

SOUTH KOREA AND THE PUBLIC DIPLOMACY-INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEXUS

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This paper uses theories of the public diplomacy – international development nexus to analyse how South Korea uses international development aid as a tool of its public diplomacy. As an OECD-DAC member, it has rapidly increased the outreach of its development aid to many developing countries, which often regard South Korea's development experience as an example of a successful development model. In this way, the paper shows how development can be considered as a niche of South Korea's middle power diplomacy. The paper explains how South Korea blends its foreign aid and development policies with public diplomacy in two ways. First, through projects, such as Korea Aid, South Korea uses development aid as a facet within which it enacts its public diplomacy initiatives. Second, as South Korea is a recent graduate to the OECD-DAC club, its experience of South-South cooperation allows it to act as a bridge-maker, and rule-maker, between different paradigms of development within the global development community.

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Introduction

While the international development scene has seen many changes in the last decade, mainly due to the differing development practices of emerging donors that are challenging the paradigms of traditional OECD-DAC donors, many governments and non-state actors are using development policy as a location to enact public diplomacy initiatives. As the relationship between public diplomacy and international development has not been subject to much study, this paper aims to contribute to filling this gap in academia.

While one may argue that the link between public diplomacy and development is too abstract and vague to form a basis for academic research, the very parameters of what can be considered as public diplomacy, or what it can be linked to, are often rather fluid and vague as well. This is evident in how PD practitioners and scholars have not agreed on any uniform or concerted definition of public diplomacy, as they vary widely. Nevertheless, the fact that the "USC Center on Public Diplomacy has made International Development a priority area in their work" seems to confirm that the PD – development nexus is a worthwhile topic of research. Reflecting the growing importance of the

development – public diplomacy nexus.¹ R.S. Zaharna also notes, "the migration of language from development projects into public diplomacy is perhaps a reflection of the growing trend to highlight development assistance as a part of a country's public diplomacy".²

In discussing the role of development aid, and how it can be linked to public diplomacy, James Pamment discusses the many changes in the development industry, and makes an example of how significant the Millennium Development Goals were in seeing the whole global development community come together for the first time. He notes that while the new discourse has led "international development actors to think in terms of "partnerships" and "participation," PD has also shifted its debates toward "dialogue," "engagement," and "collaboration".³

¹ James Pamment, "Intersections Between Public Diplomacy & International Development: Case Studies in Converging Fields," (2016), pg. 9

² R. S. Zaharna, "The Public Diplomacy Challenges of Strategic Stakeholder Engagement," In *Trials of Engagement: The Future of U.S. Public Diplomacy* 6 (2010), pg. 207

³ Pamment, pg.7

This shift has led to medium powers, such as South Korea and Canada, to employ Official Development Aid (ODA) as a part of their public diplomacy initiatives. Pamment asserts that the emergence of “non-traditional soft power and aid actors” from emerging economies, such as the BRICS and MINTS countries, has led to an increased use of “public diplomacy targeted international development funding to support their political and economic objectives”.⁴

The aim of this paper is to analyse how international development aid is being used as a tool of public diplomacy by South Korea, a country that was still quite recently a recipient of aid, but graduated to become a fully-fledged member of the OECD-DAC club in 2010. South Korea’s experience of rapid development, often dubbed as the ‘miracle of the Han River’, makes for an interesting case study, as its geopolitical location, history, and size, may allow for it to become a sort of bridge between the traditional donors from the global North, and the emerging donors from the global South. Moreover, South Korea can serve as a bridge between the developed and developing countries in general. South Korea is often viewed as a middle power, like Canada or Australia, that has increasingly been entering the field of development, where it has used innovative methods to foster development cooperation in ways that promote a positive image of itself to recipient nations and other foreign audiences. The paper asserts that South Korea may be at an advantageous position to use its experience with aid as a form ‘niche diplomacy’.

