

# **An Analysis of Korea's Public Diplomacy through the Theories of International Relations**

## **Abstract**

Because public diplomacy (PD) is where the discipline of international communication meets that of international relations (IR), the area has been studied by both fields. But genuine efforts to bring these two schools together for a converging theory building has been rather scarce. Communication scholars used media and public opinion theories mostly to analyze the phenomenon, while IR scholars generally adopted theories on power and identity for that purpose. Hence, this study aims to bridge that gap by analyzing key dimensions of PD through IR theories. More specifically, this research starts with the assumption that three key dimensions of PD – informational, relational and reputational – can be explained by the three grand IR theories – realism, liberalism and constructivism. Informational PD is based on realism in that it focuses on message competition among state actors in a zero-sum game for state power and capabilities. Relational PD can find its roots in liberalism in that it stresses multilateral cooperation among state and non-state actors for genuine relationship building. Reputational PD is based on constructivism in that it concentrates on identity and image formation of state actors through advertising, branding and other reputation building activities that affect global public discourses. Through an analysis of Korea's eight key PD cases in recent years, this exploratory study attempted to establish links between the three PD dimensions and the three IR theories.

Key words: public diplomacy, international relations, soft power, identity, media

## 초록

공공 외교는 국제 커뮤니케이션과 국제 관계 분야가 만나는 학문이기 때문에 양 쪽 분야 모두에서 연구가 이루어져 왔다. 그러나 이 두 분야를 결합해 수렴된 이론 정립을 위한 노력은 미미했다. 공공 외교라는 현상을 연구하기 위해 커뮤니케이션 학자들은 주로 미디어나 여론에 관한 이론들을 사용한 반면, 국제 관계 학자들은 권력과 정체성 등의 이론을 사용했다. 이 양자 간의 간격을 메우기 위해 본 연구는 공공 외교의 주요 차원을 국제 관계 이론으로 분석하고자 시도했다. 구체적으로 이 연구는 공공 외교의 세 가지 주요 차원(정보적, 관계적, 평판적)을 국제 관계의 세 가지 주요 이론(현실주의, 자유주의, 구성주의)으로 설명할 수 있다고 전제한다. 정보적 공공 외교는 정부 행위자들이 국가 권력과 능력을 위한 제로섬 게임의 메시지 경쟁을 한다는 점에서 현실주의에 바탕을 둔다. 관계적 공공 외교는 정부 및 비정부 행위자들이 진실된 관계 정립을 위해 다자 협력을 도모한다는 점에서 자유주의에 뿌리를 두고 있다. 평판적 공공 외교는 정부 행위자들이 전 지구적 공공 담론에 영향을 미치는 광고, 브랜딩 등 명성 관리 행위를 통해 정체성과 이미지 성에 주력한다는 점에서 구성주의에 바탕을 둔다. 본 탐색적 연구는 최근 몇 년간 시행된 한국의 8가지 공공 외교 사례 분석을 통해 세 가지 공공 외교 차원과 세 가지 국제 관계 이론을 연결하고자 시도했다.

키워드: 공공 외교, 국제 관계, 소프트 파워, 정체성, 미디어

## 1. Introduction

Public diplomacy (PD) is a multidisciplinary study incorporating international relations (IR), communication, public relations, and branding, among others (Gilboa, 2008). In other words, the study of PD is where international communication meets IR. As such, the two schools have traditionally adopted rather different approaches and theories in studying the subject. International communication scholars in general focused on public opinion and media, while IR researchers concentrated on state power and capabilities.

For communication scholars, the first question was how international actors use mass media to disseminate their messages to international audiences (d'Hooghe, 2007; Wang, 2007; Winkler, 1978; Wolper, 1993). Key media effects theories, such as agenda setting, framing, priming or indexing, were used to explain the communication process (Gilboa, 2008). Information activities, such as press releases, interviews and international broadcasting designed to advocate a state actor's position and policy, were key concern.

More recently, as PD evolved into an effort to build amicable relations with foreign publics, theories of public relations came to the fore. The four public-relations models of Grunig and Hunt (1984), the excellence in public relations theory and studies on organization-public relations are among them (Grunig, 1993; 1997; Yun, 2006). As a result, the relational aspect of PD was added to the original informational aspect. Cultural and educational exchanges, development cooperation, knowledge sharing and other joint programs received academic attention.

Another recent strain of PD is place or nation branding. Advertising or marketing research was used to explain this reputational aspect of PD (Anholt, 2002; van Ham, 2009). Theories on issue and crisis management were also part of

this literature (Coombs, 2012). While the informational PD was considered short-term and the relational PD long-term, this type of PD was called mid-term strategic communication (Nye, 1990; 2004). Golan and Yang (2015) presented an integrated PD model, combining the three dimensions -- mediated (informational), reputational and relational.

On the other hand, IR researchers used a different set of theories in studying PD. The three grand IR theories of realism, liberalism and constructivism were often used to explain state power, capabilities, preferences, norms, identity and other aspects of PD (Karns & Mingst, 2015; Kim, 2019; Keohane & Nye, 1971; Nye, 1990; 2004; Sevin, 2015; Waltz, 1979; Wendt, 1994). Nye (1990; 2004), for example, introduced the concept of soft power as the ultimate goal of PD. Gilboa (2008) used the idea of *noopolitik* and *realpolitik* to explain PD's rise. Sevin (2015) used the three IR theories to devise a scheme measuring PD effectiveness. Cowan and Cull (2008) posited PD has roots in the three IR theories.

Yet these studies have linked IR theories rather vaguely to PD. Their main point was that as part of diplomacy, PD can be studied from an IR perspective. However, there could be more explicit and direct connections between the theories of IR and PD. Particularly, the three different communication modes or dimensions of PD (informational, relational and reputational) can each be linked to the three grand IR theories. Informational PD can be explained by realism, relational PD by liberalism, and reputational PD by constructivism.

