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Assessment of South Korea's Role as a "Middle Power Country": Case Studies of South Korean Diplomacy in Central Asia

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**ASSESSMENT OF SOUTH KOREA'S ROLE AS A "MIDDLE POWER COUNTRY":
CASE STUDIES OF SOUTH KOREAN DIPLOMACY IN CENTRAL ASIA**

By

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B.A. State University of New York at Binghamton, 2015

A THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

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(in Global Policy)

The Graduate School

The University of Maine

August 2018

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Thesis Advisor: Dr. Kristin Vekasi

An Abstract of the Thesis Presented
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The concept of "middle power country" existed since several hundred years ago introduced by European philosophers and political scientists. The definition was proposed by many scholars and used by countries in many different status, one specific definition of "middle power" was not set until current days. The characteristics of a "middle power country" range from economic status, and political system, to patterns of diplomacy. By current broad definition, almost 80 percent of the countries in the world can fit into one or more categories of a "middle power country."

The purpose of this paper is to depict the importance of middle power countries, and narrow down the definition and characteristics of them by analyzing the case study of South Korea and its diplomacy in Central Asia. It is necessary to narrow the definition of "middle power" to evaluate what constitutes a country as "middle power." Middle power countries matter in the international relations as middle power countries hold pivotal positions when regional or world super power states make decisions. As diffusion of power becomes one of the global trends in the 21st century, clearer definitions of power structure of countries are needed to be redefined.

This thesis analyzes the nature of middle power countries and shared characteristics of them. Using variables such as diplomatic policy, security, foreign direct investment, and trade, I systematically analyze South Korea's status as a middle power country. Using data from South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs reports and scholarly articles on middle power and Central Asia, I verify the relevance of studying the relationship between South Korea and Central Asian republics. This thesis concludes with the fact that middle power countries are defined by the four selected variables: diplomatic policy, security, foreign direct investment, and trade. The thesis also proves that South Korea performs qualifications of middle power country regardless of the regions and countries it deals with.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Since 2011, South Korea has been holding “Caravan events” in Central Asia to promote South Korean interests in the region. From March 28, 2016 until April 1, 2016, the sixth and the largest-ever Caravan event was held in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. This event aimed to promote cooperation between South Korea and Central Asia in economics, business, and cultural exchange. South Korea put significant resources in this event, sending over 100 government officials and representatives to Central Asia to meet with Central Asian counterparts, and working to deepen cooperation strategies. It is not immediately apparent why it is in South Korea’s strategic interests to spend their limited diplomatic resources on Central Asia. Neither scholars of South Korea nor the South Korean public focus on the region as a key to a prosperous and secure future. And yet, the last decades have seen an increasing focus in South Korean foreign policy on Central Asia. This thesis investigates that focus, and in doing so brings to light broader lessons about the efficacy and limits of South Korea’s middle power diplomacy.

The Caravan events are a part of South Korea’s broader Eurasia Initiative to deepen diplomatic ties and enhance mutually beneficial economic trade. Currently South Korea and Central Asia cooperate in many different projects including development in energy, resources, infrastructure building, agriculture and information technology. Based on complementary economic characteristics, South Korea and Central Asia are developing a robust cooperative relationship. Why South Korea became interested in Central Asia and put effort into building collegial relations with the region are worth investigating.

The purpose of this thesis is thus threefold. First, to analyze existing diplomatic relationships between South Korea and Central Asia; Second, to define Korea as a middle power country; Third, to verify if South Korea's engagement in Central Asia confirms or challenges the existing definition of middle power countries in the literature. Current definitions range from narrow to very broad. A middle power country could encompass all countries that are neither super power nor failed/failing states. This definition encompasses 20 out of 178 countries which is about 88% of all countries. While these countries are in the "middle," this very broad definition does not take into account the more important part of the moniker: "power". Super powers and failing or failed states are comparably easier to identify depending on their governance, economy, and their overall development statuses. But it is unclear and vague to identify what countries in the middle have characteristics of power which have strong diplomacy, use of soft power, located between strong countries, and have robust economic trade among all the countries that are not super power and failing/failed states. Middle power countries and their roles must matter in international relations and yet a clear and obvious definition of a middle power country have not been determined. Therefore, this project seeks to further clarify the definition of middle power through an explanation of the relationship between South Korea which is now a middle power and Central Asia.

South Korea is typically defined as a middle power country. It is not a super power country like the United States or China but neither is it a small state incapable of individual policy (Brzezinski, 1997). The range of determinants to segregate countries into different categories of power structures vary depends on many different characteristics such as military capability, size of economy, and its behavior in the world politics. South Korea is

currently defined as a middle power country based on its relationship with geographical neighbors, China, Japan, and the United States. Because these three countries are not the only countries that South Korea interacts with, its relationships with other countries that South Korea interacts need to be taken into account in defining South Korea as a middle power country.

Central Asia is an appropriate region to examine South Korea's diplomacy trends and its characteristics of middle power country for three reasons. First is timeliness. South Korea has recently been trying to develop its relations with Central Asian republics by increasing the amount of trade and cultural exchange. Second, South Korea and Central Asia relations allow an explanation of middle power diplomacy outside of a great power context. South Korea does have a large amount of trade and cultural exchange with China and Japan, but they are necessarily mediated by regional security and balance-of-power concerns. South Korea's relations with Central Asian republics are less affected by regional super powers. It will be profitable to demonstrate that South Korea's trends of diplomacy and relations with other countries fit into middle power countries' profile even the relations are only subtly affected by regional super powers. Lastly, until now, South Korea has been evaluated according to its behaviors dealing with countries from similar region, East Asia and Southeast Asia. Therefore, analyzing South Korea's diplomatic trends and its projections for the future relationship with Central Asia will help analyze how South Korea, as a middle power, projects its interest in economy and security. Since current literature's definition and characteristics of "middle power country" is very broad and vague, analyzing South Korea's middle power country characteristics will make it possible to further specify the definition of middle power country.

Chapter 2 reviews current literature's definition of middle power countries and its characteristics. The middle power country definition is applied to South Korea and will be analyzed under what circumstances South Korea is qualified as a middle power country. Chapter 3 explains the historical relationship between South Korea and Central Asia from the late 1930s until present. Chapter 4 and 5 analyzes the current South Korea's relationship with Central Asia using changes in trade amount, soft power exchange, and analysis of South Korean government documents on South Korea-led initiatives and bilateral relationships with the five Central Asian republics. Through my analysis of South Korea and Central Asia's current relationship, this paper aims to generalize South Korea's qualifications as a middle power country beyond the geographical limits in East Asia and its relationship with regional neighbors, China, Japan, and the United States.

CHAPTER 2

CURRENT MIDDLE POWER LITERATURE AND DEFINITION

The concept of middle power started in medieval period in Italy by writers such as Thomas Aquinas, Giovanni Botero, and Bartolus de Saxoferrato (Holbraad, 1994). These scholars recognized the different kinds and power structure of states such as which countries get to tell other countries what they want them to do, and which countries have to listen to stronger countries to sustain themselves and thought it was worth looking at the dimensions more closely. Even though there were centuries of time between the three scholars and the times they were living, the ideas they talk about middle power are similar. Botero's explanation of a middle-sized states sums up the prevalent idea of middle power in the medieval period. Botero states:

Middle-sized states are the most lasting, since they are exposed neither to violence by their weakness nor to envy by their greatness, and their wealth and power being moderate, passions are less violent, ambition finds less support and license less provocation than in large States. Fear of their neighbors restrains them, and even if feelings are roused to anger they are more easily quieted and tranquility restored... Yet although this mediocrity is more conducive to the preservation of an empire than excessive power, middle-sized states do not last long if their leaders are not content but wish to expand and become great, and, exceeding the bounds of mediocrity, leave behind also those of security (Frace 1975, Holbraad 1994).

According to Botero, the idea of middle-sized states is defined as countries that are moderate, less violent, and supportive of the great powers. They are vulnerable in the sense that can be relatively easily conquered by great powers and have potential to be readily swayed by outside influences. However, middle power countries do not work solely in subordination to the goals of great powers. They can also be powerful, autonomous, and

capable in creating their own individual policies and diplomatic relations with other countries to pursue their agendas. In the case of South Korea and its newly formed cooperative relations with Central Asian republics serve as an example of a middle power country with its independent behaviors. This proves that middle power countries do not necessarily act within sphere of great powers but they project their influence to the countries of their choice.

Gabriel Bonnot de Mably, also known as Abbé Mably, who was a French philosopher also published his work in 1757 about middle power (Holbraad, 1994). Mably's argument is as follows: "the interest of middle-sized countries is to leave themselves recommendable during peace; that is to maintain the division between the great powers. The middle powers also flatter their passions by having negotiations driven with equivocal manner. Through the conversations, the middle powers inject their views into other parties in negotiations and give hopes to all the parties without taking any decided engagement."¹ Understanding middle power's behaviors and the fact that middle powers use diplomacy and negotiations to achieve their political goals has been argued since the 1700s. Mably's explanation of middle-sized countries is done in the context of great powers and not analyzed as independent behaviors. This is why traditional explanation and definition of middle power are insufficient. Current middle power countries can be identified by their independent actions, policies, and development of diplomatic relations with other countries. The behaviors of middle power countries are not necessarily dependent on its relationship or comparison to great powers.

¹ Translated from French by the author.

Both Botero and Mably describe the characteristics of middle-sized states based on their characteristics and the way they behave with the great powers. The advantage of middle-sized states compared to great powers is that they are less aggressive, prefer negotiations or diplomacy, and supportive of great powers. The disadvantage of middle-sized states is that they are vulnerable and easily dominated by stronger states. As Mably says, middle-sized states express their positions about international issues that matter, but they do not directly get involved which alludes the fact that middle-sized states can express their stance and suggest, but when it comes to make a decision, it will depend on great powers.

Since the medieval period, the concept of middle-sized states or middle power existed in Europe. The concept evolved over time and now the term is used not only in Europe but also all over the world. The distinction between middle power and great power is clearer now than before in many aspects and it is worthwhile to analyze how the concept has evolved.

The modern day ranking of countries started at the end of the First World War. During the World War I, creation of Triple Entente and Triple Alliance, clear formation of alliance system among countries was established. By the time when the World War I ended on November 11, 1918, winners and losers of the war became clear which led to a definite division of stronger and weaker power countries. Until then, regional super powers existed such as Germany in Europe, and China in Asia. But during the First World War, the majority of the world took sides of either Allies or The Central Powers. After the First World War, ranking of countries became one of the ways to differentiate one from another and it marks the beginning of ranking as a strategy of diplomacy (Holbraad, 1994). This strategy of

ranking gave stronger states leverage to manipulate weaker states to achieve their priorities. The League of Nations was established in January 1920 after the First World War and as a result of the Paris Peace Conference. Even though the primary purpose of The League of Nations was keeping world peace, it was created by the winners of the First World War which were the dominant power at that time. The Council of Ten which was a committee within The League of Nations, was the congregation of the most influential members led by France, Britain, and the United States (Holbraad, 1994). After the Second World War, The League of Nations was succeeded by the United Nations. Like the UN, The League of Nations was created by the winners of the Second World War. The United Nation's version of The Council of Ten is the United Nations Security Council composed of five permanent members and ten temporary members. The primary purpose of the United Nations Security Council is "maintenance of international peace and security (United Nations Security Council website)."

The creations of both the League of Nations and the United Nations were done by the winners of two major World Wars, and these are examples of relatively stronger countries get the ruling power over weaker countries. The winners get to rule the world as the great powers and the losers become followers. However, there has always been more sophisticated systems in rankings of countries even though often times they are not succinct and not clearly articulated. This is where middle power countries take place. As Botero and Mably explained, middle power countries express their opinions about international issues without getting directly involved in the situations. They also use negotiations and diplomacy rather than military force to achieve their priority goals. Botero and Mably's analysis of middle power countries continue to hold until these days.

Although the basic analysis holds until now, it is necessary to verify if the analysis fits into all the countries without exceptions and in different countries. Middle power countries matter nowadays even more so than the medieval era because of diffusion of power that we are experiencing now and stronger influence that middle power countries can have on great powers.

