

Korean Cultural Diplomacy: Uniting Society Through Soft Power

Kunkunrat Kunkunrat

Pasundan University

Corresponding Author:

Kunkunrat Kunkunrat.

Pasundan University

Bandung, Indonesia

Email:

kunkunrat@unpas.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Soft power is persuasive power that is not military or economic in nature, but is rooted in the attractiveness of culture, values and a positive image of a country. South Korea has successfully utilized soft power through the Korean wave to increase its presence and influence on the global stage. This research aims to investigate the role of Korean cultural diplomacy in integrating and uniting the international community through the concept of soft power. This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. The research results show that South Korea's cultural diplomacy, especially through the Korean Wave, has succeeded in creating a significant positive impact. The research highlights the contribution of the Korean Wave in strengthening South Korea's positive image at the global level, building sociocultural and economic ties in the East Asian region, and generating economic growth through increasing the popularity of Korean products and lifestyle. Full support from the government, including through the establishment of public institutions, provides a strong foundation for the success of South Korea's cultural diplomacy. In conclusion, research shows that South Korea's cultural diplomacy is an effective instrument in building positive connectivity, advancing the economy, and shaping global views of this country.

Keywords: diplomacy, culture, korea, korean wave, soft power.

1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of establishing good relations between countries can provide beneficial things such as achieving national interests. When national interests are achieved, a country can maintain its existence and stability in various fields (Tahmi et al, 2022). In this way, countries in the world are starting to take various steps to fulfill their national interests by collaborating with other countries. This cooperation is usually referred to as diplomacy. Apart from achieving a country's national interests, diplomacy also aims to create world peace (Bainus & Rachman, 2018).

Diplomacy is the art of obtaining agreement between countries that need to work together to produce results in which each has an interest. Conventionally the same as negotiation to resolve conflicts, diplomacy is widely considered an alternative to war and war as a failure of diplomacy (Djelantik, 2008). Diplomacy now also not only concerns political activities but is also multi-dimensional involving economic, socio-cultural, human rights and environmental aspects which are used in any situation in relations between nations to create peace in the global political arena and achieve national interests. a country (Prayuda, 2019).

In the context of international relations, countries generally implement diplomacy to achieve their national interests. In this effort, the state utilizes two main forms of power, namely soft power and hard power (Hutagalung et al., 2019). Joseph S. Nye, an international relations expert, explains the concept of soft power as attraction that comes from three main sources, namely culture, political values and foreign policy. Soft power reflects a country's ability to influence and shape the opinions and behavior of other countries through the positive image resulting from these elements (Nye, 1990).

Soft power, as a key concept in contemporary diplomacy, involves all forms of power that are different from hard power approaches, which often involve military or economic power (Lee, 2009). Soft power, also known as soft diplomacy, has become the main instrument in international relations because it is considered

more profitable and can be exercised without requiring the use of physical force or large budgets (Yani & Lusiana, 2018). In a paradigm shift in international relations, soft diplomacy now involves various non-governmental entities, making it more inclusive and broader in scope. An integral part of public diplomacy, soft diplomacy encompasses various forms, including cultural diplomacy, media diplomacy, cooperative diplomacy, and sports diplomacy (Burnay et al., 2014).

Cultural diplomacy, as an important aspect of soft diplomacy, can be applied in various fields such as film, art, culinary, fashion, traditional culture and religion. This diversity enriches the way a country interacts with the outside world (Zahidi, 2016). Cultural diplomacy not only promotes the unique aspects of a country but also serves as a tool for building cross-cultural understanding and increasing a nation's attractiveness in the eyes of the international community. By emphasizing soft power, especially through cultural diplomacy, a country can create a positive image, inspire a desire to learn more, and strengthen international relations through mutual respect for each other's cultural heritage (Anindia, 2022).

Cultural diplomacy can be carried out in various steps, such as introducing the culture of a country which is an attraction and also has a big influence on people in the world so that they follow the culture of that country. This explanation is a form of application of public diplomacy to a country (Leonardo, 2019). In contrast to public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy aims to understand each other between countries or citizens of other countries by implementing measures to exchange culture, information and art (Erwindo, 2018).