First, old-style informational PD can find its roots in realism in that both are based on the idea of state-centric competition. Realism defines international relations as an anarchy where states compete against each other to maximize their national interests, leaving little room for cooperation and relationship building. States mainly seek hard power such as military or economic capabilities (Karns & Mingst, 2015). Original Cold War-era informational PD also seeks to enhance national interests through unilateral message imposition on others. Key

objective was to influence the attitudes and behaviors of foreign publics through message penetration, without much efforts to listen to them. Even today, main PD programs of Russia, China and other authoritarian societies value zero-sum competition with other states with their propagandistic elements of disinformation and deceits (Kim, 2019).

Relational PD, on the other hand, is very much based on liberalism in that they both seek mutual benefits through cooperation among states and non-state actors. Through exchanges, knowledge sharing, capacity building and other collaborative programs, today's advanced relational PD, also called New PD (Melissen, 2007), aims to enhance broad global goods rather than narrow national interests, based on economic and other interdependence of neoliberalism or institutionalism. Game theory (Keohane, 1984) and soft power (Nye 1990; 2004) explain much of this type of PD in that network-based collaboration can lead to the prosperity of all for a win-win game.

As the third grand theory of IR, constructivism can also explain the branding or reputational aspect of PD (Gilboa, 2008; van Ham, 2008; Zaharna, 2016). The constructivist view assumes states' identities and interests are not fixed because they can change through interactions with other states. Discourses based on norms, values and ideas can define international relations (Wendt, 1994). Those characteristics are somewhat similar to what states pursue through branding, advertising, marketing and other aspects of reputational PD. Identity formation and image projection of states through such PD activities is well situated within constructivism.

Yet no studies have so far clearly and explicitly linked the three IR theories to the three PD dimensions. Existing literature has only indirectly and vaguely connected some IR theories to PD. Hence, this study attempts to build those three links in a more concrete manner by examining actual PD cases. More specifically, this research will look into key PD programs of South Korea

(henceforth Korea) in order to find connections between informational PD and realism, relational PD and liberalism and reputational PD and constructivism. This type of research can contribute to bringing the two disciplines of communication and IR together for a more converging theory building in PD.

For the study, Korea's actual PD cases will be analyzed. As an emerging middle-power country hoping to enhance its international influence (Ayhan, 2019; Kim, 2019), Korea has recently been significantly stepping up its PD efforts. Its PD programs are not only ambitious, but also highly diverse, incorporating different types and dimensions of today's PD. In this study, Korea's main PD programs in recent years will be first categorized into the three dimensions (informational, relational and reputational). Afterwards, those programs will be analyzed through the theoretical frameworks of the three IR theories (realism, constructivism and liberalism) in a bid to find their links.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **1) Public Diplomacy Dimensions**

Defined as "the management of communication among diplomatic actors" (Golan & Yang, 2015: 1), PD is generally divided into three dimensions. Nye (2008) divided PD into daily communication, strategic communication and sustainable relationship. Daily communication is short-term programs such as press releases or interviews explaining the context of an actor's position or policy, while strategic communication is mid-term programs such as advertising campaigns designed to brand an actor. Sustainable relationship refers to long-term programs such as exchanges, assistance, scholarship or training aimed at building mutually

amicable relationships. Nye (2008) posits diplomatic actors use different dimensions depending upon circumstances.

Similarly, Golan (2013) presented an integrated PD model, consisting of mediated, reputational and relational dimensions. Mediated or informational PD is similar to Nye's daily communication and reputational PD to his strategic communication. According to Entman (2008), mediated PD is a government's strategic attempts to exert control over the framing of the country's policy in foreign media. Reputational PD is to shape and define the reputation or brand of a country through information subsidies, such as branding or advertising.

Cowan and Arsenault (2008) also divided PD into three modes – monologue, dialogue and collaboration. Monologues refer to one-way information programs designed to influence foreign publics, including international broadcasting like the BBC. Dialogues, on the other hand, are to listen as well as speak to foreign publics through exchange programs. As the most advanced PD form, collaboration is network-based multilateral PD programs designed to handle collectively global issues such as climate change or conflict resolution.

In a slightly different manner, Cull (2009; 2013) divided PD into five key domains: advocacy, international broadcasting (media), cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy and listening. Advocacy and international broadcasting generally belong to the informational PD dimension, while listening and cultural and exchange diplomacy belong to the relational dimension. Scholars note the dimensions generally advanced from the lower level of information dissemination to the high level of relationship building (Golan & Yang, 2015; Melissen, 2007). More recently, reputational PD was added to the two dimensions as a result of increasing importance of nation or place branding (Anholt, 2002; van Ham, 2002).

## 2) Informational Public Diplomacy

Of the three dimensions, informational PD is the most original form of PD which developed during the early period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The two world wars in particular saw a surge in many nations' efforts to influence foreign publics through massive information programs designed to win wars. The U.S. government, for example, created the Committee on Public Information during the First World War and the Office of War Information during the Second World War to foster dissent among its enemies, while boosting that of the Allied countries and improve America's image overseas (Wang, 2007; Wolper, 1993). The Voice of America (VOA), which transmitted news and information about the U.S. to the world, was a typical program whose sole purpose was to persuade foreign publics.

During the Cold War, the U.S. government created the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) to continue its information activities. The agency gradually expanded its scope to include culture and exchange programs, but its main focus was to counter Soviet propaganda by telling the American story to the world (Wang, 2007). With the War on Terror in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in 2001, Washington again beefed up its informational PD programs to mitigate anti-American sentiment in the Middle East and elsewhere. However, results were rather dismal due to their unilateral nature, focusing only on speaking, not listening (Snow, 2009). Currently, the U.S. and other Western nations rely less on informational PD, although authoritarian states like Russia and China still depend heavily on that by using state-funded media like RT (formerly Russia Today) or China Global Television Network (CGTN).

Traditionally, informational PD has been the realm of media scholars who focus on relations among media, public opinion and policy. Their main concern was how foreign policy makers use media to influence foreign publics. Bennett (1990) proposed the indexing hypothesis under which media serves as a tool for policy

makers. On the other hand, the CNN effect theory assumes that media determine the national interest and usurp policy making from elected and appointed officials (Gilboa, 2002). Agenda-setting, framing, priming and other media effects theories are also used to explain the validity of informational PD (Entman, 2004; Wanta, Golan & Lee, 2004).