Even though the middle power countries are not the great powers that make final important decisions of the world issues and have leading influence on many other countries, middle power countries matter (Cooper, 1997; Holbraad, 1984; Hundt, 2011; Jordaan, 2003; Potter, 2015; Kasmi, 2017; Neack, 2017). First, middle power countries arguably have leverage to influence great powers. Second, middle power countries have developed competitive economic capabilities that can compete and establish robust trade relations with great power countries. Third, middle power countries have strong diplomacy. Even though middle powers are strong and capable of sustain themselves economically, socially and militarily, compared to great power countries, their military capacity is relatively weak. Therefore, middle power countries tend to pursue strong and influential diplomacy rather than strong military.

South Korea, for example, is classified as a middle power country. In the regional politics in East Asia, South Korea has responsibility for and leverage on decision making processes. South Korea not only neighbors North Korea that is causing a tremendous amount of uncertainty and instability of the region, but also it is a buffer zone for both great powers, China and the United States. Neither of these great powers want to lose their ideological and economical influence in East Asia and South Korea stands in the center of that tension. Another example of influential and important middle power is Australia, also

located geographically and ideologically located between China and the United States. Its economic status represented as GDP and GNI has grown up since the past, giving it more independence and flexibility in foreign affairs. Therefore, Australia is another example of a middle power country that fits the traditional and current explanations of middle power.

As the influence and importance of middle power countries grow (Jordaan, 2003; Lee, 2012), it is necessary to understand the behaviors of middle power and make clearer definition of middle power countries. Current literature develops definitions and qualifications about middle power countries. Few countries are classified as strong power states and unstable states like Syria and Afghanistan are classified as weak countries. This leaves us that most countries in that are not very strong and not struggling through ongoing wars can be classified as a “middle power” country. At its broadest, middle power countries are defined as those with “sufficient strength and authority to stand on its own without the need of help from others” (Shin, 2016). More specifically, scholars identify middle power countries as those that tend to show the trends of system supporter, network builder, security provider, a country with strong diplomacy, catalyst, facilitator, manager and mediator roles (concepts discussed further below). However, these are too many categories to define a concept: the concept is overdetermined.

To understand the roles of middle power countries in international relations and how they actually affect relations with great powers, it is necessary to further formulate the definition of a middle power country. Since the middle ages, the concept of middle-sized states was studied by scholars. Nowadays it became a concept of middle power or middle power country and the concept is still analyzed by scholars. But because middle power countries are geographically located all over the world and based on their neighboring

countries and the middle power's relationship with regional great power countries, the behaviors of middle powers vary.

Current literature's characterization of middle power can be categorized into three big groups: Geographical and economic factor as a factual characteristic, soft power and diplomacy as usages of power resources and policy characteristic, and provider of security and international order as a conduct of international cooperation characteristic. The idea of a middle power country was established in 16th century in Italy by Italian philosopher Giovanni Botero who said that middle powers "are exposed neither to violence by their weakness nor to envy by their greatness, and their wealth and power being moderate, passions are less violent, ambition finds less support and license less provocation than in large states" (O'Neil, 2017). On the behaviors of middle power countries, Spero additionally posits that middle powers don't have choices about the kind of international system in which they compete, cooperate or confront (Spero, 2009). Spero also points out that even though it is difficult for middle powers to choose with whom they want to cooperate and compete, their presence and impact on security dilemmas can be significant for great powers (Spero, 2009). South Korea is an example of this security dilemma. Being located between two great powers, the United States and China, South Korea cannot choose who it wants to cooperate or compete. Both the United States and China are significantly important trade partners of South Korea. South Korea has been in a defense alliance relation with the United States. However, economic interdependence and fear of economic backlash plays an increasingly important role in South Korea's stances between the United States and China. To generalize the trend of rising middle power country phenomenon, Lee articulates that the diffusion of power trend in the world and diversified goals of

international system have triggered “secondary powers to seek policy responses and initiatives in niche areas where they have the advantage” (Lee, 2012). As mentioned before, from the medieval era until now, the concept of middle power was studied and analyzed by many scholars. But it has yet to be solidified into one generalizable definition.

Current literature’s definition of middle power countries is different depending on scholars, and it is abstract and not clearly defined. The description covers general idea of middle power and it almost fits into most of the states that are not obvious great power or failing states. The first characteristic of middle power is geographical, economic and factual characteristic. Lee talks about middle power country with economic capabilities along with the size of population and military capabilities. He addresses a middle power country as a “positional approach locating a middle power at the middle point in range of bigness and smallness in terms of population, economic strength and complexity, and military capability” (Lee, 2012). Lee also claims that a middle power country is physically and ideologically located between great powers (Lee, 2012). This is a description that fits to countries like South Korea, Indonesia, Australia, and Canada and their physical and ideological location. South Korea, Indonesia, Australia and other emerging middle power countries like Vietnam and Philippines are located in Asia-Pacific region where China is a great power in both economically and ideologically facing the United States which is also a great power, and a strong ideological influencer.

The second characteristic of middle power is soft power and diplomacy as a usage of international policy making strategy. Middle power countries tend to have economically and militarily less strong compared to regional and ideological great powers. Therefore, they tend to find their niche area that that can successfully penetrate and achieve their

goals as strong influence of their soft power and usage of diplomacy as an effective tool to negotiate with their counterparts. South Korea has a clear example of diplomacy. Lee mentions in his article *South Korea as New Middle Power Seeking Complex Diplomacy*, that “South Korea pursues strong alliance diplomacy with the United States on the one hand and balanced multilateral diplomacy on the other” (Lee, 2012). The United States has been South Korea’s primary ally in trade, military, and democratic ideology since the end of the Second World War and Korean War. South Korea pursue alliance diplomacy because since the Korean War, the United States provided military supports and led South Korea to win the current amount of territory in Korean peninsula without losing it all to North Korea and China allied forces. Since then, South Korea and the United States stayed as security allies and once South Korea achieved economic development, they became important trade partners to each other. Because South Korea pursues an export-oriented economic policy, diplomacy and trade negotiations with great power allies like the United States and China are important survival strategies for South Korea.

Furthermore, Mo states that “First and primarily, South Korea (unlike great powers) defines its role largely as an intellectual or soft power contributor” (Mo, 2016). To strengthen Mo’s argument, Cooper et al. argue that “middle powers provide the intellectual and political energy to trigger an initiative and take the lead in gathering followers around it” (Cooper et al., 1993). The descriptions are true to South Korea’s behaviors as a middle power in East Asia. South Korea began to spread its culture in the late 1990’s through a phenomenon called the “Korean Wave” (*hanryu*). Through the Korean Wave, South Korea started exporting its TV dramas, movies, and music to China (Cho, 2005). Starting with China, South Korea now exports its cultural products to many East and Central Asian

countries including Japan, Vietnam, and Uzbekistan. Spreading Korean culture through entertainment materials became one of the strong cultural integration and diplomatic strategy of South Korea. In current days, almost twenty years the beginning of Korean Wave, South Korean dramas, movies, pop music, and even cosmetic and fashion products are being exported to South Korea's neighboring countries.

Middle power capacity is not only in the realm of soft power, cultural cooperation, and ideological balancing. Scholars also argue that middle powers could have an important role in maintaining international security and promoting international cooperation. The last characteristic of middle power country is provider of security and supporter of international rule of law. Spero argues that after the Cold War, South Korea and Poland established new alignments because of their new leaders' decisions. The leaders of South Korea and Poland chose to develop more state-to-state bilateral and multilateral alliance systems to decrease existing regional security dilemmas (Spero, 2009). Spero also states that middle power countries are pivotal "bridging countries" in regional security (Spero, 2009). This assessment can also match South Korea's profile as it serves as a pivotal country in regional security. South Korea is located next to North Korea that threatens the regional and world security by developing nuclear missiles and testing them regardless of pressures from international society. South Korea is also a neighboring country of China. China is South Korea's number one trade partner but ideological adversary since South Korea is a democracy and an ally of the United States. South Korea also has tight economic interdependencies and security alliances with Japan and the United States. Based on underlying sentiment and rivalry in East Asia, South Korea serves as a buffer zone that borders unstable North Korea backed by a communist regime, China. South Korea as a

middle power country in East Asia, ensured its foreign policy to not favor either side to the other and not be hated by any of its allies (Spero, 2009).

With respect to institutions, Lee suggests the concept of “middlepowermanship” which describes tendency behaviors of middle power countries that pursue multilateral solutions to international problems. Middle power countries also “embrace positions in international disputes or adopt the notions of ‘good international citizenship’ to guide its diplomacy (Lee, 2012).” The concept of “middlepowermanship” sums up the middle power country’s characteristic of provider of security and international order. According to Mo, South Korea behaves as an international system supporting middle power by encouraging activism, promoting open trade and multilateralism, and embracing strong rule of law within South Korea (Mo, 2016). Mo’s argument is supported by the fact that South Korea has diplomatic relationships with 190 countries, is a member of the United Nations since 1991 and became a member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1996. Furthermore, South Korea hosted Olympic Games twice in 1988 and 2018, and a World Cup Soccer Tournament in 2002. South Korea has been promoting international order and peace by joining international organizations, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations and hosting international events.

Based on current literature’s categorization of middle power country’s traits, South Korea fits into most of the characteristics. However, South Korea’s behaviors and characteristics as a middle power country were based on its diplomacies and relationship with East Asian neighbor countries, mostly China, Japan, and the United States. Therefore, in this project, I intend to examine South Korea’s diplomatic, economic and security relationship with Central Asian republics to assess its behavior as a middle power. This

study focuses on the regional variable to determine whether South Korea as a middle power country act same in different regions. I chose Central Asian republics as case study subjects because Central Asia is a relatively new region that South Korea has recently been trying to develop more economic and security relations with through numerous presidential visits and new initiatives to increase economic ties between South Korea and Central Asia.

Central Asia is also an appropriate region to study South Korea's middlepowermanship because China does have a role in Central Asia as a great power and influencer of which South Korea needs to be attentive. However, South Korea's interests and strategies in Central Asia are not dependent on nor done in reaction to Chinese economic or security interests. China has been developing its own international organizations and programs to connect with Central Asia. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an international organization with the members, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan that was founded in 2001 in Shanghai. Its original purpose was to demilitarize the borders and bring peace to the region, but the goals have been broadened to military and counter terrorism cooperation and intelligence sharing (Albert, 2015). The members of SCO expanded to India and Pakistan along with four observer members: Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, and Mongolia. SCO has six dialogue partners: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkey, and Sri Lanka (Shanghai Cooperation Organization, n.d.). China's most recent effort to expand to Central Asia is through One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative. OBOR is proposed in 2013 by China's president, Xi Jinping, as a modern way of recreating the Silk Road (Jinchen, 2016). OBOR is composed of two routes, one as Silk Road Economic Belt on the ground and the other as

21st Century Maritime Silk Road through ocean. China already made a few bilateral agreements related to this project with Hungary, Mongolia, Russia, Tajikistan, and Turkey (Jinchen, 2016). South Korea is neither a country on the list of countries that cooperate with China on OBOR, nor a cooperating partner of China. South Korea's initiatives on cooperation with Central Asia are relatively new compared to China's projects and that's what makes Central Asia open to South Korea. Further, South Korean policies towards Central Asia are mostly bilateral with each of the five Central Asian republics, and no other countries are involved. Therefore, South Korea's policies to cooperate with Central Asian countries are not dependent or related to Chinese approach of cooperation with Central Asia.

Based on the current literature's definitions and characteristics of a middle power country, I expect to see the following in South Korea's activities in Central Asia. South Korea is expected to demonstrate soft power and diplomacy as a usage of diplomatic policies, and a provider of security and international order as a conduct of international cooperation in its involvement with Central Asia as South Korea has shown in its relations with China, Japan, and the US in East Asia. I exclude the geographical and factual characteristics of a middle power country because the location of South Korea physically cannot be changed even though the location of its performance changed from East to Central Asia. However, other two variables, diplomacy and provider of international security can be tested by examining current relationship between South Korea and Central Asia.

