

THE EVOLUTION OF SOUTH KOREAN CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

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In the modern world, more and more countries emphasize the special role of politics in the cultural sphere, and the use of the term “foreign cultural policy” became frequent. In case of successful implementation of this policy, it can become a tool supporting the foreign policy strategy of a state by establishing a solid base for the promotion of national interests as well as influencing various social, political, and economic processes in the international arena. This policy is realized through cultural diplomacy, a diplomatic activity that applies culture as a means to achieve basic objectives of external policy such as the creation of a positive image of a country and the popularization of the nation's culture and language [1]. Otherwise, this term can be defined as the use of already existing or newly constructed socio-cultural and scientific connections by the state to reach its political, diplomatic, and propagandistic aspirations [2].

Korea is among the countries which prefer the magnification of attractiveness of its national culture around the globe implementing one of the effective means of soft power, which is cultural diplomacy, in elaborating its strategies and realization of politics at different levels.

The success of its strategy can be observed in the magazine *Monocle* providing a detailed report regarding the country's ranking in terms of soft power or its impact. In the previous decade, South Korea had been ranked in the top 20. In 2011, the country was placed the 14th [3]. However, it did not stop there and the current result is quite impressive. In the December 2020/January 2021 edition of the magazine, South Korea was in 2nd place, ranked after Germany [4]. Technologies catalyzed the rapid development of the country, nowadays Korean pop culture successor of this catalyst role. Today Korea is undergoing rapid growth: akin to the economic transformation of the country during the post-war period, its influence is spreading at unprecedentedly high rates. In addition to its status as a global technological leader, diplomatic authority - positive aftermath of the G20 summit, and effective promotion of the “Made in Korea” brand, Korea is perceived positively due to its practiced democracy, free elections, and freedom of speech.

However, it is worth noting that South Korea's unprecedented global recognition is the result of transformations in the government's approach to using cultural diplomacy. The state's policy regarding this means had undergone a number of changes since the 20th century when the first efforts were taken by officials to construct and promote South Korea's image as a developing and prospering nation after the Korean War of 1950.

To put into the historical context, the Korean peninsula had always presented the interests of superpowers such as China, the USSR, Japan, and the United States. The presence of these actors created a unique geopolitical environment for the country. Next, the Korean War of 1950 between the South and North Korea had a devastating effect on social life and the economy, and in this decade, it remained the world's poor country, with low standards of living. Realizing the necessity of becoming a part of international relations and affecting the course of the political process, Korea had to heavily rely on the economic progress of the country, as well as cultural elements in

increasing its world recognition. This paper explores the development of cultural diplomacy in South Korea indicating relevant blueprint and ways of CD realization for other nations.

The discussion of cultural diplomacy usually starts from the concept of soft power by Joseph Nye. Being the representative of neoliberalism, Nye attempted to prove that the effect of Soft Power is stronger than Hard Power which lies in compelling the counteragent to undertake undesirable actions resulting in resistance or even conflict escalation. In this regard, Nye views culture as a source of soft power but not necessarily the soft power itself: culture is deployed to reach clear objectives under well-developed government strategies [5].

Other scholars hold a similar view to Nye's assumption that culture is considered to be a source of symbolic capital [6] and "a resource for attaining an end" [7, p. 29] meaning that cultural diplomacy is an instrumental application of culture by state actors to achieve the protection of national interests. Cultural diplomacy can also be framed as a form of modern diplomacy that constructs and represents national identity [8].

This field of research received a great amount of attention in the last decade in Western countries, whereas the role of context shaping the application of cultural diplomacy by Asian countries lacks critical inquiry into it. Developed countries had long been deploying their national culture to support the economy and foreign policy strategies. This practice of CD proliferated due to the intensification of the soft power agenda and the development of information technologies [9]. In the light of the rising economic potential of Asian countries, the CD has become equally important for this region regarding their regional and international influence.

Up until the 1990s, Korea used to be associated with poverty, backwardness, economic disadvantage, and North Korean nuclear provocation [10]. However, around the same time, South Korea's neighboring states started to recognize Korea's success owing to its pop culture as known as Hallyu – Korean Wave [11]. Based on the varying perception of the country the Korean government has been implementing CD as an integral part of domestic and foreign policy.