### 3) Relational Public Diplomacy

Because of its one-way communication mode, informational PD is gradually losing its influence and replaced by relational PD. The rise of social media especially deprives governments of their ability to monopolize information channels. Amid the proliferation of media and information, today's diplomatic actors need credibility and trust which can be built only through long-term engagement with foreign publics. As a result, the New Public Diplomacy (Melissen, 2007) emphasizes the relational role of non-state diplomatic actors, and the two-way engagement of publics through the use of soft power (Nye, 2008). In this new model, states work with non-state actors in order to capitalize on the latter's higher credibility among publics.

Consequently, contemporary PD stresses ways to establish and foster mutual understanding and two-way exchanges of information (Golan & Yang, 2015). Examples of these changes are the emergence of cultural and educational exchanges in terms of cultural diplomacy. Cultural programs such as the British Council or the Goethe Institute have been around for decades, but their focus has shifted from a unilateral exportation of one country's culture to another to two-way cultural exchanges as well as collaborations. Scholarships, training and other educational programs are also on the rise as a way to build favorable relations with future leaders of foreign nations.

More recently, new types of relational PD programs have been developed, reflecting a changing international environment. They include contribution activities like aids, development, peacekeeping, knowledge sharing, disaster relief and other joint programs used to enhance a nation's soft power (Entman, 2008; L'Etang, 1996). Those programs generally seek to enhance common global goods, rather than chasing narrow national interests. The growing emphasis on relationship cultivation assumes that publics are gradually becoming actors as well as targets of PD (Lee, 2019). That is quite different from the assumption of informational PD where publics are seen only as passive message receivers.

European, particularly Scandinavian, countries are known to be active relational PD practitioners. Norway, for example, engages in many peace-building programs around the world by extensively networking with civil society and other non-state actors (Dahlen, 2019; Henrikson, 2007). Canada, Germany and other Western countries also follow this path. Korea also attempts to enhance relational PD through greater deployment of official development assistance (ODA), peacekeeping operations (PKO) or other contribution programs.

For the study of relational PD, public relations theories are heavily used because both fields stress the importance of relationship. Snow (2009), for example, calls for the adoption of public relations' two-way asymmetrical communication (Grunig, 2001) in studying PD. Many scholars argue the two fields have practically merged (Gilboa 2008; van Ham, 2002; Signitzer and Coombs, 1992; Wang & Chang, 2004). Grunig (1993) posits his one-way public-relations models represent informational PD and the two-way models relational PD. Network theories are also used to study collaborative PD where multiple state and non-state actors work together to address common issues.

#### 4) Reputational Public Diplomacy

Reputational PD has gained traction recently as a result of the development of marketing, advertising and branding techniques. Such techniques have long been the domain of the private corporate sector, but countries and cities have recently begun to pay attention to the field because of their commercial value. Nation branding in particular helps states by bringing in more tourists and investors and promoting exports (Anholt 2002; Dinnie, 2008). As globalization makes nation states look more similar, nation branding is valued as a means to differentiate one country from another (van Ham, 2008; Olins, 2007). Nation branding is also seen as an essential part of soft power proposed by Nye (1990; 2004).

Branding scholars, particularly those studying corporate brands, tend to separate nation branding from PD because the former is for commercial gain, while the latter is for foreign policy (Gilboa, 2008; Melissen, 2007). However, as commercial interests become a major goal of foreign policy, branding or reputation management of a nation is increasingly considered as part of PD (Anholt, 2003; Golan & Yang, 2015; van Ham, 2008). Ham (2008: 128) defines nation branding as an attempt to "give personality to a state" for the purpose of "creating value in relationship between territorial entities and individuals."

As a pioneer in nation branding study, Anholt (2003) attempted to measure the brand power of a country by looking into its people, tourism, exports, governance, culture and heritage and investment and immigration. Different countries focus on different nation branding elements. According to Gilboa (2008), the U.S. is associated with self-expression and technology, Germany with engineering and quality products, Japan with miniaturization, Italy with style, France with chic, Britain with class, Sweden with design and the Catholic Church with the Crucifix.

Reputational PD is studied from the perspective of identity formation and

projection, in addition to branding and marketing. Zaharna (2016) argues today's PD is basically a narrative or identity contest among nations. As global information battles move from mass to social media with so many storytellers, states compete to present and preserve their identities-based narratives. Scholars also use issue or crisis management research in studying reputational PD. Zhang and Benoit (2004), for example, used the image restoration theory in explaining government's attempt to restore tarnished national images.

## 5) International Relations Theories

IR scholars have traditionally analyzed state power, capabilities, preferences, norms and identities to explain the concept and practices of PD (Gilboa, 2008; van Ham, 2008; Karns & Mingst, 2015; Koehane, 1984; Nye, 1990; 2004; Sevin, 2015; Waltz, 1979; Wendt, 1994). Their main concern was how such variables affect nation states' attempts to enhance their international influence and achieve desired foreign policy goals. Put together, those studies in general touch upon all three main theories of IR (realism, liberalism and constructivism).

First, realism is based on the assumption that individuals and states act rationally to protect their own interests. As the primary actors of IR, states seek to maximize their power and security relative to others. Because each state is concerned with acquiring more power relative to other states, competition between states is keen and there is little basis for cooperation (Karns & Mingst, 2015). As a result, states pursue only hard power and material capabilities in a zero-sum competition where my gain is considered your loss (Waltz, 1979). State identities and interests are largely given and fixed.

On the other hand, liberal theory, or idealism, holds that human nature is basically good, social progress is possible and human behavior is perfectible

through institutions. Injustice, aggression and war are not inevitable, but can be eliminated through collective or multilateral action and institutional reform. The expansion of human freedom is a core liberal belief that can be achieved through democracy and market capitalism (Abboff & Snidal, 2015; Karns & Mingst, 2015).