CHAPTER 3

CENTRAL ASIAN HISTORY AND CURRENT CENTRAL ASIA-SOUTH KOREA RELATIONS

This chapter delves into the history and background of Central Asia and China. The first part will discuss and lay out the history of Central Asian republics and how they became the countries they are now. The second part of this section describes the relationship between South Korea and Central Asia; when Korean people started to live in Central Asia and how Korean diaspora spread into Central Asia which is remotely detached from South Korea. The last part analyzes contemporary relations between South Korea and Central Asia.

Central Asian republics that this paper considers consist of five countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Central Asian republics are located in the south of Russia, east of Caspian Sea, and west of China. Central Asian republics became individual states after the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991 and they have gone through tumultuous political and economic reforms. Some states were able to have relatively more stable and peaceful transition from Soviet Union to an independent state but others did not. Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan had stable transition to independent states; on the other hand, Tajikistan had a civil war from 1992 to 1997 and Kyrgyzstan had inter-communal conflicts that brought sudden changes in the country (Fumagalli, 2012)². The processes of transition to independent states vary in all five Central Asian states and it may have affected the countries' economic development in the next 20

years. Table 3.1. compares the 2017 GDP per capita, population, ethnic diversity, and physical area of all five Central Asian countries.

Table 3.1. Central Asia profile

	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Turkmenistan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
GDP per capita (2017 est.)	\$26,100	\$3,700	\$18,700	\$3,100	\$7000
Population (2017 est.)	18,556,698	5,789,122	5,351,277	8,468,555	29,748,859
Ethnic groups	Kazakh 63.1% Russian 23.7% Uzbek 2.8%	Kyrgyz 73.2% Uzbek 14.6% Russian 5.8%	Turkmen 85% Uzbek 5% Russian 4% Other 6%	Tajik 84.3% Uzbek 13.8% other 2%	Uzbek 80% Russian 5.5% Tajik 5% Kazakh 3%
Area sq km	2,724,900	199,951	488,100	144,100	447,400

Source: CIA World Factbook 2017

As Olcott and Cummings describe, Central Asian states were “catapulted to independence (Olcott, 1992; Cummings, 2012).” From the Soviet Union to new nation building processes starting in 1991, three issues characterized the new nation building and issues were intertwined. Fumagalli states that a few noticeable issues came up during the course of national building process in Central Asia. The first one is the emphasis on the state-led economic and culture development plans; second, the position of minority groups who have been living in the region but had to separate because of the new countries borders were being created; third, the relationship between the ethnic minority groups and the new countries they had to integrate within the new state boundaries (Fumagalli, 2009; Fumagalli 2012). The new leaders of Central Asian republics were newly elected for

them to achieve a real meaning of political independence from the Soviet Union. Except for Kyrgyzstan's Askar Akaev who was elected as the leader of new Kyrgyzstan was the only case among the five Central Asian republics that elected a new leader after their independence. Other four states did not elect new leaders to embrace the idea of independence and kept the leaders of the each region under the Soviet Union (Cummings, 2012: 61). As independent states, all five states eventually established authoritarian political systems. Because the Central Asian republics chose to have authoritarian regimes, the level of corruption was high and the power of governments were perceived unaccountable by the public (Cummings, 2012). However, the degree of importance of each government and differences in the government systems vary in all five Central Asian countries.

As a part of ethnic diversification happened in Central Asia not only ethnic groups within Central Asia, but also South Korea was involved. South Koreans who live in Central Asia are mostly known as "Koryo Saram" which means "People of Goryeo."³ The history between South Korea and Central Asia begins in 1937 and continues to 1940's. Korean people were living near Khabarovsk, which is a city on the Russian side of the Russian-North Korean border. During the World War II, Soviet union's suspicion and discrimination about Korean people stemmed from their hostile relationship with Japan. The Soviet Union and Japan had been having continuous conflicts from late 1932 until 1939 over border conflicts (Young, 1967). The series of battles and skirmishes were fought by Union of Soviet

³ Goryeo (also called Koryo): A dynasty in Korean history which lasted from 918 until 1392. Goryeo dynasty began after Later Three Kingdoms era and before Joseon Dynasty.

Socialist Republics and Mongolian People's Republic against Empire of Japan and Manchukuo. The battles between the Soviets and the Japanese ended in 1939 at the battle of Khalkhin-Gol (Sella, 1983) with Soviet Union's victory. After the Soviet Union won the battles at Khalkhin-Gol, Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact was signed and the Soviets invaded Poland two days later. Throughout the latter half of the 1930's, skirmishes between the Soviets and Japanese continued. But in 1937, Soviet-Japanese relations were eased by Japanese invasion of China in July.

Mass deportation of Koreans began in September 1937 (Kim, V, 2009) followed by the start of the second Sino-Japanese war. During the Second Sino-Japanese War, the Soviets aided China increasing tension with Japan. The Soviets, who were at war with Japan at the time, became suspicious of Koreans because the Koreans were under Japanese control, and lived at the border the Soviet Union. Kim writes, "In August 1937, Stalin signed the infamous Resolution No. 1428-326CC, condemning 171,781 Koreans-the whole Soviet Korean population of the far East- to deportation to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan." (Kim, V, 2017) Koreans were chosen to be deported to Central Asia, the place that was so remote and where Soviets sent people for exile. Soviet Koreans, who were forcefully deported to Central Asia in 1937 were approximately 700,000 across the entire former Soviet Union and about 500,000 are settled in Central Asia (Kim, G, 1995 and 2000; Fumagalli, 2012). These Koreans were moved from Khabarovsk, a city in far east close to current day North Korea, to Central Asia and later Korean people established their own villages in Volgograd region (Kim, G. N., 2004).

Ethnic diversity in post-Soviet Union Central Asia was prevalent especially when ethnic minority groups were forced to be a party of newly created countries that they were not used to belong to, often times the friction became conflicts. McGlinchey notes that “ethnically heterogeneous postcolonial societies are thought to be more prone to conflict and instability than are postcolonial societies dominated by one titular nationality” (McGlinchey, 2011). Korean ethnic groups were a part of diversified ethnic groups in Central Asia. Being the first Korean people to settled in Central Asia after the mass deportation began in 1937, Korean people spread throughout Central Asia but mainly in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Table 3.2. shows the number of ethnic Koreans in the five Central Asian republics from 2011 to 2017. It is clear that the majority of Korean population is concentrated in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan throughout the seven years when the data was collected. An interesting observation can be made about Tajikistan; Korean population in the other four countries increased over time or stayed similar but Korean population in Tajikistan decreased more than 50 percent between 2011 and 2013 and stayed low.

Table 3.2. Ethnic Korean Population in Central Asia

Ethnic Koreans	2011	2013	2015	2017	Percentage of Korean Population in 2017	Estimated % of total ethnic Koreans in Central Asia in 2017
Kazakhstan	107,130	105,483	107,613	109,133	0.58%	35%
Kyrgyzstan	18,230	18,403	18,709	19,035	0.33%	6.1%
Tajikistan	1,740	744	743	774	0.009%	0.25%
Turkmenistan	884	1,329	1,425	1,451	0.03%	0.47%
Uzbekistan	173,600	173,832	186,186	181,077	0.60%	58%
Total	301,584	299,791	314,676	311,470	N/A	100%

Source: Republic of Korea Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ethnic Korean people in Central Asia did not have easy and prosperous lives. They had to condition the land so they can grow crops and they were constantly discriminated against and labeled as “the unreliable” people (Chung and Dibble, 2006). However, Korean people had no choice but to endure and live in the land they were sent to by Soviet government. The Korean diaspora to Central Asia that started in the late 1930’s remains there to this day. Currently, among five Central Asia countries, Uzbekistan has the largest Korean population of about 180,000 people, Kazakhstan has 105,000, Kyrgyzstan has 18,403, Turkmenistan has 1,060 and Tajikistan has about 640 ethnic Koreans (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Korea, 2016).

Korean diaspora is most prevalent in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan where the first group of deported Korean people settled in. Deported ethnic Korean people were forced to work at kolkhozes, which are collective farms (Kim, V, 2016b; Kim, V, 2017). Ethnic Koreans worked hard to turn the dried and desert land of Uzbekistan to arable land. Despite discrimination and false impression of being the “unreliable” people from foreign land, Koreans sustained their lives and eventually were recognized as a hard-working ethnic group (Kim, V, 2016).

Despite the ethnic ties between Korea and Central Asian republics, robust trade interdependence between the two was lacking for the past twenty years since 1991 until about 2009. Historically, economic relationships between South Korea and Central Asia started with establishment of the Silk Road between 9th and 15th century (UNESCO). Yet modern history of trading partnership begins in 1992 after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Once Central Asian countries gained independence, South Korea and Central Asia established diplomatic relations (MOFA, 2016). Korea has bilateral trade agreements with all five Central Asian countries and Uzbekistan has the most robust trade with Korea reaching \$949 million in total trade in 2016. Since 1992, Korea has been conducting multiple summits of the ROK-Central Asia Cooperation Forum and in 2014 Korea launched the Eurasia Initiative to promote more robust economic and cultural exchange (Kwon, 2014). Korea is not alone in its steady efforts to build a strong relationship with Central Asia. China, Russia, and even the United States have been trying to build strong economic relations with Central Asia as well. After the Soviet Union, Russia remains one of the largest trading partners of Central Asian countries. Furthermore, China has numerous initiatives and organizations such as Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and One-Belt, One-Road (OBOR) initiative to bolster trade and implement Chinese cultural influence (Hwang, 2016). Even though China is developing its strategies to further expand its influence, South Korea still can pursue its policy to cooperate with Central Asian republics and strengthen diplomatic relationship. Current stage of South Korea and Central Asia relationship is not a competition against China's SCO or OBOR project and it is unlikely to become a competition in the future.

3.1. Current Central Asian Economy

None of the five Central Asian countries have diversified economies. The region is mostly rich with mineral resources, oil and natural gas, and materials such as coal and uranium, ferrous metals such as chromium and iron, nonferrous metals such as aluminum, copper, lead, zinc and gold, and industrial minerals such as phosphate (Laurelle, and Peyrouse, 2013). Other than minerals, Uzbekistan produces some cotton, and Kazakhstan produces large amounts of oil. However, products that Central Asian countries can export are limited. Below is an explanation of each Central Asian country's imports and exports.

Kazakhstan has the largest trade economy among the five Central Asian countries with import value of \$39.7 billion in 2014 and export value of \$64.2 billion in 2014 (The Observatory of Economic Complexity, MIT). The top five countries that Kazakhstan imports from are Russia, China, Germany, the U.S., and South Korea. Kazakhstan imports from Russia the most and Russia takes up to 33% of the total import. The second largest importing country is China with 18%, third is Germany with 6%, the fourth is the U.S. with 5% and the fifth is South Korea with 3%. Machinery/Electrical takes up the largest portion of Kazakhstan's imports with 26% of total imports, transportation is 15%, metals are 10%, chemicals and allied industry is 9% and mineral products are 7%. The top five countries that Kazakhstan exports to are China, Germany, Russia, France and Romania. Kazakhstan exports to China the most and China takes up to 15% of total export. The second largest exporting country is Germany with 9%, third are Russia and France with 8%, and the fifth is Romania with 5%. Petroleum oils, crude takes up the largest portion of Kazakhstan's exports with 59% of total exports, petroleum refined is 6%, radioactive elements are 4%, petroleum gases and ferroalloys are 3% each (The Observatory of Economic Complexity, MIT).

