo: Teoría, investigación y práctica*. AIQUE.
- Solórzano Tello, O. A., & Portador García, T. D. (2018). La geopolítica en la península coreana. *Relaciones Internacionales*, 91(2), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.15359/ri.91-2.5>
- Verástegui, J. (2017). *Geoestratégica de Corea del Sur en el siglo XXI*. Instituto de Investigaciones Estratégicas de la Armada de México.
- Villareal Gonzáles, A., & Cel. R. (2023). Comprensión geopolítica de Corea del Sur: desarrollo, tendencias y perspectivas. *PORTES, Revista Mexicana de estudios sobre la cuenca del Pacífico*, 1(1), 7–24. <https://n9.cl/c5avl>
- Yepes, C., & Ruiz, N. (2017). Alcances de los TLC firmados con Estados Unidos y Corea del Sur para las pequeñas y medianas empresas (pymes) en Colombia: un análisis del discurso. *Revista Científica General José María Córdova*, 15(19), 217–236. <https://doi.org/10.21830/19006586.85>

Chapter 6

Soft Power in Colombian Foreign Policy. The Asia Pacific: A Light on the Horizon, a Lighthouse on the Other Side of the Ocean*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287818101.06>

Fernando Andrés Polo Puentes

Escuela Superior de "Guerra General Rafael Reyes Prieto"

Fernando Enrique Farfán Castro

Escuela Superior de "Guerra General Rafael Reyes Prieto"

Abstract: Colombia's international projection in the political field has been a primary focus of government projects since the twentieth century. The importance of creating a foreign policy initiative that supports the country's economic, political, and social development relies on its soft power to influence others' decisions through cultural, educational, or value attraction, including public diplomacy strategies learned from the experiences of South Korea. We conclude that Korea's achievements serve as a successful study tool to apply in other States.

Keywords: foreign policy; Colombia; South Korea; culture

* Book chapter derived from the research project *Relations between Colombia and South Korea: An Analysis of the Impact of National Foreign Policy on the Economic Development and Geopolitical Projection of the Country*, conducted by the Masa Crítica research group of Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto." This group is categorized as A1 by the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation (MinCiencias) and registered under code COL0123247. The views and results in this chapter belong to the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the participating institutions.

Fernando Andrés Polo Puentes

Retired Colonel of the Colombian National Army. Master's in National Security and Defense and Specialization in Command and General Staff, "General Rafael Reyes Prieto," Colombia. Specialization in Security Management, Universidad Militar Nueva Granada, Colombia. Specialization in Sociology of the Military, Escuela Militar de Cadetes "General José María Córdova," Colombia. Specialization in Military Resource Management for National Defense. Lecturer, Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto," Colombia.

Contact: fernando.polo@esdeg.edu.co; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0467-1496>.

Fernando Enrique Farfán Castro

Retired Colonel of the Colombian National Army. Master's in Strategic Studies, U.S. Army War College, United States. Master's in National Security and Defense, Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto," Colombia. Specialization in International Law Applicable to Armed Conflicts and Bachelor's in Military Sciences, Escuela Militar de Cadetes "General José María Córdova," Colombia. Bachelor of Business Management, UCC, Colombia. General Staff, War College, Republic of Korea.

Contact: fernandoe.farfan@esdegue.edu.co; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-4993-6002>

APA Citation: Polo Puentes, F. A., & Farfán Castro, F. E. (2025). Soft Power in Colombian Foreign Policy. The Asia Pacific: A Light on the Horizon, a Lighthouse on the Other Side of the Ocean. In J. E. Moreno Peláez & A. M. González González (Eds.), *Relations between Colombia and South Korea: An Analysis of Colombian Foreign Policy as a Geopolitical Strategy in the Asia Pacific* (pp. 123-142). Sello Editorial ESDEG. <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287818101.06>

RELATIONS BETWEEN COLOMBIA AND SOUTH KOREA: AN ANALYSIS OF COLOMBIAN FOREIGN POLICY AS A GEOPOLITICAL STRATEGY IN THE ASIA PACIFIC

Print ISBN: 978-628-7818-09-5

ISBN digital: 978-628-7818-10-1

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287818101>

Strategy, Geopolitics, and Culture Collection

Sello Editorial ESDEG

Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto"

Bogotá D.C., Colombia

2025



Introduction

Currently, the Asia Pacific is a crucial area of study, given its significance and impact on economic dynamics, as well as its contributions to national development in countries like Colombia. Therefore, this will be addressed specifically regarding the spaces Colombia holds in organizations, alliances, and treaties agreed upon by Pacific countries, as well as its process to get involved in them. It is evident that there are ongoing processes to become part of some of these agreements, but it is essential to understand how experiences and initiatives aim to transform this region of the world not only into a development model but also into a space to utilize tools of soft power. However, during the research, diplomatic challenges were identified that require a broader perspective, particularly in a multicultural region like Asia, incorporating elements of Latin American diversity.

Additionally, the chapter describes and analyzes how Colombia is addressing the challenge of engaging with the Republic of Korea through soft power. The opportunities are plentiful, and the factors that foster a strong bond and create synergy are highly relevant in the pursuit of common interests. The history of both countries strengthens the bilateral relationship, and the contrasts outlined below are essential in shaping Colombia's development.

Overview of Colombian Foreign Policy: Foreign Policy as a Flag

The foreign policy of a State defines its attitude in the external context, which, among other aspects, seeks to determine how the country will be recognized in the complex landscape of the international system. Analyzing and identifying

the characteristics and properties of such foreign policy requires considering the involved actors, the instruments used, as well as the principles, channels, and priorities that define this policy. According to *Diccionario de la Diplomacia Moderna*, published by the Academia Diplomática Augusto Ramírez Ocampo (2021), the foreign policy is a set of activities and processes through which a State relates to other States and other subjects of international law (p. 271).

Indeed, if we look back at the first decades of the twentieth century, Marco Fidel Suárez, who served as Minister of Foreign Affairs (1914–1917) and as president of Colombia (1918–1921), used the expression *Respice polum* to signify that we should look at the northern star, the pole star, referring to the United States. This expression would shape Colombia's international relations and foreign policy for much of that century, despite some exceptions and the influence that the United States had on the secession of Panama. President Suárez aimed to make the bilateral relations between the two States functional; thus, to secure revenue for our country, he formulated a policy centered on loyalty and alignment with the interests of the northern power (Borda, 2019).

Subsequently, these relations were ratified on June 19, 1922, during a meeting between Warren G. Harding, president of the United States, and Manuel Torres, who served as the official diplomatic representative in the capacity of business manager of Colombia in Washington. This meeting officially established diplomatic relations between the two countries (Goldberg, 2022). In 2022, a series of special programs commemorated the historical milestone of 200 years of these bilateral relations.

On the other hand, in a section of his book *Política Internacional de Colombia*, lawyer, political scientist, former congressman, and academic Benjamín Ardila Duarte reviews a period in the recent history of our country's foreign policy (1945–2015), which he calls "seventy years of Colombian diplomacy." This timeframe began with the end of World War II and the first term of President Alberto Lleras Camargo, encompassing each of the governing administrations, and concluded with the first term of President Juan Manuel Santos, a period of seven decades during which the marked influence of the *Respice polum* strategy became evident. With few exceptions, such as the administrations of Carlos Lleras Restrepo (1966–1970), when relations with the Soviet Union were resumed, international relations diversified, and the end of the export monopoly began with the establishment of Pro-Export.

During the López Michelsen administration (1974–1978), Marco Fidel Suárez's *Respice polum* formula was tacitly disapproved, while *Respice similia* (look at your fellow man) was promoted. Likewise, Belisario Betancur's government (1982–1986) was noted for its openness to dialogue with guerrilla and insurgent groups. In several speeches, the president clearly distanced himself from the United States. Similarly, the foreign policy of Ernesto Samper Pizano's administration (1994–1998) focused on fostering regional integration and strengthening economic and cultural relations with the European Union (EU) and the Pacific Basin, while also being marked by a complex relationship with the U.S. government.

However, as reliable evidence of the alignment of Colombian foreign policy with the United States over the past 70 years, we should highlight the formulation and development of the Alliance for Progress under the leadership of Alberto Lleras Camargo; the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR, according to its acronym in Spanish) and the replacement of the Pan-American Union with the OAS within the context of the ninth conference in Bogotá during the government of Mariano Ospina Pérez; the signing of a military treaty with the United States in 1952 and the participation of the Colombian Battalion in the Korean War during Laureano Gómez's administration; the strong alignment with the United States during the Cold War under President Lleras Camargo's second term; the fight against the Cuban revolution and the anti-communism of Guillermo León Valencia; the vigorous campaign against M-19 and the FARC, which significantly aligned the government of Julio Cesar Turbay with that of the United States; the inception of Plan Colombia during Andrés Pastrana's government; the implementation of the aforementioned Plan Colombia, the continuation of the free trade agreement (FTA) process, and the noticeable alignment of President Álvaro Uribe Vélez's policy with the United States; and finally, the signing and performance of the FTA with the United States during President Juan Manuel Santos's administration (Ardila Duarte, 2017).

Following this brief overview of Colombian foreign policy development during the latter half of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century, we can identify, in general terms, the dynamics, trends, and elements of diplomatic missions as a State, within a context characterized by complex interdependence.

To establish the characteristics and properties of Colombian foreign policy, we conducted a detailed review of the National Development Plan (PND, according to its acronym in Spanish) 2018–2022, titled "Pact for Colombia, Pact for Equity," led by the Government of Iván Duque Márquez, the current President. We were able to determine that there is adequate strategic alignment with the Institutional Strategic

Plan (PEI, according to its acronym in Spanish) “Responsible, Innovative and Constructive Foreign Policy” of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MinExt) regarding the scope of goals, the achievement of objectives, and the formulation of principles and guidelines for Colombian foreign policy.

The 2018–2022 PND constitutes the roadmap developed by the National Government for implementing plans, programs, and projects aimed at achieving the goals and objectives outlined at the start of the four-year period. For this purpose, five lines of action have been established, one of which is called “Colombia in the Global Scene,” pertaining to foreign policy. To execute this line of action, six strategies have been proposed, one of which is outlined below. It emphasizes the use of soft power as a fundamental element in reaching these objectives.

We will design and implement a long-term strategy that leverages Colombia's soft power resources, strengthening the country's external action capabilities, promoting its identity and culture globally, and innovatively projecting national interests in new scenarios and with new international interlocutors. (DNP, 2018, p. 26)

Similarly, and continuing with the strategic alignment with the PND, which corresponds to the Integrated Planning and Management model, MinExt employed a strategy in its PEI that it would develop through seven actions. The second of them is the one looking to strengthen and promote national interests through diversified bilateral relations, both in geographical and thematic terms, and the creation of a new public diplomacy policy that enables us to spread Colombia's soft power before traditional and non-traditional actors (Cancillería, 2018, p. 1).

In this way, we can see that both the PND and MinExt's PEI discuss the use of *soft power* as a tool in Colombian foreign policy. This encourages us to examine, based on international relations theories, what this power entails.

Colombian Foreign Policy and Soft Power: Public Diplomacy Conveying Its International Projection

To delimit the issue, we will focus on the time frame between 2007 and 2010—which corresponds to the second term of President Álvaro Uribe Vélez, 2018—which marks the end of the two administrations of President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón—and,

finally, 2018–2021—which represents the first three years of the government of Iván Duque Márquez, the current president. This analysis is based on a documentary review of the management reports submitted annually by MinExt.