During the Cold War, realism and its derivative versions dominated IR, but after its end, liberalism experienced a revival, resulting in neoliberalism based on increasing economic and other interdependence. Keohane and Nye (1971) in particular argued states can work together and solve collective action problems with the assistance of international institutions. Axelrod and Keohane (1986) drew on game theory and particularly the Prisoners' Dilemma game to illustrate how cooperation is in the individual state's self-interest.

Social constructivism posits that the behavior of individuals, states and other actors is shaped by shared beliefs, socially constructed rules and cultural practices. Their main concern is identity and interests and how these can change (Karns & Mingst, 2015). While realists treat states' interests and identity as given, constructivists believe they are socially constructed and influenced by culture, norms, ideas and domestic and international interactions. In that regard, persuasive ideas, collective values and cultural and social identities matter very much in the international system.

## 6) PD Dimensions and IR Theories

Despite their apparent connections, the three dimensions of PD and the three theories of IR have not been studied together in a serious manner. Sevin (2015) used all three IR theories to devise a scheme measuring PD effectiveness. But here, PD programs were not divided by their dimensions. Van Ham (2002; 2008) elaborated a direct link between reputational PD and constructivism. He argued

both fields basically overlap because they deal with identity. Yet his research was limited only to constructivism, failing to explore the other two theories. Also, Yun and Toth (2009) touched upon only the realist aspect of PD. Lee (2019) noted all three IR theories can explain the evolution of Korea's PD during the past seven decades, maintaining that it generally moved from informational to relational and reputational PD. But again, there were no specifications of PD dimensions.

Yet the two sets of theories can be paired conveniently by comparing their main characteristics. First, the primary tenet of informational PD and realism is competition among states. For example, Cold War informational PD, represented by U.S. and Soviet message programs such as the VOA and Radio Moscow, is based on a bipolar rivalry seeking dominance in the global stage. During this time, realism-based advocacy and international broadcasting focused on states' materialistic capabilities, notably military and economic power. Communication mode was generally unilateral without much efforts to listen to audience feedback. During critical times like war, even psychological warfare and outright propaganda prevailed. While confrontational information-based PD is now mainly used by Russia, China and other authoritarian states, open democracies also engage in that during diplomatic rows with others. For example, Korea and Japan recently exchanged harsh informational assaults over their historical and territorial disputes.

The main commonality between relational PD and liberalism is cooperation and collaboration among diplomatic actors. Believing in mutual benefits of cooperation, states carry out bilateral or multilateral exchange and contribution programs together with non-state actors, such as international organizations or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). With their limited hard power, many middle-power countries like Canada and Norway pursue liberalist PD in a bid to enhance their soft power, by focusing on niche areas overlooked by big powers (Henrikson, 2007). Canada's successful attempts to remove dangerous landmines

in conflict zones on the globe through extensive networking with multiple state and non-state actors around the world was a good example (Henrikson, 2007; Nye, 2008).

Constructivism meets reputational PD through their shared view on state norms, values and identities that are defined not by hard power, but by soft power (van Ham, 2002). PD can formulate these constructs by encouraging and influencing discussions and is thus a tool to shape public debates in foreign countries (Gilboa, 2008). States are still main diplomatic actors, but they don't necessarily compete against each other. Rather, they seek to promote and project their unique identities and images through diverse branding activities highlighting their persuasive ideas, values and culture. Different countries carry out different branding campaigns, such as "100% Pure New Zealand," "Dynamic Korea," or "Cool Japan," based on their identities. The connections between PD dimensions and IR theories are explained in Table 1.

**Table 1. Main Links between PD Dimensions and IR Theories**

<b>PD Dimension</b>	<b>Informational PD</b>	<b>Relational PD</b>	<b>Reputational PD</b>
<b>IR Theory</b>	<b>Realism</b>	<b>Liberalism</b>	<b>Constructivism</b>
<b>Communication mode</b>	Unilateral monologue	Multilateral collaboration	Bilateral dialogue
<b>Engagement mode</b>	Zero-sum competition	Win-win cooperation	Competition; Cooperation
<b>Major actors</b>	States	States and non-state actors	States
<b>States' focus</b>	Capabilities	Preferences	Identities
<b>States' resource</b>	Hard power	Soft power (foreign policy)	Soft power (culture, value)
<b>PD</b>	Advocacy;	Exchange; Culture;	Nation

<b>domains</b>	Media	Listening; Aids	branding
<b>Communication theories</b>	Public opinion; Media effects	Public relations; Social network	Branding; Advertising

To examine whether the above-mentioned links can be actually found in real PD cases, a framework of analysis was developed. Specifically, the communication mode, engagement mode, major actors, states' focus and resources of actual cases can be analyzed by the framework. This can be summarized as Figure 1.

PD dimensions	Major tenets to be analyzed	IR theories
Informational PD cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Communication mode</li> <li>● Engagement mode</li> <li>● Major actors</li> <li>● States' focus</li> <li>● States' resources</li> <li>● Others</li> </ul>	Realism
Relational PD cases		Liberalism
Reputational PD cases		Constructivism

Figure 1. Framework for the analysis of Korea's PD cases

Based on the discussion, the following research questions were drawn.

RQ1: What kind of PD programs does Korea carry out?

RQ2: How is Korea's informational PD related to realism?

RQ3: How is Korea's relational PD related to liberalism?

RQ4: How is Korea's reputational PD related to constructivism?

### 3. Method

In order to answer the research questions, this study examined Korea's recent PD cases. As a middle-power country aspiring to enhance its influence in the global stage, Korea has recently paid a great deal of attention to PD (Ayhan, 2010; Choi, 2018; Kim, 2012; 2019). Since the government declared 2010 the first year of genuine PD, it appointed the Public Diplomacy Ambassador and expanded its PD bureau at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). PD functions were further strengthened by the enactment of the Public Diplomacy Act in 2016, allowing the ministry to coordinate various PD programs conducted by different ministries, local governments and the private sector (Lee, 2019). PD budget was increased from 6.7 billion won in 2013 to 21 billion won in 2019 (MOFA, 2019).