Figure 1. Top 5 Exporters to Kazakhstan

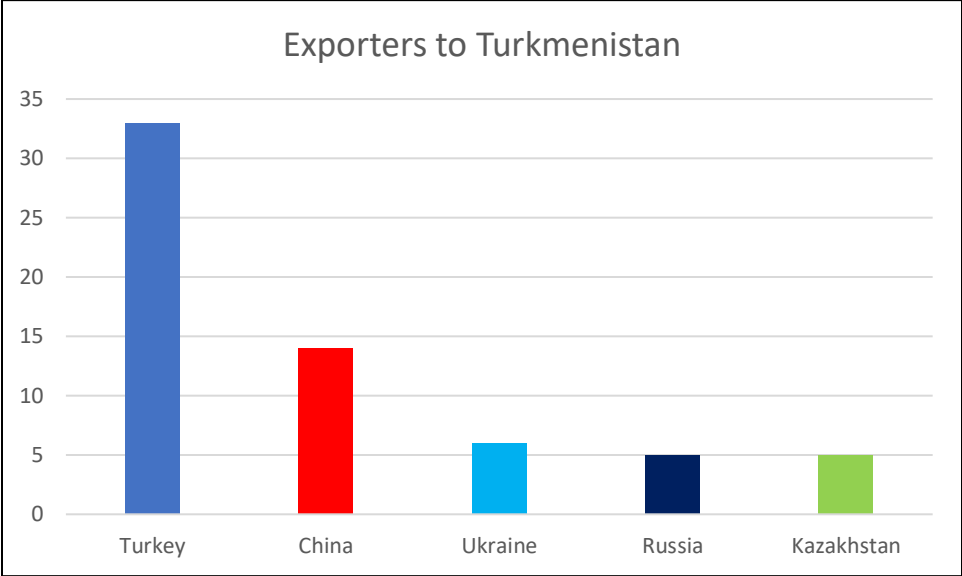


Source: The Observatory of Economic Complexity, MIT

Turkmenistan has second largest trade economy among the five Central Asian countries with total import of \$6.69 billion in 2014 and total export of \$11.1 billion in 2014 (The Observatory of Economic Complexity, MIT). The top five countries that Turkmenistan imports from are Turkey, China, Ukraine, Russia, and Kazakhstan. Turkmenistan imports from Turkey the most and Turkey takes up to 33% of the total import. The second largest importing country is China with 14%, third is Ukraine with 6%, fourth is Russia with 5% and Kazakhstan with 5%. Machinery/Electrics takes up the largest portion of Turkmenistan’s imports with 33% of total imports, metals are 18%, transportation is 14%, chemicals are 7% and food stuffs are 4%. The top five countries that Turkmenistan exports to are China, Turkey, Italy, Germany, and the U.K. Turkmenistan exports to China the most and it takes up to 82% of total export. The second largest exporting country is Turkey and Italy with only 5%, fifth are Germany and U.K. with 2%. We observe that most exports go to

China so the other four countries have trivial impacts. Petroleum gases take up the largest portion of Turkmenistan’s exports with 82% of total exports, petroleum oils, refined is 8%, cotton, raw is 5%, petroleum, crude is 2%, and cotton, yarn is 1% (The Observatory of Economic Complexity, MIT).

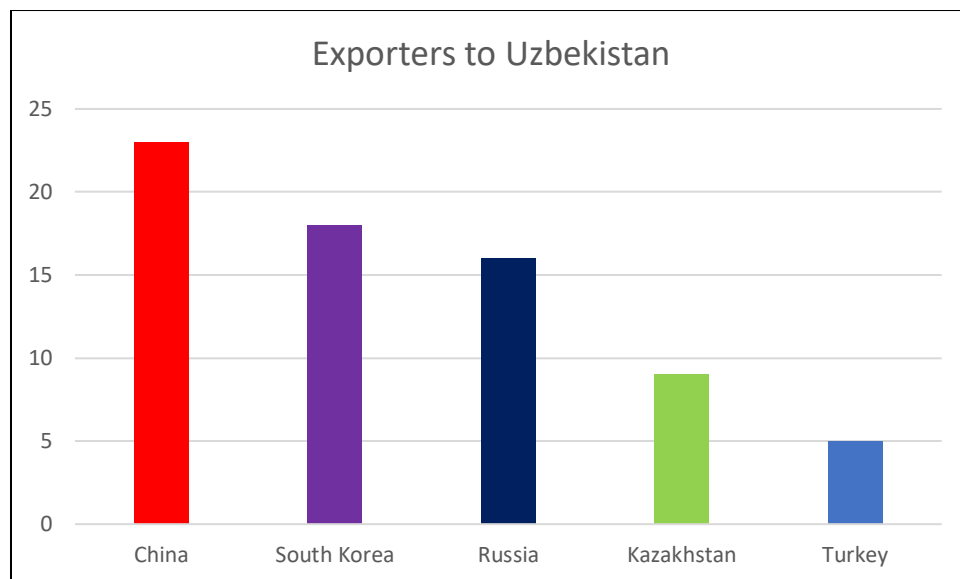
Figure 2. Top 5 Exporters to Turkmenistan



Source: The Observatory of Economic Complexity, MIT

Uzbekistan has import value of \$11.6 billion in 2014 and total export of \$5.9 billion in 2014 (The Observatory of Economic Complexity, MIT). The top five countries that Uzbekistan imports from are China, South Korea, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Turkey. Uzbekistan imports from China which takes up to 23% of the total import. The second largest importing country is South Korea with 18%, third is Russia with 16%, fourth is Kazakhstan with 9% and the fifth is Turkey with 5%. Machinery/Electrical takes up the largest portion of Uzbekistan’s imports with 27% of total imports, transportation is 15%, metals are 12%, chemicals and allied industry is 10% and vegetable products are 7%.

Figure 3. Top 5 Exporters to Uzbekistan



Source: The Observatory of Economic Complexity, MIT

Kyrgyzstan has total import of \$9.32 billion in 2014 and total export of \$1.08 billion in 2014 (The Observatory of Economic Complexity, MIT). The top five countries that Kyrgyzstan imports from are China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkey, and South Korea. Kyrgyzstan imports from China the most and China takes up to 56% of the total import. The second largest importing country is Russia with 19%, third is Kazakhstan with 8%, fourth is Turkey with 5% and the fifth is South Korea with 2%. Textiles takes up the largest portion of Kyrgyzstan's imports with 37% of total imports, mineral products are 13%, machinery/electrics are 8%, transportation is 6% and footwear/headgears are 6%. The top five countries that Kyrgyzstan exports to are Switzerland, Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkey and China. We observed that unlike other Central Asian countries, China is not the largest exporting market for Kyrgyzstan. Kazakhstan exports to Switzerland the most and it takes up to 38% of total export. The second largest exporting country is Kazakhstan with 31%,

third is Russia with 8%, fourth is Turkey with 6% and the fifth is China with 4%. Like Uzbekistan, gold takes up the largest portion of Kyrgyzstan’s exports with 40% of total exports, dried legumes are 5%, radioactive elements are also 5%, precious metals are 4%, and copper waste and scrap is 4% (The Observatory of Economic Complexity, MIT).

Figure 4. Top 5 Exporters to Kyrgyzstan

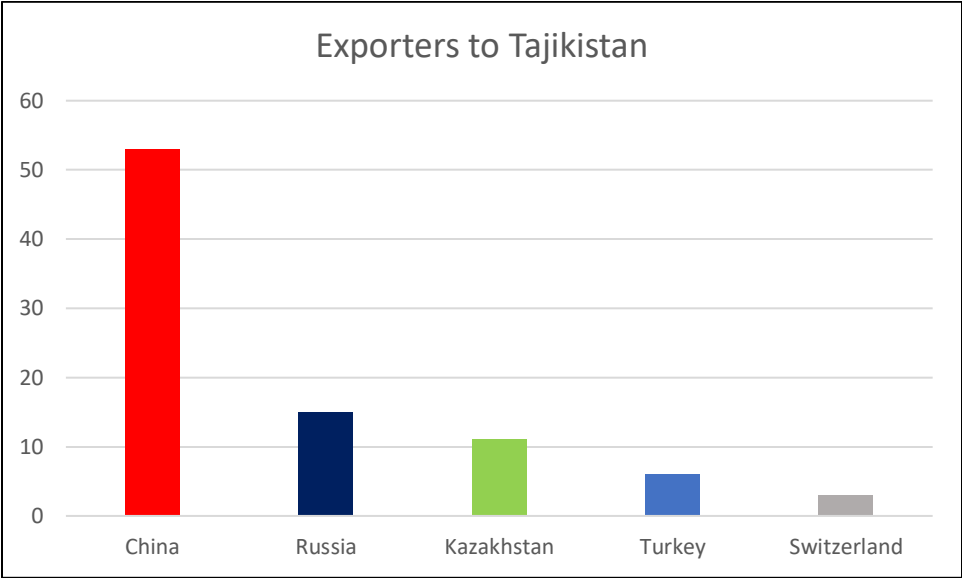


Source: The Observatory of Economic Complexity, MIT

Tajikistan has total import of \$4.64 billion in 2014 and total export of \$679 million in 2014 (The Observatory of Economic Complexity, MIT). The top five countries that Tajikistan imports from are China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkey, and Switzerland. Tajikistan imports from China the most and China takes up to 53% of the total import. The second largest importing country is Russia with 15%, third is Kazakhstan with 11%, fourth is Turkey with 6% and the fifth is Switzerland with 3%. Textiles takes up the largest portion of Tajikistan’s imports with 22% of total imports, machinery/electrics are 12%, metals are

9%, mineral products are 8% and vegetables are 7%. The top six countries that Tajikistan exports to are Kazakhstan, Turkey, Switzerland, Italy, Algeria and Russia. Tajikistan exports to Kazakhstan the most and it takes up to 25% of total export. The second largest exporting country is Turkey with 23%, third is Switzerland with 17%, fourth is Italy with 10%, the fifth is Algeria with 7%, and the last is Russia with 5%. Unwrought aluminum takes up the largest portion of Tajikistan’s exports with 26% of total exports, gold is 17%, zinc ores are 9%, lead ores are also 9%, raw cotton is 7% and other ores are 5% (The Observatory of Economic Complexity, MIT).

Figure 5. Top 5 Exporters to Tajikistan



Source: The Observatory of Economic Complexity, MIT

3.2. Summary

As the statistics show, even though South Korea is not the country that Central Asian republics trade the most, it is included in one of the top ten trade partners of Central Asia.

Figure 6 shows continuous increase in volume of trade since 1995 until 2014 between South Korea and each of the Central Asian republics. Along with the amount of trade, it is worth analyzing the trend and what kind of goods are being traded. Furthermore, using World Integrated Trade Solution (WITS) data from World Bank, it is clear that South Korea and the Central Asian republics trade the complementary products. The data is collected from 2000 to 2017 and the traded products are classified at the 2-digit HS codes. Table 3.3. represents sector level products that are top ten largest amount of export and import from a Central Asian republic to South Korea. The amount is represented in \$1000USD per year. Some of the same sectors appeared multiple times in the ten largest trade amount. South Korea mainly exports vehicles and nuclear reactors, which South Korea has ability to produce with skilled labor. On the other hand, South Korea imports mineral fuels, aluminum, iron and steel, which are mostly raw materials and can be extracted as resources. South Korea and Central Asian trade shows the trend of complementary economies. Both South Korea and Central Asia export what is abundant for them and import what is scarce.

Table 3.3. Trade Between South Korea and Central Asia by Sectors 2000-2017

	Kazakhstan
Top 10 Export to South Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances, mineral waxes • Inorganic chemicals; and inorganic compounds of precious metals; of rare earth metals, of radio-active elements and of isotopes • Iron and steel
Top 10 Import from South Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicles; other than railway or tramway roll stock, and parts and accessories thereof • Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof; sound recorders and reproducers; television image and sound recorders and reproducers, parts and accessories of such articles • Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof.