In an International Conference held in 2010 by the Jeju Peace Institute, Korea Foundation and the US Embassy in Seoul, a representative of Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Kim Dong-gi, gave a speech on the “context, current status and challenges” of the Korean government’s public diplomacy initiative.⁵ He iterated that while traditional diplomacy still has an important role, new areas of diplomacy, which utilise “soft power assets such as culture, values, knowledge and national brand images”, are increasing in

importance.⁶ His speech highlighted how various non-state actors, from citizens to NGOs, have become “prominent in the diplomatic arena due to globalization, proliferation of democracy, and the advancement of communications technology”, and how there is a growing importance in public diplomacy that “utilizes soft power assets to promote national image and build trust in foreign civil societies, citizens, as well as governments”.⁷ The notions of public diplomacy engaging non-state actors, especially in linkage with globalisation and innovations in communication technology, are echoed in scholarly literature, while there is a lack of a consensus on how to interpret the relationship between public diplomacy and soft power. The literature seems to sometimes speak of public diplomacy and soft power rather interchangeably, while it sometimes treats them as distinctly differing concepts.

Nevertheless, Mr Kim’s pragmatic definition of public diplomacy sees it as the “diplomatic measures to approach foreign citizens directly using art, knowledge, media, language and development assistance”.⁸ Thus, public diplomacy encompasses a wide array of fields, where the Korean government, Korean organisations, and their cooperation, has allowed for public diplomacy initiatives to take place. This paper focuses on the relationship between Korean public diplomacy and its development assistance. More precisely, this paper asks the question: How does South Korea use development as a tool of its public diplomacy?

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This paper is conducted as a qualitative study. The theoretical and analytical framework is based on theories and concepts that can accommodate the nexus of public diplomacy and international development studies. The paper uses a wide array of academic journals and studies, governmental statements, and other news and media sources regarding public diplomacy, development, their intersection, and the role of South Korea within this intersection. Furthermore, an interview is conducted with students at the Korean Development Institute.

⁴ Ibid, pg. 8

⁵ Dong-gi Kim, “Korean Government’s Public Diplomacy Initiative: Its Context, Current Status, and Challenges” (speech, December 2010),

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

This paper is organised in two sections. First, it describes the relationship between public diplomacy and international development, by looking at Zielińska's theory of development diplomacy, and Pamment's three levels of analysis on the intersection between public diplomacy and international development.⁹ Second, the paper introduces the case of South Korea's public diplomacy, and its relationship with international development. It introduces the concept of niche diplomacy, and its relationship with public diplomacy and development, as the paper provides evidence on how South Korea can be considered a middle power democracy, with great potential to exploit its niche in development as a tool of its public diplomacy. Thereon, with reflections on the theories of Zielińska and Pamment, it gives empirical evidence of public diplomacy initiatives with linkages to international development, by introducing projects of the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).¹⁰ While KOICA is the main case used for analysing the South Korean public diplomacy – development nexus, some other relevant aspects of the South Korean public diplomacy – development relationship is also discussed. Finally, concluding remarks are made on how South Korea uses development as a tool of public diplomacy.

Theories of Public Diplomacy and Its Relationship with Development

The emergence of new donors has altered the understanding of aid, or Official Development Aid (ODA), as their resource flows to developing countries are less clearly defined, and the idea of what can be defined as aid is becoming increasingly blurred. While definitional issues relating to development aid is a debate on its own, the definition of public diplomacy, and how it can be related to development is also blurry. This is largely due to the fact that governments may seek to conceal any public diplomacy ambitions in their

development policies, as development aid is generally regarded an altruistic obligation of richer countries, where any sort of self-promotion of a donor nation's own interests could be viewed as undignified.

