

Public Diplomacy in Other Words: Mapping the Field in Korean-language Research

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Abstract

This study maps out the trends and scope of public diplomacy (PD) research published in South Korean academic journals, covering the disciplinary and institutional characteristics as well as the debates and discussions that have shaped PD scholarship in Korean-language research. We conducted deductive and inductive analyses of a sample of 212 peer-reviewed Korean-language scholarly articles on PD from 2001 to 2022. The results indicate that the majority of PD research in Korean is concentrated in the fields of international relations, area studies, and communication and media studies. Geographically, the research often focuses on regions close to Korea or areas of geopolitical significance, with African countries frequently appearing as hosts but rarely studied as acting countries. A significant portion of the research addresses the political and military dimensions of PD, particularly in relation to South Korea's conflict with North Korea and the use of Korean War veterans to foster relations between the two governments. In terms of the PD actors, the articles predominantly focus on governments, with less attention given to the roles of NGOs, civil society, and individuals. Discussions emerged around the need to identify distinct characteristics and values that define the country's PD. Finally, irrespective of whether PD is examined through political, military, sociocultural, or economic viewpoints, the majority of articles situate PD within a soft power framework. The study concludes with suggestions for future research.

Keywords: Public diplomacy; systematic review; Korea; soft power; international relations; political science; communication

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Background

This study maps the range of academic inquiry into public diplomacy (PD) in Korean-language scholarly publications. PD was integrated into South Korea's (Korea, hereafter) policy agenda in 2010 with the declaration of the "First Year of Public Diplomacy." It was officially recognized as one of the three pillars governing Korea's diplomatic relations, alongside state diplomacy and economic diplomacy. A year later, in 2011, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) established the position of Ambassador for Public Diplomacy and the Office of the Ambassador, which serves as the central hub overseeing Korea's comprehensive PD strategy and plans. In 2013, the government allocated budgets to PD activities for the first time. Subsequently, in August 2016, the Public Diplomacy Act was enacted, granting legal authority to MOFA to enhance coordination and cooperation with other ministries and local governments (Choi, 2019). Furthermore, following Article 8 of the Public Diplomacy Act, the Public Diplomacy Committee was established, consisting of officials from government ministries, think tanks, and civilian PD practitioners. Along with the committee, MOFA published its first Five-Year Master Plan of Public Diplomacy covering the periods from 2017 to 2022, followed by the second Master Plan for 2023 to 2027. In line with these plans, the relevant ministries and local governments have published their own annual action plans since 2018.

MOFA also underwent organizational restructuring in 2018, expanding the Cultural Diplomacy Bureau into the Public Diplomacy and Cultural Affairs Bureau. This new structure consolidated the Public Diplomacy, UNESCO, Cultural Cooperation, Policy Communication, and Digital Public Diplomacy Divisions. Through strategic planning and the restructuring of the governing bodies, the government aimed to establish conceptual clarity and delineate boundaries within various foreign public outreach and exchange programs that previously were loosely categorized under cultural diplomacy (Paik, 2017).

The institutionalization of PD through organizational restructuring and establishing legal measures during this period reflects the Korean government's recognition of its limited political and diplomatic influence compared with its economic and military capabilities (Lee, 2011). Furthermore, it demonstrates the government's response to the changing landscape of international politics, in which soft power is considered a key source of global power competition (Paik, 2017). It viewed the country's rapid economic growth and democratization with the pre-existing condition of colonial experience as crucial components of its soft power, alongside the cultural appeal. The government emphasized the knowledge transfer of the country's "development model" to the global South, many of which share Korea's past colonial experience, authoritarian rule, and devastating civil war (Bae & Lee, 2020).

The global popularity of Korea's cultural entertainment products, referred to as *Hallyu* or Korean Wave, is utilized as an important source of PD. The Master Plan of PD formulated in 2017 set the strategic goal of "enhancing and strengthening the national prestige and image"

