South Korean Public Diplomacy: A Case Study of China and THAAD
Cramer, Mischa

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Mischa Cramer

Dr. S.Y. Jang

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Abstract

South Korea-China bilateral relations deteriorated in the wake of the THAAD announcement in July of 2016. China considers the anti-ballistic missile defense system currently situated on South Korean soil a gross violation of their national security. Subsequently, Chinese public opinion of South Korea regressed swiftly due to negative representation of South Korea's security policies throughout Chinese state media. In response, South Korea employed public and traditional diplomatic approaches to restore bilateral favorability. Through a mixed method exploratory study, which considers quantitative and qualitative data, the effectiveness of public diplomacy in the given context was clearly deduced . This approach is seldom employed in the field of diplomacy research and thus resulted in a more innovative understanding. The findings demonstrate the insignificant impact that public diplomacy had on Chinese public opinion subsequent to the THAAD incident. Influential Chinese state media, effective traditional diplomatic alternatives, and insufficient coordination represent the key roadblocks for public diplomacy's efficiency in targeting the Chinese population. Anticipating these variables can facilitate further development of public diplomacy strategies by South Korean policy makers.

Keywords: South Korean public diplomacy, traditional diplomacy, Chinese state media, mixed methodology, Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD)

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Introduction

International relations can be understood through varying paradigms, yet they are ordinarily defined by the presence of some form of strategic communication with outside actors. The concept of public diplomacy takes center stage in the contemporary practices of foreign policy. Traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy strategies can be understood differently not through their goals, but rather through the means of achieving set goals. Joseph Nye illustrates this well with his interpretation of public diplomacy. According to Nye, public diplomacy is reliant on soft power initiatives to persuade the recipient to adjust their views or behavior. Broadly, this refers to an emphasis placed on cultural similarities or common interests. These methods are in stark contrast with hard power stratagems, as the latter is contingent on command power, with the intent of coercion or encouragement.[1] Since the end of the Cold War, the global significance of public diplomacy has been increasing more and more.

Despite the growing importance of public diplomacy in the field of international relations, the effectiveness of such policy is still underrepresented in academic research. Particularly the applicability of public diplomacy theories and practices to non-Western countries is often called into question. According to Jan Melissen, the unique interactions among East Asian countries represent a reality far different from that of the West. A noticeable distinction is the presence of a great number of middle power states in East Asia, that in the mere essence of their existence are required to balance security and economic interests in relation to China. During this process, the nation's image abroad is maintained through public diplomacy.[2] So, in order to better interpret the growing influence of public diplomacy strategies within the continent, individual case studies should be critically discussed and contextualized.

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[1] Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: the Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), 5-11.
[2] Jan Melissen and Yul Sohn, *Understanding public diplomacy in East Asia middle powers in a troubled region* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1-3.

Interestingly, South Korea depicts this balancing act clearly, as security and economic cooperation with the U.S. and China respectively has resulted in continuous tensions. This came into prominence after a dispute erupted between South Korea and China following a joint U.S.-South Korean decision to deploy an anti-ballistic missile defense system (THAAD) on South Korean soil in July of 2016. Subsequently, the deployment resulted in the deterioration of South Korea-China bilateral relations. According to Wang Xiao-ke, similar security concerns had arisen in China starting in 2008 when then South Korean President Lee Myung-bak commenced negotiations on defense systems with the U.S., and security cooperation between the countries intensified. Even though South Korea asserts that the deployment of THAAD is solely in response to North Korean missile threats, China has voiced its concerns over some of THAAD's radar functions, presenting them as limiting to China's missile defense capabilities.[3]

Due to the contradictory perspectives on the significance of THAAD for East Asian security, South Korea's representation in Chinese state media worsened, much in line with their general bilateral relations. Alongside boycotts of one of South Korea's most prominent firms Lotte Group for their involvement in providing land for the THAAD project, the Chinese were discouraged from investing in South Korea. In fact, research done on Chinese tourism to South Korea following the THAAD dispute demonstrates the significance of negative representation in media. Respondents affirm that patriotism and Lotte Group sanctions caused them to cancel trips.[4] Similar sentiments were represented throughout Chinese state media in the months prior. Even though Chinese state media have been commercializing since the 1990s, research claims that the party-state views represented in the media have not subverted significantly.[5] This begs the question how effective South Korea's public diplomacy has been in restoring favorability.