As public diplomacy leaks over borders into different fields of practice and theory, it is very difficult to give a thorough and rigid definition of it. This is especially evident when comparing the varying definitions of academics, or looking at the variety of ways in which different governments and practitioners frame the concept of public diplomacy. To further inspect the relationship between public diplomacy and development in South Korea, this section will introduce the two theories of Zielińska and Pamment, which link PD and development.¹¹

Zielińska's Concept of Development Diplomacy

In dressing development assistance as a tool of public diplomacy, Karolina Zielińska defines "development diplomacy" as "diplomacy done through development aid", and "as a part of public diplomacy that realises its aims thanks to soft power resources".¹² She states that aid programmes are increasingly moving from their traditional context of fostering development to also promoting and enhancing the image of the donor country.¹³ Zielińska frames development diplomacy as a part of new public diplomacy, where both governments and non-state actors can do it. It is "based on soft power, two-ways communication, management of (credible) information; and...both short- and long-term oriented".¹⁴ Zielińska says that while development aid may not be a formal part of a states' public diplomacy programme, it still "constitutes a soft power resource for public diplomacy in itself", and "serves employment of other soft power resources in the service of public diplomacy".¹⁵ If aid can develop "positive, mutual and symmetric relationships", it can enhance the soft power of a donor country, and support its public diplomacy.

⁹ K. Zielińska, "Development Diplomacy. Development Aid as a Part of Public Diplomacy in the Pursuit of Foreign Policy Aims: Theoretical and Practical Considerations," *Historia I Polityka* 16, no. 23 (2016); Pamment, (2016)

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Zielińska, pg. 9

¹³ Ibid, pg. 10

¹⁴ Ibid, pg. 13

¹⁵ Ibid, pg. 15

Zielińska uses Ociepka's definition of public diplomacy, where PD is a "two-way, dialogical form of political international communication, directed at the public abroad, realised through the media and direct channels. Its aim is shaping or supporting a positive image of a country and society abroad, including - by influence on public opinion - building of positive attitudes towards the country".¹⁶

Zielińska says "public diplomacy understood this way is meant to assist in the realisation of aims of given country's policy in the international environment".¹⁷

Zielińska highlights how the last decades have seen elements of 'new' public diplomacy relating to "educational diplomacy"; "citizen diplomacy"; "digital diplomacy"; "historical diplomacy"; "local government diplomacy"; "diaspora diplomacy"; "social diplomacy"; and "development diplomacy".¹⁸ The borders between these fields are very blurred, as many PD initiatives could see a mix of these subfields being executed. In this way, development diplomacy functions best when other instruments of public diplomacy can support it.¹⁹

Moreover, Zielińska finds that "forms of aid such as training, study visits, acceptance of students, on-the-spot consultations or know-how transfer, as well as small-scale projects well embedded in local community, seem to be most promising in terms of converging aims related to development with the ones of public diplomacy".²⁰ Finally, she finds that while many small or medium power countries may deliver aid purely for "altruistic reasons [...] launching foreign aid programmes is usually connected to undertaking certain moral standing, which constitutes part of conscious formation of own role in the international system".²¹

Pamment's Three Levels of Intersection Between PD and International Development

In looking at how different PD scholars have analysed the relationship between international

development and PD, Pamment isolates three levels where these two areas intersect.²²

At the first level, the "act of giving aid can itself be considered a form of public diplomacy", as aid can be regarded as "an extension of traditional diplomatic objectives towards the general public", where civil society can play a mediator's or broker's role.²³ Especially, the areas of advocacy, education and exchanges in aid have a far-reaching effect on foreign publics. Pamment quotes Edward Guillon's early definition of PD, which includes "dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy" that involve "the interaction of private groups in one country with those of another," and where "transnational flow of information and ideas" are central, and could include topics such as "health education".²⁴ Such interactions are evident in areas of development aid, such as technical assistance, educational exchanges, and volunteering programmes.