by “spreading the national charm with its sophisticated culture,” including a variety of initiatives such as “strategically spreading the pop culture Hallyu content, promoting events and competitions, exhibiting traditional and contemporary artworks, effectively utilizing sports events, promoting Korean food, raising awareness of Korean tourism, and strengthening interactive cultural networks” all with explicitly designated responsibility for implementation (MOFA, 2017). Hallyu is also incorporated into the country’s PD efforts to enhance its global influence (Son, 2020). In 2021, the Korean boy band BTS was appointed as Special Presidential Envoy by the administration of former President Moon Jae-in to attend the United Nation General Assembly. The band also visited the White House in 2022 to advocate for an end to hate crimes against Asian Americans. The mainstreaming of PD in Korea’s foreign policy has been coupled with a steep rise in the number of Korean-language scholarly publications on the subject. The growing policy and scholarly attention to PD is underscored by the founding of the Korean Association for Public Diplomacy (KAPD) in 2020. The KAPD publishes scholarly articles through its two peer-reviewed journals: *Public Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, is a Korean language publication, and the *Journal of Public Diplomacy* caters to the English-speaking audience.

We conducted an in-depth examination of research on Korean PD over the past two decades from 2001 to 2022 to map out the range of topics of study, the disciplines incorporated, and the framing of PD within the broader foreign policy interest in Korean PD publications. Our goal in doing so was twofold: to survey the collective knowledge published in the Korean language for non-Korean literate scholars and, through a meta-analytic review of the state of PD research and discussion of the gaps in the research, to facilitate further collaborative research endeavors among scholars and practitioners of Korean PD.

This study raises the following research questions.

RQ1. What is the volume of Korean-language PD publications over time?

RQ2. Which PD topics have been addressed?

RQ3. Which PD actors have been examined?

RQ4. What methodological approaches have been employed in the publications?

RQ5. How has PD been framed within the broader foreign policy interest?

Methodological Approach

Data Collection

We used the Korea Citation Index (KCI), a national database operated by the National Research Foundation of Korea, to identify Korean-language research articles on public

diplomacy. The initial search for domestic publications on public diplomacy (공공외교) in the KCI database yielded a total of 371 articles. The sample was reduced to 359 articles after we excluded publications not registered by the KCI between 2001 and 2022. We note that although the search included publications from 2001 onwards, the final sample suggests a growth in Korean-language PD studies from 2006 onwards. Next, we excluded 34 articles that were written in languages other than Korean. Of the remaining 325 articles, we excluded 105 that did not mention the term “public diplomacy” in the title, abstract, or list of keywords or in which the words “public” (공공) and “diplomacy” (외교) appeared in isolation. In doing so, our sample was further reduced to 220 articles. Finally, we excluded 6 publications from our sample that were not accessible through the databases available to us. Our final sample included 212 KCI-indexed articles.

Data Analysis

For our systematic literature review, we conducted a deductive quantitative analysis and an inductive qualitative analysis of the sample. To provide an overview of the literature, we initially coded all of the articles in the sample qualitatively. The first set of codes provided information about the publication year and the disciplines within which the research was conducted. Codes were assigned for the publication year of each article, ranging from 2001 to 2022 in the randomized sample, so that we could explore the development of Korean-language PD research over time. To assess the interdisciplinary scope of PD research in Korean, we coded the affiliated department or college of the first author of each article. After sorting the value inputs into higher-level categories, we identified 13 academic disciplines. In addition to coding the disciplines based on the authors’ affiliation, we drew on the KCI database to establish the disciplinary focus of each journal in the sample. Moving beyond the information about each publication, we observed whether the articles in the sample provide a definition of PD and whether they mention the two related concepts of “soft power” and “nation branding.”

Next, we examined the methodological approaches of the articles, categorizing them based on whether they adopted a *quantitative* or *qualitative* method of analysis. Since many self-identified as a *case study*, we created a separate value for case studies. We also examined whether the studies used *primary* or *secondary data* as a source for their analyses and coded those that did not involve the collection or analysis of primary or secondary data as *non-empirical*.