According to the foreign ministry, the Korean government carries out a wide range of PD programs that cover the three key pillars of culture, knowledge and policy (MOFA, 2019). Cultural programs include the Korea Week festivities at overseas embassies, Korea brand exhibitions, K-Pop World Festival, Quiz on Korea and Taekwondo Contest. Knowledge-related activities cover Korean language and Korean studies programs under which foreigners learn the language as well as the history, culture and other aspects of Korea through scholarships or other educational exchange projects. Policy PD programs include media briefings, interviews, newspaper contributions, seminars, and town-hall meetings, among others.

Of them, eight recent programs the ministry deemed highly important were selected and analyzed to determine whether they display links between the three PD dimensions and the three IR theories. In order to see commonalities between realism and informational PD, two programs designed to advocate Korea's foreign policy and position were selected. The first was a series of media activities by the

ministry during Korea's diplomatic feud with Japan in 2019 regarding their colonial history and trade sanctions. The second one was also media activities by the ministry in 2019 to address a confrontation between Korea and the U.S. on how much Seoul should pay for 28,000 U.S. troops stationed in Korea. Washington demanded more than 500 percent increase from the previous year, but Seoul rejected, calling it "unacceptable." For both programs, the ministry's press releases as well as speeches and media interviews by Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha and other diplomats were examined.

For the examination of connections between liberalism and relational PD, this research analyzed four programs selected by the ministry as "Excellent PD Cases of 2019." These programs were chosen among 25 applications submitted by Korea's central ministries, overseas embassies and local governments. They all exhibit a highly relational nature with sincere efforts to build and maintain amicable relationships with local communities and foreign publics. They include 1) a comprehensive cross-country culture and contribution outreach program in Indonesia; 2) a family photo taking program in Madagascar; 3) a joint wine development project in Vietnam by the Chungcheong Namdo province; and 4) a video production on Korea's economic development in East Timor. Documents submitted by the applicants as well as reactions by local publics and media were reviewed.

To determine links between constructivism and reputational PD, two recent cases were chosen. The first reputational program was Korea's branding and marketing efforts during the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. The foreign ministry and other government agencies strived to use the global mega event to brand Korea as a "peace maker" in connection with the participation of North Korean athletes and delegates that led to sudden reconciliation on the Korean peninsula. The other was Korea's reputation management during the Korea-ASEAN Summit in Busan in November 2019 where the government attempted to

position Korea as a “connector” between Northeast and Southeast Asia.

For the research, all press releases, interviews, speeches, and newspaper contributions by foreign ministry officials posted on the ministry website during 2018 and 2019 were reviewed. They include 1,816 press releases, 246 contributions and interviews on domestic media, 220 contributions and interviews on foreign media, and 27 speeches. Also, the ministry’s White Paper from 2015 to 2019 which chronicle major diplomatic developments every year were reviewed (MOFA, 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019).

#### **4. Results**

##### 1) RQ1: Korea’s Major Public Diplomacy Cases

###### (1) Culture Programs

The biggest PD program regarding Korea’s culture is Korea Week which is held at more than 140 overseas embassies every year. Korea’s traditional and contemporary cultural items are presented to local publics through exhibitions, performances, contests and classes. In 2018, for example, “culture caravans” traveled local towns in Japan, India and Brazil, while Korean writers, artists and performers visited the Netherlands, Canada and Bulgaria to showcase their talents. Also, cultural programs commemorating special occasions, such as major anniversaries of the opening of diplomatic ties, are conducted.

Korea Contest is another major event where foreigners compete for their knowledge about Korea or skills in Korean culture. Quiz on Korea is first held

regionally and then in Korea for final competition. Similarly, K-Pop World Festival starts with preliminary contests in nearly 80 countries, then move to regional competitions in different continents and final race in Korea. For both projects, Korea's overseas embassies and consulates are heavily involved. Sports diplomacy is also active. Every year, Taekwondo competition is held in more than 90 foreign missions. For the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, special efforts were made to promote the event through cultural and other programs.

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism also carries out various culture and sports programs as part of PD. The ministry currently runs 32 Korea Culture Center in major cities in the world which is similar to the British Council or the Confucius Institute. They organize diverse events promoting Korea's traditional and pop culture and provide culture-learning classes to local people. Rather than unilaterally imposing Korean culture to foreign publics, they also work to collaborate with local communities to create joint culture programs.

## (2) Knowledge Programs

Major knowledge programs are carried out by the Korea Foundation under the foreign ministry. In 2018, the government agency supported Korean studies programs at 177 universities in 66 countries by appointing professors teaching Korean history, culture or language or providing online classes for those subjects. Foreign scholars, students or civil servants, especially those from developing countries, are invited to Korea to learn about the country as well. In addition to Korean language and culture, they learn about Korea's development experiences which they can apply to their own countries when they go back. Other government agencies, such as the Korea Development Institute, also run similar knowledge-sharing programs for the capacity building of foreign publics.

The foreign ministry also tries to disseminate more information about Korea by setting up Korea Corner at overseas embassies where books, video and other materials are furnished. More than 70 embassies operate Korea Corner currently. Korean embassies also endeavor to correct inaccurate information about Korea on foreign textbooks and maps. Special efforts are made to change information regarding Korea's history and territory in regard to its relations with neighboring Japan.

### (3) Policy Programs

Policy area is the most recent addition to Korea's PD. Mainly targeting foreign opinion leaders, such as scholars, journalists or civil society leaders, policy PD aims to persuade foreign publics to support Korea's foreign policy, such as peaceful national unification. For example, Korean diplomats tried to make international public opinion more favorable to the country's peace dialogue with North Korea in 2018 which led to historic summit meetings between U.S. President Trump and North Korea's Kim Jong Un. For that purpose, they carried out media interviews or published contribution articles in global newspapers.