Pamment discusses how Bruce Gregory's definition of public diplomacy in the 21st century also supports the first level.²⁵ Gregory says that (new) PD is "an instrument used by states, associations of states, and sub-state and non-state actors to understand cultures, attitude and behaviour; to build and manage relationships; and to influence thoughts and mobilize actions to advance their interests and values".²⁶ For instance, a donor nation may send aid, or aid workers to a recipient country, towards projects that promote shared values and interests, and even foreign policy objectives. Aid may be given towards sanitation or renewable energy to safeguard the global public goods of healthcare and a cleaner environment. This is facilitated by making the publics of the recipient country interact with experts and aid workers from the donor country through cultural and educational exchanges and activities, where the shared values are promoted. Furthermore, such exchanges may garner support of

¹⁶ Ibid, pg. 10

¹⁷ Ibid, pg. 10-11

¹⁸ Ibid, pg. 11-12

¹⁹ Ibid, pg. 23

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid

²² Pamment, (2016)

²³ Ibid, pg.10

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Pamment, 2016; Bruce Gregory, "American Public Diplomacy: Enduring Characteristics, Elusive Transformation," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 6, no. 3 (2011):

²⁶ Gregory, pg. 353

the recipient people towards foreign policy goals of the donor country. In this way, development aid can build relationships, and influence foreign publics. The second level of Pamment's analysis sees "the communication of aid activities as public diplomacy".²⁷ This level involves "branding, marketing, and promotion of aid activities to foreign citizens and domestic stakeholders in a manner that supports an actor's reputation and image".²⁸ This is exemplified by a study of the EU's public diplomacy, which states that its aid is made "visible in the recipient country and beyond", as "it is important not only that aid be given but that it is seen to be given".²⁹ In this way, development supports the self-image that the EU wants to portray of being a normative power, which advocates values, such as peace, democracy, rule of law, and development.

Lastly, the third level focuses on how development and public diplomacy matters "are discussed and understood within institutions and among the experts that produce aid and public diplomacy".³⁰ This level can be exemplified by the approach that South Korea seems to be taking in seeking to become a 'rule-maker' in the global development architecture, as will be discussed in the second section.

Korean Public Diplomacy and International Development

As South Korea is geopolitically situated between two economic giants, Japan and China, and living under an ongoing threat of war with North Korea, its already limited hard power vis-à-vis its closest neighbours is further constrained by the "ever-present sense of instability".³¹ In adapting to this geopolitical position, South Korea has taken advantage of its wealth of soft power assets, such as *hallyu* (Korean Wave), which can be used as a part

of its public diplomacy initiatives, to allow for countries further away to have a favourable image of South Korea. While its public diplomacy only began formally in 2010, South Korea has already developed significant PD programmes³². Many scholars note that Korea's experience of rapid development is regarded as a model for developing countries, which could be used as a part of its public diplomacy.³³

While Cull advocates for Korea to use its middle power status, and image of "being a good global citizen", Cho sees PD targeted at "developing and underdeveloped nations" as a way for Korea to alter "the perception that it is sandwiched between major powers of Northeast Asia" – China and Japan.³⁴ He iterates that Korea has a great opportunity to share "its know-how on economic growth and development" so that it can "become a nation that other nations want to share experience with" and "emulate".³⁵

Accordingly, the Director-General for Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Enna Park, presented development cooperation as the main pillar of Korea's foreign policy, and stated that public diplomacy in development cooperation could upgrade South Korea's national prestige.³⁶ This importance of development assistance as a tool of public diplomacy is echoed by the chancellor of the Korean National Diplomatic Academy, Yun Duk-min, who stated that it is now time for "Korea's public diplomacy to take a leap forward, given the significance of soft power in determining a middle power's diplomatic sway, and the potentials the country has built over the past 20-plus years through the Korean Wave, official

²⁷ Pamment, pg. 11

²⁸ Ibid, pg. 12

²⁹ P.F De Gouveia and H. Plumridge, "European Infopolitik Developing EU Public Diplomacy Strategy," The Foreign Policy Centre, pg. 17 (2005)

³⁰ Pamment, pg. 12

³¹ Young Sam Ma, Jung-he Song, and Dewey E. Moore, "Korea's Public Diplomacy: A New Initiative for the Future," The Asan Institute for Policy Studies, December 20, 2012,

³² Ma et. al (2012); Cull, Nicholas J. "Bulging Ideas: Making Korean Public Diplomacy Work." Asan Institute for Policy Studies, 37th ser. (December 2012).