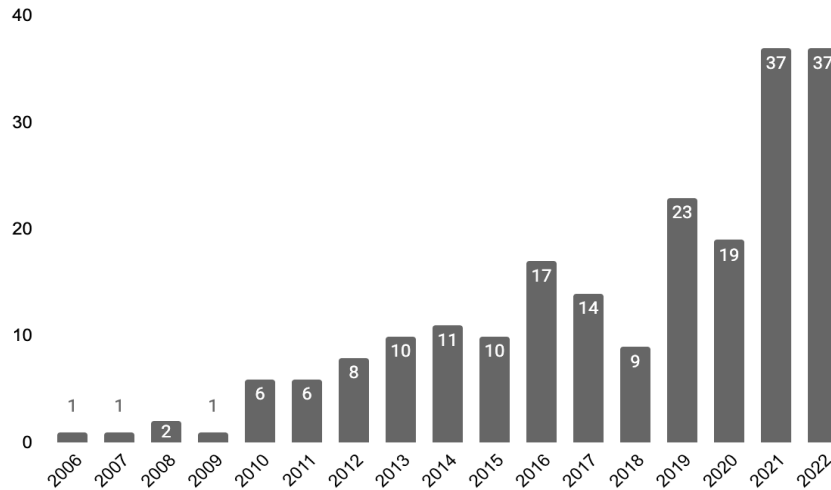
Next, we assessed the categories of PD addressed in each article, of which we identified six—cultural diplomacy, media diplomacy, local/city diplomacy, peace diplomacy, and sports diplomacy—each representing a specific function within the broader scope of PD. *Cultural diplomacy* research includes studies dealing with such aspects of culture as language and the arts, knowledge sharing, and promoting a positive national image through people-to-people exchange. *Media diplomacy* research includes studies exploring the role of the media in PD

from such perspectives as news coverage and interviews with journalists. Studies focused on *regional* and *city diplomacy* highlight the role of PD activities at the regional, provincial, and local levels, such as bilateral city programs and local branding. *Peace diplomacy* research includes issues such as peacekeeping in the Korean peninsula and maintaining positive relationships with Korean war veterans. *Sports diplomacy* research includes the incorporation of sports such as Taekwondo, a Korean martial art that is listed as an official Olympic Sport, and international sporting events into PD efforts. Articles that addressed PD as a broad policy or concept were coded as *general PD*.

We then examined the three spheres in which PD plays out: *Political/military*, *economic*, and *societal/cultural*. Drawing on Leonard et al., (2002), the weight placed on each of the three spheres will vary depending on the political economic context of the country. The framework allows us to understand how concerns and emphasis surrounding PD may differ based on the context of the practicing country. Another code item that we considered was PD actors. We carried out a detailed analysis of the entities highlighted in the articles as central to the researchers' study of PD. The categories include *government actors* at both the national and local levels, *public-private partnerships*, *non-state actors*, *media organizations*, *research institutions*, and *public figures and celebrities*. Using this method, we were able to categorize and understand the diverse range of actors involved in the landscape of public diplomacy systematically as discussed in the literature. We also tracked the *acting* and *host* countries of the PD featured in the articles. To add nuance to our understanding of the content, we employed qualitative coding to identify initial codes from the literature. These codes were then organized into multiple subthemes that captured the recurring discussions about PD. The authors then compared and contrasted these subthemes to identify overarching themes.

Results

Our findings show an overall increase in the number of peer-reviewed, Korean-language publications on PD over the years (Figure 1). The number of articles were scarce throughout the 2000s but started to increase after 2010. The table indicates a sharp rise in 2016, following the enactment of the Public Diplomacy Act and the founding of the PD and Cultural Affairs Bureau under MOFA the same year. In the ten years between 2012 and 2022, the number of Korean-language articles on PD increased from less than 10 to almost 40 annual publications.



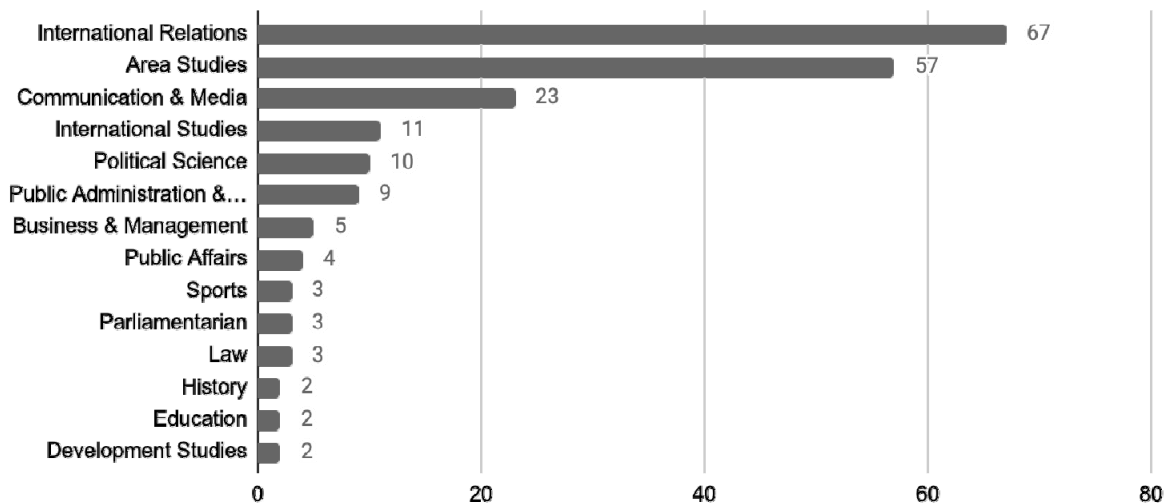
Note: The years between 2001 and 2005 did not yield any publications.