South Korea is a successful example of implementing cultural diplomacy strategies to build a positive political image in the eyes of the international community. Korea's success in utilizing soft power, especially through the Korean Wave phenomenon, has not only changed positive perceptions of the country but also strengthened bilateral ties with other countries (Azzahra, 2022). The Korean Wave, which includes Korean cultural influences such as K-pop music, television dramas, films, and fashion, not only brought significant progress to South Korea's economic and tourism sectors, but also played an important role in uniting the international community. Through the Korean Wave, South Korea succeeded in spreading its cultural appeal, creating positive connectivity, and building a close inter-country network. This initiative not only reflects the success of South Korea's cultural diplomacy but is also clear evidence that soft power, especially through cultural expression, can be an effective tool in achieving diplomatic goals and strengthening relations between countries.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Cultural Diplomacy

Milton C. Cummings stated that cultural diplomacy is the exchange of ideas, information, values, beliefs, or other aspects of culture and has the aim of increasing mutual understanding and respect for each other. As time goes by, cultural diplomacy is often used by many countries to approach other countries because it can be seen that cultural diplomacy is seen as safer and easier than using economic or political approaches (Prabowo, 2014). According to Warsito & Kartikasari (2007), cultural diplomacy is a state effort that aims to fight for its national interests through a cultural dimension, either at a macro level such as propaganda or at a micro level such as education, arts, science, and so on. The occurrence of cultural diplomacy can start from the assumption that culture is something that is general and capable of transcending borders, although each country certainly has its own unique cultural characteristics. With cultural exchange, it can be said to be one way for people to have a sense of respect for cultural differences with other countries (Fadli, 2016). Thus, it can be concluded that cultural diplomacy is a country's soft power approach in the study of international relations that can be carried out by both government and non-government actors. This cultural diplomacy is carried out to gain one country's national interests towards other countries through art, education and others.

2. Soft Power

Joseph Nye coined the term "soft power" to describe a nation's ability to attract and persuade. In his book entitled "Soft Power The Means of Success in World Politics", Nye also explains that soft power is the ability to get what one wants through attraction, not through coercion or payment which arises from cultural attraction, ideals, political ideals and policies of a country (Nye, 2004). Nye also added that soft power can be exercised by all countries to increase their influence in international politics. Countries in the Asian region like Thailand attract the world's attention through their food, many people outside the country love their food, and the Thai government itself has set a goal to increase Thai restaurants outside the country. This is a subtle way to help them establish deeper relationships with other countries (Nye, 2004). Soft Power is found in the attraction to create other countries' points of view regarding culture, values, and other things (Lovric, 2016).

3. Korean Wave

The Korean Wave, also known as Hallyu or Hanryu, is the popularity of popular culture from South Korea in other Asian countries. Korean popular culture such as films, television dramas and pop music is very strong and television dramas are one of the icons of popular culture in the Korean Wave (Ravina, 2009). Then according to Yecies in Reimeingam (2014) "Hallyu is an intensive and extensive wave of popular Korean culture." Kim (2013) states "Hallyu (Korean Wave) is very popular among young people enchanted with Korean music (K-pop), dramas (K-drama), movies, fashion, food, and beauty in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Vietnam, etc. Based on the definitions above, it can be concluded that the Korean Wave is a cultural trend phenomenon that is influenced by several instruments such as K-Drama, K-Pop, dance, fashion, tourism and food.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is qualitative with a descriptive approach. Qualitative research methods according to Sugiyono (2011) "that qualitative research methods are naturalistic research methods because the research is carried out in natural conditions (natural settings); It is called a qualitative method because the data collected and the analysis is more qualitative in nature. The qualitative approach was chosen with the consideration that this research explores and collects information and facts from informants as they are, according to the informants' own views by collecting data in the form of facts they express, in accordance with the language and views of the informants. Therefore, researchers provide the widest possible opportunities to informants, so that all informant information is revealed completely and holistically.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The Korean Wave, initially focused on films and television dramas, experienced significant development with the entry of the K-Pop industry. This phenomenon not only created international popularity for Korean music, but also opened the door for the expansion of Korean cultural influence in various aspects of daily life. K-Pop music, with its innovative style, eye-catching visuals, and spectacular stage presence, has been a major force behind the rapid growth of the Korean Wave. K-Pop artists are not only recognized as musicians, but also as lifestyle icons who influence fashion, beauty and lifestyle trends.