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[3] Xiao-ke Wang, "sadŭ munjewa hanjunggwan'gyeŭi kujojŏk munjejŏm," [THAAD Dispute and the Structural Crux of the Relationship between China and South Korea] *North Korean Studies Research* 13, no. 2 (2017): 143.
[4] Yuxian Juan et al., "The constraints of Chinese tourists to visit Korea caused by THAAD using Q-methodology," *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research* 22, no. 12 (December 2017): 1261-72.
[5] Minghua Xu, "Commercial Reform and the Political Function of Chinese Television," *Telematics and Informatics* 32, no. 2 (May 2015): 367–68.

Actually, South Korea's involvement with public diplomacy can be traced back decades, yet the first Public Diplomacy Act in South Korea was established only in 2016.[6] Broadly, this is a strategy outlined by the South Korean government with the purpose of "[f]ascinating the world with Korea's [c]harm". Frankly, the increasing interest in Korean culture abroad, dubbed *Hallyu*, reflects major achievements. Taking a closer look at specific policies derived from the act, it is clear that their approach to China also revolves around the export of Korean cultural products such as television shows, promoting shared history, and creating a clear understanding of South Korean society. It is especially the hard power elements related to politics and security that will be omitted in this process, in contrast with previous traditional diplomatic approaches.[7]

In fact, according to Nye, public diplomacy is understood to rely on communication with a foreign public to achieve greater support for any specific policy. However, although academic literature on public diplomacy and state media is abundant, research that compares their effectiveness in the case of South Korea and China has not been properly conducted. Moreover, while scholarly papers on THAAD and its aftermath can be found with ease, it is in fact the soft power solution that has been underexplored throughout the field of security studies. Hence, this thesis intends to examine and fill this gap in research. First, background knowledge on THAAD, South Korea's public diplomacy, and China's state media will be provided. Then, a mixed methodology approach will be employed to quantify the efficacy of South Korea's public diplomacy aimed at China. At last, the following research question will be answered.

How effectively has South Korea's public diplomacy influenced Chinese citizens' views on South Korea against the backdrop of Chinese state media's critical reporting of the 2016 THAAD incident?

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[6] Republic of Korea: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Public Diplomacy Act*, (Seoul, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016) https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_22723/view.do?seq=317912.

[7] Kwang-jin Choi, "The Republic of Korea's Public Diplomacy Strategy: History and Current Status," *CPD Perspectives*, no. 1 (January 2019): 18-21.

1. Literature Review

Academic debates concerning public diplomacy are continuously and rapidly evolving. Among scholars there is a general consensus that public diplomacy accounts for government-to-public outreach. This is in stark contrast with the government-to-government approach represented in traditional diplomacy. Nevertheless, the realm in which public diplomacy is observed is not generally agreed upon. According to Nicholas J. Cull, it was in the 1950s that public diplomacy was commonly coined as a term referring to propaganda. Due to the similar nature of changing the understanding and attitudes of a foreign public, the two were often interchangeably used.[8] However, Tsan-Kuo Chang and Fen Lin dispute this similarity by acknowledging the difference between indoctrination and persuasion, with propaganda relying on the absence of any form of public critique or dissent.[9] Although Chang and Lin accurately highlight this polarity, they do acknowledge the gray area that has dominated related discourse in the past.

In line with the previous juxtaposition, public diplomacy's overlap with public relations is another widely contested matter. According to Cull, the interest in engaging a foreign public is central to understanding the objectives of public diplomacy.[10] Similarly, Kathy Fitzpatrick draws attention to the overlapping scope of the public diplomacy and public relations fields. She acknowledges that the theoretical frameworks of public relations are largely applicable to public diplomacy.[11] However, whether or not academics in the field of public diplomacy and public relations fundamentally agree that there is an overlap is mostly irrelevant, as both have proven to sustain themselves by modernizing theoretical frameworks regularly.

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[8] Nancy Snow and Nicholas J Cull, *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2020), 15.

[9] Tsan-Kuo Chang, and Fen Lin, "From Propaganda to Public Diplomacy: Assessing China's International Practice and Its Image, 1950–2009," *Public Relations Review* 40, no. 3 (2014): 453.

[10] Nicholas John Cull, *Public Diplomacy: Foundations for Global Engagement in the Digital Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019), 18.