Figure 1. Annual Number of Publications from 2001 to 2022

Mapping Publication Patterns

The majority of the authors were based in Korea. Among the first authors in our sample, four were affiliated with institutions outside the country, including Waseda University in Japan and Freie Universität Berlin in Germany. Nearly half of our sample were solo-authored (49%), while slightly less had two co-authors (41.1%). A few studies were authored by a team of three (7.2%) and four (2.7%). Co-authored studies were conducted in collaboration with researchers mostly located within Korea, but a few cases of international collaborations include co-authorship with researchers at Chinese universities, including Guangdong University of Foreign Studies and Jilin University. The limited number of authors affiliated outside of Korea suggest that Korean-language research in PD is carried out primarily by researchers located at Korean domestic institutions.

The authors represented a range of disciplines, as Figure 2 shows, with the most common disciplines being international relations (31.6%), area studies (26.9%), and communication and media studies (10.8%). Additionally, several studies were published in international studies (5.2%), political science (4.7%), as well as public administration and policy (4.2%), reflecting the multidisciplinary scope of PD. Some differences in disciplinary interest in PD between Korean and English-language publications are evident when comparing our findings with those of Sevin et al. (2019), which noted that PD articles published in the English-language scholarly journals tend to be authored by scholars in historical studies, communication studies, and marketing. While communication studies is fairly well represented in both languages, journals featuring studies in history, business, and management sciences are largely underrepresented in the Korean-language PD research, each accounting for less than two percent of the total publications.



Note. The identification of the disciplines is based on the affiliation of the first author.

Figure 2. Disciplines of the Authors

The Korean-language PD scholarship in our sample was published in a total of 111 journals (Table 1). While the articles were largely dispersed across the journals, a few journals published multiple articles on the topic. The journals that published the greatest number of articles on PD are the *Korean Journal of Area Studies* (3.8%), *National Security and Strategy* (3.3%), *Korean Political Science Review* (3.3%), and *Korean Journal of International Relations* (3.3%). Other publications that published five or more articles include *National Strategy*, *Korean-Chinese Social Science Studies*, *Journal of Political Science and Communication*, *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies*, and *Journal of European Union Studies*, each accounting for more than 2 percent of the total publications. These journals reflect the most frequently contributing disciplines, with several journals catering to international relations and area studies, albeit fewer than expected publications featuring communication and media research. The remaining journals accounted for 2% or less of the publications on PD in our sample.

Table 1. Top Korean-language Publishers of PD Articles

Journal	n	%
<i>Korean Journal of Area Studies</i>	8	3.7
<i>National Security and Strategy</i>	7	3.3
<i>Korean Political Science Review</i>	7	3.3
<i>Korean Journal of International Relations</i>	7	3.3
<i>National Strategy</i>	6	2.8
<i>Korean-Chinese Social Science Studies</i>	5	2.8
<i>Journal of Political Science & Communication</i>	5	2.3
<i>Journal of Northeast Asian Studies</i>	5	2.3
<i>Journal of European Union Studies</i>	5	2.3

Patterns in Research Content

Among the articles in our sample, case study methodology was employed the most frequently (31.1%), followed by qualitative (25%), and quantitative methods (15.6%). Nearly a third of the articles did not specify a methodology (28.3%). The majority of these studies tended to adopt a description-prescription format. More than half of the articles drew on secondary data (65.1%), such as government reports, policy papers, and publicly available statistics. 28.3 percent used primary data, including survey, interview, and news media text data. Among the literature in our sample, case studies utilizing secondary data (26.4%) appeared most frequently. Secondary data was used in close to 23 percent of the studies that did not explicitly state the methodology. Primary data was used in 12.3 percent of qualitative and 11.8 percent of quantitative studies.