³³ Ma et. al (2012); Cull, Nicolas J. (2012); Yun Young Cho, "Public Diplomacy and South Korea's Strategies," The Korean Journal of International Studies 10, no. 2 (December 2012)

³⁴ Cull, pg. 18; Cho, pg. 285

³⁵ Cho, pg. 285

³⁶ Enna Park, "Korea's Development Cooperation Policy: Philosophy, Objectives, and Strategies," Asian Approaches to Development Cooperation, pg. 5 (2013)

development assistance and other knowledge and people-to-people exchange programs”.³⁷

Development as South Korea’s Niche

The notion of ‘niche diplomacy’ is often seen as a way for smaller countries to conduct their public diplomacy. Countries such as Canada and Norway have developed their ‘niche’, or specialisation, as actors in peacekeeping, conflict resolution, and development aid, which have garnered them huge international prestige, and a positive perception by foreign audiences.³⁸ In the field of development cooperation, Lee finds that while most countries development aid practices are based on “the intrinsic goals of development cooperation, it is difficult to completely detach development cooperation policy from individual countries’ interests”.³⁹ He finds that major donors have displayed a “dual dynamic of cooperation and competition in constructing the new order”, where they all agree that a framework for global governance in development is needed, but “compete against each other to realign the coming global order of development cooperation toward their interests”.⁴⁰ He sees that these changes present development cooperation as “a natural candidate for niche diplomacy” of middle powers, where Korea could take a leading role.⁴¹

While the most important factor in South Korea developing a niche for development diplomacy is its own experience, South Korea has proven to be very active in participation and initiation of global discussions in the development arena.⁴² It has played “a bridging role among various players with potentially conflicting interests including traditional donors, providers of South-South cooperation, NGOs, CSOs, and private funders”.⁴³ In what Lee

describes as “the complex nature of the international architecture of development cooperation”, South Korea’s experience in development, geopolitical position, and middle power politics has allowed it to specialise and become a leader in the global governance of development, as it has garnered respect from diverging actors across the development community.⁴⁴

Accordingly, the President of KOICA stated that Korea does not need to “remain a follower but it may become a rule-maker” in the development arena.⁴⁵ As South Korea became an OECD-DAC member in 2010, it fully embraced its new role, as the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, a major conference of the global development community, was held in Busan in 2011.⁴⁶ This pivotal conference saw opposing development regimes speak of deeper cooperation, in a way that fit the host country’s aspirations to become a leader, a bridge, or a *rule-maker*, between the development practices of the global North and South.

This has spawned a lot of academic literature on South Korea’s role as a middle power, or bridge, of development thinking between the differing paradigms of development. It has allowed for South Korea to further its image as a specialised country in development within the global development community. In this way, South Korea exemplifies the third level of Pamment’s public diplomacy - international development intersection, where it is becoming the *rule-maker* “within institutions and among the experts that produce aid and public diplomacy”.⁴⁷

In fact, the Korean Development Institute (KDI) and KOICA have already developed programmes, such as the Knowledge Sharing Program (KSP) and the Development Experience Exchange Program (DEEP), where KSP includes “joint policy research, workshops, training, field trips and dissemination seminars” for foreigners, while the latter is involved

³⁷ Min-Sik Yoon, “New law to boost public diplomacy,” The Korea Herald, (2016)

³⁸ Henrikson, Alan K. “Niche Diplomacy in the World Public Arena: the Global ‘Corners’ of Canada and Norway.” The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations, pg. 67-87 (2005)