Also to influence global public opinion about Korea, the foreign ministry hosts seminars, forums or lectures in different countries. Such projects focus on major countries affecting Korea's security and economy, such as the U.S. and China. News media, universities and think tanks are main targets. The Korea Overseas Culture and Information Service under the culture ministry closely watches and monitors foreign media to gauge global opinions on Korea. The government also utilizes its own media platforms, such as Arirang TV and Korea.net, to advocate its policy and position.

## 2) RQ2: Informational Public Diplomacy's Link to Realism

### (1) Media Activities Related to Korea's Diplomatic Feud with Japan

In 2019, Korea engaged in a harsh diplomatic row with Japan due to their history-related disputes that led to a trade war. It started with a Korean court ruling that Japanese companies have to compensate for forced labor during Japan's colonization of the Korean peninsula from 1910 to 1945. Japan strongly denounced the decision, arguing the matter was settled by a 1965 treaty under which the Japanese government paid \$500 million for Korea's pains. Korea's position is that Japanese companies are also responsible.

Amid deteriorating relations between the two neighboring countries, Japan imposed regulations on Korea's key semiconductor exports and later excluded the country from the list of preferentially treated nations. Tokyo argued such decisions were related to its security concerns, but did not specify, angering many Koreans. Seoul in turn announced the termination of a crucial military intelligence sharing agreement with Japan, citing the lack of trust between the two. The U.S. tried to dissuade Korea from the action that could weaken trilateral military partnership among the three nations against North Korea and China, but Korea just delayed the termination, but didn't retract.

As international concerns about security and trade in Northeast Asia grew, the Korean government actively pursued a media campaign to calm such concerns and blame Japan as the culprit. A series of press releases were announced during the summer when the diplomatic row peaked. In an August 2 press release, the foreign ministry expressed "strong protests and deep regrets" over Japan's trade curbs, demanding their immediate retraction. "Our government cannot but lament that the Japanese government took actions negatively affecting bilateral

economic cooperation as well as regional prosperity and global free trade order, ignoring our repeated calls for retraction and international society's concern and criticism," another press release said.

Korean diplomats also carried out numerous interviews with global media to defend Seoul's position. In an interview with the BBC, Foreign Minister Kang claimed Japan's trade curbs were "unilateral, arbitrary and retaliatory," adding Koreans are "angry." In another interview with Bloomberg TV, she defended Seoul's scrapping of the military intelligence sharing accord with Tokyo, saying such a deal requires a great deal of trust which Japan lacks. Responding to a question whether the termination of the agreement between Korea and Japan would help China, Kang denied, arguing Seoul's action will not hurt regional security.

Such aggressive responses and remarks by the Korean government as part of its confrontational informational PD clearly demonstrate traits of a realist perspective. Vis-à-vis Japan, Korea's position is based a zero-sum confrontation where Korea's gain is Japan's loss and vice versa. In sending out Seoul's messages, the government was the sole actor and voices for moderation from opposition and some civil society were rather blocked for a unilateral monologue approach. Main elements of the media programs dealt with hard power resources, notably military and economy. Overall, the case illustrates a clear link between informational PD and realism.

## (2) Media Activities Related to Korea-U.S. Debate on Defense Cost Sharing

During the second half of 2019, Korea and the U.S. confronted sharply on how much Seoul should pay for 28,000 U.S. troops stationed in Korea for its defense. Korea has long shared the cost with the U.S., but Washington has recently

demanded a large increase in Korea's share. In 2019, Korea paid nearly \$1 billion to the U.S., a 8 percent rise from the previous year, under strong pressures from President Trump who has argued America's allies have been "free riding" by not paying enough for American troops on their soil. For Korea's cost for 2020, Washington demanded a surprising 500 percent surge, while Seoul insisted on a more incremental increase.

As a result, several rounds of talks between Seoul and Washington failed. Even after the new year started, the two sides remained widely apart. Washington threatened not to pay salaries for Korean workers on U.S. military bases. Some sources even forecast a partial withdrawal of U.S. troops which are an essential element of the Korea-U.S. military alliance. As the stalemate continued, both sides waged media campaigns to defend their positions and undercut the other's. Seeking reelection in November 2020, President Trump stepped up his rhetoric, while the Korean foreign ministry responded with its own media activities.

Reacting to President Trump's excessive request, Foreign Minister Kang called for a "reasonable and acceptable level," in an interview with the BBC. In another interview with Korea's MBC TV, she emphasized the agreement has to be "accepted by the Korean people and the National Assembly." Through a press release, the ministry also stressed the importance of "a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable agreement."

As the chief negotiator of the talks, the foreign ministry itself was cautious in an apparent attempt not to provoke President Trump. But other government agencies were more vocal and outspoken about the issue. Kim Jun-yeong, President of the Korea National Diplomatic Academy, argued in an interview with Korea's CBS Radio that President Trump is using the case for his reelection, calling his demand "ridiculous." In another interview with MBC Radio, Kim attributed the case to President Trump's isolationism designed to appeal to his supporters in America's Rust Belt ahead of the presidential election.

As seen in those reactions, Korea's media and information campaign for the defense cost issue shows a high degree of a realist approach. Despite their military alliance and long-term partnership, the U.S. is here considered a hostile competitor trying to frame the issue to its favor. As the main player in this debate, the government is at the forefront of the framing contest. Korea's main concern here is typical hard power elements of military and economy that belong to the realm of realism.

### 3) RQ3: Relational Public Diplomacy's Link to Liberalism

#### (1) Comprehensive Cross-country Outreach Program in Indonesia

During September 2019, the Korean embassy in Indonesia hosted a comprehensive culture and contribution outreach program across the country's main island of Java, visiting five major cities along the way. In order to expand its activities beyond the capital city of Jakarta, Team Korea, headed by the ambassador, crisscrossed the island for six days, interacting and engaging with local communities through cultural programs, sports events, media briefings and seminars on Korea. They traveled 1,000 kilometers on a giant bus covered with a large placard promoting Korea.