Table 2. Choice of Method

	Primary		Secondary		Unspecified		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Case Study	9	4.2%	56	26.4%	1	0.5%	66	31.1%
Qualitative	26	12.3%	27	12.7%	0	0.0%	53	25.0%
Quantitative	25	11.8%	7	3.3%	1	0.5%	33	15.6%
Unspecified	0	0.0%	48	22.6%	12	5.7%	60	28.3%
Total	60	28.3%	138	65.1%	14	6.6%	212	100%

Our examination of the countries and regions discussed in the Korean-language research on PD revealed several noteworthy findings. Close to half of the sample publications focused on PD activities by Korea (45.8%). They included, for instance, examinations of the Public Diplomacy Act, public diplomacy activities by local governments, and comparisons of Korean and Japanese PD efforts. Studies that concerned countries other than Korea most often examined countries in East Asia (11.3%), Europe (8.5%), and North America (7.5%), thus revealing interest among Korean scholars in Western PD. These findings suggest that the Korean-language PD literature focuses on economically advanced economies, particularly in East Asia and Western countries. Conversely, Central Asia, the CIS countries, the Middle East, and South America each accounted for less than 4% of the focus of the articles in our sample. 6.1 percent of the articles in the sample did not specify the originating country.

Our examination of the host countries revealed that a substantial number of the researchers did not specify the target audience of the PD activities by the various countries (54.7%). This finding indicates that the focus tended to be on PD activities rather than their impact on their overseas target audiences. Among the studies focused on the host countries of PD, the emphasis mirrors, to an extent, that observed for the acting regions, with East Asia (10.4%) and North America (7.1%) featuring prominently. However, compared to the findings

for the acting regions, we observed that fewer host-focused studies looked at Korea (5.7%) or Korea in conjunction with other countries (2.8%) as the host countries of PD. Notably, Africa was among the regions receiving the most attention as PD host (4.2%) though the region rarely received attention as an actor of PD.

Table 3. Frequently Occurring Countries

Acting regions			Host regions		
	n	%		n	%
South Korea	97	45.8	Unspecified	116	54.7
East Asia	24	11.3	East Asia	22	10.4
Europe	18	8.5	North America	15	7.1
North America	16	7.5	South Korea	12	5.7
Unspecified	13	6.1	Africa	9	4.2

Our analysis of PD actors revealed an emphasis on the role of the state. More than half of the studies (51.9%) focused on government entities, and several focused on local government actors (5.7%). Non-government actors such as public-private partnerships (9%), non-state actors (10.4%), media (5.2%) and prominent individuals (3.8%) received significantly less attention,

Table 4. Public Diplomacy Actors

Category	n	%
Government	110	51.9
Non-State Actor	23	10.8
Unspecified	22	10.3
Public-Private Partnership	19	9.0
Local Government	12	5.7
Media	11	5.2
Public Figures and Celebrities	8	3.8
Institute	5	2.4
Research Organization	1	0.5
Multilateral Organization	1	0.5
Total	212	100.0

Regarding the functional areas of PD, 52 articles in our sample explored PD in general (24.5%), which included topics related to the organizational structure of PD in a government, legal measures, and the challenges that Korea’s PD efforts have faced, such as a lack of an

agreement in the conception of PD among practitioners. Research on cultural diplomacy comprised 16%, which included topics such as the King Sejong Institute; Korean traditional cuisine, or Hansik; and case studies of foreign governments’ cultural diplomacy institutions, policies, and initiatives. The third most frequent topic in this regard was peace diplomacy (14.6%). This body of research examined PD activities and events targeting foreign veterans who served in the Korean War as a way to forge bilateral ties and gain favorable public opinion in the host country. Some of the articles discussed the role of PD in maintaining peace between North and South Korea. Other studies investigated media diplomacy (11.8%), regional and city diplomacy (9.4%), aid diplomacy (6.1%), exchange diplomacy (5.2%), and sports diplomacy (3.3%).