To achieve this, we propose an analysis of the recent history of Colombian foreign policy, focusing on the objectives outlined in the PEI of MinExt. This will be contrasted with the management reports issued by the same entity year after year, while also seeking strategic alignment with the goals set forth in the PND for each of the last three government periods.

The Asia Pacific: A Light on the Horizon, a Lighthouse on the Other Side of the Ocean

The importance of a nation's projection to the world is reflected in its foreign policy, which aims to influence others in a way that secures, if not total support, then at least some contribution to its interests, even when these nations have no particular intention of reciprocating. Nevertheless, a common feature of all international relations is clear cooperation, even though, in most instances, it revolves around pursuing self-benefit while, whether intentionally or not, generating benefits for other countries involved in this action (Welsh & Nye, 2017). The level of development in countries directly correlates with the interests that support their *national objectives*, compelling each to align both their strategic and national policies with their available power instruments (Bartholomees, 2012). As a result, this is where tools or instruments, including soft power, come into play. The case of Colombia's projection to the Asia Pacific holds special significance due to its wide array of opportunities and extensive scope of action, considering that, for example, the Asian market is the most dynamic and shows the highest growth rates (Nhan, 2021). Therefore, this area of focus within foreign policy presents a critical challenge for the country.

Next, some participation actions by Colombia are analyzed in its vision for the Asia Pacific, demonstrating important challenges based on its intentions to be part of existing alliances or create new ones, which imply strategic initiatives for the Colombian State. These initiatives, to a large extent, require special attention and greater investment in both resources and focus for growth.

Initially, it is crucial to address the existence of the Colombian Pacific Cooperation Council (COLPECC, according to its acronym in Spanish), one of the

entities responsible for exploring and energizing Colombia's projections in this region of the world (Cancillería de Colombia, 2022). The Council was established in 1987 and has undergone updates to its bylaws and functions throughout its existence. Its primary aim is to serve as the country's representation agency in the Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (PECC). The PECC is a network of nations that seeks to promote trade and investment issues, primarily making proposals to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), an entity that should not be confused with it. In APEC, Colombia participates only in tourism, services, investment, and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) working groups, but is not a member of the organization. APEC emerged from an idea conceived by Japan and Australia for economic development. Among the Latin American countries that are part of the entity are Mexico, Chile, and Peru (Cancillería de Colombia, 2022).

Colombia may not have direct participation in APEC, but it is making significant strides in areas that can be seen as aspects of soft power.

Unfortunately, the forum finds it inconvenient to include more countries in its organization, as the most recent members joined in 1998 (APEC Secretariat, 2021). The significance of this alliance lies in the fact that, since its initial objective of economic integration, its purposes have expanded to cover issues related to climate change, food crises, technical cooperation, and other aspects of prosperity. The intention of cooperation—and especially direct participation—is grounded in cultural diversification, a strategy that a country like Colombia must adopt by contributing varied initiatives in the soft spectrum with reciprocal impact. It is evident that in an organization like APEC, notable cultural differences arise, but with the implementation of the fundamental principle of sharing the outcomes of agreements, these differences become advantageous to their contributors.

On the other hand, there is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), an alliance of nations that aims to strengthen economic, social, cultural, and technological cooperation, among many other important aspects for its member nations (ASEAN Secretariat, 2020). Although Colombia is not part of this entity, it has managed to have an ambassador since 2019. This represents a significant step in foreign policy, as this scope is visible through participatory diplomatic actions in alliance with a widely recognized multicultural foundation, rather than focusing on a single country, as is often the case. Furthermore, there is a willingness to cooperate among ASEAN members, as shown by their acceptance of Colombia's participation through a representative ambassador.

Likewise, concerning ASEAN and considering the concept of soft power, one of the main examples of its application is the “program of dissemination of Colombian culture through the teaching of Spanish” (Londoño, 2022), in which several member countries participate. Under the leadership of Colombian representatives with teaching expertise, in addition to the educational process, they promote Colombian tourist destinations and other cultural aspects of the country. In this exercise, there is not necessarily a direct influence on the countries of the alliance; however, a first door is opened to dissemination, within which a stepped link is established based on knowledge of the Colombian context. Here applies what Joseph S. Nye and David A. Welsh describe in saying that, many times, soft power is difficult, but, above all, slower to produce results (Welsh & Nye, 2017). Therefore, sharp strategic thinking is necessary when the vision relies on soft power, and the goals are considered within a timeline that encompasses long-term achievements.

Therefore, considering that only a few processes have been described within alliances related to the Pacific, it is evident that Colombia's engagement in such a vast area of the world is still in its construction phase. Consequently, advanced dynamics seek to consolidate with the potential to forge solid ties, as the effective use of cultural diplomacy tools, among others, reinforces national interests (Stolberg, 2008). However, factors attributed to the armed conflict in Colombia, a lack of focus on international policy distinct from that of the United States (Torres, 2021), and the resulting need for a deeper understanding of foreign relations regarding the Asia Pacific have significantly hindered this process.

For over 100 years, Colombia has sought to establish a network with the Pacific, stumbling at times but maintaining a strategic vision. In 1908, a friendship treaty was signed with Japan to establish trade and navigation relations (Sanmiguel, 2006). This relationship has evolved through various phases, and the policies of both countries have undergone transformations in response to shifts in their positions, particularly during pivotal periods such as World War II. Japan has a unique history regarding migrations to Latin American countries, which received Japanese citizens. Although some migration programs were initiated in the 1930s towards Colombia, the number of Japanese immigrants was not significant, unlike in Peru. Colombia and Japan maintain an active diplomatic and trade relationship, particularly benefiting from the import of finished technology and products, as well as the export of agricultural and mining products. Currently, over 80 Japanese companies have made direct investments in Colombia (Embajada de Japón, 2022).

The incorporation into the Asia-Pacific region has been more evident in other Latin American countries, which, prior to Colombia, have sought to create closer ties with that part of the world. Gloria Milena Torres affirms that, regarding the launch of Colombian diplomacy and other aspects, progress is negligible compared to Chile, Argentina, and Brazil. Therefore, she recommends a more proactive approach by the Colombian State for integration into the Pacific (Torres, 2021). Torres states that Colombian culture is more Western, which has, to a large extent, led it to view the Far East differently than other South American nations. Several studies affirm that the outlook toward the Pacific is to pursue development supported by a robust economy (Nhan, 2021). As will be discussed later, this presents an opportunity to learn from nations such as Korea, which have exemplified accelerated growth processes in their own region.

Another agreement to consider is the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which was established based on the vision of some political leaders from both the Americas and Asia (Sistema de Información sobre Comercio Exterior [SICE], 2021). This agreement envisions integrating the extremes of the ocean, turning it into a communication channel rather than an obstacle. Despite geographical and cultural differences, this partnership aims for integrative goals, particularly in the field of international trade, and has undertaken various initiatives since 2002. Similar to other agreements previously described, Colombia is not a party to this partnership; however, it made a request for participation in 2010 (La República, 2018). To date, the integration has not been consolidated.

The TPP aims to eliminate tariffs on agricultural and textile products, among others, while also providing an opportunity for a cultural approach that can act as an additional ingredient to economic elements. The first step is to become a member of the partnership, enabling the utilization of “soft” resources that help achieve benefits supporting Colombian national interests. The core of most international agreements is economic, with their objectives focused on obtaining benefits aligned with the commercial capacities of the signatory countries. In the case of TPP, geopolitical issues are significant factors that currently influence the situation (Schott, 2021), as China holds substantial sway over the regional economy and is not a participant in this agreement. Conversely, it emerges as a competitor.

Moreover, the Pacific Alliance, comprising Mexico, Peru, Chile, and Colombia, has both commercial and developmental objectives. It also aims to serve as a platform for political coordination and global projection, with a particular emphasis on the Asia Pacific (Cancillería de Colombia, 2020). In this way, the alliance serves

as a supportive channel to establish connections and facilitate Colombia's involvement in the aforementioned treaties and agreements, for which it must provide justification to gain benefits and adopt models similar to those already in place in ASEAN, with a focus on teaching the Spanish language.

In this regard, a perception of cultural, artistic, moral, and other characteristic features must be achieved that produces an interest in comprehensive incorporation, so that the economy is not the end, but part of a whole general purpose (Freeman, 2005). The Pacific Alliance encompasses the harmonization of health measures, customs cooperation, shared embassies, and the integration of stock exchanges, among other objectives of common interest. As an association of nations, it aims to become an attractive partner for the countries of Asia, which we have previously mentioned are engaged in a highly dynamic economic development process.

In addition, several Latin American countries have expressed interest in joining the Pacific Alliance, including Panama, Costa Rica, and Ecuador. This means that, as Patti Londoño (2022) states, the entrance channel is strengthened when multiple entities collaborate to join a major conglomerate. If it is possible to unite sports, educational, gastronomic, and other initiatives beyond the cultures of Latin American countries, which share certain similarities, a greater attraction from the Asia-Pacific can be achieved, leading to much stronger ties. The experience of teaching the Spanish language, along with music, dances, and other expressions shared around the world, as narrated by Patti Londoño while serving as vice chancellor, presents clear opportunities for cultural promotion that undoubtedly carry the component of soft power.

Considering Colombia's involvement in APEC, ASEAN, TPP, and the Pacific Alliance, among other initiatives, it can be said that there have been times when the vision was clear; however, important challenges still remain. Initiatives have been presented that impact these approaches, but, as is often the case in a democracy, changes in government bring different strategies that should maintain the State's vision, because national interests do not adhere to a single approach, but rather to all resources—soft, in this case—that must be used strategically. Therefore, examining the approach to Asian nations with which there is a friendship based on gratitude, such as the Republic of Korea, is a valuable issue to analyze and discuss.

The Soft Power of Colombia and Korea: A Spearhead for Strengthening Bilateral Relations

To understand the projection of Colombian soft power toward a country like Korea, it is necessary to note that the nation with which it intends to strengthen bilateral relations effectively applies this type of power in a highly efficient manner (Valieva, 2018). However, before that, it is worth describing aspects of the Korean development process to gain a general perspective, which is still important in order to have the Korean model as an example. This model serves as a framework of discipline, culture, and education, among other elements, that ultimately become key components of soft power.

Accordingly, the rise of Park Yung-hee to power stands out after several years following the signing of the armistice that ended hostilities between North Korea and South Korea in 1953 (Oberdorfer, 2001). At that time, a period of development began that the world would later qualify as "The Miracle on the Han River" (ROK Center for Korean Studies, 2019), during which South Korea achieved in sixty years what others have not accomplished in two hundred years. During this period, despite being a dictatorship, it was marked by an emphasis on industry and, generally, a global vision for the Korean nation. Over the years, state leadership evolved until it solidified into a democracy and reached a level of development that became evident with the hosting of the 1988 Olympic Games (Oberdorfer, 2001), an event where the world witnessed a formidable country "resurfaced from the ashes," as General Álvaro Valencia Tovar described in a book with this title ten years before those sports competitions (Valencia, 1977).