Table 3.3. Continued

	Kyrgyzstan
Top 10 Export to South Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aluminum and articles thereof • Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof • Vegetables and certain roots and tubers; edible • Fruits and nuts, edible; peel of citrus fruit or melons • Oil seeds and oleaginous fruits; miscellaneous grains, seeds and fruit, industrial or medicinal or medicinal plants; straw and fodder
Top 10 Import from South Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fabrics; knitted or crocheted • Plastics and articles thereof • Vehicles; other than railway or tramway rolling stock, and parts and accessories thereof
	Tajikistan
Top 10 Export to South Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aluminum and articles thereof • Raw hides and skins (other than furskins) and leather • Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof • Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof; sound recorders and reproducers; television image and sound recorders and reproducers, parts and accessories of such articles • Ships, boats and floating structures
Top 10 Import from South Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicles; other than railway or tramway rolling stock, and parts and accessories thereof • Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof
	Turkmenistan
Top 10 Export to South Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof; sound recorders and reproducers; television image and sound recorders and reproducers, parts and accessories of such articles • Cotton • Apparel and clothing accessories; not knitted or crocheted • Articles of leather; saddlery and harness; travel goods, handbags and similar containers; articles of animal gut (other than silk-worm gut) • Beverages, spirits and vinegar • Oil seeds and oleaginous fruits; miscellaneous grains, seeds and fruit, industrial or medicinal or medicinal plants; straw and fodder
Top 10 Import from South Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iron or steel articles • Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof • Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof; sound recorders and reproducers; television image and sound recorders and reproducers, parts and accessories of such articles

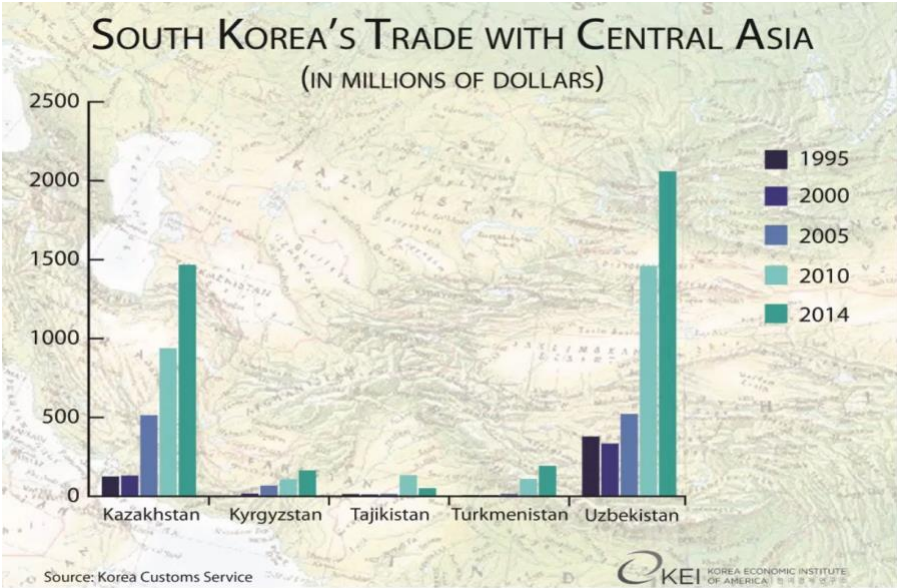
Table 3.3. Continued

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicles; other than railway or tramway rolling stock, and parts and accessories thereof
	Uzbekistan
Top 10 Export to South Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fertilizers • Inorganic chemicals; and inorganic compounds of precious metals; of rare earth metals, of radio-active elements and of isotopes • Pulp of wood or other fibrous cellulosic material; recovered (waste and scrap) paper or paperboard • Cotton • Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof
Top 10 Import from South Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicles; other than railway or tramway rolling stock, and parts and accessories thereof • Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof

Source: World Integrated Trade Solution (WITS) data, World Bank

Along with the economic trade, South Korea is recently trying to build more robust diplomatic relationship with Central Asian countries through specific initiatives. The examples of these initiatives are New Asia Initiative (NAI) started under Lee Myung-bak administration and Eurasia Initiative (EAI) which is a follow-up process of NAI and initiated during Park Geun-hye administration. Through the recent initiatives and its plans to recreate Korea as hub for connecting Eurasia continent, South Korea is looking to spread its influence on Central Asia. The next chapter analyzes South Korea's engagement in Central Asia as a middle power country. The analysis is on the two initiatives that South Korea targeted Central Asia, South Korea's investment with its national companies, and Central Asian politicians' sentiments towards South Korea. The analyses aim to see if South Korea's engagement can prove its middle power country status outside of its behaviors in East Asia.

Figure 6. South Korea's Trade with Central Asia 1995-2014



Source: Korea Customs Service and Korea Economic Institute

Figure 6 shows the increase of the amount of trade between South Korea and Central Asia from 1995 to 2014. According to the data, amount of trade between South Korea, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan increased exponentially over the twenty years. Except for a small decrease in Tajikistan, throughout the all five Central Asian countries, the trend of amount of trade with South Korea shows general increase over time.

CHAPTER 4

KOREAN INITIATIVES TOWARDS CENTRAL ASIA

This chapter delves into the history South Korea's specific initiatives with Central Asian countries. First, I introduce historical factors of South Korea and Central Asia relationships. Second, I describe the Comprehensive Central Asia Initiative, New Asia Initiative, and Eurasia Initiatives. These are the specific initiatives that South Korean government established to strengthen economic and diplomatic relations between South Korea and Central Asia and become cooperative partners. At the end of this section, I discuss how South Korea's effort to more integrate with Central Asian countries represent the characteristics of a middle power country. My analysis of South Korea's diplomacy in Central Asia shows how the country pursues diplomatic initiatives independent of its position between or in relation to great powers. This will release the geographical constraint of defining South Korea as a middle power only based on its behaviors in East Asia and its regional neighbor countries.

Table 4.1. South Korea-led Initiatives and Their Focuses

Initiative	Start Year	Trade and Economy	System Supporter	Politics and Diplomacy	Soft Power
Comprehensive Central Asia Initiative	2005	0	0	0	X
Korea-Central Asia Cooperation Forum	2007	0	X	0	0
New Asia Initiative	2009	0	X	X	X
Eurasia Initiative	2013	0	0	0	0

South Korea's diplomacy and its trend in Central Asia is relatively recently established compared to South Korea's diplomatic relationships with the United States, Japan, or other neighboring countries which South Korea established diplomatic relationship in the 1970s and 80s. Starting in 2009, South Korea began to establish international initiatives that aim to become economic, social and cultural trade partner of Central Asian republics (Hwang, 2012). The most recent and effective initiatives are New Asia Initiative under South Korean president, Lee Myung-bak and Eurasia Initiatives under Park, Geun-hye. As diplomatic relationships were established between South Korea and Central Asia and as South Korea's initiatives started working, the amount of trade between South Korea and Central Asia increased significantly particularly with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan during past ten years. South Korea's investment in Central Asia for building infrastructures and education facilities like colleges has been increasing as well.

4.1. South Korea – Central Asia effort to cooperate

In a major work on the topic, Calder and Kim (2008) argue that because of Central Asia's geographical location and its resources, South Korea would benefit from having a stronger diplomatic and economic relationship with Central Asia. Geographically, Central Asia is almost 5,000 kilometers to the west of South Korea. No Central Asian countries border South Korea and China is located in between the two. Establishing effective security alliance between South Korea and Central Asia is difficult. Furthermore, since South Korea does not have any military bases in or near Central Asia, it is almost impossible to have joint military exercises as security alliances to prevent possible military conflicts in the region. Because of physical distance and lack of bases between South Korea and Central

Asia, the possibility and efficiency of the two becoming strategic military alliances is very low. However, becoming economic and diplomatic alliances is possible for South Korea and Central Asia because being trade partners and diplomatic allies do not require geographical proximity to the partners.

Calder and Kim (2008) argue that South Korea and Central Asia are mutually beneficial economic partners. South Korea is rich in skilled labor and advanced technology. Central Asia is rich in land and natural capital which South Korea lacks. Within the basic factors of production – land, labor, and capital – South Korea and Central Asia complement each other. Central Asia is rich in land and labor, but scarce in capital. South Korea is rich in capital but scarce in land and labor. More specifically, Central Asia can help Korea to diversify its resource importers' markets by providing uranium for Korea's numerous nuclear power plants to help Korea to move away from hydrocarbon fuel sources (Calder and Kim, 2008). Indirectly, a more substantial gain for South Korea is that South Korea can ultimately generate third-party trade flows by having mediating trading companies that are only indirectly linked to Korea itself (Calder and Kim, 2008). Positioning itself as a third-country trading partner is important for South Korea for building a positive impression to Central Asian countries. China, Russia, and even India are located geographically closer to Central Asia in comparison.

Within Central Asia, Uzbekistan is the most populated country with about 29 million people and Kazakhstan is the country with the largest oil deposit. Uzbekistan serves as the transportation hub and the cultural center of Central Asia. The number of ethnic Koreans is largest in Uzbekistan; 58% of all ethnic Koreans living in Central Asia is in Uzbekistan. This is a large ethnic Korean population in Uzbekistan compared to other Central Asian

countries. This stems from the initial deportation of Koreans in 1937. When the Koreans were deported from the far east to former Soviet states, half of the Koreans were sent to in current day Kazakhstan and the other half ended up in current day Uzbekistan (V. Kim, 2016). The descendants of deported Koreans settled down in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries and they still maintain some Korean cultures and rituals such as national holidays and burial traditions.

Historically, Central Asian countries have been influenced by Russia and China. Since they gained independence from the Soviet Union, Central Asian countries are seeking complete autonomy from Russian influence. South Korea may be able to find the niche area between historical strong influence from Russia and China and Central Asia's desire to function as independent states. South Korea can be the first trading partner that Central Asia voluntarily chooses to cooperate with as an equal. It also remedies Central Asia's trade dependence on China. Having South Korea can bring advanced technology, investment in infrastructure building projects, and promote higher education in Central Asia.

Reflecting their relative importance to the South Korean population and strong economic complementarity, since South Korea started interacting with Central Asia, its focus was on Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. More recently through the New Asia Initiative under Lee administration, South Korea started to increase economic cooperation and got involved in numerous joint projects with these two countries and expand it to others. The New Asia Initiative was South Korea's attempt to expand South Korea's influence throughout all Asia including South and Southeast Asia as well as Central Asia. South Korea's concrete relationship with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan can serve as a foundation for continuation of diplomatic cooperation in the Central Asia region. Having diplomatic

cooperation will help South Korea to build strategic partnerships with all five Central Asian republics in economic and security cooperation as well.

Unlike the New Asia Initiative, the Eurasia Initiative started under the Park administration focuses on South Korea's relations with Central Asia only. Despite lack of geographical proximity, South Korea has been improving its influence in Central Asia through consecutive "Caravan events".

Historically, ethnic Korean population is concentrated in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. These two countries are rich in uranium and oil deposits which gives South Korea opportunities for investment. With the Eurasia Initiative, South Korea is looking to expand cooperation with Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan as well as continue cooperation with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The proof of their effort is one of the 2016 Caravan event host countries is Tajikistan.

4.2. Comprehensive Central Asia Initiative

In December 2005, Korean government launched a Central Asia Conference that state and private organizations participated (Fumagalli, 2015). The outcome of the conference was the Comprehensive Central Asia Initiative (CCAI). The CCAI is Korea's first strategy toward Central Asia region as a whole. South Korea began their diplomatic relationship with Central Asia in 1992. At this time, South Korea limited building its relationships to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, the countries with strong economy and governance compared to other Central Asian countries. The focus has shifted in the recent years when South Korea finally realized that they needed different sources of oil and natural gas. The goals of Comprehensive Central Asia Initiative were: "1. Establish a staging

point in Central Asia for advancement to the Eurasian continent; 2. Secure long-term supply of energy resources; and 3. Explore a market which will achieve \$10 billion in bilateral trade by 2015 and \$5 billion in construction orders” (Ko, 2009).

The South Korean government expected to achieve improvement in bilateral relations between South Korea and all five Central Asian republics through diplomacy. Strengthening bilateral and multilateral diplomacy is one of the characteristics of a middle power country. South Korea has been working to improve diplomacy and chose to have diplomatic resolutions at the times of conflicts after the Korean War ended in 1953. Since then, most of South Korea’s diplomatic relations and strategies were evaluated by its relationship with East Asian neighbors and the United States (Hwang, 2014; Park, 2016; Snyder, 2012). South Korea’s Comprehensive Central Asia Initiative expands South Korea’s boundary of robust diplomatic relationship and provides further evidence that South Korea meets the characteristic of a middle power country by reinforcing strong diplomacy with Central Asia.

4.2.1. Trade and Economy

Under the CCAI, South Korean government also expected to be a model of economic development to Central Asian republics. They promoted trades and international businesses for advance of industries. South Korea explicitly mentioned that “more synergy effects through closer collaboration between interrelated businesses and advancement of industries with relative advantage” (Ko, 2009) as one of its future goals.

4.2.2. System Supporter

South Korea said that “strengthening the legal and systemic foundation for expansion of cooperative infrastructure” (Ko, 2009) is a core objective of the CCAI. Through this statement, South Korea demonstrates another characteristic of a middle power country: the system supporter. System supporter belongs to security and international order category of a middle power country’s characteristic.