Table 5. Functional Areas of PD

Category	n	%
General Public Diplomacy	52	24.5
Cultural Diplomacy	34	16.0
Peace Diplomacy	31	14.6
Media Diplomacy	25	11.8
Regional/City Diplomacy	20	9.4
Other	19	9.0
Aid Diplomacy	13	6.1
Exchange Diplomacy	11	5.2
Sports Diplomacy	7	3.3
Total	212	100.0

27.5 percent of the studies concentrated on PD in the political/military sphere. These studies incorporated security, peacekeeping, and military interests into the broader PD framework, including in discussions of strengthening inter-Korean exchange programs to maintain peace in the peninsula and peacekeeping operations abroad intended to build political influence while furthering national security interests. In addition, several studies discussed diplomacy involving veterans as a source of soft power designed to leverage the appreciation of those who served in the Korean War and build ties with the respective governments. Other research stressed the significance of war apologies in shaping contemporary PD in Korea. The emphasis on the political/military sphere reflects Korea’s geopolitical and historical context, especially its ongoing conflict with its northern counterpart and the government’s strategy involving the Korean War veterans (Ra, 2015). Other studies concentrated on PD in the social/cultural sphere (23.2%), followed by the economic sphere (11.4%). Examples include a study of German Cultural Diplomacy and a study of China’s diplomatic strategy towards developing countries, respectively.

Thematic Analysis

The first theme that emerged from the sample articles was the identification of characteristics that define Korea's public diplomacy (PD) and distinguish it from other countries' PD practices. This theme was evident in discussions about the challenges facing current Korean PD practices. These challenges were articulated in terms of organizational issues such as the fragmented nature of the work environment across government branches as well as a lack of inter-departmental coordination and systematized management by the central government (Na, 2022). Such disjuncture within governing bodies was arguably preventing the emergence of a clear shared understanding of PD among practitioners or a coherent set of values on which to base Korea's PD efforts (Kim, 2021). Within this theme, several studies aimed to carve out Korea's version of middle-power diplomacy. These articles introduced PD initiatives of the so-called middle-power countries, such as Australia's higher education scholarship ODA programs (Moon, 2014), sustainability and gender principles driving Sweden's values-based PD (Kim, 2021), and Turkey's refugee protection policy (Kim & Oh, 2022) and provided suggestions for Korea's middle-power diplomacy.

Another theme was the predominance of a state-centric discourse in PD. This finding supports previous studies that have noted the government's role as a key facilitator in advancing Korea's PD policy objectives (Ayhan, 2020; Hayden, 2015; Melissen, 2013). The literature in our sample focused on analyzing government bodies and state-led as opposed to people-to-people or civil society initiatives. When local NGOs or civil society actors appeared, they tended to be analyzed as participants in government initiatives, rather than as independent actors.

The third theme relates to the emphasis on soft power across the Korean-language PD literature. 70 percent of the studies in our sample mentioned soft power. However, these studies proposed conflicting causal mechanisms. Some described PD as an instrument of and process for exercising soft power, which was commonly referred to as "a key component" to be utilized in PD. These studies were grounded in the assumption that soft power comprises a set of resources, such as cultural appeal and political values. For example, according to Moon (2020), "PD that uses soft power is easily accessible by any actor, is participatory, and can utilize multiple channels of interaction" (p. 169, translated by the authors). Others conceived of soft power as an outcome to be pursued. For example, Lee (2010) argued that "Korea is strengthening PD efforts in order to overcome its status [as that] of a weak country and to secure the position of soft power [and be] respected and recognized by the world" (p. 152). Another study asserted, somewhat inaccurately, that PD emerged along with the development of soft power.¹⁾ None of the articles in our sample addressed whether soft power should be considered an independent variable, an outcome, or a measure. The tendency to use the

1) PD is often seen as emerging during the Cold War as the United States engaged in information campaigns to halt the spread of communism and limit its influence where it already existed whereas the soft power thesis emerged following the Cold War in the context of concerns regarding how the United States could maintain global political hegemony.

concept of soft power indiscriminately, without reference to its relationship to PD and policy outcomes, has led to ambiguity in its conceptualization.

Discussion and Conclusions

This research identified the trends in and the scope of Korean-language PD research from 2001 to 2022. We found that most PD research was conducted in the disciplines of international relations, area studies, and communication and media and research. The research focus was often on the political/military sphere of PD, with a sizable number of studies examining the ongoing conflict between North and South Korea and the government's strategy of reaching out to the Korean War veterans to forge relationships with the governments of their respective countries. The articles tended to focus on the government as PD actor, with relatively few of them addressing the roles of NGOs, civil society, and individuals.