The Korean Wave also created a positive impact on the Korean entertainment industry as a whole. Korean music, television dramas and films not only entertain but also reflect modern social and cultural characteristics. The success of the Korean Wave is not only seen from the entertainment aspect alone, but also as a driving factor in increasing the Korean entertainment business. Increased interest in Korean arts and entertainment has also brought significant economic benefits to the country.

Apart from that, the Korean Wave is also leading global consumption trends with increasing interest in South Korean products. Korea's food, electronics, lifestyle, clothing, make-up and even plastic surgery are increasingly gaining international attention. This reflects the strong appeal generated by Korean pop culture and how the Korean Wave has succeeded in changing global perceptions of South Korean products and lifestyle. This entire phenomenon not only creates a positive economic impact but also shapes South Korea's modern and dynamic image in the eyes of the world.

The current success of the Korean Wave cannot be separated from the active role of the South Korean government which provides full support for the increase and spread of this phenomenon at the international level. The South Korean government has strategically taken steps to strengthen and promote the Korean Wave as part of its cultural diplomacy efforts. This step was taken in response to the Asian economic crisis in 1997 which had a significant impact on Korea's cultural industry and national economic sector. To overcome this challenge, the South Korean government sees the potential of soft power, especially in the field of culture, as an effective way to introduce and reposition South Korea's image in the eyes of the world.

The South Korean government allocates significant resources to support the cultural industry, including providing financial incentives and policies that support the growth of arts and entertainment. Investments in cultural education, promotion of arts and entertainment, and creating an environment that supports creativity are also the government's focus. Thus, the South Korean government encourages the growth of the cultural

industry as an integral part of the national economy and foreign diplomacy. This strategy proved successful, with the Korean Wave becoming a major attraction that not only increased the sustainability of the Korean cultural industry but also had a positive impact on the national economy as a whole.

The Korean Wave has achieved an extraordinary level of success in various countries, making a significant contribution to promoting and enhancing the image of South Korean brand products. This success cannot be separated from the similarities and compatibility of Korean culture with culture in the East Asian region. Enjoyment of Korean TV dramas, as a form of visual media, has been a major catalyst in spreading Korean cultural products throughout the region. Korean TV dramas, with their compelling stories and high-quality productions, managed to find an overwhelmingly positive response from East Asians, opening the door to the influence of Korean culture throughout the region.

The South Korean government recognizes the positive impact of the Korean Wave and is proactively implementing public diplomacy with a direct approach to citizens in countries in the East Asian region. These efforts include cultural exchange programs, promotion of arts and entertainment, as well as diplomatic initiatives that emphasize shared values and cross-cultural cooperation. Through this approach, South Korea has succeeded in building close relations with the people of East Asia, creating strong bonds through mutual understanding and appreciation of each country's cultural riches. The public diplomacy carried out by the South Korean government in this region not only promotes a positive image of the country but also strengthens its position as a leader in the creative and entertainment industry at the global level.

Campaigning against the international public through public diplomacy is a political instrument that is oriented towards coexistence, not coercion, based on public issues, such as culture, learning, arts and sports which are carried out over a long period of time. For this reason, the South Korean government created a public diplomacy strategy using Hallyu's popularity in the East Asia region with the aim of promoting South Korea and improving South Korea's national image.

To support its public diplomacy efforts, the South Korean government is actively establishing public institutions that have a special role in improving the country's image abroad. These institutions are involved in spreading and promoting various aspects of Korean culture, including Hallyu or the Korean Wave. In this context, Hallyu has significant implications for increasing South Korea's soft power in the East Asia region. The Hallyu phenomenon not only creates a strong cultural attraction but also has a positive impact on sociocultural and economic ties between South Korea and countries in the region. Through the increasing popularity of TV dramas, K-pop music, and various other cultural expressions, South Korea has succeeded in strengthening emotional ties with East Asian societies, paving the way for growing economic cooperation and closer sociocultural exchanges. By establishing public institutions focused on enhancing its image through soft power, South Korea plays an important role in establishing positive relations with countries in the region .