[11] Kathy Fitzpatrick, "Advancing the New Public Diplomacy: A Public Relations Perspective," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 2, no. 3 (2007): 193.

Conventional knowledge on these relevant theories and practices of public diplomacy are therefore key to interpreting its effectiveness and limitations. So, general trends and critiques related to this foreign policy strategy will be scrutinized to distinguish where major research gaps exist. First, three predominant public diplomacy theories will be explored. These consist of the stakeholder theory, situational theory of publics, and the nation branding model. All strive to describe the workings of public diplomacy within relevant theoretical frameworks.

The stakeholder theory, when applied to public diplomacy, is defined by the aim of a government to enhance its efficiency in reaching out to a foreign public. The government (internal stakeholder) intends to balance its mutual relationship with the foreign public (external stakeholder) with the ultimate goal of increasing connectivity. Through this method, reciprocal understanding can provide a gateway to problem solving. However, a clear distinction between diverse sets of people is omitted. Originally established by R Edward Freeman, this theory is thus scrutinized for its lack of depth when considering the complexities of human interactivity. Consequently, academics find fault in the overgeneralization of varying foreign publics.[12]

The situational theory of publics intends to deal with this critique by acknowledging the significance of cultural comprehension. Through the structural categorization of foreign publics, the theory set out by James E. Grunig proposes to highlight the importance of regional approaches. Active and passive publics are discerned and then categorized based on their level of interaction with a particular issue. This includes the level of awareness and engagement with any topic. The following structures are measured: 1) personal involvement, 2) level of influence, 3) reasons for involvement, 4) existence of solution.[13] So, as this approach more thoroughly classifies the differences among foreign publics, it adds to the previous stakeholder theory.

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[12] Craig T. Maier, "Public relations as humane conversation: Richard Rorty, stakeholder theory, and public relations practice," *Public Relations Inquiry* 4, no. 1 (January 2015): 26-29.

[13] Laura Illia, Francesco Lurati, and Rita Casalaz, "Situational Theory of Publics: Exploring a Cultural Ethnocentric Bias," *Journal of Public Relations Research* 25, no. 2 (April 2013): 95-98.

Nation branding is a rather current theoretical model present in the branch of public diplomacy, yet has left a significant mark on the way countless nations are framing themselves. In short, nation branding can be delineated by its step-by-step approach to influencing foreign attitudes. According to Aard J. Groen and Lenna K.M. Lee, the cooperation of governments with private companies and networks represents the key actors within this process. Although relatively similar to the previous theories in terms of their objectives, the theory differs itself by the amplification of both strategic and systematic nation branding. Concretely, strategic branding covers the target-specific approach also found in marketing. So, this takes into account a person's background, attitude, and desires, making it more precise and effective in practice than the previous notions. Also, the systematic element of this theory is significant as it highlights the importance of building and maintaining a particular image within a region.[14]

The three theories represent the dominant discourse within public diplomacy. However, Freeman's stakeholder theory does not hold up when considering the unique experiences of foreign publics. Although Grunig's situational theory of publics targets this predicament through differentiation according to individual levels of participation, it primarily takes into account the public's role, yet slightly diminishes the impact that a nation can have during this process. Interestingly, the nation branding theory represents a similar problem as it focuses mainly on the nation's role. All three of these theoretical frameworks can potentially be merged to design a more refined structure. This is especially important in relation to THAAD, where relevant theories on extended deterrence[15] and fear of abandonment and entrapment[16] describe the quandary of unequal cooperation with a more forceful state. Accordingly, the potential of conflict with the Chinese has required South Korea to produce effective solutions to such issues.

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[14] Aard J. Groen, and Lenna K.M Lee, "Nation Brand Management: Towards a Convergent Theory for Nation Branding," *Archives of Design Research* 26, no. 2 (2013): 58–61.

[15] Jaganath Sankaran, and Bryan L Fearey, "Missile Defense and Strategic Stability: Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) in South Korea," *Contemporary Security Policy* 38, no. 3 (2017): 321.

[16] Yong Sub Choi, "Keeping the Americans in: The THAAD Deployment on the Korean Peninsula in the Context of Sino-American Rivalry," *Contemporary Security Policy* 41, no. 4 (2020): 638–40.