4.2.3. Politics and Diplomacy

Lee Myung-bak indicated that “The previous Roh Moo-hyun administration first introduced South Korea’s mediating role as a bridge and a hub national under the slogan of a ‘Northeast Asian Era of Peace and Prosperity’” (Lee, 2012). Therefore, the CCAI was South Korea’s first modern strategy to expand its cooperation and building a robust diplomatic relationship with Central Asia. Specifically, South Korea focused on four areas: “politics/diplomacy, energy/resources, economy and human exchange/culture” (Ko, 2009).

4.3. Korea-Central Asia Cooperation Forum

The Korea-Central Asia Cooperation Forum was initiated by South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 2007. The first session was held on November 15, 2007 where government agencies from South Korea, and Central Asian republics met to discuss about “special opportunities in Central Asia, agricultural cooperation, cultural and educational cooperation, and trade and investment finance” (Ko, 2009). South Korea aimed to achieve these goals through ministerial-level bilateral consultations with Central Asian countries. This forum was significant in South Korea’s relationship with Central Asia

because it was the first multilateral dialogue channel that was created for promoting cooperation. Korea-Central Asia Cooperation Forum was followed up by the New Asia Initiative that Lee administrative launched.

4.4. New Asia Initiative

New Asia Initiative started in June 2009 as a result of 12th Korea-ASEAN presidential meeting. Presidents of ASEAN member countries gathered in Jeju island, South Korea for the special leaders conference in 2009. This conference reassured that Korea-ASEAN relations that have been built for the past 20 years. New Asia Initiative will contribute to strengthening Korea-ASEAN relationship in the future (MOFA, 2010).

4.4.1. Trade and Economy

South Korea focused on trade with Central Asia, especially, energy and resources. South Korea imports 98% of oil from the Middle East, and recently increased instability of the region and for means of searching diversified sources of oil and other resource, South Korea seeks to have Central Asia as the new source of imports.

4.5. Eurasia Initiative

As a follow-up process for Lee's New Asia Initiative, the Park administration in South Korea started the Eurasia Initiative. Since New Asia Initiative was an effort to reintegrate South Korea and other general Asian countries including Central Asia and Southeast Asia, Park's Eurasia Initiative is South Korea's governmental plans that are solely dedicated to South Korea and Central Asia's bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

As a part of the Eurasia Initiative, Korea-Central Asia Caravan events was held from March 28 through April 1, 2016 in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan with about 100 group of government officials, businessmen, scholars, and artists from South Korea and the five Central Asian republics (MOFA, 2016). Caravan events promote political, economic, cultural mutual understanding and encourages holistic cooperation between Korea and Central Asia. Historically, these events were held annually; the first one was held in 2011 in Kazakhstan; the second one was held in 2012 in Uzbekistan; the third one was held in 2013 in Kyrgyzstan; the fourth one was held in 2014 in Uzbekistan and the fifth one was held in 2015 in Turkmenistan. In 2016, the sixth Caravan event was held in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan (MOFA, 2016). The major theme of 2016's Caravan event was "promoting cross-regional ties amid tension with neighboring North Korea" (The Korea Herald, 2016). In 2016, Korean government prepared the largest Caravan event in efforts to promote and advertise the Eurasia Initiative hoping that the event would become the starting point of tightening political, economic, and cultural cooperation between South Korea and Central Asia (MOFA, 2016). The Caravan event in 2016 had the biggest number of representatives from South Korea and Central Asia joined including people from Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP), policy negotiators from Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, and 53 performers from Korea who are experts in Korean traditional dances, K-Pop, and martial arts (MOFA, 2016).

CHAPTER 5

SOUTH KOREA'S BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS

In this chapter I look at the effects of the South Korea-led initiatives with each Central Asian country. Through analyzing bilateral relationships between South Korea and Central Asian republics, I focus on middle power characteristics of South Korea in each country.

Descriptions of South Korea's relations with Central Asian republics summarize South Korea's patterns of engagement and evaluate its middlepowermanship. Table 4 demonstrates the characteristics of middle power country used by South Korea in each Central Asian republic.

Table 5.1. Emphasis on Middle Power Characteristics in South Korea and Central Asian Republics Relations

Countries	Trade and Economy	Development and Investment	Diplomacy	Security
South Korea-Uzbekistan	0	0	0	X
South Korea-Kazakhstan	X	0	0	0
South Korea-Turkmenistan	0	0	X	X
South Korea-Kyrgyzstan	X	0	X	0
South Korea-Tajikistan	0	X	X	X

5.1. South Korea – Uzbekistan Relations

South Korea and Uzbekistan started diplomatic relationship in 1992 and since then, economic exchange between the countries increased tremendously. Therefore, President Karimov's 2015 visit to Korea is considered as the continuation of tight economic relationship between Korea and Uzbekistan and also promoted the New Asia Initiative.

President Lee also visited Uzbekistan in May as a part of promoting New Asia Initiative in Central Asia. During the phone calls between Hwang Gyo-ahn, Uzbek President Mirziyoyev mentioned that he was happy to re-confirm that both South Korea and Uzbekistan are strongly willing to strengthen strategic and holistic cooperation. He also said that since independence of Uzbekistan, South Korea became the most trustworthy partner and he is looking forward to have more cooperation on different issues. Mirziyoyev said that Korean descendants living in Uzbekistan are working as a bridge to the friendly relationship between South Korea and Uzbekistan. South Korea and Uzbekistan are planning on presidential letter exchange, high officials visits, and cultural performances for celebrating 25th year of starting the diplomatic relationship. The both countries look forward to having deeper understanding between the peoples of the two countries, and deepening cooperation in broader ranges (Yonhap News Agency, 2017).

5.1.1. Trade and Economy

President Lee Myung-bak and President Karimov from Uzbekistan had a presidential meeting and talked about co-development of gasoline depository and improving international trade in agriculture, environment, and culture.

Lee Myung-bak achieved several milestones in terms of South Korea-Central Asia relationship. Lee and President Karimov signed 16 deals about joint development of Uzbekistan's oil fields. According to Uzbekistan president Karimov, "South Korea is an important partner to the Central Asian republics, and especially to Uzbekistan (Rakhimov and Sung, 2016)." South Korea is the second largest exporter in Uzbekistan's economy as the Figure 3 (Top 5 Exporters to Uzbekistan) shows.

Uzbekistan president Karimov visited South Korea a year after Park's visit in 2015. In May 2015, when Karimov was in Seoul, he signed 60 documents relating to trade, investment, economic and technical cooperation. These projects and investments worth U.S. \$7.7 billion (Rakhimov and Sung, 2016).

Prime Minister Han Seung-soo had many achievements in Korea and Uzbekistan relations. Between 2010 and 2016, Han signed a contract to purchase 2,600 tons of uranium from Uzbekistan that worth \$400 million. This is an opportunity for South Korea to diversify its oil and gas import countries since South Korea used to import uranium from Australia, Canada, Kazakhstan, the United States, and France. Another achievement that Han made was leading Korea's state-run company Korea Gas Corp (KOGAS) to take a contract with its counterpart Uzbekneftegaz, on joint exploration of oil and gas fields in Chust, Namangan, and Uzunkui regions of Uzbekistan (Ko, 2009).

When Korean Prime Minister Han Seung-soo met with Uzbek Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoev, they agreed that Uzbekistan will give rights to South Korea to explore A-District of the Amu Darya region. This region is where the largest oil deposit exists in Uzbekistan. Han and Mirziyoev also agreed that South Korea and Uzbekistan will start a joint development of molybdenum and tungsten mines 150 kilometers west of Samarkand (Ko, 2009).

During Lee and Park administration, the Korean government was an important catalyst between South Korea and Central Asia for signing numerous contracts for projects and purchasing 2,600 tons of uranium worth \$400 million from Uzbekistan (Calder and Kim, 2008). This amount is about 9 percent of South Korea's projected annual uranium consumption.

5.1.2. Development and Investment

Korea also agreed to invest \$17.6 billion in building sewage system and airports in Navoi. South Korea's Hanjin Group, parent of Korean Airlines is taking the lead in building Navoi airport (Calder and Kim, 2008). South Korea and Uzbekistan agreed to move towards a special relationship (Rakhimov and Sung, 2016). Furthermore, Uzbekistan is willing to cooperate with South Korea about technological development in Uzbekistan.

Specifically, South Korean companies and agencies directly invested in projects in Uzbekistan. Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) got involved in building airports in Tashkent and Navoi for better transportation. South Korea Prime Minister Hwang Gyo-ahn and Uzbek Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoev agreed on bilateral cooperation in developing gas channel in Ustyurt Gas Chemical Complex which is located in Surgil deposits. This project costs about \$4 billion.

In September 2015, Korean company LG CNS launched a joint venture in Uzbekistan. In this investment, LG CNS has the majority of shares of the joint venture and two other Uzbek companies share the remainder. By doing so, LG CNS still has the right to sway corporate decisions in favor of South Korea when it is necessary (LGCNS, 2015). The company focused on the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) with the Ministry of Development of Information Technologies and Communications (MDITC) in the Republic of Uzbekistan (Kim, 2015). CNS aims to implement the corporate/individual database system and a few projects for e-Government. The components of e-government consist of registration system of the Supreme Court and providing technology experts into government branches (LGCNS, 2015). Uzbekistan is seeking to develop economy based on ITC. With LGCNS's investment and a nation-wide support from Park administration on

building up business in Central Asia, South Korea and Uzbekistan are willing to continue the cooperation in bilateral trade and investment.

For education development and aid, South Korea is training small and medium-size businesses in Uzbekistan. South Korean Inha University built its campus in Tashkent Uzbekistan in 2014 to provide education on computer science and high-tech engineering (Rakhimov and Sung, 2016).

5.1.3. Politics and Diplomacy

Lee Myung-bak and Karimov also talked about two countries' the ways to increase cooperation and exchange opinions about regional, international politics. Currently, South Korea focuses on the investment in education, tourism, and cultural exchange, and security. In 2006, South Korea and Uzbekistan signed a declaration on strategic partnership and they signed a new Joint Declaration in 2014 while Park was visiting Tashkent (Rakhimov and Sung, 2016, MOFA, 2015).

On the political side, Lee and Karimov agreed to visit each other's country on regular bases to continue to exchange political views about bilateral and global issues that may affect South Korea and Uzbekistan relations. They also agreed on promoting cooperation with the UN and other regional and international organizations. According to Ko, "Karimov highly appraised Korea's role and efforts in tiding over the global financial crisis as a co-chair of the G20 summit conference (Ko, 2009)." Karimov specifically expressed his positive opinion about South Korea by praising its economic achievement.

5.2. South Korea – Kazakhstan Relations

As a part of his effort to visit Central Asia, Lee Myung-bak met Kazakhstan president Nazarbayev. Lee and Nazarbayev agreed to ameliorate bilateral cooperation and improve the two countries' relationship as a "strategic Partnership (Ko, 2009)."

5.2.1. Development and Investment

Lee and Nazarbaev signed 10 memorandum of understanding the two countries' cooperation on energy and resources and development of Jambil maritime oil block in Caspian Sea as well as a thermal power plant in Balkhash (Ko, 2009). "The two sides will also hold talks at least once every two years to enhance their cooperation in the development of nuclear energy. It will include joint planning and construction of small and medium-sized nuclear reactors.

In Kazakhstan, Korean Prime Minister Han under Lee administration made many achievements as he did in Uzbekistan. First, he signed contracts that gave South Korea a right to explore offshore Zambil oil field for a long term supply of uranium. Han also signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that gave a chance to South Korea to develop molybdenum mine with Kazakhstan counterpart (Ko, 2008).

5.2.2. Politics and Diplomacy

Other than economic and energy cooperation, Lee and Nazarbayev also agreed to work together in fighting the worldwide recession, terrorism and global warming (Ko, 2009)." We can notice from the deals and conversations that Lee and Nazarbaev had as a part of South Korea's reaching out to Central Asia and a part of New Asia Initiative, both

Kazakhstan and Korea want to cooperate in different sectors of businesses to develop Kazakhstan and supply oil and natural resources for South Korea.