Pioneering attempts in incorporating culture into public diplomacy both domestically and abroad were made by the authoritarian regime under President Park Chung-hee (1961–1979) followed by the Korean War (1950–1953). His model of governance meant a strong state intervention and regulation in all spheres where the arts and culture were also subject to extensive government control. In other words, the state was culture's biggest resource provider and coordinator [12]. CD in this period was adopted to legitimize the regime, modernize the nation, shape the national sense after the Japanese colonization, and, finally, continue the ideological war against North Korea. The cultural policy under Park deployed Korean traditions as a tool to foster national cohesion and unity by reinforcing people's ethnic identity [13]. This agenda was realized through 2 major activities: the government-sponsored exhibition '5000 Years of Korean Art' of cultural artifacts (held in 1976 and 1978) and the traditional performance of the National Gugak Center specializing in traditional music in Asia, the US, and Europe completing 20 tours between 1964 and 1979 [11].

Since this period, the government had institutionalized CD to enhance national prestige, adhering to its legacy of the "developmental state model". To reinforce this process, institutional restructuring was accomplished by merging the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Public Information in 1968 which formed the Ministry of Culture and Public Information performing both internal and external public information and cultural expansion functions. This transformation laid a foundation for the state's direct intervention in the process of national construction: it allowed censorship and tight regulation of media and information flow concerning culture and arts as well. In this framework, the term CD was first unequivocally introduced as a part of foreign propaganda in government documents [14].

By the 1980s and early 1990s, Korea transitioned from military dictatorship to democracy signifying the upcoming modifications in its CD discourse. Particularly, neo-liberalization of the cultural sector took place where it was newly regarded as an autonomous sector redressing itself from the idea of the object of state regulation and tool of propaganda. Consequently, MCPI was divided into two institutions - the Ministry of Culture and the Bureau of Public Information in 1990 [11]. The current imperative was *segyehwa*, globalization, indicating the challenge of staying competitive in the highly interconnected global economy [15]. To respond to the global change President Kim Young-sam (1993-1998) initiated renewed government efforts to enhance the country's competitiveness through the broader promotion of cultural diplomacy elements including Korean cuisine and cities [15].

In the framework of *segyehwa* discourse, the practice of CD continued to further enhance the foreign perception of the country. Thus, in 1996 a survey was conducted among foreign residents of Korea to identify distinguished cultural symbols of Korean culture [16]. Based on the results the ministry determined 'Top 10 Korean Cultural Symbols' which were publicized to the foreign audience through Korean overseas channels such as embassies, Culture and Information Service, and Government Information Agency [17].

The start of the millennium signified another critical point in the use of CD by policymakers. Particularly, Kim Dae-Jung's government (1998-2003) attempted to create a national brand in the light of new historical events concerning South Korea. For example, Korea overcame the Asian financial crisis of 1997 by paying off its debt to IMF before the scheduled date; it co-hosted the 2002 World Cup with Japan under the banner "Dynamic Korea" showcasing Korea as a country with dynamic growth. Furthermore, president Kim presented himself as a strong supporter of human rights advocating the social changes in Burma and Timor [18]. All these events with Korea's new democratic face created a positive national image of the country with a high degree of national cohesion and with advocacy of international human rights.

However, the previous initiatives were concluded not to have sufficient outcomes in improving Korean national image, despite the institutionalization of CD by the creation of the National Image Committee in 2002 [19]. For example, "Top ten cultural symbols" were announced to be outdated, therefore, ineffective in promoting the state image [17]. This implied requirements to impose some changes on the existing elements of CD. Thus, administration of the President Roh Moo-hyun's (2003-2008) enriched the previous list of cultural symbols with other symbols constituting a total of 100 items representing both traditional and modern culture. They introduced the 'cultural DNA' of the Korean nation [20]. Additionally, Roh's presidency emphasized the role of South Korea as a business hub, leader, and balancer in Northeast Asia. By establishing the program called Knowledge Sharing, Roh intended to demonstrate Korea's economic development to the developing world [18] producing additional validation in the global area.

The expansion of the cultural approach persisted during Lee Myung-bak's government (2008-2013) as well with a focus on the national brand. Despite efforts of South Korean soft power, the country's global ranking on the national brand was consistently low and all the three institutions' results, surveying the state brand were not satisfying. In Anholt-GfK Roper Index Korea was ranked 33rd among 50 countries in 2009 [18], although it was the 15th largest world economy at the time [11]. Bloom Consulting evaluated 193 countries in 2012 regarding their attraction to trade, tourism, and talent, among which Korea was placed 79th, 36th, and 18th based on the three aspects. Finally, FutureBrand rated Korea 49th (a downgrade compared to 42nd in 2011) as the result of its 2012 research on factors including awareness, preference, advocacy, and other elements [18]. Lee's government was concerned with such indicators as they reflected the national uncompetitiveness abroad. As a response, they imposed another institutional change:

National Image Committee was disbanded and the Council on National Branding was established in 2008 [11].