In the case of South Korea and China, it is the widespread influence of Chinese state media that is essential in understanding the limitations of South Korea's public diplomacy. Generally, state media refers to media that is partially or entirely sponsored and/or edited by the state. Due to China's vast state media consumption[17], the agenda-setting theory on media attests to the difficulty that South Korea encounters while targeting Chinese publics with their public diplomacy. Broadly, the agenda-setting theory suggests that the media has the potential to shape the significance placed on issues of the public agenda. Although scholars generally agree that the agenda-setting theory reflects reality, the importance of print- and online media is debated.[18] According to Jie Xu, trust levels in institutions and state media are surprisingly high in China.[19] Due to negative representation of THAAD throughout these media, it is such actors that can both foster awareness and negative sentiments in regard to South Korea. This reporting is ordinarily in line with the political sentiment of the Chinese Communist Party.[20]

Overall, the theories, practices, and impacts of public diplomacy are still vigorously debated among scholars. Due to the increasing reach of social media worldwide, significant developments call for regular revising of well-established theories. Similar disagreements in discourse are found in the field of media studies, where the agenda-setting theory and its extent are often called into question. Most importantly, there remains a gap in research that compares the efficacy of public diplomacy against the backdrop of an impactful state media. Besides, since most theoretical frameworks are founded in Western culture, it is especially important to distinguish the limitations encountered when applying them to South Korea and China.

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[17] Lei Guo, "Media Agenda Diversity and Intermedia Agenda Setting in a Controlled Media Environment: A Computational Analysis of China's Online News," *Journalism Studies* 20, no. 16 (2019): 2460.
[18] Stefaan Walgrave, and Peter Van Aelst, "The Contingency of the Mass Media's Political Agenda Setting Power: Toward a Preliminary Theory," *Journal of Communication* 56, no. 1 (2006): 92-93.
[19] Jie Xu, "Trust in Chinese State Media: The Influence of Education, Internet, and Government," *Journal of International Communication* 19, no. 1 (2013): 80.
[20] Ying Ren Feng, Dong Geun Lee, and Xiang Dan Cui, "chungguk ŏllonŭi kaekkwanbodo sasang: hyŏngsŏnggwa pyŏn," [Journalistic Objectivity in China: Formation and Changes] *Journal of Science Research* 11, no. 1 (March 2011): 464-467.

2. Methodology

This investigative study utilizes a mixed method approach where statistical datasets on two economic variables (trade and tourism) are supported by surveys and Q-methodology studies to explore public attitude developments among Chinese citizens. In essence, the goal of this thesis is to quantify the success rate of South Korean public diplomacy in the context of a strong Chinese state media presence. The effectiveness of mixed methodology is established in accordance with the Mixed Method Appraisal Tool (MMAT). In short, this tool provides guidelines for mixed method exploratory studies and is time efficient due to its select number of key criteria.[21] Research in the field of public diplomacy is often primarily qualitative in nature as it deals with many sociological elements, such as human behavior. However, according to Viswanath Venkatesh, Susan A Brown, and Hillol Bala, mixed method approaches can in fact be more appropriate as the qualitative findings help inform the quantitative datasets, ultimately resulting in a more refined analysis. Broadly, two major advantages are outlined.

First, problems that arise within quantitative and qualitative research respectively can be nullified through the integration of both tools. For instance, relation or causation cannot be properly concluded through statistical datasets only, whereas incorporating attitude studies can shed light on possible connections. Also, qualitative data is frequently difficult to quantify, while on the contrary involving statistical figures will generate a more in-depth interpretation.[22] Second, as mentioned by Courtney A McKim, the integration element of a mixed method approach not only increases trust in the accuracy of results among readers, it also aids academics in that particular branch of study with the pursuance of subsequent examination.[23]

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[21] Quan Nha Hong et al., "The Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) Version 2018 for Information Professionals and Researchers," *Education for Information* 34, no. 4 (2018): 287–90.

[22] Viswanath Venkatesh, Susan A Brown, and Hillol Bala, "Bridging the Qualitative-Quantitative Divide: Guidelines for Conducting Mixed Methods Research in Information Systems," *MIS Quarterly* 37, no.1 (2013): 25.

[23] Courtney A McKim, "The Value of Mixed Methods Research," *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 11, no. 2 (2017): 203.