Currently, this vision of Korean development is further demonstrated by the presence of companies such as Samsung, LG, Kia, Hyundai, and others, which, due to their innovative policies and their focus on producing consumer and primary goods, differ significantly from those in Colombia (Cruz, 2014). Expanding technological incorporation in nearly all aspects of development in Colombia is a challenge that emerges as a key element against the capabilities in which Korea has remained at the forefront, exemplarily holding a leading position on a global scale. Technological learning and the creation of large companies contribute to economic success (Hernández, 2009), and the robustness of the economy supports regional and global influence softly and distinctly from the precepts of the realist school in international relations. It is clear that rich countries are often

viewed as potential benefactors, although not always disinterested, due to their ability to provide support in various fields that contribute to the interests of the nation receiving it.

Additionally, the cultural and artistic dimensions that have reached the world through gastronomy, soap operas, K-pop, and other expressions clearly illustrate the subject of study, defined as soft power (Sinivas, 2021). Furthermore, in the process of promoting culture, Korea experienced what is referred to as the *Korean Wave*, or *Hallyu*, which began amid unification challenges with North Korea but gained a global presence (Valieva, 2018).

Thus, observing a country that, in four decades, transitioned from supporting its fragile rural economy to becoming an industrialized nation is an important subject of analysis, owing to its influence and competitive standing among other developed countries. This influence is evident in the level of development already described, as well as in the soft power elements it has exerted for more than 20 years. Therefore, it is worthwhile to consider what reciprocal vision exists from Colombia to attract power from the Republic of Korea, given Joseph Nye's assertion that soft power is not easy to wield, and that the results do not always materialize quickly (Nye, 2011). Consequently, in addition to requiring integration into a strategy, a long timeline demanding patience must be established. In any case, Colombia possesses elements of soft power that can be leveraged, which, in a certain way, has drawn the world's attention to the country.

From this, writers such as Gabriel García Márquez, singers like Shakira, actresses like Sofia Vergara, Colombian coffee, especially with the Juan Valdez brand, soccer players, and other athletes with international achievements are identified as elements of Colombian soft power. A highly disciplined country with customs influenced by Confucianism (Chen, 2021) may be attracted to Colombia, without implying that aspects similar to those of Koreans are the primary source of interest. The concept of soft power is not solely about attraction, but also about influence (Nye, 2011), and this should be considered in the specific case of Korea, where the high standard of living is contrasted with Latin American cultural diversity. While many needs are met in Korea, factors related to the personal fulfillment of its inhabitants, such as entertainment, musical enjoyment, and the variety of leisure options, may be lacking; this could create opportunities for soft power to emerge within what is seemingly a developed but perhaps routine lifestyle.

However, differing visions as a nation can create a separation of interests, which ultimately undermines the effective exercise of power. The primary purpose is to ensure that, in addition to the economy, when a strong and developed ally is needed,

there is a friend willing to lend support after relationships have been strengthened through determined efforts. Korea's gratitude toward Colombia already enhances their friendship, but sharing other interests related to democracy, such as human rights and education, can significantly contribute to the challenges involved in pursuing common goals. This can be described as the *creation of interdependence*, as outlined by Paul Wilkinson, whereby hard power becomes less relevant and non-state institutions and entities play a crucial role in international relations (Wilkinson, 2007). In this context, numerous private, educational, and cultural organizations can facilitate scenarios where Korea and Colombia share common interests. Thus, a broad perspective of strong interdependent ties can be established.

For example, according to MappingWords, Colombians tend to steer conversations toward the positive aspects of their country, while Koreans often take their country's development for granted. It is mentioned that Colombians have the ability to turn a discussion about the violence in their country into one about the place that makes the best and most delicious empanadas (Sarah, 2017). Additionally, the environments surrounding coffee shops with older people in Colombia are less rigid than those in Korea, creating interesting learning spaces, despite the fact that *soju* also fosters recreational environments among Koreans. Nonetheless, despite the significant cultural differences, there is an opportunity to create something new, complementary, and beneficial for both cultures.

Another example, but in the opposite direction, is taekwondo, which, with its numerous schools in Colombia, has transmitted positive aspects of Korean discipline among its practitioners, such as not smoking, not swearing, not eating or drinking during training, bowing to the flag (Secretaría de Cultura, Recreación y Deporte, 2022), and other rules that contribute to the development of good habits and education among those who practice the sport. Analyzing cultural contrasts poses a challenge that can be leveraged in exchanges that enhance international relations. In Colombia and Korea, many advocate for an examination of such contrasts to create interdependence, as Wilkinson notes. The same Confucian culture has made the rigidity of family relations very pronounced (Chen, 2021), avoiding disrespect and cultivating habits of connection between generations, which may be a contribution from the perspective of Latin Americans.

However, soft power remains a form of power, serving as a means to achieve results (Nye, 2011), with the creation of interdependence mentioned earlier being a part of this. Initiatives harnessing this type of power must be built on credibility, and establishing this credibility poses a significant challenge for nations that need

to utilize all available resources to ensure their soft tools are both dependable and, most importantly, appealing. It has already been pointed out that its benefits become apparent over the long term, with an example being that the emergence of Colombian cyclists among the world's best did not happen overnight. Given this level of achievement, what proposals exist from Colombia to capture the attention of the many Koreans who have embraced that sport as a regular form of exercise? Many other questions also arise in the realms of culture and sports. Furthermore, to gain external credibility, it must become entrenched within the country. "Colombia needs to believe it," says Simón Borrero (2019), because the "we cannot" mentality is the first barrier to surpass in attaining international success. It is crucial to have national examples that are not only viewed as models but also as opportunities for others to grow through an alliance with Colombia. Thus, we must first believe it, and from there, as Nye indicates, establish the credibility that soft power requires to be truly influential.

On the other hand, Nye also states that soft power is a dance that requires partners. One of the experiences that Colombia is having with the Pacific Alliance is entering a bloc with Chile, Peru, and Mexico across various fronts concerning the Asia-Pacific countries. Patti Londoño highlights this, referring to the benefits that this alliance brings to the countries that are part of it, particularly the advantage of being part of a group rather than operating independently (Londoño, 2022). These four countries share common elements that contribute to what is considered soft power.

Furthermore, there are benefits beyond the economic ones: the ties of friendship and FTAs imply commitments with stable countries. Logically, a signatory, aiming to gain advantages from a commercial partner, may contribute in various ways to help consolidate stability over time. For instance, if Colombia and Mexico help many Koreans improve their soccer skills through school agreements, and due to the international fame of their players, the Asian country gets attracted to these countries, then when an "educational-sports" need arises in the opposite direction, the potential for cooperation would be more feasible.

Another aspect of soft power relates to education. A well-developed education system fosters the innovation and technological needs of a productive economy (Amiberk & Ydyrys, 2014), alongside other advantages that enable a society to achieve the status of an "educated society" and become a benchmark for others who are drawn to and desire to emulate these traits. In this context, education is a resource that Korea possesses, and by allowing Colombians to study in Korea, a dual benefit arises. When a Colombian studies in another country, they become a Trojan

horse in the best sense of the word, as they have the opportunity to promote their values, traditions, culture, and tourism, among others, to their classmates.

This work, which is naturally associated with embassies, takes place spontaneously at the university in a more informal, yet persistent and close manner, due to the permanent coexistence of students with their host classmates. Currently, there are several scholarship programs for Colombians offered by the Korean government in a broad and generous manner. Among them, the Global Korea Scholarship awards more than a thousand scholarships per year (Becas y Convocatorias, 2022). These opportunities serve as strategic nodes of soft power.

In summary, approaching a country with substantial technological and industrial development, which also has a diverse array of advanced soft power that has been built over decades, is no simple task. It requires prolonged and persistent effort. However, we must identify elements that Colombia already possesses and has nurtured throughout its history, especially in areas like culture, sports, and education. The key is to uncover opportunities for complementarity that aim to achieve shared interests and maintain high credibility.

We must demonstrate to the world that our cumbia and porro have connections to jazz, as *cumbieros* and jazz musicians traveled together from Barranquilla to La Dorada. Carlos Vives states this in the work *Reimaginando a Colombia*, which also includes the aforementioned excerpt by Simón Borrero that we must believe in ourselves (Vives, 2019). We need to demonstrate that vallenato has reached the world through musicians like Vives and has inspired people from every corner of the planet to dance, highlighting the cultural versatility that allows music, food, clothing, and other aspects of culture to intermingle. The ability to influence is in Colombia's hands. As previously mentioned, and citing the same work by McKinsey and Company, we must unite around Colombia's diverse culture and recognize its potential (McKinsey & Company, 2019).

Conclusion

In short, greater attention must be paid to international alliances, particularly in the Asia Pacific, given that progress has been slow and the processes related to soft power require time to achieve their objectives. Colombia is not a member of APEC or ASEAN; however, there are approaches that have yielded results, as described in this chapter, exemplified by the Ambassador's presence in ASEAN and

the teaching of the Spanish language, along with additional elements of tourism promotion, which are also evidence of soft power.

It is also worth noting that other Latin American countries have taken the lead; however, Colombia can leverage these experiences and undertake a process tailored to its own capabilities. Additionally, the alliances that must be exploited are those with Mexico, Peru, and Chile—those of the Pacific—to form a bloc not only with a commercial vision, but also with cultural and sports dimensions.

On the use of soft power with Korea, the challenge lies in competing with a developed, industrialized, and experienced country in the exercise of such power. However, despite this, there are several opportunities arising from the contrast of cultures and traditions. Colombian diversity, gastronomy, sports, and leisure activities are elements to be leveraged, as they are considered tools of soft power that must be strategically utilized. Education is another interesting factor, as many Colombians study in Korea, thanks to the facilities that the government of that country provides. The opportunity to penetrate the Korean market by promoting Colombian soft power is very wide.

Ultimately, credibility is a vital aspect of soft power. What Colombia has already achieved through talent, coffee, soccer, and cycling, along with music, lyrics, and art in various forms, can provide a foundational approach to Korea. Confidence in our own country fosters credibility, and perhaps this is the key to employing the intelligent strategy of soft power, which, beyond its definition, could be described as the power of influence without force. For Colombia, there should be no challenge in winning over others with its own charms.