At one place, the diplomats collected and removed a large amount of garbage scattered on the beach. In another city, they held cultural festivities for Indonesian workers working for Korea-invested factories. A renowned Korean YouTuber accompanied the tour to post real-time video contents, which were viewed by more than 1 million Indonesians. A total of 150 media outlets, including 109 Indonesian ones, reported about the tour, focusing on its relational and

interactive nature. Centered around Korea's culture and other soft power resources, it was a result of collaboration among diverse state and non-state actors, including the Korea Culture Center in Jakarta and an association of Indonesian journalists, exhibiting a highly liberalist tenet.

## (2) Family Photo Taking Program in Madagascar

In August, 2019, the Korean embassy in Madagascar worked with three famous Korean photographers to take pictures of poor families in the country's remote towns. As one of the poorest countries in the world, the African country has many people who have never taken pictures of themselves. In order to show them Korea's generosity and desire to build genuine relations, the embassy visited more than 20 villages and took photos of 250-plus families. Many of those families had terminally ill patients who wanted to leave memorable family photos before they die. Afterwards, the pictures were framed and presented in long-lasting acryl for longer preservation.

The program, titled "We Are Family Project," was warmly received by local media. One Madagascar newspaper praised the project for showing the hope of Africa, not just its poverty. The project was particularly effective because it was done through joint collaboration between the embassy and private citizens. In addition to the three photographers, a Korean missionary medical doctor who has provided free medical services to Africans for 15 year also took part in the project. The case is a good example of liberalist PD where state and non-state actors collaborate for altruistic causes.

## (3) Joint Wine Development Program in Vietnam

Chungcheong Namdo Province has worked since 2017 with Long An to help the Vietnamese province to develop new fruit wines, using the Korean region's expertise in the field. A key agricultural product of Long An Province is dragon fruit, but its price has declined steeply in recent years, hurting its local economy. As such, wine experts of Chungcheong Namdo who have been successful in developing apple wines visited Long An several times to transfer their knowhow on wine making, ranging from production to marketing. With that help, the Vietnamese province could develop their own high-quality dragon fruit wines and other related foods.

As a result of the collaboration, Long An Province was able to secure a new revenue source and create jobs, helping its economy. Bilateral ties between the two provinces have now expanded to cover other business areas, including promotion of start-up companies. With this success as a base, Chungcheong Namdo has sought similar joint programs in neighboring Cambodia. The wine production case shows how PD can be used for a win-win cooperation among different actors. The participation of private business entities was another such indication.

#### (4) Video Production on Korea's Economic Development in East Timor

Gaining national independence recently, East Timor suffers from slow economic growth and high unemployment, leading to a high degree of inertia in the society. Given the circumstance, the Korean embassy there decided to create a 10-minute video on how Korea transformed itself from a poor country like East Timor to an industrial powerhouse in one generation. The purpose is to instill a sense of confidence into the minds of East Timorese by showing similarities between the

two countries.

The video, titled "Korea's Miracle in East Timor," was first circulated through social media and received warmly by local people. The prime minister of the country was also moved by the video and asked local TV stations to run the program during prime time. The country's Nobel Peace Prize laureate Jose Ramos Horta also watched and commented the video has inspired many people in East Timor and brought them hope. The case was able to bring the two countries' people together by building deep emotional ties based on shared histories. Korea's desire to help the needy country strongly resonated with the local people.

#### 4) RQ4: Reputational Public Diplomacy's Link to Constructivism

##### (1) Branding Korea's Peace Image through Pyeongchang Winter Olympics

The Korean government used the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics to brand the country as a peace maker or peace broker. After North Korea expressed its interest in attending the Olympics just a few weeks before the games, the two Koreas carried out a series of high-level talks. As a result, the North sent the head of its Supreme People's Assembly and the sister of its leader Kim Jong Un to the opening ceremony, while the southern government enthusiastically welcomed the delegation. The exchange was the first major contact between the two Koreas in years, which had remained hostile due to the North's nuclear weapons program.

Thanks to the Olympic-related exchange, the two Koreas quickly resumed dialogue and in April their leaders met at the truce village of Panmunjeom and agreed to take actions to ease tensions on the Korean peninsula. Using that momentum of reconciliation, U.S. President Trump met with the North's Kim in

Singapore in June that year for the historic first-ever summit between the two adversaries, resulting in a joint declaration for the North's denuclearization and better ties between Washington and Pyongyang.

Although the euphoria subsided and the hope of the North's denuclearization dimmed later, the Pyeongyang Olympics helped Korea position itself as a peace promoter. Government officials emphasized Korea's willingness to bring peace to the Korean peninsula around the Olympic time. During the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland just before the games, the Korean delegation hosted the Korea Pyeongyang Night with the slogan of peace and prosperity. In a speech there, Minister Kang noted the Pyeongyang Olympics will be "a momentum for world peace and prosperity through North Korea's participation," as the 1988 Seoul Olympics served as a momentum for reconciliation, overcoming the East-West Cold War divide.

In another speech after the games were over, the minister said the Olympics "jump started South-North dialogue and engagement after years of hiatus, and demonstrated the power of the Olympics to generate the momentum for peace and reconciliation." In a press release, the foreign ministry noted the Olympics served to celebrate the spirit of peace and unity, adding North Korea's participation and the resumption of inter-Korean talks have led to the easing of tensions on the Korean peninsula and the fostering of a much needed momentum toward a peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear crisis.

The case is a good example of reputational PD which was firmly based on Korea's search for an identity as a divided nation seeking a peaceful national unification. By projecting the values and norms of peace, the country tried to affect global public discourse that in turn constructed its identity and image. As a result, international media praised Korea's role in bringing the U.S. and North Korea to the table of dialogue. Although it focused a lot on media programs, the case didn't attempt to attack anybody, unlike the two informational cases where

Japan and the U.S. were harshly criticized. While there was some criticism at home and abroad that the Korean government used the Olympics for political purposes, the fact that it resulted in Pyongyang's peace talks with Seoul and Washington clearly proves the point.