5.2.3. Security

During Lee administration, South Korea and Kazakhstan signed a few agreements related to security and international peace building. The two countries agreed to proceed with joint peace and security promotion in Asia especially by encouraging multilateral talks and conferences such as Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation of Europe (OSCE) (Ko, 2009). South Korea and Kazakhstan agree that increase in multilateral dialogues is an effective way to increase trust between countries and move forward cooperation. They thought that Korea-Central Asia Forum contributes to the idea of promoting peace and practical cooperation of Asian countries (Ko, 2009).

5.3. South Korea – Turkmenistan Relations

South Korea and Turkmenistan relationship has not been as robust as South Korea and Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan relationship. The reason why there's not much information or actions have been done between South Korea and Turkmenistan is not explicitly stated. I assume not much has been done between South Korea and Turkmenistan is because not many Korean descendants are living in Turkmenistan in contrast to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Another reason might be Turkmenistan might not have stable economy and political environment for South Korea to safely trade.

South Korea and Turkmenistan relations accelerated in August 2016 after the two countries started a diplomatic relationship in 1992. In 2016, Yoon Duk-min, Korean head of the National Foreign Service met with Akja Nurberdiyeva, Turkmenistan Chairman of National Assembly to discuss about South Korea-Turkmenistan relationship, both countries' diplomatic policies, instability in Korean peninsula, and cooperation in training diplomats. Yoon perceived that "South Korea and Turkmenistan relationship has been positively developing in politics, economy, and culture and he hopes this cooperative relationship between the two countries ameliorate in the future." (MOFA, 2016) Yoon also mentioned that he was glad that Turkmenistan endorsed denuclearization of Korean peninsula following the North Korea's 4th nuclear test. South Korea requested more robust cooperation in establishing security in Korean peninsula.

5.3.1. Trade and Economy

Following Yoon's meeting with Nurberdiyeva, Lim Sung-nam 1st rank vice foreign minister participated in 10th Korea-Central Asia Cooperation Forum and met with Turkmenistan's counterpart, Vepa Hajiyev in November 2016. Both foreign ministers agreed that presidential visits in 2014 and 2015 strengthened the relationship between South Korea and Turkmenistan. They agreed to have more official meetings and conferences to discuss about economic and cultural exchange to promote stronger cooperation between the two countries.

Lim Sung-nam also emphasized that Turkmenistan has world's 4th largest natural gas deposit which will benefit South Korea in trade and economic cooperation (MOFA, 2016). As a part of economic cooperation, South Korean government and Turkmenistan

government signed a joint agreement on airway businesses in Ashgabat on November 26, 2016 (MOFA, 2016). The two countries agreed to have free airways between the two countries and have more flexibilities for the airline companies to operate (MOFA, 2016).

5.3.2. Development and Investment

In Turkmenistan, the prime minister consulted on Korean firms' participation in that country's inland and offshore gas fields. He also secured an opportunity to participate in modernization projects of Turkmenbashi port facilities (Ko, 2009).

Lim emphasized that South Korean companies started to get involved in Turkmenistan's infrastructure and energy businesses. Hajiyev hopes to develop more robust economic ties cooperation with South Korea. Lim assessed that Turkmenistan hosted the first sustainable transportation conference and has been cooperating with transportation sector.

Most recently in March 2018, South Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs,, Kang Kyung-hwa, invited Rashid Meredov, Turkmenistan Vice Prime Minister of Foreign Affairs to have a foreign minister's conference in March 30. During this meeting, two foreign ministers plan to discuss about practical regional, and global cooperation including South Korean companies' ongoing infrastructure construction in large oil and chemistry sectors (MOFA, 2018).

5.4. South Korea – Kyrgyzstan Relations

South Korea's interest in Kyrgyzstan officially documented in 2007. South Korea's assessment of Kyrgyzstan was rather harsh than other Central Asian countries because

Kyrgyzstan's political corruption, lack of natural resources compared to other Central Asian countries which slowed down economic development of Kyrgyzstan. Even though Kyrgyzstan joined WTO in 1998, it was affected by Russian economic crisis in 1998 and decrease in gold production, which is Kyrgyzstan's one of the export products (Korean embassy in Kazakhstan report, 2007). After 2003, Kyrgyzstan focused on electricity production, agricultural reform, infrastructure building, and IT industry development. After 2003, its economic growth rate rose up to 7% but it decreased to -0.6% in 2005 because of continuation of political instability, and high oil price.

5.4.1. Development and Investment

South Korea recognizes the potential to develop water power, mining, agricultural development, residential building construction, tourism, road infrastructure building, and ICT sector development. However, difficulties still exist because of instability and political unrest. One of the first Korean industry that invested in Kyrgyzstan despite the hardships is residential apartment construction company. Artis Global initiated building residential apartments in Bishkek in September 2006 (Korean embassy in Kazakhstan report, 2007).

South Korean companies invested in tourism industry as well. Lake Issyk-Kul is one of the most famous sightseeing places in Kyrgyzstan along with Pik Pobedy, Pik Lenin, Khan Tengri and other mountains and fjord lakes. South Korea is planning to build resorts near Issyk-Kul lake region as they expect increase in tourist after straight road is built from Almaty to Issyk-Kul (Korean embassy in Kazakhstan report, 2007). South Korea considers broadening Kyrgyzstan's infrastructure, including road building and increase in airlines to promote more tourism. The difficulty for Korean business to participate in road building is

that Kyrgyzstan government has not enough funding and Korean companies are not going to make enough profit compared to Chinese companies with cheap labors who are also investing in Kyrgyzstan's road building projects. South Korea is looking to develop more Information Communications Technology (ICT) industry and it will be worthwhile to invest in ICT sector because Kyrgyzstan's ICT industry is developing more quickly than other Central Asian countries (Korean embassy in Kazakhstan report, 2007).

In 2013, Yoon Byung-se, Minister of Foreign Affairs met Erlan Abdyldaev, Kyrgyzstan's counterpart during 68th UN General Assembly meeting to discuss about Korea-Central Asia Cooperation Forum that had been planned to happen in Bishkek in October 2013 and practical business cooperation. Yoon and Abdyldaev specifically discussed about broadening cooperation in energy, resource development, cooperation in agriculture, medical, cultural and development. Abdyldaev emphasized the importance of Korea-Kyrgyzstan Agricultural Center equipped with high technology Greenhouse and agriculture technology education and showed high interest in continuing cooperation with South Korea (MOFA, 2013).

5.4.2. Security

South Korea provided humanitarian aid to Kyrgyzstan when Kyrgyz-Uzbek ethnic dispute occurred in June 2010. During the violent dispute, at least 187 people died, 1966 people were injured and about a million people were internally displaced or became refugees. South Korean government provided food and medical supplies through UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. It is South Korea's effort to restore peace and promote security in Kyrgyzstan (MOFA, 2010).

5.5. South Korea – Tajikistan Relations

In June 2011, Kim Sung-hwan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade met with Shukurjon Zuhurov, Tajikistan Speaker of the House, to discuss about South Korea and Tajikistan's cooperation for ameliorating their relationship. Both parts agreed that the two countries improved their cooperation in water resource development, agriculture, road infrastructure building, and ICT development since the two countries started diplomatic relationship in 1992(MOFA, 2011). Zuhurov reconfirmed that he would work with South Korea to continue the cooperation businesses in every sector. In 2012, Tajikistan officially became a member of WTO and in April 2015, Tajikistan Embassy was built in Seoul, South Korea (MOFA, 2015). Cho Tae-yeol, 2nd vice foreign minister, participated in opening ceremony of Tajikistan Embassy and met with President Rahmon along with Tajik nationals living in South Korea. Cho and Rahmon embraced the relationship that the two countries have built and agreed to continue cooperation (MOFA, 2015).

5.6. South Korea-Central Asia Relationship Summary

As we can see, South Korea has significantly larger trade and cooperation history and investment in different sectors of businesses in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan compared to Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. A few variables can explain these differences. First, many more ethnic Koreans live in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan because of historical reasons discussed before. Second, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have larger economy (higher GDP per capita) compared to the other three (add tables). Third, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have comparably stable political environment than Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan where violent ethnic disputes, ongoing civil wars until recent years, and

threat of terrorism especially in Tajikistan. Despite the differences in level of cooperation and trade, when representatives from South Korea and all five Central Asian countries meet, they tend to agree that bilateral cooperation has been developing and strengthening since the diplomatic relationship was established in 1992. Even though the level of robustness in cooperation varies in each Central Asian country, it is clear that South Korea is pursuing middle power diplomacy in Central Asia through promoting economic development, security of the region, and soft power diplomacy using cultural exchange. The next section analyzes more in detail what aspects of middle power diplomacy that South Korea is pursuing in Central Asia.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Through analysis of South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs documents, academic papers, and other news articles, I explained initiatives that South Korea started to connect with Central Asia, and South Korea's bilateral relationships with each of the five Central Asian republics. As a middle power country, South Korea focused on developing economic and diplomatic aspects in their key initiatives. With the Comprehensive Central Asia Initiative, South Korea promoted trade and international businesses, and positioned itself as a mediator and a promoter of Northeast Asia's peace. The New Asia Initiative focused on economics, and particularly the energy and resources sector. Lastly, the Eurasia Initiative covered many aspects of South Korea and Central Asia relationship including economy, politics, security, and cultural cooperation. Increase in trade amount between South Korea and Central Asia from 1995 to 2014 is one clear evidence that reflects South Korea's effort to develop tighter and more cooperative relationship with Central Asia.

Observing bilateral relationships between South Korea and each five Central Asian republics, it is important to notice that South Korea performed the characteristics of a middle power country described in academic literature. In South Korea and Uzbekistan relations, the South Korean government emphasizes the spheres of Trade & Economy, Development & Investment, and Politics & Diplomacy. Uzbekistan is the country that South Korea has the most cooperative and strongest relationship with among the Central Asian republics. South Korea has 16 deals with Uzbekistan about joint oil field development, large amount of imports and exports, and \$17 billions of investment in infrastructure building.

South Korean companies such as LG and Hanjin are stationed in Uzbekistan to conduct infrastructure building and oil and gas field exploration.

Kazakhstan has South Korea's second largest investment and cooperative relationship among the five Central Asian republics. In Kazakhstan, South Korea focused on Development & Investment, Politics & Diplomacy and Security aspects of the bilateral relationship. South Korean president Lee Myung-bak and Kazakhstan president Nazarbayev agreed to joint develop oil blocks and confirmed South Korea's investment in energy and resources. It is worth noticing that security aspects of South Korea and Kazakhstan relationship because Kazakhstan systematically endorsed joint peace and security promotion in Asia through international measures such as CICA, ACD, and OSCE.

South Korea's relationship with Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan are not as strong as South Korea's relationship with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. But the emphasis on the Trade & Economy, Investment, and Politics & Diplomacy is the same as South Korea's emphasis on relationship with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. In Turkmenistan, South Korea agreed to invest in airway businesses and investment in natural gas deposits. Economic and cultural exchange and strengthening cooperative relationship between South Korea and Turkmenistan is also promoted. In Kyrgyzstan, South Korea invested in infrastructure building and IT industry development. South Korea also recognizes the potential to develop water power, mining, and agricultural development in Kyrgyzstan along with tourism industry. South Korea and Tajikistan relationship is still in the begging stage. The two countries agreed to continue cooperation in water resource and agricultural development as well as infrastructure building and IT industry investment.

For an additional understanding on South Korea and Central Asian republics' relations, I analyzed data from the GDELT project on global database on events, language, and tone. I gathered data from 2000 to 2017 to analyze the changes on number of articles and the tone of languages. To get the perspectives from the both sides, I gathered data reported from South Korea about the five Central Asian republics and I also gathered data reported from the five Central Asian republics about South Korea. The types of events that reports depict is measured by Goldstein scale (Goldstein, 1992). The Goldstein scale is a measure of how positive or negative bilateral relations are on a scale from -10 to 8.3; -10 being extremely hostile events such as military attack and 8.3 being extremely friendly events such as extend military assistance. Figures 7 and 8 portray changes in tone and number of articles over time using loess trend line that is calculated from all individual events.