³⁹ Seungjoo Lee, “Multilayered World Order and South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: The Case of Development Cooperation Policy,” Korean Political Science Review 48, no. 6 (2014)

⁴⁰ Ibid, 79

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Ibid, pg. 96

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Hyon-hee Shin, “[EYE] Shaping the game of development assistance,” The Korea Herald (2016)

⁴⁶ Emma Mawdsley, Laura Savage, and Sung-Mi Kim, “A ‘post-aid world? Paradigm shift in foreign aid and development cooperation at the 2011 Busan High Level Forum,” The Geographical Journal 180, no. 1 (2013)

⁴⁷ Pamment, pg.12

in “country tailored consulting” to help developing countries address a wider range of issues that they come up against in their quest for economic progress.⁴⁸

In speaking with students at the Korea Development Institute in Sejong City, I found that the majority of them come from developing countries from around the world, and have received Korean (mostly KOICA) funded scholarships to come to South Korea to learn about the Korean development model. These factors all point to South Korea already knowingly exploiting its reputation as a model for development as a form of ‘niche diplomacy’. As the KDI students return to their home countries as policy makers, they may spread the word about the Korean development model further on, and act as PD agents for South Korea as well.

To further understand how development and public diplomacy intersect in the case of South Korea, the following part will analyse how the Korean government and KOICA adapt development programmes to entail public diplomacy initiatives, and include references to the theories presented earlier on in the paper.

KOICA

The Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) is the main government agency in development cooperation in South Korea, as it “has established over 60 vocational institutes” in developing countries, and actively invites “foreigners to Korea for training programs”.⁴⁹ KOICA builds networks through development initiatives in education and training to spread the Korean know-how and experience of development. KOICA is even known to brand its projects to support Korean culture, as exemplified by Korea Innovative Maternal & Child Health Initiative being labelled as the Korean signature dish, KIMCHI. In an interview in 2016, the President of KOICA, Kim In-shik, said, “KOICA should be at the forefront of crafting new assistance models that can expedite the recipients’ growth while boosting business, cultural and people-to-people ties with

Korea”.⁵⁰ The idea of supporting aid to promote people-to-people and cultural ties is very much in line with the first level of the relationship between public diplomacy and development described by Pamment, where the very act of giving aid allows for positive interactions and image-building. Moreover, its aim to create new models of assistance supports the logic of Korea wanting to become a *rule-maker* in development.

The KOICA president sees the “fragmentation among various state agencies” as Korea’s main problem in utilising development as a venue for public diplomacy. This is exemplified by how the more than 44 institutions that implement ODA in Korea lack common objectives or a coherent vision.⁵¹ This intra-agency tension thus harms consistency, which is an important part of successful public diplomacy. In describing ODA as “one of the most effective tools to promote Korea’s brand image and influence”, the KOICA President’s comments echo the importance of the communication of aid activities, which is the second level conceptualised in Pamment’s theory of the development–public diplomacy relationship.⁵²

Hereon, this paper introduces two programmes that involve KOICA, and use development as a tool for public diplomacy: the Korea Aid programme, and the World Friends Korea programme.

Korea Aid

In May 2016, during President Park Geun-hye’s visit to Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, the Korean government launched its Korea Aid programme, with an idea “to blend health support with cultural and public diplomacy”.⁵³ This “mobile aid” project included two ambulances and four food trucks that were driven to poor parts of Africa, where they provided “medical services while serving Korean food and screening soap operas and music”.⁵⁴ Moreover, it saw “more than 20 South Korean doctors and nurses...join hands with their Ethiopian counterparts to provide basic medical services,

⁴⁸ Lee, pg.95

⁴⁹ Ma et. al, pg.17

⁵⁰ Shin, (2016)