## (2) Branding Korea as a Connector during Korea-ASEAN Summit in Busan

The Korea-ASEAN Commemorative Summit in Busan in November 2019 was to mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Korea's ties to the 10-nation bloc in Southeast Asia. Attended by all 11 heads of state, the summit was used by the Korean government to position itself as a connector or bridge between Northeast and Southeast Asia. In order to strengthen and project its Asian identity, Korea has pursued the New Southern Policy and the New Northern Policy since President Moon Jae-in took power in 2017. The former is to build closer ties with the ASEAN and India, and the latter is with Central Asia.

The goal of such policies is to increase Korea's role in handling regional issues, such as security and trade. While Japan and China are often met with suspicions by smaller nations in Asia because of their authoritarian rule or imperialist past, Korea is viewed more favorably as a reliable partner. The Southern and Northern Policy is to use that reputation to establish a stronger presence in Asia, while reducing Korea's reliance on the so-called four powers (the U.S., China, Japan and Russia).

The Commemorative Summit's key message was three Ps (people, prosperity and peace). In addition to official talks, the occasion featured cultural, business, environmental and other events designed to show Korea's capabilities in connecting countries in Asia. K-pop festivities were held to show Korea's cultural prowess that binds Asian people together. Korea's desire to be a bridge was

shown through its initiatives for bio diversity and other environmental issues many of which are deadlocked due to confrontations between rich and poor nations. During the summit, Korea also pledged to provide full supports for economic development in the five Mekong River nations (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam), with the slogan of "From Han River to Mekong River."

In an interview with Korea's Arirang TV, Minister Kang emphasized Korea's Asian identity, saying a stronger partnership with the ASEAN "is a must, not a choice." "We will boost people-to-people and cultural exchanges in line with the vision of the New Southern Policy," she said in an article contributed to the Korea Times. In a press release, the foreign ministry noted the summit was to upgrade Korea's partnership with the ASEAN to the level of its ties with the "Four Powers."

As a reputational PD case, the summit was used by the government to influence the agenda and frames of media and public discourses that are crucial in the social construction of reality. The country itself was able to reinforce its identity as an Asian bridge, connecting Asia's north and south, by interacting with its partners and creating common values and norms of the community. Whether Korea achieved that purpose through the event is an open question, but the case clearly shows that constructivism-based intention.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study attempted to find links between three PD dimensions and three IR theories by examining eight actual PD cases carried out by the Korean government in recent years. More specifically, two informational cases were analyzed to detect traits of the realist IR perspective, notably state-centered message competition focusing on hard power elements. Four relational cases

were reviewed to identify characteristics of the liberalist paradigm which values cooperation and collaboration among networked state and non-state actors for mutual benefits and common goods, rather than narrow national interests. Finally, two reputational cases were looked into to seek their links to the constructivist worldview where identity-based discourses construct states' values and norms.

According to various documents, press releases, interviews, contributions or speeches provided by the Korean government and reactions by foreign publics and media, the eight Korean PD cases in general displayed such tenets of the IR theories. In other words, links between informational PD and realism, between relational PD and liberalism, and between reputational PD and social constructivism were found. More specifically, the connections could be identified by comparing communication and engagement modes, major actors and state focuses and resources of those eight cases.

This research's significance is its efforts to connect communication and IR theories together for a more converging theory building in PD. This was perhaps the first study connecting the three main communication modes of PD, defined as dimensions in this study, to the three IR theories individually. This type of multi-disciplinary research can further the conceptualization of PD which is inherently an inter-disciplinary study combining communication and IR. In fact, the gap between the research of communication scholars and that of IR researchers has been pointed out as a major issue in the study of PD (Golan & Yang, 2015; Gilboa 2008). Through an analysis of actual cases, this study offered a concrete path through which the two disciplines can help reduce the gap further.

The study can also help our understanding of ever-evolving nature of today's PD. By reviewing diverse and creative actual PD cases currently carried out by Korea, an ambitious middle power highly committed to PD, one can grasp the current direction and contour of the field and use that knowledge for actual PD program execution. Korea's heavy focus on more ideal and advanced relational

PD is well exhibited in the four related cases. An analysis of countries like Korea can also help reduce our U.S. and West-centered scholastic interests and focus. As a global diplomatic phenomenon, PD is in fact practiced differently in different nations. PD practitioners in different countries can use this study to realign their programs in accordance with their foreign policy goals.

This research also proves the utility of the three-dimension PD typology proposed by many (Cowan & Arsenault, 2008; Golan, 2013; Gilboa, 2008; Nye, 2008). As seen in Korea's case, all three dimensions are used by modern states with different degrees. While authoritarian countries like China and Russia very much depend on informational PD, more open democracies in Europe and North America as well as middle powers like Korea increasingly migrate to relational PD. Reputational PD is favored by countries trying to brand or rebrand themselves, such as transitional states of the former Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Olins, 2007).

One notable finding is that realism-based aggressive informational PD is still used by democratic societies like Korea as a result of a growing nationalist sentiment in the world. President Trump's isolationist foreign policy and push for more concessions from U.S. allies, for example, is gradually eroding the liberal international order, inviting a more realist trend. The two informational PD cases regarding Korea's harsh and confrontational media campaigns against the U.S. and Japan confirm such a nationalist and protectionist shift in the world. The cases were based on fierce message competitions with Tokyo and Washington where my gain is considered your loss and vice versa. They were quite different from the other cases where Korea tried to boost its reputation through reason-based dialogue and collaboration.

Yet this study is limited in many ways. First, there is a lingering question whether the eight cases reviewed here can be neatly placed under the three PD dimensions. Some cases show more than one dimension. For example, the

relational programs in Indonesia and East Timor also display reputational elements. They were categorized as relational in the end because that aspect seemed most notable, but the decision was still arbitrary. More research with many cases is needed to develop a clearer and convincing classification of PD dimensions and reduce sampling bias.

Also, this research remains exploratory at best as it was unable to determine the links between PD dimensions and IR theories through more empirical means. About five frames, such as communication and engagement mode, were used to compare the two sets, but more is needed for a clearer comparison. In that regard, comparing different countries' PD cases with this study's theoretical framework can yield more insightful results. Further studies can narrow down research scope for more empirical research. Such efforts can benefit not only academics in the field, but also PD practitioners in different countries.

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