In this era of globalization, public diplomacy in South Korea is considered as a solution to take an approach towards North Korea. Public diplomacy, in this context, is identified in three key dimensions: news management, strategic communication, and building long-term ties. Initiatives taken by President Moon Jae-in since 2017 have played a significant role in shaping South Korea's attitude towards North Korea. His speech in Berlin reflected a desire to build better relations between the two countries, and media encouragement in the era of globalization has been key in spreading this message. Through effective news management and strategic communications, South Korea seeks to motivate North Korea to participate in dialogue and embrace more positive assumptions. Public diplomacy under Moon Jae-in's leadership not only created momentum for inter-Korean talks but also shaped the global outlook on the dynamics of relations on the Korean Peninsula .

With the image that South Korea has built in the international world, it can make relations between countries in the world continue to become closer so that it can help improve various sectors of political, economic and of course socio-cultural ties. The improvement in South Korea's image through the Korean Wave, which was implemented as a form of instrument for implementing soft diplomacy, also had a positive influence on the economic sector. The significant improvement in relations between countries is also well reflected in the rapid growth of trade.

Influence in the economic sector is also supported by the South Korean tourism zone which certainly cannot be separated from a significant influence in implementing this soft diplomacy. The Korean Wave had a real influence and played an important role in introducing Korean culture to the world. The influence of Korean culture in world society is from the results of interviews with several Korean fans, starting from their hobby of watching Korean drama series and starting to enjoy Korean pop music, then learning about Korean culture. Then, they tried Korean food like what they saw in Korean dramas or films, then started to get to know the traditional Korean clothing 'Hanbok'. and even learn some Korean vocabulary through K-Pop song lyrics. The Korean Wave has worked effectively in the international community and a positive image has been formed to create a Global Korea.

Korean cultural diplomacy, as an integral part of the concept of soft power, has played a central role in uniting the international community. South Korea actively utilizes elements of its culture, such as K-pop music, television dramas, films, fashion and traditions, as the main instruments in creating a positive image and building connectivity with the global community. The Korean Wave, or Hallyu, phenomenon is a successful example of Korean cultural diplomacy that has positively influenced the international community. Through the Korean Wave, South Korea succeeded in breaking through cultural and linguistic boundaries, creating a universal appeal. K-pop music, with its eye-catching visuals and innovative trends, has not only become a global phenomenon but also opened the door to understanding and appreciating Korea's rich culture. Korean television dramas have also become an effective means of conveying the cultural values, traditions and daily life of South Korean society to international audiences.

In terms of fashion, South Korea is also able to set trends that are accepted by the international community, creating fashion icons that are recognized globally. The adoption of these cultural elements in the daily life of international communities helps unite them through a shared cultural experience. The importance of Korean cultural diplomacy in uniting society through soft power lies in its ability to create diversity that is respected and appreciated by various groups in society. This not only increases cross-cultural understanding, but also strengthens relations between countries through cultural exchange, artistic collaboration, and a deeper understanding of each other. Thus, South Korea's cultural diplomacy not only builds a positive image, but also produces close connectivity between the global community through its soft power.

5. CONCLUSION

South Korea has succeeded in utilizing cultural diplomacy, especially through the Korean Wave, as a major force to improve its positive image in the eyes of the international community. Full support from the government, including the establishment of public institutions, has been key in promoting and enhancing the country's soft power. The Korean Wave, involving K-pop music, television dramas, films and other cultural elements, has not only created global popularity but also strengthened bilateral relations, especially in the East Asian region. South Korea's cultural diplomacy, as a response to the economic crisis and a strategy to reintroduce the country's image, has had a positive impact on the national economy and expanded South Korea's influence in the world. Recent diplomatic initiatives, such as those undertaken by President Moon Jae-in, highlight the importance of public diplomacy in shaping South Korea's attitude toward North Korea, focusing on news management, strategic communications, and building long-term ties. Overall, South Korea's cultural diplomacy has been a successful model in uniting society through soft power, creating positive connectivity at the global level, and changing the world's perception of this country.