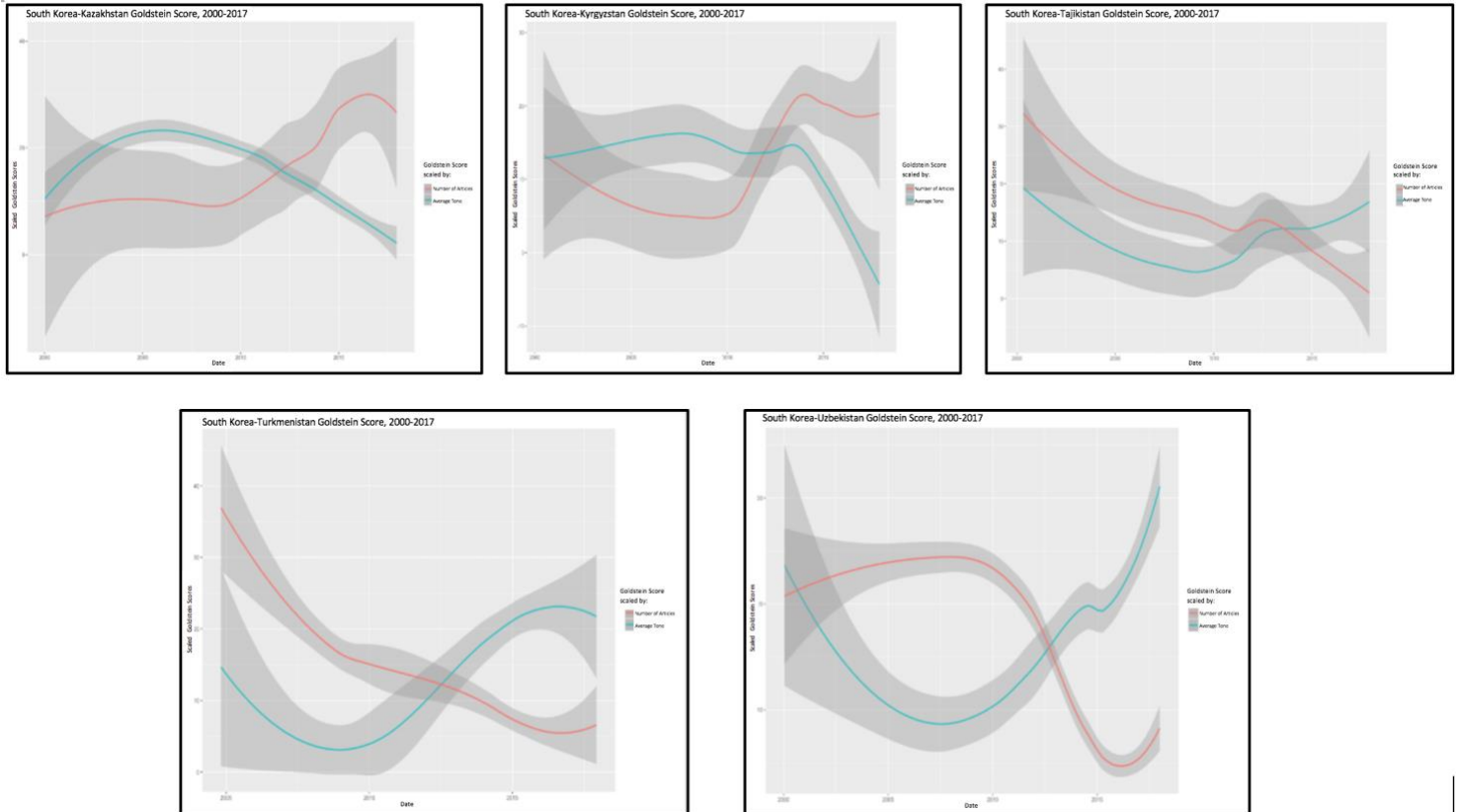
From South Korean reporting on Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, I observed that average tone of articles became more hostile over time when the number of articles increased. From South Korean reporting on Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, average tone of articles became more friendly when the number of articles decreased.

From Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan reporting on South Korea, the average tone of articles became more hostile over time when the number of articles on South Korea increased. From reports from Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, the average tone of articles became more friendly when the number of articles about South Korea decreased.

Both South Korea and Kazakhstan used more hostile tone about each other and the number of articles increased. Tone of South Korea's reports on Kyrgyzstan became more hostile but Kyrgyzstan's tone on South Korea became more friendly over time. Both South

Korea's reports on Tajikistan and Turkmenistan became more friendly but Tajikistan and Turkmenistan's tone about South Korea became more hostile. Lastly, both South Korea's reporting on Uzbekistan and Uzbekistan's reporting on South Korea became much more friendly over time when the number of articles decreased.

Figure 7. South Korean Report on Central Asia

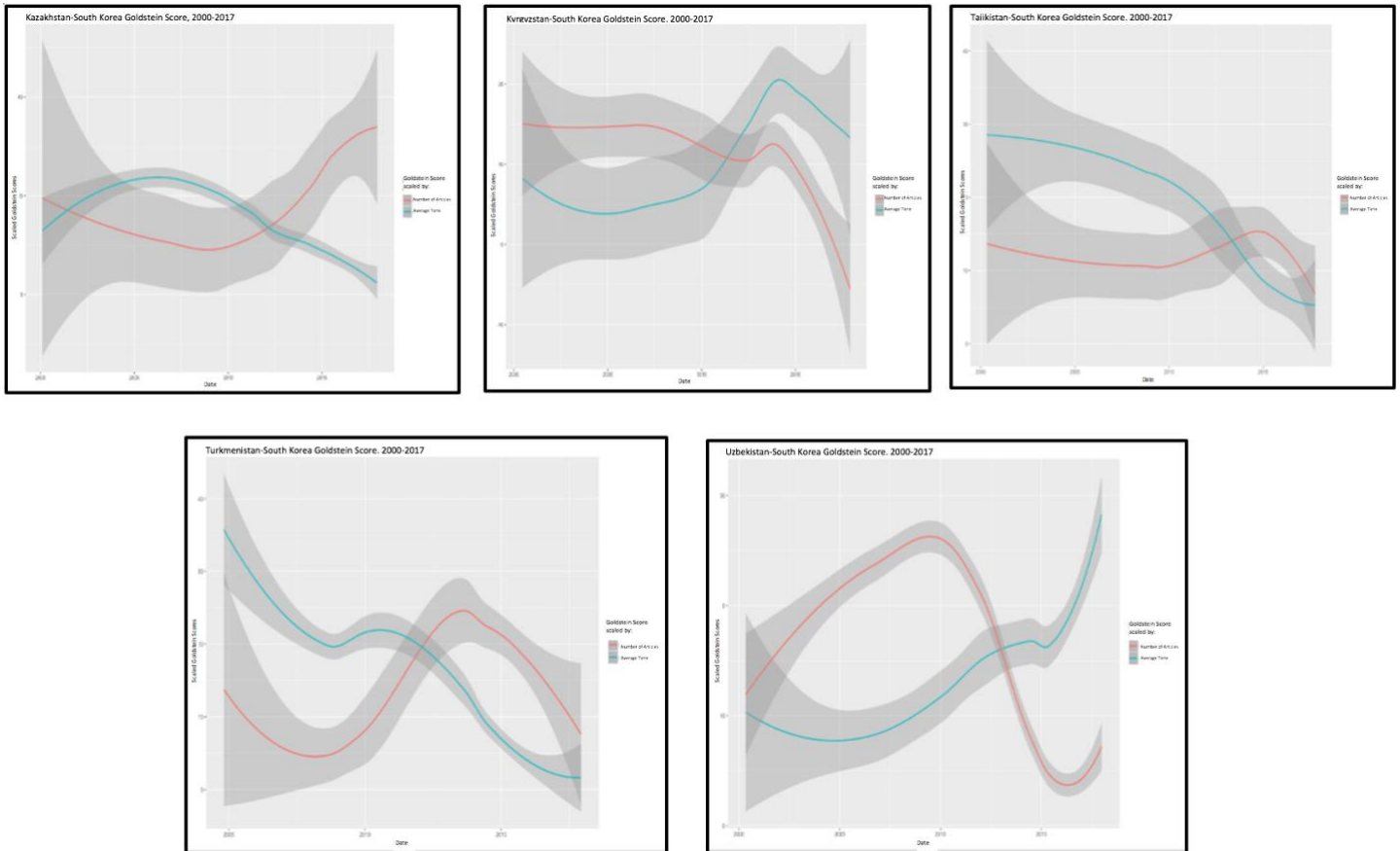


Source: GDELT Project

As we see in Figure 7, tone of articles (represented in green line) about Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan became more hostile over time in South Korea when the number of articles (represented in red line) increased. According to the analysis, it can be inferred that South Korea paid more attention and reported more about Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan but the contents of articles became more hostile over time. By contrast, the tone of articles about Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan became more friendly when the number of

articles decreased. It can be inferred that Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were not in the center of South Korea’s attention, but the tone of article became more friendly over time. The crossover between number of articles and the tone of articles happens around 2011.

Figure 8. Central Asian Report on South Korea



Source: GDELT Project

As we see in Figure 8, tone of articles about South Korea became more hostile over time in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan when the number of articles (represented in red line) increased. According to the analysis, it can be inferred that Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan paid more attention and reported more about South Korea but the contents of articles became more hostile over time. In Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan by contrast, the tone of articles (represented in green line) about South Korea

became more friendly when the number of articles decreased. In these two countries, they reported less about South Korea and it can be inferred that South Korea was not in the center of their attention, but the tone of article became more friendly over time. The crossover between number of articles and the tone of articles happens around 2011. Given that in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, South Korea was one of the top five trading partners, economic relationship between South Korea and Central Asian republics may not have a positive correlation.

As we can see from the cooperation measures, despite the difference in robustness, South Korea generally has constructive relationship with Central Asian republics. Countries like Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have longer history of cooperation. Specific projects of South Korea and its investment sectors are clearly stated in Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs documents. South Korea has relatively weaker relationship with Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan but the potential to broaden the cooperation and more investment opportunities for South Korea are present. There are some generalization about the South Korea-Central Asia relationships to be made: South Korea concentrates on Trade & Economy, Energy & Investment, and Politics & Diplomacy aspects of relationship. All of these traits that South Korea demonstrates are characteristics of a middle power country. South Korea is defined as a middle power country in current political science literature. South Korea was commonly judged by its location and diplomatic behavior among geographical and political neighbor countries which are the United States, China, and Japan. Through the analysis of South Korea's relationship with Central Asia, it is right to say that South Korea behaves as a middle power country outside of East Asia. East Asia has been the location where South Korea's middle power diplomacy was shown.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The purposes of this paper were: First, to test if South Korea truly behaves as a middle power country outside of East Asia using the case study of South Korea and Central Asia relationship; Second, to define middle power country's characteristics more clearly. If South Korea is a middle power country, then I expected to see the characteristics of a middle power country defined in literature in South Korea's relationship with Central Asia. To test the hypothesis, I collected government documents from Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, academic articles, and reputable news articles to see what South Korea has done in relations to Central Asia. After analyzing the documents, I concluded that South Korea has a cooperative and complementary relationship with all five Central Asian republics despite the differences in degree of cooperation. From South Korea's relationship with Central Asia, it is clear that South Korea concentrates on Trade & Economy, Energy & Investment, and Politics & Diplomacy aspects. These aspects commonly appear in South Korea and Central Asia relationships. Therefore, to determine if a country is a middle power country, its location, economic status, do not matter much but how a country behave cooperatively in relation to the countries it interacts with matters more significantly. In sum, South Korea truly behaves as a middle power country outside of East Asia. A middle power country's characteristics can be more narrowly defined as a country that focuses on Trade & Economy, Energy & Investment, and Politics & Diplomacy aspects in its relationship with other countries.

For further research to more embellish the argument of this paper, I suggest three other possible data collection options. First, it will be helpful to collect reports from governments of the five Central Asian republics to cross examine the validity of South Korea's middlepowermanship in the region. Second, conducting a text analysis on South Korea's opinion about the five Central Asian republics, and Central Asia's opinion about South Korea from 1991 to present to strengthen the argument about why South Korea and Central Asian relationships are cooperative. Third, this paper shows that South Korea has more robust cooperative relations with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and not so much with Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. I can speculate the difference is coming from the number of Korean descendants living in each country, economic advancement, and government stability can be the factors of difference in level of cooperation. Further research can be done to verify the reasons of the different cooperation levels and its implications on South Korea and Central Asia relations.

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