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Ibid

especially to girls in medically underserved regions”.⁵⁵

The three elements in the project were labelled “K-Medic, K-Culture and K-meal”, and they entailed Korean volunteers, from doctors and cooks to technicians.⁵⁶ While the developmental aspect of the project was run by K-Medic, which focused on offering health education and health services, the K-Meal side focused on “forging friendship through sharing a meal”, and the K-Culture side on “screenings of educational clips”, and introducing “various aspects of Korean culture”.⁵⁷ The Korean government has stated that it expects the programme to enhance cultural and economic exchanges with the partner countries.⁵⁸

While the government stated that it expects the programme to contribute to reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the unprecedented programme was very controversial, and provoked a “backlash from civic groups and some academics”, who labelled it a “one-off political show”.⁵⁹ The critics stated that ODA “should not be diverted for cultural promotion”, as the Korea Aid programme “not only lacks long-term viability but also runs counter to the international community’s efforts to systematically improve the health environment in the region”.⁶⁰ While some of these criticisms may seem harsh, the Korea Aid programme does seem a lot like a cultural festival, rather than a development project.

Although the criticisms make the project seem a failure in terms of public diplomacy, especially in donor communities, KOICA president Kim argued that “it is too early to call the program a failure” as it may have had positive results in terms of healthcare and South Korea’s image in the actual recipient communities.⁶¹ He stated that “KOICA has been running mobile clinics in West Africa and elsewhere, which managed to save many lives and

helped plug the medical service vacuum in remote and critically underserved areas in a relatively cost-efficient way”.⁶²

This project can be regarded as an example of the development diplomacy aspect of public diplomacy, described by Zielińska, which “realises its aims thanks to soft power resources”.⁶³ In this way, soft power assets, such as *hallyu* is blended with social diplomacy, in the form of Korean doctors and nurses, whom interact with the local population under the auspices of a greater development agenda. Moreover, the mobile aid concept blended with Korean cultural promotion is an example of what Zielińska dubs as “on-the spot consultations” and “small-scale projects”, as ways of implementing public diplomacy initiatives through development assistance.⁶⁴ However, in Pamment’s third level of analysis of the development – PD relationship, this project could have scathed South Korea’s ambition to be a ‘bridge-maker’ in the international development community, where the project was not seen favourably.

The Korea Aid project also serves as an interesting example of the relationship between public diplomacy and the international development arena, where the Korean government and KOICA did not try to conceal the promotion of South Korea within the altruistic performance of their development obligations. Conversely, the Korean government publicly asserted that Korea Aid “will combine development assistance with cultural diplomacy”.⁶⁵

World Friends Korea

Another example of South Korea’s public diplomacy initiatives made by KOICA is the World Friends Korea organisation.

The Korean government integrated six government agencies that ran overseas volunteer programs into the single brand of World Friends Korea in 2009.⁶⁶ Since its inception, World Friends Korea has sent over 20,000 volunteers to partner countries between 2009 and 2014 (KOICA, 2016), with the total number of KOICA/World Friends Korea volunteers

⁵⁵ Kwang-tae Kim, “(LEAD) Park launches Korea Aid program for Ethiopia,” Yonhap News Agency, (2016)

⁵⁶ Myo-Ja Ser, “Korea bets big on African development projects,” Korea JoongAng Daily,

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ Eve Lee, “President Park to launch Korea Aid initiative during Africa trip,” Arirang News, 2016

⁵⁹ Kim (2016); Shin (2016)

⁶⁰ Shin (2016)

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² Ibid

⁶³ Zielińska, pg. 9

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ Myo-Ja Ser (2016)

⁶⁶ KOICA (2016)

dispatched since 1990 numbering at 50,000, and active in 96 countries.⁶⁷ The organisation firmly believes in the power of “soft diplomacy”, where partnership and collaboration can create a common vision for the future.⁶⁸

Based on the United State Peace Corps, World Friends Korea has three clearly defined goals: the promotion of sustainable development, poverty reduction, and improved living standards; forging deep and “friendly ties” with partner countries; and “self-fulfilment” with the opportunity “to become active global citizens”.⁶⁹ Thus, the volunteers act as soft diplomatic assets, who work to fulfil development targets in partner nations, while simultaneously sharing and promoting the values and culture of South Korea, and developing stronger networks.