References

- Academia Diplomática Augusto Ramírez Ocampo. Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores. (2021). *Diccionario de la diplomacia moderna. Terminología Técnica de Diplomacia, Derecho Internacional y Relaciones Internacionales*. <https://n9.cl/bhduy>
- Amirbek, A., & Ydyrys, K. (2014). Education and Soft Power: Analysis as an instrument of foreign policy. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 143, 514–516.
- APEC. (2021, December 17). *Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation*. <https://n9.cl/63pd7>
- Ardila Duarte, B. (2017). *Política Internacional de Colombia*. Universidad Libre.
- ASEAN. (2020, July 13). *Association of Southeast Asian Nations*. <https://n9.cl/wv9df>
- Bartholomees, B. (2012). *Theory of War and Strategy*. Strategic Studies Institute Publications.
- Becas y Convocatorias. (2022, February 14). *Becas del gobierno de Corea del Sur para programas de pregrado/licenciatura, maestría y doctorado*. <https://n9.cl/7f2p3>
- Becerra, L. (2018, June 16). *Colombia solicitó ingreso formal al Acuerdo Transpacífico de Cooperación Económica*. La República. <https://n9.cl/lq9ug>
- Borda, S. (2019). *¿Por qué somos tan parroquiales? Una breve historia internacional de Colombia*. Crítica.
- Borrero, S. (2019). Un país rico. In McKinsey & Company (Eds.), *Reimaginando a Colombia: visiones del país que podemos construir* (pp. 176–186). Planeta.
- Cancillería de Colombia. Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores. (2018). *Principios y lineamientos de la política exterior colombiana*. <https://n9.cl/j9oor>
- Cancillería de Colombia. Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores. (2020, May 7). *Pacific Alliance*. <https://n9.cl/jsp8k>
- Cancillería de Colombia. Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores. (2022, February 10). *Foro de Cooperación Económica del Pacífico (PECC)*. <https://n9.cl/mr670>
- Cancillería de Colombia. Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores. (2022, March 3). *Foro de cooperación Asia Pacífico (APEC)*. <https://n9.cl/vpcpj9>
- Chen, Y. (2021). *The Presence of Confucianism in Korea and Its General Influence on Law and Politics*. Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Cruz, J. S. (2014). Estudio comparado de la industrialización de Corea del Sur y de Colombia: 1962-2012. *Administración & Desarrollo*, 43(59), 99–118. <https://doi.org/10.22431/25005227.91>
- DNP. (2018). *Resumen Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2018-2022*. <https://colaboracion.dnp.gov.co/CDT/Prensa/Resumen-PND2018-2022-final.pdf>
- Embajada de Japón. (2022, February 2). *Sean bienvenidos a la embajada del Japón en Colombia*. <https://n9.cl/hemr2>
- Freeman, C. (2005). *Arts of Power. Statecraft and Diplomacy*. United States Institute of Peace.

- Goldberg, P. (2022, February). *Estados Unidos y Colombia: 200 años de amistad, 10 años de libre comercio*. Amcham Colombia. Cámara de Comercio Colombo Americana. <https://n9.cl/7eke3>
- Hernández, I., & Rosado, L. (2009). Las instituciones del Estado y los grandes conglomerados industriales como determinantes del cambio estructural en Corea del Sur y Colombia. *Revista de Economía del Caribe*, (5), 34–102. <https://n9.cl/iqo3d>
- Huynh, N., & Dao, A. (2021). Factors of Early-Stage Entrepreneurial Aspirations in Asia Pacific Economies. *Journal of Asian Business Strategy*, 11(1), 10–23.
- Londoño, P. (2022, April 5). *Política Exterior Colombiana y el Asia Pacífico*. (F. F. Fernando Polo, Entrevistador)
- Mapping Words. (2017). *Cultural Differences in Colombia and South Korea*. <https://n9.cl/c2ye8>
- McKinsey & Company. (2019). *Reimaginando a Colombia*. Planeta.
- Nye, J. (2011). *The Future of Power*. PublicAffairs.
- Oberdorfer, D. (2001). *The Two Koreas. A Contemporary History*. Basic Books.
- ROK Center for Korean Studies. (2019, August 24). *The Miracle on The Han River*. <https://n9.cl/gxhlh>
- Sanmiguel, I. (2006). Japoneses en Colombia. Historia de Inmigración, sus descendientes en Japón. *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, 23(23), 81–96.
- Schott, J.J. (2021, November 4). *proquest*. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.mindefensa.basesdedatosezproxy.com/lib/mindefensa/detail.action?docID=3385693>
- Secretaría de Cultura, Recreación y Deporte. (2022). *Taekwondo*. <https://n9.cl/z97w8>
- Sistema de Información Sobre Comercio Exterior SICE. (2021). *Acuerdo Amplio y Progresista de Asociación Transpacífico (CPTPP), Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canadá, Chile, Japón, Malasia, México, Nueva Zelandia, Perú, Singapur y Vietnam*. <https://n9.cl/tndsg>
- Srinivas, S. (2012, December 8). *On Hallyu and its global army: Soft power lessons from South Korea*. Observer Research Foundation. <https://n9.cl/zt6yx>
- Stolberg, A. G. (2008). Crafting National Interests in the 21st Century. In J. B. Bartholomees (Ed.), *Guide to National Security Issues* (pp. 3–14). Strategic Studies Institute Publications.
- Taylor, P., & Barr, D. (2017). *APEC Guiding Principles for Research Integrity*. Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT).
- Torres, G. M. (2021). Colombia y Asia-Pacífico: un examen en la evolución de las relaciones con esta importante zona. *Razón Crítica*, (11), 183–202. <https://doi.org/10.21789/25007807.1697>
- Valencia, Á. (1977). *Corea: Resurgimiento de las Cenizas*. Canal Ramírez Antares.
- Valieva, J. (2018). Cultural Soft Power of Korea. *Journal of History, Culture and Art Research*, 7(4), 207–212. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v7i4.1837>

- Vives, C. (2019). Colombia, lo versátil. In McKinsey & Company (Eds.), *Reimaginando a Colombia* (pp. 303–310). Planeta.
- Welch, D. A., & Nye, J. (2017). *Understanding Global Conflict and Cooperation: An Introduction to Theory and History*. Pearson Education.
- Wilkinson, P. (2007). *International Relations. A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

Capítulo 7

South Korea-Colombia Cooperative Relations: A Perspective from Ocean Governance*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287818101.07>

Héctor Mauricio Rodríguez Ruiz

Escuela Superior de "Guerra General Rafael Reyes Prieto"

Abstract: *Ocean governance theory* marks a new milestone in the thinking and development of maritime theory, as the sea is viewed as a genuine development space for the State. The Colombia-Korea relationship, when examined from historical, economic, and political angles, reveals significant contrasts that deserve attention in future projections and developments. In the Asia Pacific, various associations and integration areas have been established since 2004, featuring new strategic, dual-action, and economic cooperation configurations, along with regional free trade areas. The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum, comprising 21 economies, is recognized as the primary platform for formal dialogue on trade liberalization, economic cooperation, trade facilitation, and investment in open regionalism. The Pacific Alliance represents a deep integration initiative formed by Colombia, Chile, Peru, and Mexico, aiming to create a free trade area and extend influence toward the Asia-Pacific region.

Keywords: Asia Pacific; Colombia; trade; Korea; economy; ocean governance

* Book chapter derived from the research project *Relations between Colombia and South Korea: An Analysis of the Impact of National Foreign Policy on the Economic Development and Geopolitical Projection of the Country*, conducted by the Masa Crítica research group of Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto." This group is categorized as A1 by the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation (MinCiencias) and registered under code COL0123247. The views and results in this chapter belong to the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the participating institutions.

Héctor Mauricio Rodríguez Ruiz

Retired Commander of the National Navy of Colombia. Master's in International Relations and Business, Universidad Militar Nueva Granada, Colombia. Specialization in Financial Management, Universidad Escuela de Administración de Negocios, Colombia. Bachelor's in Naval Electronic Engineering and Bachelor's in Naval Sciences, Escuela Naval de Cadetes "Almirante Padilla," Colombia. Research professor, Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto," Colombia. Contact: mauricio.rodriguez@esdeg.edu.co; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9558-9732>

APA Citation: Rodríguez Ruiz, H. M. (2025). South Korea-Colombia Cooperative Relations: A Perspective from Ocean Governance. In J. E. Moreno Peláez & A. M. González González (Eds.), *Relations between Colombia and South Korea: An Analysis of Colombian Foreign Policy as a Geopolitical Strategy in the Asia Pacific* (pp. 143-170). Sello Editorial ESDEG. <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287818101.07>

RELATIONS BETWEEN COLOMBIA AND SOUTH KOREA: AN ANALYSIS OF COLOMBIAN FOREIGN POLICY AS A GEOPOLITICAL STRATEGY IN THE ASIA PACIFIC

Print ISBN: 978-628-7818-09-5

ISBN digital: 978-628-7818-10-1

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287818101>

Strategy, Geopolitics, and Culture Collection

Sello Editorial ESDEG

Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto"

Bogotá D.C., Colombia

2025



Introduction

In the twenty-first century, seas and oceans have sparked an unusual interest, driven by various factors, primarily political, economic, social, ecological, and environmental. From Alfred Mahan (1840–1914), the first geopolitician and geostrategist to establish the link between maritime power and national politics throughout the twentieth century, various authors from different nations have taken theoretical positions on the use and misuse of the oceans. In the early 1980s, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea was promulgated, establishing the legal framework for oceanic spaces and making new contributions to sustainable use and exploitation, reflecting the growing maritime awareness of the ecological and environmental preservation of the seas and oceans, the development of new technologies, changes in ocean governance, overexploitation of natural resources such as fishing, maritime pollution, the consequences of ongoing climate change, and other anthropogenic effects, which compel humanity to reflect on the ocean's importance for its survival.

The ocean governance theory, developed in the early 1990s by Jorge Martínez Busch, represents a significant milestone in the evolution of maritime thought and theory, as the sea is acknowledged as a genuine space for state development. The concepts of this theory continue to be discussed in the twenty-first century, often referred to as the century of the seas and oceans.

It is worthwhile to examine the relationship between Colombia and South Korea from an *ocean governance* perspective, as both countries are fundamentally maritime: Korea is bordered by three seas, while Colombia is considered a bi-oceanic country. Additionally, both nations boast extensive coastlines along the Pacific Ocean, the largest ocean on the planet.

Colombia and South Korea are sister countries, a result of a long-standing friendship between the two nations, highlighted by Colombia's participation as the only Latin American country in the Korean War (1950–1953). The deployment of Colombian combat troops represented a significant diplomatic action that strengthened the ties between South Korea and Colombia. The Colombia Battalion, which fought in defense of South Korea, was distinguished by its courage and heroism, recognized by the United Nations (UN) forces. The following frigates also participated: ARC "Almirante Padilla," with two turns; ARC "Capitán Tono," with two turns; and ARC "Almirante Brion," with one turn.

After sixty years of rapid and surprising economic development, South Korea's short-term economic and technological advancements have attracted the attention of nations worldwide. Among them, Colombia aims to leverage these developments to benefit its own progress.

The friendship with South Korea, where diplomatic relations are categorized as a *Country Partnership Strategy*, and the formal establishment of a free trade agreement (FTA) between Colombia and South Korea make economic and trade cooperation more effective, benefiting both countries with practical effects.

With Colombia's growing international presence in the Asia-Pacific region, the country is regarded as part of the East Pacific basin from an ocean governance analysis perspective. In line with its foreign policy, it aims to connect with this region, which is considered the most dynamic for trade and economic development in the current century. Colombia is a participant in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and utilizes the Pacific Alliance (AP, according to its acronym in Spanish) as a bridge, which includes Mexico, Peru, Chile, and Colombia—the first three being members of APEC.

From an ocean governance viewpoint, *is the cooperative relationship between South Korea and Colombia a foundational element for Colombia's integration into APEC?*

Methodology

The research methodology relied on consulting secondary documentary sources, including books, articles, and academic databases like Google Scholar and Redalyc, from 2010 to 2022.

From the theory of ocean governance as a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary science, it seeks to address international economic cooperation relations. No

studies on ocean governance, international cooperation, and ocean activity fields, as well as their applications in South Korea, were found.

The research employed an exploratory-descriptive approach, focusing on ocean governance, and utilized a qualitative logic for description and analysis.

Ocean Governance

The sea has been, is, and will continue to be a crucial factor in the development of humanity within the context of international relations among countries that comprise the international system of nations. In the twenty-first century, the oceans and seas face various challenges related to climate change, global warming, pollution, illegal fishing, and overfishing, all of which impact the marine ecosystem. Furthermore, these issues impact human prosperity and well-being, as the health of the oceans suffers. The increase in carbon pollution leads to higher levels of acidity, which are detrimental to many marine species, and plastic pollution has reached catastrophic levels, according to the UN (2017).