REFERENCES

- Anindia, A. (2022). Diplomasi Budaya Korea Selatan Melalui Korean Cultural Center dalam Program Hanbok Experience. *Moestopo Journal of International Relations*, 2(1), 63-76.
- Azzahra, F. P. (2022). Korean Wave dan Kebijakan Budaya: Analisis Diplomasi Budaya melalui Kerangka Neoliberalisme. *ResearchGate*. Retrieved October, 7, 2022.
- Bainus, A., & Rachman, J. B. (2018). Kepentingan Nasional dalam Hubungan Internasional. *Intermestic: Journal of International Studies*, 2(2), 109-115.
- Burnay, M., Hivonnet, J., & Raube, K. (2014). Soft diplomacy and people-to-people dialogue between the EU and the PRC. *Eur. Foreign Aff. Rev.*, 19, 35.
- Djelantik, S. (2008). Diplomasi antara teori dan Praktik. *Graha Ilmu*.
- Erwindo, C. W. (2018). Efektifitas Diplomasi Budaya Dalam Penyebaran Anime Dan Manga Sebagai Nation Branding Jepang. *Jurnal Analisis Hubungan Internasional*, 7(2), 66-78.
- Fadli, F. (2016). *Film The Radi I Sebagai Sarana Diplomasi Kebudayaan* (Doctoral dissertation, Univeristas Andalas).
- Hutagalung, N. K., Rachman, J. B., & Akim, A. (2019). Diplomasi publik korea selatan di indonesia melalui king sejong institute center indonesia. *Jurnal Ilmiah Hubungan Internasional*, 15(2), 131-145.
- Khumayah, S. (2021). Implementasi Perlindungan dan Pengelolaan Lingkungan Hidup untuk Peningkatan Kesejahteraan Nelayan. *Syntax Literate; Jurnal Ilmiah Indonesia*, 6(1), 430-437.
- Kim, Y. (Ed.). (2013). *The Korean wave: Korean media go global*. Routledge.
- Lee, G. (2009). A theory of soft power and Korea's soft power strategy. *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, 21(2), 205-218.
- Leonardo, L. (2019). Diplomasi Budaya Korea Selatan Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Hubungan Bilateral Korea Selatan-Indonesia. *Global Political Studies Journal*, 3(1), 1-32.
- Lovric, B. (2016). Soft power. *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, 10(1), 30-34.
- Nye, J. S. (1990). Soft power. *Foreign policy*, (80), 153-171.
- Nye, J. S. (2004). Soft power: The means to success in world politics. *Public affairs*.
- Prabowo, Y. I. (2014). *Diplomasi Budaya Indonesia Melalui Sea Games 2011 Di Palembang* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Muhammadiyah Malang).
- Prayuda, R. (2019). Diplomasi dan Power: Sebuah Kajian Analisis. *Journal of Diplomacy and International Studies*, 2(01), 80-93.
- Ravina, M. (2009). Introduction: conceptualizing the Korean wave. *Southeast Review of Asian Studies*, 31, 3-10.
- Reimeingam, M. (2014). Korean wave and Korean media consumption in Manipur. *Journal of North East India Studies*, 4(2), 15-30.
- Sugiyono, P. (2011). Metodologi penelitian kuantitatif kualitatif dan R&D. *Alfabeta*, Bandung, 62-70.
- Tahmi, A. R., Rosyidin, M., & Faiza, M. (2022). Analisis Kepentingan Nasional Uni Emirat Arab Dalam Normalisasi Hubungan Dengan Israel. *Journal of International Relations*, 8(3), 325-333.
- Warsito, T., & Kartikasari, W. (2007). Diplomasi kebudayaan: konsep dan relevansi bagi negara berkembang: studi kasus Indonesia. *Ombak*.
- Yani, Y. M., & Lusiana, E. (2018). Soft power dan soft diplomacy. *Jurnal Tapis: Jurnal Teropong Aspirasi Politik Islam*, 14(2), 48-65.
- Zahidi, M. S. (2016). KSCC dan Diplomasi Budaya Korea. *Insignia: Journal of International Relations*, 3(01), 44-59.