2.1 Economic Indicators

In the final analysis two economic indicators are included. These datasets represent part of the quantitative aspect of the mixed methodology approach employed in this research paper. First, South Korea-China bilateral trade statistics regarding import were collected through Statista and the CEIC. These online platforms gather and organize data on consumer behavior, trade, and other economic indicators. Trade is represented as the first economic indicator due to its inherent reflection of consumer behavior. In fact, these statistics highlight the desire for foreign products, which generally follows trends of public favorability. This can take on the form of boycotts or increased investments in certain companies. Secondly, tourism data from Statista was selected for further investigation. Tourism reveals major effects of public diplomacy as the desirability of a particular travel destination is largely dependent on favorable views of the visitors. Actually, this will become apparent when consulting Chinese tourists on their considerations during travel destination selection. It turns out that public opinion of a nation as a whole, including political tension, is closely linked to travel behavior. Thus, such economic variables might show that THAAD and public diplomacy have had significant effects.

Frankly, research on South Korean public diplomacy's success in China has been rather limited in scope as it mainly considers sociological findings present in qualitative research. Yet, economic indicators often reflect trends resulting from the success or failure of certain domestic and foreign policy decisions. Since this thesis intends to review public diplomacy's effects on public opinion, considering these economic variables will bring to light the level of influence that such policy can have in the case of South Korea and China. So, taking these barometers into account essentially strengthens and builds on the findings of observational research. This in turn will reveal new insights into the various processes that are linked to public diplomacy in the case of two countries that are politically opposed on an issue. Furthermore, it highlights the uniqueness of East Asian relations as it relates to security conflicts on the Korean peninsula.

2.2 Opinion Polling

The two datasets on trade and tourism are subsequently comprehended through the utilization of World Values Survey results, Pew Research Center polls, and Q-methodology studies. First, the World Values Survey results were selected due the broad nature of its research. In fact, the questionnaires reveal general Chinese views on the role of governments, politics, and media. Then, the Pew Research Center was consulted due to its relatively high level of engagement with the Chinese audience and its reputation of not publicly taking on any policy positions. Finally, Q-methodology studies, which research participants' subjectivity regarding various issues, represented the final opinion polling element of the mixed methodology research. This type of study systematically categorizes beliefs, which is useful when interpreting poll results. The combination of these studies are particularly effective when applied simultaneously, as they represent individual decision making processes, as well as views on broader topics. Although presuming a direct connection between certain phenomena is impracticable with the many factors at play in bilateral relations, this method is valuable as it broadens the view of what Chinese citizens' decision making process entails. Also, these results reveal the importance of national security within the Chinese population. This is particularly relevant, as the security aspect of THAAD appears to overshadow the cultural impact of public diplomacy.

Since reaching large-scale Chinese audiences for opinion polling requires translators, the ability to interview people within their vicinity[24], and the means of public outreach that larger companies possess, I was not able to individually conduct such research. Thus, previous studies that investigated these topics on a broader scale were selected to deal with this difficulty. In the following chapter, background on the researched topic, including THAAD, Chinese state media, and South Korean public diplomacy is provided to ensure proper contextualization.

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[24] Kevin B. Wright, "Researching Internet-Based Populations: Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Survey Research, Online Questionnaire Authoring Software Packages, and Web Survey Services," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 10, no. 3 (2005).

3. Background

In the ensuing sections, the setting of the THAAD dispute within international relations theories will be contextualized. Then, an overview of Chinese state media's representation of the incident will be provided, and its effects on public attitudes within China will be established. Finally, South Korea's foreign policy of public diplomacy will shed light on the strategies employed to enhance bilateral understanding. Through this background knowledge, the aim and importance of multifaceted approaches related to public diplomacy will be underscored.

3.1 THAAD Incident

In 1992 South Korea-China bilateral relations were normalized. According to Sukhee Han, lucrative economic collaboration was fundamental in understanding this increasing partnership. Although economically beneficial to South Korea, security concerns on the peninsula soared in the 2010s due to increasing North Korean testing of missiles and nuclear weapons. Following North Korea's fourth nuclear test in 2016, President Park Geun-hye endorsed the U.S.-backed THAAD proposal. [25] In essence, this anti-ballistic missile defense system is meant to protect South Korea against North Korean missile attacks, according to South Korean authorities.[26] However, as Keeseok Kim explains, China's condemnatory response is reflective of a larger economy-security nexus issue within the region. In short, the economy-security nexus theory suggests that economic and security interests are interconnected and partially incompatible. In this case, South Korea's well-established economic ties to China clashed with the U.S. security cooperation on THAAD, as China had repeatedly denounced the decision to deploy THAAD. Subsequently, this called for South Korea to enhance its diplomatic strategies even further.[27]

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[25] Sukhee Han, "Resetting the South Korea–China Relationship: The THAAD Controversies and Their Aftermath," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 31, no. 4 (2019): 539-46.