On the other hand, the aspirations and interests of States and various organizations converge in maritime and international relations, resulting in configurations of power relations that facilitate multipolar, multi-conceptual, and multi-explanatory analyses. These analyses, guided by different theories, aim to clarify and explain the behavior and influence of various actors in the international system.

The sea has played a leading role in development and exploitation. For Solis (1997), the importance of the sea for trade and human development remains valid and has recurring applications with deeper roots and greater projection in the twenty-first century. In this regard, he points out that today, the oceans serve as the umbilical cord of commercial exchange in an increasingly globalized world. They also represent a vast reserve of living and non-living resources necessary for ensuring the survival of humanity. For this reason, they are the scenarios where the interests, aspirations, and expressions of power of the vast majority of nations converge.

The concept of ocean governance has its theoretical precursor in Admiral Jorge Martínez Busch, a former Commander-in-Chief of the Chilean Navy. In his work, *La oceanopolítica: una alternativa para el desarrollo*, published in 1993, he analyzes historical, strategic, and geopolitical events, international relations, and maritime interests, among other factors. He emphasizes the sea as a key element that serves as a true space for the growth and development of the State. He specifically refers to the southern scenario and proposes it as a topic for reflection

and discussion, highlighting it as a task for the new generations in determining the future of Chile. For Colombia, a sustainable bi-oceanic power, this work serves as a reference for analysis and discussion.

In this sense, Martínez (1993a) proposes the following conceptual relationship as a definition of ocean governance: The sea must always be in the minds of rulers. They have a duty to consider the presence of the ocean and its impact on the country's geographical environment when formulating their policies. By doing so, they can contribute more effectively to its development and growth, and therefore achieve the specific purpose of the State, the common good. *This consideration of the ocean's existence within the geographical environment and its influence on political decisions is referred to as "ocean governance"* (p. 135).

Similarly, when referring to geopolitical analysis with respect to the sea and the oceanic spaces, Martínez (1993a) establishes a conceptual difference, stating that ocean governance must enable rulers to pursue the common good, considering the sea and oceanic spaces as a platform for the development and growth of the State. Ocean governance is not equal to the concept of maritime policy or ocean policy. The latter attempts to address the issue of land space development through maritime space, as viewed from the classical geopolitical perspective, i.e., a communication route, and focuses on aspects related to the development of maritime spaces adjacent to the continent. *Ocean governance, on the other hand, enables the occupation of oceanic space as a true space for the development and growth of the State. This conception is a step beyond maritime consciousness* (p. 135).

The central purpose of ocean governance is to ensure that political management appreciates the influence of the sea in the life cycle of the State (Martínez, 1993b).

For Martínez (1993b), ocean governance, along with *geopolitics*, encompasses three key elements that define its political study, particularly the relationship among the *State*, *power*, and *political relations*, with the State being the primary focus, representing the authority that constitutes, sustains, and exercises power through political relations. However, the oceanic space is distinct: it is governed and shaped by unique conditions and characteristics of the marine environment. In this context, the existence of the State and its relationships with the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, management, planning, and development fields constitute the focus of ocean governance, which aims to create a political landscape typical of an ocean nation and its interactions with other countries at national, regional, and international levels.

The man-space-State relationship is also valued, with maritime territory conceptualized in four dimensions of occupation and action: *maritime surface, ocean mass, oceanic soil, and oceanic subsoil* (Martínez, 1993b). This four-dimensional territory will face increasing exploitation and use, necessitating rules and regulations for sustainable use to maintain oceanic security, balance, life, and wealth (Martínez, 1993b).

Similarly, there is a complex and interconnected relationship among factors influencing the reality, gravitation, and strategic value of oceanic spaces, especially in light of potential tensions arising in this maritime context due to the diversity of interests at stake and power dynamics among various States in the international system. These contributing factors and the potential tension situations correlate with some general principles of ocean governance, highlighting their impact on the State's life cycle. Table 1 lists these conceptual variables related to ocean governance (Martínez, 1993b).

According to Rodríguez (1997), we can appreciate another definition of ocean governance, which addresses the relationship between nation-States and seas. Ocean governance views itself as a *rationalization of the processes and relations involving the nation-State (as a programmatic political actor) and the seas and oceans*. From this perspective, maritime and oceanic spaces are seen as relational, theoretical-practical fields where the political objectives and significant purposes of States are at stake (p. 6).

In the same vein, complementary to the definition, Rodríguez (1997) states that, in its most basic and fundamental form, *ocean governance concerns politics in the sea and the oceans*. The term itself suggests a meeting point, a synthesis between the *political phenomenon* and the *oceanic phenomenon*, as both dimensions converge in reality from the dawn of human history (p. 6).

It should be noted, based on the previous definition, that ocean governance involves the analysis and scientific study of the relationships recognized over time between maritime and oceanic spaces and certain political actors. According to this orientation, Rodríguez (1997) maintains that the foundation of ocean governance theory lies in a systematic and scientific understanding and rationalization of a certain relationships, which can be classified into two basic types: a) the relations established between States and other political actors regarding maritime and oceanic spaces, which occur in the international sphere; b) the relations established between States and the maritime and oceanic spaces, which are generally situated in the national sphere due to their legal nature and political content (p. 7).

This definition, of course, follows that maritime spaces constitute a superimposed and interdependent diversity of arenas or relational fields. Here lies the objective rationality of ocean governance phenomena: these are processes and phenomena that are empirically observable and verifiable, where seas and oceans serve as the substrate element, the founding and explanatory basis of the relationship, and where States and other political actors are the active and dynamic elements (p. 7).

Table 1. *Ocean Governance. Oceanic Factors, Tension Situations, and General Principles*

OCEANIC FACTORS
Maritime transport
Linking oceanic spaces with food (fishing)
Value of existing energy resources in oceanic spaces and on the coast
Wealth of mineral deposits in the oceanic spaces
Regulatory system (constituted by maritime international law)
Scientific-technological capacity of nations in the development of sea sciences
Political-strategic element (naval power)
RELATIONSHIP WITH PROBABLE TENSION SITUATIONS, UNDERSTANDING THEIR CAUSES
National security problems
Fishing affairs
Aspects of maritime borders among States
Political-legal aspects referring to the interpretation of the Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982, including the future mining exploitation of the deep ocean
Issues related to maritime commercial law
Application of the Code of Conduct of Maritime Conferences
Maritime transport policy
Distribution of limits for naval construction
SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF OCEAN GOVERNANCE
Collective ocean governance attitude
Oceanic territory
Prior development level

Sensitivity to the life cycle of the State
Action and occupation on four levels
Legal division and coding of activities
Non-renewable, decomposable, and degradable resource
National ecological code
Adaptation to state management
Focus on education

Source: Own elaboration based on Martínez (1993a; 1993b).

The dynamizing element of ocean governance relations is *maritime consciousness*. According to this perception and value, Rodríguez (1997) points out that ocean governance relations are not only in the objective and empirical sphere of political, diplomatic, and strategic processes but also manifest in an imaginary and cultural environment—in other words, in a *symbolic dimension*: that of maritime consciousness. At the core of the culture of people living by the sea and of nations with a maritime vocation (actual or potential) is *maritime consciousness*. Maritime consciousness precedes national consciousness; however, in modern society, characterized by a historical synthesis between a State and a nation, both tend to converge into a single body of beliefs and values (p. 7).

Ocean governance is a multidisciplinary field that arises from the convergence of various social sciences. It is characterized by a relationship of understanding and conceptual contribution among the diverse social sciences, each maintaining its own specificity. In this context, Rodríguez (1997) points out that ocean governance encompasses two interconnected fields of interdisciplinarity: a first circle consisting of three social science systems—political science, international relations, and strategic studies. Simultaneously, a second, complementary circle includes natural sciences, environmental sciences, marine sciences, law, and political economy (p. 58).

It can be affirmed that ocean governance introduces a significant shift in the perspective of analysis and vision regarding key international, political, strategic, diplomatic, and other phenomena that occur in the seas and oceans, providing insights for land-based observation to support decision-making about the sustainable use of oceanic spaces.

Justification

Observing geographical reality, the Pacific Ocean is the largest ocean, with an area greater than 155 million square kilometers and an average depth of 4,000 meters. Thus, it is not only the most extensive but also the deepest (GeoEnciclopedia, 2022). Various authors agree that its basin serves as a site for commercial exchange, growth, development, reserves of renewable and non-renewable resources, and a means of survival for humanity in the twenty-first century. From an ocean governance perspective, it also represents the scenario in which the interests, aspirations, and expressions of power of a vast majority of States converge. Given the diversity of these competing interests, tensions are likely to arise.

Colombia and South Korea are nations located in the Pacific Basin on opposite "shores." The distance between the port of Pusan in South Korea and Buenaventura is 14,913 kilometers (dateandtime.com, 2002). Similarly, for the transport of consolidated maritime cargo, the transit time for a ship traveling from Busan to Buenaventura is approximately 35 days (DVS, 2022). Ninety percent of global transport and imports are conducted by sea, as this method allows for the transfer of large cargo volumes over extended distances. It is essential to note that commercial exchange, which drives the world economy, takes place by sea.

Figure 1. *The Pacific Ocean*



Source: Expedición Oriente. <https://expedicaoorientes.com.br/por-que-o-oceano-pacifico-tem-esse-nome/>

Figure 2. South Korea-Colombia



Source: 123RF Map of Korea - CCO Schematic Map of Colombia.

The friendship between South Korea and Colombia began with Colombia's participation in the Korean War (1950–1953). The deployment of Colombian combat troops became the most significant diplomatic action that united the two countries. Colombia was the only country in Latin America that sent troops to the conflict: 5,314 soldiers, of whom 213 were killed, wounded, or missing. The Colombia Battalion, which fought in defense of South Korea, distinguished itself by its courage and heroism, recognized by the UN forces. The following frigates also participated: ARC “Almirante Padilla,” with two turns; ARC “Capitán Tono,” with two turns, and ARC “Almirante Brion,” with one turn.

An Ocean Governance Reflection

South Korea, with maritime features such as the Yellow Sea on its west coast and the Sea of Japan, referred to as the Eastern Sea by Koreans, along with the southern coast of the Peninsula in the Korean Strait, facing Japan, represents a maritime scenario of great complexity for its own security and the advancement of its national and maritime interests. This complexity has led to the development of a significant South Korean naval power with a deterrent purpose, reflecting its fine naval diplomacy in alignment with Korean foreign policy. This occurs amid ongoing tensions and in direct relation to the interests of nearby countries, including North Korea, China, and Japan.

Colombia, a bi-oceanic country, has established the National Policy for Ocean and Coastal Spaces (PNOEC, as per its acronym in Spanish), updated in 2018. It has also formulated the policy “Colombia: Sustainable Bi-Oceanic Power by 2030,” as outlined in the National Council of Economic and Social Policy (CONPES) document 3990 of 2020. In 2021, it published 18 Colombian Maritime Interests. For the first time, the National Development Plan (PND 2018-2022) recognizes the Ocean Region Pact and Colombia's strategic location between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans as a bi-oceanic country. From a multidisciplinary perspective on ocean governance, these documents serve as pillars for Colombia's maritime development as a sustainable bi-oceanic power while promoting a national *maritime consciousness* within Colombian society.

