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# South Korea + MENA Relations

Post-Korean War - Present

CJ Roey

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# Overview

1. Post-Korean War relations to the Middle East
2. South Korean investment in the Middle East
3. Seoul's current stance on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Map of Middle East and North Africa region<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup>Note: The disputed territory of Western Sahara is not depicted separately from Morocco, which currently administers the region.

Source: USDA, 2015

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# Post-Korean War Diplomatic Relations

- A devastated South Korea leans on the shoulder of the United States
- Cold War divisions dictated Korea's diplomatic relations
  - Tunisia - Jordan - Iran - Israel - Saudi Arabia -
- Seoul was too focused on nation-building

Alternatively...

- North Korea was practicing “chu'ch” or self-reliance
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# Post-Korean War Diplomatic Relations

- Pyongyang sided with pro-Soviet powers in the MENA region
    - Yemen - Syria - Sudan -
  - North Korea allied with “Third World” non-aligned nations with radical governments
  - South Korea allied with anti-communist states, and pro-U.S. states
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# The 1970s - The Oil Boom



- Pres. Park Chung-Hee wants a less U.S. dependant Seoul
  - *Chaebol* seeking the MENA region markets
  - South Korea imports **85%** of its oil from MENA region
    - Nuclear contracts with UAE, Jordan, Turkey
      - Other free trade agreements and Korean based infrastructural development
    - S. Korea's new involvement into the Middle East made them factors in Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, the ASEAN Regional Forum, and the United Nations
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# Israel and Palestine



- South Korea's relationship with Israel leads to Arab boycotts on any country that trades with Israel
  - Israel - one of the first MENA countries to establish relations with South Korea (1962)
  - Seoul must make a decision in this conflict:
    - Choose their U.S. backed ally
    - Choose their oil-rich economic partner
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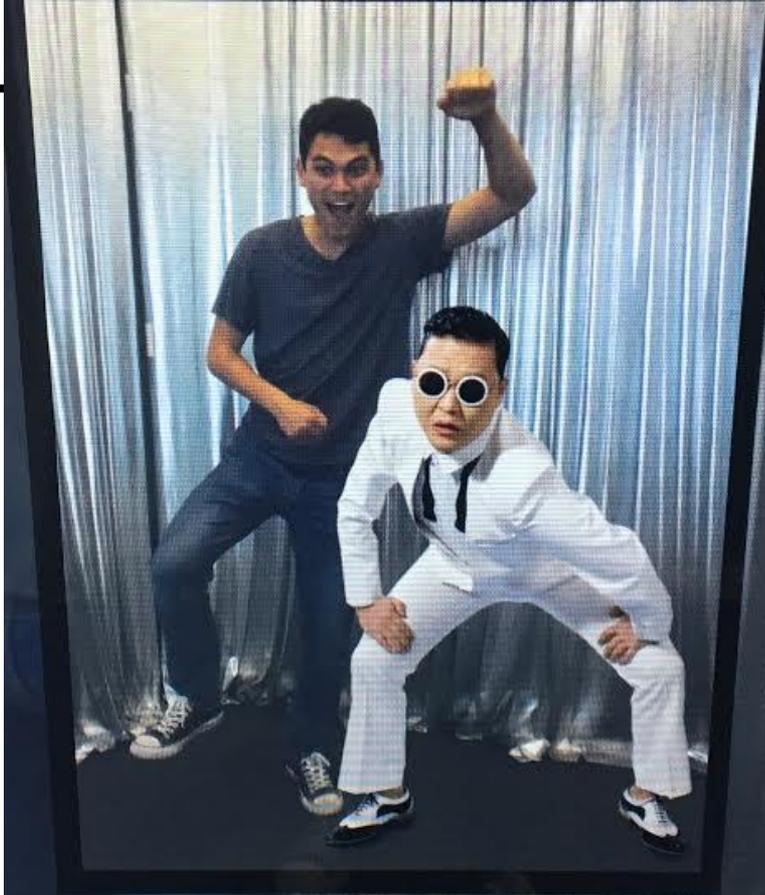
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# Israel and Palestine

- South Korea chooses economic enrichment
- S Korea's most important trading partners in the MENA region are Saudi Arabia and UAE
- They do not trade with Israel and they do not open an embassy in Jerusalem







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# Questions?

**Should South Korea prioritize domestic affairs in unification with North Korea before helping resolve international conflicts?**

-How will this affect their hegemony within the region?  
How does South Korea escape the role of a secondary power?

**Is prioritizing economic prosperity more crucial than assisting allies?**

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# Questions

Should South Korea use the U.S. policy of “South Korea First” in order to gain more power regionally, and among the international community?

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