Our findings indicated the need for theory-building and the development of a conceptual framework suited to the context of Korean PD. Several factors may contribute to the current lack of such studies. First, much of the PD research has been conducted by area studies scholars, whose focus tends to be on the historical, political, and cultural contexts of the countries involved in PD, rather than developing, testing, and advancing a particular theory. Second, from a methodological standpoint, many of the articles that we analyzed did not specify a clear theoretical approach or analytical framework. These studies often relied on secondary data sources such as government reports and policy papers, while empirical research methods were rarely employed. As such, although these studies examined cases from various countries, their recommendations for improving Korea's PD strategy were fragmented and lacked consideration of the specific context of Korean PD. The reliance on secondary data is also reflected in the relatively large number of studies with a description and prescription format that did not clearly indicate the research approach or orientation. As a result, though some researchers have criticized the lack of a clear and common understanding of PD among policymakers and practitioners for creating a disjuncture in the planning, execution, and evaluation of PD projects, there remains a significant gap in theoretical orientation and empirical research involving primary data collection and analysis based on a clear analytical framework. Without addressing this gap, such disjunctures and inefficiencies in practice are likely to persist and may even worsen over time.

Our close examination of the Korean-language PD studies revealed a disproportionate focus on the roles of central and local governments, with relatively little attention given to the contributions of NGOs, civil society, and individuals. This gap in literature is evident in the absence of PD from cultural and critical inquiries into issues such as power dynamics, representation, and inclusiveness, as well as the complex, often non-linear processes through which public perception is formed. For example, only two of the studies in our sample

examined Korea's international exchange programs and the role of exchange students in creating a favorable image. There is much room for research on this topic, especially in relation to concepts such as "trust" and "long-term relationship building" to which NGOs and ordinary citizens lacking direct ties to the government's foreign policy agenda are better positioned to contribute.

Third, reference was made in much of the Korean-language research in our sample to soft power as a justification for the practice of PD without consideration of the causal relationships among soft power, PD, and, at times, related concepts such as nation branding and legitimacy. This indiscriminate conceptualization of soft power is not unique to Korean PD research, and critics have pointed to the ambiguity, lack of relational clarity, and normative bias inherent in the concept (Hayden, 2012; Layne, 2010). The lack of conceptual refinement further adds to the ambiguity of PD. Moreover, the tendency to view PD from the vantage of soft power reduces it to a mere tactic in the competition for the finite resources of attention and attraction, the primary goal being the pursuit of narrowly defined national interest irrespective of the common good. While the concern that "the excessive pursuit of national interest could lead to international conflict, and by extension, common tragedy" (Hwang et al., 2019, p. 68, translated by authors) was raised in one article, there was in our sample a dearth of research directed at developing both theory and practice relating to PD in ways that address transnational issues such as global health and environmental degradation. The public interest or cooperation aspect of PD was rarely mentioned (as an exception, see Kim, 2021). Future studies could therefore broaden the focus from viewing PD primarily as a soft-power resource to exploring it as a resource for public interest and cooperation.

Future studies could also contribute to the literature by approaching PD and soft power resources from a contextualized and audience-based perspective. As Gilboa (2008) pointed out, "Soft power may be relevant in one society but exactly the opposite for another. American values, for example, may be appreciated in Australia and Canada, but totally rejected in Iran or Saudi Arabia" (p. 62). The deployment of soft power resources may lead to a backlash or rejection in other instances. The rise of anti-Korean sentiment in East Asia over the past decade demonstrates the limitations of an essentialized understanding of soft power as a set of cultural and political values that contribute to a nation's status and influence. Interestingly, in this context, none of the PD studies in our sample referred to anti-Korean sentiment. To move beyond the focus on the projection of soft power, we call for a reorientation in the predominant view of culture as an instrument of promotion toward the understanding of culture as an ongoing and dynamic process (see Clark, 2016; Lee & Ingenhoff, 2020).

We hope that the findings presented here encourage further reflection on Korean-language research into PD and more broadly, non-Western research into PD. It is also our hope that such reflection and the redirection of scholarly attention facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration as well as collaboration between researchers and practitioners.

Through such efforts, research can support a contextualized understanding, policymaking, and practice of PD for the wide range of stakeholders involved in engaging foreign publics in the pursuit of foreign policy goals.

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