Table 2. *Geographical Categories of Colombia and South Korea*

OFFICIAL NAME	Republic of Colombia	Republica of Korea
AREA (KM²)	2,070,408	99,538.70
COASTS (KM)	4,171	2,413
PORTS	In the Caribbean Sea: La Guajira, Santa Marta, Barranquilla, Cartagena, Golfo de Morrosquillo, Golfo de Urabá, and San Andrés In the Pacific: Buenaventura and Tumaco.	Chinhae, Inchon, Kunsan, Masan, Mogpo, P’ohang, Pusán, Tonghae-hang, Ulsan, Yosú.
MARITIME BORDERS	Bi-oceanic country; maritime territory defined by treaties Maritime borders in the Caribbean Maritime borders in the Pacific.	12 miles (territorial sea), 200 miles (exclusive economic zone) Yellow Sea to the West, Sea of Japan to the East, and the Korea Strait, south of the Peninsula .

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION	32 departments	9 provinces (subdivided, in turn, into 137 districts) .
CAPITAL	Bogotá D.C. (founded in 1538)	Seoul (founded in 1394)
CURRENCY	Colombian peso, EUR = 4,187	Korean Republic Won, EUR = 1,375
LANGUAGES	Official: Spanish and 69 mother tongues	Official: Korean; non-official: Chinese
NATIONAL HOLIDAY	July 20, August 7, and November 11	August 15, Liberation
NUMBER OF INHABITANTS	51.27 million	51.74 million
DEMONYM	Colombian	South Korean
TIME ZONE	UTC-5	UTC+9

Source: Own elaboration based on Expansión / datasmacro.com. Colombia-South Korea.

The Participation of the Colombian Navy in the Korean War: A Naval Historical Reference

The first relationship established with South Korea came through the sea: Colombia's participation in the Korean War (1950–1953) as part of the multinational force led by the United States, under a UN mandate, supported South Korea, which was attacked by North Korea, backed by the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union.

The government of President Laureano Gómez offered the participation of a Colombian frigate, ARC "Padilla." Through Decree 3230 of September 23, 1950, this Naval Unit was allocated to the service of the UN Joint Forces. On October 30, with Decree 3296, the crew was assigned as follows: 13 officers and 177 non-commissioned officers and naval officers (Barona, 2003).

The ARC "Padilla" sailed on November 1, 1951, toward the port of San Diego, California, United States, to undergo minor repairs, which turned into major repairs, as the ship was not in operational condition to join a naval force. Once the repair phase was completed on February 28, 1951, it departed from the Naval Base San Diego to the Naval Station Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, arriving on March 21, 1951. Later, on April 30, it arrived at U.S. Fleet Activities Yokosuka, Japan. On May 5, it

sailed to the Sasebo Naval Base, arriving on May 7, 1951. The unit was assigned to Task Element T.E. 95.13, part of Task Force 95 (Blockading and Escort Force), marking the beginning of Colombian participation in the Korean War through naval operations off the coast of Korea in the Yellow Sea (Reyes, 1993).

To maintain its commitment to the UN and support the ARC "Padilla," the Colombian government received a frigate from the United States reserve fleet at the port of Yokosuka on February 12, 1952. This frigate was named ARC "Capitán Tono." Its crew traveled from Cartagena aboard an American troop transport to Yokosuka, supplemented by volunteers from the experienced crew of the frigate ARC "Almirante Padilla," who expressed their desire to remain in Korea. The frigate's crew underwent intense training, and the vessel completed sea trials until April 19, 1952, when it arrived at the Sasebo Naval Base to integrate into the command of Task Group 95.5, under whose operational control it fell (Barona, 2003).

The third Colombian flagship that participated in the Korean War was the frigate called ARC "Almirante Brion." Like its predecessor, the ARC "Capitán Tono," the "Almirante Brion" was transferred from the United States' reserve fleet to the Colombian Navy and underwent major repairs. During this process, its engine was reconditioned, and its weapons, detection, and communications systems were modernized. The entire crew of the unit participated in these repairs. On June 26, 1953, it was officially received at U.S. Fleet Activities Yokosuka, and on July 18, it sailed to Sasebo Naval Base. Naval operations began on July 29, 1953, as a member of Task Force 95.0 (Barona, 2003).

The frigate ARC "Capitán Tono" made a second turn during the Korean War, arriving at the port of Yokosuka on March 26, 1954. On April 2, part of the ARC "Almirante Brion" volunteer crew came on board. From this date until June 15, the unit continued with enlistment, repairs, and training. On July 3, it set sail for the Sasebo Naval Base. On July 9, 1954, it resumed naval operations as a member of Task Force 95.0 (Barona, 2003).

The frigate ARC "Almirante Padilla" made a second turn during the Korean War. On January 12, 1955, it arrived in Yokosuka, where it underwent repairs and tests, as well as training alongside units of the United States Navy. On June 9, 1955, the unit commenced naval operations as part of Task Force 95.0. On October 11, 1955, it sailed to Colombia, officially ending the contribution of the Colombian Navy to the United Nations Force that participated in the Naval Campaign of Korea (Barona, 2003).

South Korea-Colombia Bilateral Relations Support

As noted earlier, since Colombia's participation in the Korean War, a solidarity relationship has existed between Colombia and South Korea. There is an environment in which formal and diplomatic ties indicate a strengthened future relationship. It is important to highlight the commitment to enhancing bilateral support for business activities and relations between the two parties, adopting a "win-win" and prospective management approach to development in various fields of collaboration. One way to emphasize the relations between Colombia and South Korea from a historical and evocative perspective is to present, as a recapitulation, the main manifestations or milestones of particular friendship, intercultural, business, and diplomatic relations that have occurred (Table 3).

Table 3. *Some Events of Intercultural and Friendship Manifestations between South Korea and Colombia*

1951-1953	The Colombia Battalion and three Colombian frigates participated in the Korean War in support of the South Korean government.
1962	Diplomatic relations were established without the presence of permanent ambassadors.
1962	Korea began its industrialization and economic internationalization process, known as "The Miracle on the Han River."
1964	Taekwondo teaching began in Colombia.
1967	A trade agreement was signed.
1970	A pagoda-shaped monument, donated by Korea as a gesture of gratitude for Colombia's participation in the Korean War, was originally erected in Bogotá at the intersection of Calle 100 and Carrera 15.
1973	The Korean Embassy in Colombia (Ambassador Ahn Jim-sang) was established.
1978	The Colombian Embassy in Korea (Ambassador Virgilio Olano Bustos) was established.
1986	The Colombo-Korean Chamber of Trade and Industry was founded.
1987	President Virgilio Barco made a state visit to South Korea.
1994	A pagoda-shaped monument, donated by Korea as a gesture of gratitude for Colombia's participation in the Korean War, was moved to the facilities of Escuela Superior de Guerra.
2007	There was interest on the part of Korea in supporting Colombia's entry into APEC.

2009	Negotiations for the FTA started.
2010	The Quindío coffee San Alberto was awarded for its quality in South Korea.
2011	President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón made a state visit to South Korea.
2011	The Proexport Colombia-Korea Importers Association agreement was signed.
2011	The Association of Korean Studies was founded in Colombia.
2012	Lee Myung-bak, president of South Korea, made a state visit to Colombia.
2012	The Expo Corea "50 years of friendship towards prosperity" fair was held.
2012	The drafting of the South Korea-Colombia FTA was completed.
2012	Fifty years of diplomatic relations between the two countries were completed.
2013	The FTA between the two countries was signed.
2014	The Colombian Congress approved the FTA.
2015	Park Geun-hye, president of South Korea, made a state visit to Colombia.
2021	President Iván Duque Márquez made a state visit to South Korea.

Source: Own elaboration based on the data collected by Zitzmann and Gómez (2015, pp. 17–19).

The Republic of Korea was proclaimed on August 15, 1948. Syngman Rhee, its first president and known as "The Father of the Nation," was tasked with navigating the challenges of the Korean War. Afterward, his devastated country had to embark on a process of national reconstruction, with immediate goals including the recovery of agriculture, rebuilding cities, repairing the destroyed infrastructure, laying the foundations for an industrial economy, and restoring the social fabric (Zitzmann & Gómez, 2015).

The South Korean economy is based on large businesses known as conglomerates or *chaebols*. Most of these are family-owned businesses, currently very diversified, and primarily include companies in the electronics, chemical, construction, and commerce sectors. The most prominent chaebols include Hyundai, Samsung, LG, Hajin, SK Group, and POSCO (Zitzmann & Gómez, 2015).

As a tool to enhance economic stability, successive South Korean governments have implemented five-year development plans focused on a process of industrialization through import substitution, aimed at boosting exports of products and services. This approach has facilitated strict control over significant

economic development, as shown in Tables 4 and 5. The plans, their functional concept, and the factors contributing to success and competitiveness in the South Korean economy are detailed.

Table 4. *Korean Planning Tool. Five-Year Plans*

First Five-Year Plan (1962)	To establish key basic infrastructure industries, electricity, soil resources, and means of transport and communication
Second Five-Year Plan (1967–1971)	To prioritize light industry and exports, and lay the foundations of the Korean electronics industry
Third Five-Year Plan (1972–1976)	To push forward chemical and heavy industries
Fourth Five-Year Plan (1977–1981)	To support industrialization and strengthen the country's defensive capabilities
Fifth and Sixth Five-Year Plans (1982–1986 and 1987–1991)	To emphasize fiscal prudence, education, and social welfare
Seventh Five-Year Plan (1992–1996)	To strengthen industrial competitiveness
Eighth Five-Year Plan (1997–2001)	To expand welfare spending and advance the knowledge economy
Ninth Five-Year Plan (2002–2006)	To harmonize growth and well-being

Source: Own elaboration based on the data collected by Zitzmann and Gómez (2015, p. 67).

Table 5. *Critical Success Factors that Affect the Competitiveness of the Korean Economy*

1. Religion	Special Confucian orientation; also, by its nature, importance given to education
2. Discipline and, therefore, dedication to the nation	A broad patriotic sense of belonging due to its fight against colonialism, which did not erase the local identity
3. Relative political and social stability	Development search, which provided access to a great capacity for negotiation, credibility, and risk minimization
4. Abundant and qualified labor	Excellent human resources, together with significant job training that provide an advantage in production costs
5. Rise in domestic savings, which allows for a high level of investments	Internal resources constitute an integral part of working capital, enabling a decrease in financial costs and enhancing competitiveness in terms of the cost of capital

6. Orientation to markets abroad	Vision that enables market penetration even before the globalization paradigm. Important strategic alliances that determine its current high negotiation position
7. Quick absorption of technology	Anticipation of the managerial paradigms of globalization and standardization of processes such as benchmarking, outsourcing, etc.
8. Use of the economy of scale	Optimal production volumes
9. Increased educational opportunities	Which led to great social mobility and increased productivity
10. Use of intensive labor	In addition to other factors, it has enabled cost minimization
11. Exercise of power by the government	Importance of government position regarding private companies; the maneuvering margin generates speed, flexibility in policies, and concentration of influence on rapid decision-making
12. The external threat	Initially, North Korea has become a destabilizing factor in the cohesion process, as South Korea's survival feels threatened
13. Science and Technology Development Policy	In all five-year plans, emphasis is placed on investment as a dynamic factor

Source: Data taken from Granados (2004, pp. 28–30).