In working “with governments, schools, non-profit organizations and businessmen in various areas, including education, the environment, agriculture and information technology”, Korean official stated that the volunteers “will also play an important role in promoting Korea’s culture and food around the world”.⁷⁰ Thus, World Friends Korea and Korea Aid seem to have very similar attributes at the core of their function. Both programmes aim to foster development and simultaneously promote Korean culture and food overseas.

As World Friends Korea is the second largest volunteer organisation in the world (after the US Peace Corps), its activities fit into the first level of Pamment’s theory of the intersection between PD and international development, where the civil society plays a mediator’s role as a broker of aid. The very fact that South Korea has such a big group of volunteers in the field of development already gives it a positive image, while these actors that deliver ‘aid’ in its various forms also serve as PD agents who promote and make visible the Korean national brand, its reputation, culture, and image (second level).

⁶⁷ KOICA (2016); Friends of Korea (2016)

⁶⁸ Friends of Korea (2016)

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ Jeong-ju Na, “Korea’s Peace Corps Launched,” Koreatimes (2009)

Finally, the function of World Friends Korea as a tool of public diplomacy can be related to Zielińska’s concept of development diplomacy. As Zielińska iterates that development diplomacy functions best when it is supported by other instruments of diplomacy, World Friends Korea reflects this as it crosses development diplomacy with citizen diplomacy and educational diplomacy, where volunteers engage with foreign publics, and transfer knowledge and build relationships with them. Moreover, World Friends Korea is an example of how social diplomacy as a part of public diplomacy sees civil society “engage in activities abroad that aim at enhancing development”.⁷¹

Conclusions

While it is important to note that many definitions of public diplomacy may not accommodate a linkage between development aid and public diplomacy, the purpose of this paper is to show that there is an existing avenue for PD to be driven into the changing field of development, as this is becoming increasingly possible as the norms of development aid are changing.

It seems that South Korea has indeed developed policies that mix public diplomacy and international development, as development is becoming a niche of Korean middle power diplomacy. While the strategy, or aim of development initiatives are not always clearly attributable to ends of public diplomacy, the theories of Pamment and Zielińska that link PD and development seem to be supported by the case of South Korea.⁷²

South Korea blends development and public diplomacy in two ways. It blends public diplomacy into its development initiatives, while it also uses its experience of rapid development as a tool of its public diplomacy. In more concrete terms, it intersects development and public diplomacy through projects, such as Korea Aid, where *hallyu* and other aspects of Korean culture are promoted as an integral part of the mobile development aid project. In this way, development aid can be used as a facet to enact public diplomacy initiatives within. Second, South Korea is a prominent middle power,

⁷¹ Zielińska, pg.12

⁷² Zielińska (2016), Pamment (2016)

who is both a member of OECD Development Assistance Committee, and a strong promoter of South-South cooperation in development. This allows for it to be considered a bridge-maker between different paradigms of development within the development community. South Korea exploits its reputation as ‘the Miracle of the Han River’, by using its own development experience to act as a bridge between the developed and developing world, and as a *rule-maker* in the changing sphere of global development governance.

In order to diversify its public diplomacy strategies, and not to rely entirely on the strength of *hallyu*, South Korea may find that linking its experience in development with its public diplomacy initiatives could serve as a lucrative public diplomacy asset. Evidence seems to support the claim that South Korea is in a privileged middle power position, between the developed and developing world, to enhance development as its niche. While public diplomacy is still a relatively new area that is increasingly being explored by the South Korean government, the next years may show the country enacting further innovative ways of blending development into public diplomacy, and vice versa.

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