It is worth noting that starting from the 1990s, the emphasis was on the implicit use of CD as a means of capacity building of domestic culture abroad with a vivid vision of economic advantage of the new approach by private sector actors. In other words, culture did not only fulfill the tasks of national brand promotion from now on but also was expected to be a major source of income for the country due to external demand or export of culture overseas. Thus, the discourse of ‘cultural industry’ became a new agenda in the mid-90s [13]. For instance, the report of the Presidential Advisory board under president Kim (1993–1998) noted that the well-known Hollywood movie Jurassic Park produced an income equivalent to the revenue generated by 1.5 Hyundai automobiles [21]. Such a statement highlighted the economic potential of the cultural and entertainment industries. The next step taken by policymakers was the adoption of the Law for the Cultural Industry Promotion (1999) conditioning the government’s obligation to support and promote cultural industries through foreign investments, cooperation with foreign companies, opening a way to the international market, distribution, and marketing [22]. Thus, without the government support, “Korean corporations simply would not have been able to increase their infrastructure and production at the rate they did” [23, 33].

As a result, visible achievements of the state’s efforts in CD have been demonstrated via the nascent Korean pop culture exposing foreign countries, known as Korean Wave or Hallyu. To illustrate, the export of domestic films by three major terrestrial broadcasters KBS, MBC, and SBS constituted 19.7 million USD between 1993 and 1996 [24]. The share of export increased dramatically in the next decade, peaking in 2017 at over US\$188 million [25]. Notably, this is the export performance of film content in a single year and does not include the share of other digital material such as TV series, shows, music videos, music albums, and other cultural content. Regarding these types of pop culture, Korean soap dramas were first introduced to the international audience by Korean overseas troops leading to the increased awareness of South Korea. This generated the export of the dramas giving rise to successive attractions to the K-pop music genre in those countries. The prominent examples of high ranked Korean music products in foreign music charts could be ‘Gangnam Style’ of the early 2010s with billions of views on YouTube and with a title of the most “liked” video in the Guinness Book, and the boy band BTS’s unprecedented success resulting in multiple wins in Billboard Music Awards in 2021. Finally, the release of Oscar-winning Parasite (2019) and the Netflix series Squid Game (2021) gave another impetus for worldwide and largescale recognition of South Korea.

To stimulate the further growth, the Korean government's cooperation with Korean corporations is manifested in the classification of eleven categories of cultural exports of strategic importance under the name Hallyu Strategy by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: broadcasting programs, films, music, performing arts, electronic sports, comics, fashion, publication, tourism, and beauty [26]. The Korean Popular Culture & Arts Award organized by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, and Korea Creative Content Agency is one of the ways of recognizing significant milestones of content creators and artists who contributed to the spread of the culture [27].

The transition of South Korea from an autocratic military regime to neo-liberal democracy defined ways how cultural diplomacy evolved and was institutionalized as an instrument of foreign strategic policy. Through the evolutionary approach, the article has identified major stages of South Korean cultural diplomacy. In the earlier phases of the development of CD, government actors persisted in the construction and proliferation of national prestige abroad under the legacy of a “developmental state”.

Following the period of democratization, cultural diplomacy was associated with the capacity building of cultural industries abroad that undertook cultural exchange. Furthermore, policymakers shifted their attention to the economic potential of the cultural industries and their exports and assessed the national prestige through a quantitative lens. This approach was a breakthrough, meaning that it generated the Korean Wave which boosted cultural nationalism and worldwide recognition of Korean culture. The essential role of this phenomenon in CD strengthened the national brand and demonstrated the cooperation of the state with private sector actors in the development of the nation's image. The application of cultural diplomacy in the South Korean case had a transformative effect on the identity of the Korean people as well as on the national image abroad.

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EVENT ANALYSIS OF THE RAMIFICATIONS OF THE TALIBAN TAKING CONTROL IN AFGHANISTAN

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In April 2021, US President Joe Biden announced that US and NATO troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by September 11, 2021. The departure of the international coalition forces from the country served as an impetus for the rapid offence of the Taliban, which ended with the capture of Kabul and the establishment of control over the territory of the entire country. The return of the Taliban caused shock around the world, as well as great concern for the fate of women in this country [1].