The Colombia-Korea relationship, viewed from historical, economic, and political perspectives, reveals significant contrasts that must be considered for future projections and developments. Trujillo et al. (2021) highlight that in the 1960s, Colombia exported eight times more than South Korea. Fifty years later, Korea ranks as the world's 10th-largest economy in terms of GDP and is among the top 10 countries exporting globally. The economic miracle of Korea involved a shift from an intensive labor-based economy to an intensive capital- and technology-based economy in the 1980s and 1990s, later evolving into a knowledge economy in this century. This country places education at the center and focuses on the adoption of technology, innovation, entrepreneurship, and the promotion of market creation and green industries (p. 6).

Relations between Colombia and South Korea, which date back to Colombia's participation in the Korean War, have always been characterized by fraternal friendship. In this century, this relationship has evolved into a new stage of understanding, marked by partnership and a focus on trade and economic

development. Trujillo et al. (2021) also assert that in 2011, Korea elevated diplomatic relations with Colombia to the Country Partnership Strategy category, the second most important category for this country, presenting both opportunities and challenges for planning the Korean cooperation agenda in the short, medium, and long term with Colombia. The support of Korea was crucial for the approval of the Colombian FTA with the United States in the Colombian Congress, and a few years later, it would become a key factor in Colombia's access to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (pp. 6–7).

The phenomenon of globalization necessitates an examination of the realities that influence trade and economic development within the global environment. Colombia is no stranger to this situation. The FTA with South Korea is, in fact, a response to the dynamic global behavior of commercial activities. It not only expresses reciprocity in opportunities, obligations, and commitments but also allows for the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the trade relationship between both countries. This agreement strengthens trade ties with the Asia-Pacific region, promotes and attracts productive investment, and enhances exports. It enhances the free movement of goods and services, engages the business sector in developing innovative alternatives for production processes, proposes mutually beneficial business conditions, reduces tariff barriers, and facilitates knowledge exchange for investment projects that enhance competitiveness and drive the structural transformation of the economy. In short, it represents a prospective agreement of understanding between the two countries, a win-win (Avellaneda, 2016; Herrera et al., 2020; Murillo, 2019).

Thus, the FTA must, in practice, become a long-term state policy due to its representativeness in economic and trade development, motivating both the public and private sectors to create consistent strategies for the optimal performance of the Colombia-South Korea FTA. Trujillo et al. (2021) state that the FTA envisions granting cooperation to contribute to its implementation and better utilization, aiming to optimize its results, expand opportunities, and maximize its benefits. According to the FTA, particular attention should be paid to cooperation initiatives aimed at: i) stimulating production synergies, creating new trade and investment opportunities, and promoting competitiveness and innovation; ii) supporting the development of small- and medium-sized enterprises; iii) strengthening institutional capacities for implementation and effective use of the agreement; and iv) addressing the cooperation needs identified in other chapters of the agreement (p. 21).

The Asia Pacific: Development Scenario in the Twenty-First Century

In relation to what it represents and the scope of the Asia Pacific, the bibliography is varied. Some sources are connected to the concept of the *basin or the geographical framework of the Pacific Ocean*, while others relate to developments in the twenty-first century in areas such as politics, culture, education, history, trade, economy, international relations, foreign policy, ocean governance, and multilateral, bilateral, or regional agreements, as well as the scope of study and application, whether particular or general, etc. Thus, economic and trade integration serves as a catalyst for growth and development.

According to Rodríguez (2014), various associations or integration areas have been established in the Asia-Pacific region since 2004. Examples include the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the free trade area of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations + 3 (China, Japan, and South Korea), APEC, and AP, which focus on new dual-action strategic subregions. Furthermore, fostering more robust economic cooperation in regional free trade areas within the Pacific Rim generates new dynamics that could alter power relations and rivalry. These transformations are closely linked to the specific interests of major powers in the region, such as the United States and China, and their regional influence (Rodríguez, 2014).

Economic and trade integration and cooperation in the Asia Pacific are characterized by a weak formal structure and a limited connection among a few legal institutions and mechanisms. Although complex in certain ways, its organization has established a completely institutionalized supranational body under a mechanism of understanding that exhibits low commitment and lacks official agreements. Economic, production, trade, and financial relations are developed within this framework, which some have called a *silent and real relationship*. Unlike Europe and America, trade schemes are not driven by governments or other regional formal institutions; rather, their outcomes arise from the cooperation and efforts of the business sector and economies. This does not imply that governments are excluded from the cooperation and integration process, as they lay the groundwork for direct investment conditions in both receiving and exporting countries (Molina & Regalado, 2014).

The unique nature of trade and economic integration in the Asia Pacific differs from that of other regions in the world. Molina and Regalado (2014) argue that Asian countries adopted a multilateral approach to their foreign trade policy,

initially through the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and later through the World Trade Organization (WTO), which has been referred to as *open regionalism*. Another characteristic that distinguishes intra-regional relations is pragmatism, allowing for cooperation among countries with varying degrees of economic development, socioeconomic systems, cultures, and religions. Regional and subregional cooperation agreements, which exhibit varying levels of integration, functions, and visions, coexist, enabling countries to participate in multiple initiatives simultaneously (p. 5).

Similarly, there is a formal cooperative and complementary relationship through bilateral and subregional commercial exchange agreements that enhance and connect more active subregional participation among neighboring countries, resulting in the so-called *growth zones or triangles* (Molina & Regalado, 2014); examples of this relationship are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. *Economic Growth Zones or Triangles*

1.	The Indonesia–Malaysia–Singapore growth triangle for the development of Johor in Malaysia and the Riau Islands in Indonesia
2.	The Baht area (Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam)
3.	The economic zone of the large area of southern China (Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Chinese provinces of Guangdong and Fujian)
4.	The Yellow Sea Economic Zone, including the coastal areas of China, North Korea, South Korea, and Japan
5.	The Economic Zone of the Sea of Japan, including the coastal areas of the Northeast of China, the East of Russia, North Korea, South Korea, and Japan
6.	The northern triangle of growth (Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia)
7.	The Eastern Growth Triangle (Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei)

Source: Abe (1997), as cited in Molina & Regalado (2014, p. 6).

Colombia formally initiated its intention, at the government level, to engage in the Pacific through a foreign policy strategy aimed at establishing effective connections in this development area. In 2007, a working group was formed to coordinate the agendas of the Foreign Ministry, the Embassies, the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Tourism, the National Planning Department (DNP, according to its acronym in Spanish), the National Association of Industrialists (ANDI, according to its acronym in Spanish), and Proexport (the entity responsible for promoting

international tourism, foreign investment, and non-traditional exports in Colombia). In 2008, the "strategy" was presented, which was approved the following year by the Foreign Policy Council, identifying the areas of action and application: cooperation, economic-trade, political, and cultural (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2013).

For 2010, the National Investment Project "Implementation of the Insertion Strategy of Colombia in the Asia Pacific 2011–2014," with code 1187000320000 of the National Investment Project Bank (BPIN, according to its acronym in Spanish), has a general objective to coordinate and bring together the insertion initiatives in the Asia Pacific in the cooperation, economic-trade, political, and cultural fields, guaranteeing a comprehensive strategy that allows the country to capitalize on the opportunities offered by the region, the world's geopolitical and economic epicenter (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2013, p. 3).

In a similar vein, Latin America's relationship with the Asia-Pacific region has been neither strong nor consistent. For instance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2013) notes that during the period from 2004 to 2006, five countries contributed to 92 % of Latin America's exports to the Asia-Pacific: Brazil, 35 %; Chile, 28 %; Argentina, 14 %; Mexico, 9 %; and Peru, 7 %. Conversely, the Asia-Pacific has not been a significant destination for Colombian exports or foreign investment. The Asia-Pacific's share of total exports was 3.5 % between 1995 and 1998, below 2.3 % between 2001 and 2004, and subsequently increased to a modest 3.2 % between 2005 and 2008, before rising to 7.25 % by the end of 2011 (p. 4).

Colombian foreign policy shows a significant interest in engaging with the Asia Pacific, demonstrating Colombia's goal to attain political and economic prominence within the region while also positioning itself as a strategic partner in trade and economic activities.

APEC as a Relational Element of the Colombia-Korea Trade

One of the most important and representative mechanisms for the potential economic development of the Asia-Pacific region is APEC, which combines the interests of the region's economies and the growing interdependence in managing capital flows, goods, and services. This promotes sustainable, participatory, innovative, and balanced economic growth, enhancing the availability of opportunities for businesses and commercial activities that benefit their residents. Delfín-Ortega and Navarro-Chávez (2021) claim that APEC includes 21 economies: Australia, Brunei, Canada, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand,

the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, the United States, the Republic of China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, Chile, Peru, Russia, and Vietnam. In 2014, its participants together accounted for 54 % of the world's GDP, 50 % of international trade, and 40 % of the planet's population.

Figure 3. *APEC-21 Economies*



Source: WordPress (2015).

Given the emergence of new economies in the Asia Pacific, APEC is recognized as the thematic forum for formal dialogue on trade liberalization, economic cooperation, trade facilitation, investments, and *open regionalism*, where participation is structured by economies rather than States. However, it remains an intergovernmental consultation forum aimed at reinforcing the growing complexity of interdependence among economies, particularly within the region. Decisions are made by consensus, facilitating flexible economic integration, which some have referred to as spontaneous integration, where commitments are voluntarily taken since there is no formal treaty (Cepeda, 2011; Richard & Gamboa, 2012; Translocheros, 2019).

With reference to the structure and functional relationship of the economies that comprise APEC, Rodríguez (2014) maintains that its nature has been informal and characterized by a lack of a rigid institutional structure, where States do not

participate directly but economies do, and no signed agreements or treaties exist. Rather, APEC has a dynamic structure in which each economy participates on equal terms, decisions are made by consensus and communicated through official statements, all under the goal of concerted unilateral liberalization expressed in the four founding principles: promoting the growth and development of the region, contributing to greater liberalization of the world economy, reinforcing the positive effects resulting from growing economic interdependence, and reducing barriers to the trade of goods, services, and investments.

Colombia, in its pursuit of integration in the Asia Pacific as part of its foreign policy, identified a pressing need to formally join APEC in 1995. However, the 21 economies have limited the admission of new members. In this regard, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2022) states that Colombia is not a member economy of APEC and has sought membership since 1995, although the institutional moratorium on considering the entry of new members ended in 1997 with the acceptance of Peru, Russia, and Vietnam as the last members in 1998. Currently, there is consensus among the 21 economies that further expansion is not advisable. Nevertheless, Colombia participates institutionally in APEC through two mechanisms: as a guest in five working groups (WGs) of APEC, renewed until December 2023, namely the Tourism WG, Services WG, Investment Experts WG, MSMEs WG, and the Subcommittee on Customs Procedures.

The Pacific Alliance as a Bridge in Relations between South Korea and Colombia

The AP is a deep integration process involving Colombia, Chile, Peru, and Mexico that aims to establish a free trade area and project toward the Asia-Pacific region, thereby enhancing existing trade agreements among its members. On an intra-regional scale, the trade relations among these four countries is not very deep; however, since the 1990s, regional agreements have indicated that, due to the low volumes of exports and reciprocal imports, along with the low levels of intra-industrial trade, open trade policies within the scope of the AP have led to favorable trade (Hernández & Muñoz, 2015).

Regarding Colombia's insertion into the Asia Pacific, a key element is its participation in the AP, which serves as an effective bridge to APEC and allows for proper engagement in the dynamic economic, trade, and political landscape of the twenty-first century. The Asia Pacific and the countries in the AP are maritime States

that exemplify maritime development: Chile, Peru, Mexico, and Colombia. The first three are also members of APEC and serve as models for Colombia's strategic leverage in economic and trade development on the Pacific stage. The AP is the most significant regional trade agreement for Colombia; this strategic initiative represents a new dynamic approach to deep regional integration, promoting free trade, trade and economic liberalization, and aiming to unify political, economic, cooperative, and competitive coordination as a bloc in operational harmony with potential partners in the Asia Pacific scene (Ayala, 2022; García, 2018; Montoya-Uribe et al., 2016; Tremolada, 2014; Valencia & Pinzón, 2021).

Colombia's participation in the AP, as a key resource for leveraging its goal of joining APEC and as a significant player in the Asia Pacific, would help identify both strengths and weaknesses for its insertion into the Asia Pacific. This is crucial as initiatives in the aforementioned development region are weak and insufficient, requiring a stronger institutional push. Apart from the *Free Trade Agreement between the Republic of Colombia and the Republic of Korea*, the country lacks other active preferential agreements in the Asia-Pacific region. Tremolada (2014) indicates that among Latin American countries supplying goods to the Asia Pacific, Colombia ranks eighth with a share of 1.9 %, surpassed by Brazil at 37.1 %, Chile at 20.6 %, Mexico at 10.1 %, Argentina at 8.4 %, Venezuela at 7.7 %, Peru at 6.3 %, and Costa Rica at 3.6 %. Colombia only exceeds Panama and Uruguay, which each have a 0.8 % share. Considering the shares of ASEAN as suppliers alone, Brazil represents 35.1 %, Argentina 18.5 %, Venezuela 12.5 %, Mexico 11.2 %, Costa Rica 7.6 %, Chile 7.3 %, Peru 1.9 %, Colombia 1.8 %, and Panama and Uruguay 1.1 %.

Table 7. *Pacific Alliance (AP) Countries*

Alianza del Pacífico							
Países	Población	PIB anual	PIB Per Capita	IDH	Deuda total (M.€)	Deuda (%PIB)	Déficit (%PIB)
 Chile [+]	18.729.160	252.035M.€	13.457€	0,843	64.507	25,56%	-1,47%
 Colombia [+]	49.834.000	289.239M.€	5.804€	0,747	146.114	52,16%	-4,68%
 México [+]	124.738.000	1.124.447M.€	9.014€	0,774	554.636	53,62%	-2,20%
 Perú [+]	32.162.184	190.826M.€	5.933€	0,750	49.880	26,15%	-2,00%
~ TOTAL: Alianza del Pacífico	225.463.344	1.856.547M.€	8.234€		815.138	43,91%	

Source: datosmacro.com (2020). Pacific Alliance.

The AP and the four countries, as an influential bloc, have developed leadership with government synergy and cooperation among business and academia to

achieve their objectives on a regional scale, aiming to establish themselves as a prominent trade and economic development bloc in the Asia Pacific. They also promote what has been referred to in the UN as *sustainable creative development*. In this regard, Sistema de Información sobre Comercio Exterior (2022) highlights that the objective of the Pacific Alliance is to create a deep integration area that fosters greater growth, development, and competitiveness among its member economies through the progressive pursuit of free movement of goods, services, capital, and people. It also seeks to serve as an economic and trade integration platform with a focus on the Asia-Pacific region. Panama and Costa Rica have expressed interest in joining the bloc. In Puerto Vallarta, the 16th Presidential Summit, held on January 22, 2022, concluded with the signing of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Singapore and a Declaration on the Creative Economy.

The APEC-AP relationship serves as a trade coordination platform, where South Korea will play a significant role based on bilateral agreements signed with APEC countries, including Mexico, Peru, Chile, and Colombia.

Conclusions

Ocean governance is a science that proposes an approach and balance between political and economic relationships and phenomena, depending on the planet's ocean reality. The vision for ocean governance regarding trade and political relations between South Korea and Colombia, particularly concerning maritime conditions, requires effective deepening and application.

The cooperative relations between South Korea and Colombia, facilitated by the FTA, will not only enhance the longstanding friendship of seven decades but also foster greater operational synergy in achieving the objectives established in the agreement. This, in turn, will strengthen the ties between strategic partners and allies committed to shared goals.

The inclusion of Colombia in the Asia Pacific is not merely an opportunity; it is an imperative necessity, considering the significant political, economic, and trade development occurring in this region of the world in the twenty-first century.

The AP has become a crucial mechanism and a regional integration process that will drive economic and trade development for the country and its people. For Colombia, it serves as a point of leverage or bridge in its goal of entering APEC, with support not only from Mexico, Peru, and Chile, as members of the organization, but also from South Korea, a founding member.

References

- Avellaneda, A. (2016). *Posibles efectos sobre el agro colombiano una vez entre en vigencia el TLC Colombia Corea*. [Seminario de Grado dos]. Fundación Universitaria Los Libertadores. <https://n9.cl/ui326>
- Ayala, L. (2022). El libre comercio como vocación de los países de la Alianza del Pacífico: una revisión histórica. *Acta Hispánica*, (4), 47–60. <https://doi.org/10.14232/actahisp.2022.0.47-60>
- Barona, G. (2003). Las Operaciones en el Mar. In Á. Valencia & G. Puyana (Eds.), *En Corea por la libertad y por la gloria, participación colombiana en la guerra, 1951-1953*. Imprenta y Publicaciones Fuerzas Militares.
- Cepeda, J. (2011). La política exterior colombiana hacia la cuenca del Pacífico: el ingreso al Foro de Cooperación Asia-Pacífico (APEC) como un escenario futuro de integración económica regional. In H. Godoy, R. González, & G. Orozco (Eds.), *Construyendo lo Global. Aportes al debate de Relaciones Internacionales* (pp. 358–374). Universidad del Norte.
- Delfín-Ortega, O., & Navarro-Chávez C. (2021). La productividad de los puertos en la región del APEC: un estudio a través del análisis de la frontera estocástica. *Contaduría y Administración*, 66(1). <https://doi.org/10.22201/fca.24488410e.2021.1998>
- DVS Global Transport and Logistics. (2022). *Transporte marítimo de carga consolidada (LCL) desde y hacia Colombia*. <https://n9.cl/4ay7q>
- García, P. (2018). La Alianza del Pacífico y Colombia ante la escalada china. *Estudios Políticos*, (52). <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.espo.n52a02>
- GeoEnciclopedia. (2022). *Océano Pacífico*. <https://n9.cl/bwteq>
- Granados, I. (2004). *Corea, el otro coloso: lecciones para el desarrollo*. Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
- Hernández, J., & Muñoz, L. (2015). Comercio y evolución de la Alianza del Pacífico. *Equidad y Desarrollo*, (24), 97–118.
- Herrera, N., Ramírez, S., Fernández, L., & Hurtado, A. (2020). *Análisis de los Costos y Beneficios del Tratado de Libre Comercio entre Colombia y Corea del Sur*. ResearchGate. <https://n9.cl/4mn43>
- Martínez, J. (1993a). *Oceanopolítica: una alternativa para el desarrollo*. Editorial Andrés Bello.
- Martínez, J. (1993b). La Oceanopolítica en el desarrollo de Chile. *Revista de Marina. Chile*.
- Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores. (2013). *Estrategia de Inserción de Colombia en Asia Pacífico*. <https://n9.cl/s4buc>
- Molina, E., & Regalado, E. (2014). *La integración económica en Asia-Pacífico. Evolución y perspectivas*. Centro de Investigaciones de Economía Internacional (CIEI), Centro de Investigaciones de Política Internacional (CIPi). <https://n9.cl/tkh00>
- Montoya-Uribe, D., González-Parias, C., & Duarte-Herrera, L. (2016). Situación y retos de Colombia en materia de comercio exterior, en el marco de la Alianza del Pacífico. *Entramado*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.1804/entramado.2016v12n1.23128>

- Murillo, G. (2019). *TLC – Colombia – Corea del Sur: Características y resultados para Colombia durante el periodo 2016-2018* [Specialization thesis, Universidad Militar Nueva Granada]. <https://n9.cl/ycvaxl>
- Naciones Unidas. (2017). *La ONU lucha por mantener los océanos limpios de plásticos*. <https://n9.cl/cizoy>
- Naciones Unidas. (2022). *Objetivo 14: Conservar y utilizar sosteniblemente los océanos, los mares y recursos marinos*. <https://n9.cl/xsmq>
- Reyes, J. (1993). Actividades de la fragata ARC Almirante Padilla. In A. Valencia (Ed.), *Historia de las Fuerzas Militares de Colombia. Armada Nacional. Participación de la Armada en el conflicto de Corea*. Planeta.
- Richard, M., & Gamboa, C. (2011, November 12). *XIX Reunión de Líderes Económicos del Mecanismo de Cooperación Económica Asia Pacífico (APEC)*. <https://n9.cl/oj618>
- Rodríguez, I. (2014). Nuevas configuraciones económicas en el Asia-Pacífico y sus consecuencias para América Latina: desde el APEC a la Alianza del Pacífico. *Dados*, 57, (2). <https://doi.org/10.1590/0011-5258201416>
- Rodríguez, M. (1997). *Fundamentos de la oceanopolítica*. Geopolítica XXI.
- Traslosheros, G. (2019). México y el Mecanismo de Cooperación Económica Asia Pacífico (APEC). *México y la Cuenca del Pacífico*, 8(23), 9–22. <https://doi.org/10.32870/mycp.v8i23.622>
- Tremolada, E. (2014). ¿La Alianza del Pacífico facilita la inserción de Colombia en la región Asia-Pacífico? *Papel Político*, 19(2).
- Trujillo, A., Torres, N., & Alfonso, E. (2021). *Hoja de ruta Colombia – Corea del Sur. Hacia un mejor aprovechamiento del Tratado de Libre Comercio*. Cámara de Comercio de Bogotá.
- Valencia, C., & Pinzón, C. (2021). Empresas colombianas dinamizadoras del comercio internacional en la Alianza del Pacífico. *Pensamiento y Gestión*, (50).
- Zitzmann, J., & Gómez, L. (2015). *Una ventana a Corea del Sur*, (1st ed.). Fondo de Publicaciones Universidad Sergio Arboleda.



Relations between Colombia and South Korea: An Analysis of Colombian Foreign Policy as a Geopolitical Strategy in the Asia Pacific

This book aims to discuss the use of soft power in Colombia's foreign policy toward South Korea, a strategic ally, with the goal of strengthening its geopolitical standing in the Asia-Pacific region. Therefore, three objectives are outlined for this research: to identify the features and characteristics of soft power in Colombian foreign policy; to conduct a detailed analysis of Colombia's foreign policy toward South Korea, especially since the signing of the free trade agreement between the two countries, assessing its impact on their bilateral relations; and to explore the geopolitical strategies Colombia employs to integrate into the dynamics of the Asia Pacific.



ISBN 978-628-7818-09-5