[26] Republic of Korea: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Press Releases (3),* (Seoul, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017) https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5676/view.do?seq=318072&page=2.

[27] Keeseok Kim, "kyŏngjeanboyŏn'gyebunsŏk: tongasiae taehan chŏksilssŏngŭi chŏmgŏm," [Economy-Security Nexus: In Search of the Relevance to East Asia] *Korea and International Politics* 33, no. 2 (June 2017): 10-19.

Such delicate relations are frankly not uncommon within East Asia. In fact, South Korea is among numerous states deemed a middle power due to their level of economic and political capital. This poses unique benefits and problems, as the topic of interdependence is often at play.[28] Although such linkage may lead to increased cooperation, a nation's autonomy could be limited. So, what happens when a middle power state chooses security interests over economic profits? In this respect, South Korea has had to bear the brunt of China's economic retaliation after going through with the deployment of THAAD in 2017. As described by Darren J. Lim and Victor A. Ferguson, although economic sanctions were mostly informal, the effects were swiftly noticeable in a couple of industries. For instance, news coverage on Lotte Group's involvement with the THAAD deployment prompted boycotts of South Korean products. Moreover, group tourism from China to South Korea was discontinued indefinitely due to bilateral tensions. However, trade relations did not follow this trend, as mutual commerce numbers increased by nearly 15% in the same year. In fact, it is therefore argued that these economic sanctions were industry-specific and informal to sustain plausible deniability.[29]

The relevancy of these studies investigating economic trends in relation to THAAD should not be underestimated as they provide useful insights into financial changes.[30] However, due to the mainstream focus on economic variables, behavioral aspects within Chinese citizens' decision to boycott Lotte Group or cease the consumption of South Korean products are often underrepresented. This poses a problem, as the interpretation of, and solution to this issue cannot be properly conducted without a mixed-method approach. Hence, this thesis will take into consideration similar economic variables and will build on this statistical data using qualitative methodology, so that a more refined structural analysis can assist in the assessment.

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[28] Sojin Lim and Niki J. P. Alsford, *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary South Korea* (London: Routledge, 2021), 354-56.
[29] Darren J. Lim, and Victor A. Ferguson, "Informal Economic Sanctions: The Political Economy of Chinese Coercion During the THAAD Dispute," *Review of International Political Economy* (May 2021): 1–7.
[30] Aanchal Anand, "Statistics and International Relations," *The SAIS Review of International Affairs* 31, no. 2 (2011): 79–80.

3.2 Chinese State Media

China's media landscape is diverse and changing, and discourse on its limitations is ongoing. In this day and age, increasing access to online media platforms is a new phenomenon. Still, China's interference with internet access has been cause for global concern. Often referred to as the Great Firewall, Chinese interference with the internet includes content censorship over domestic websites, as well as access blockage to foreign content.[31] Although limiting the access and expression of particular ideas deemed in defiance of political and virtuous standards, research by Harsh Taneja and Angela Xiao Wu suggests that Chinese acceptance of such measures is rather widely shared. This is reflective of cultural factors within internet search behavior. They argue that although access to some information is limited in China, much of the media consumption is motivated by cultural factors that in and of itself lessen the interest in foreign media.[32] Still, this interpretation is limited as historical, structural, and political factors may partially explain the mistrust in foreign media that has existed in China for a while.

In fact, such sentiments are expressed among the Chinese in relation to state media, which has faced similar critiques over its lack of critical reporting.[33] First, the consumption of, and trust in state media is key to understanding the impact of information exchange. Broadly, support and trust in state media is high among the Chinese. As Xu describes, trust in state media is often closely linked to trust in the state and its policies. Thus, due to the joint efforts of the Chinese government and state media, faith in institutions remains high among most groups in Chinese society.[34] So, when THAAD was critically reported on, it was not only in line with the government's expression of dissatisfaction, it also had significant effects on public attitudes.

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[31] Margaret E. Robert, *Censored* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 104-12.
[32] Harsh Taneja, and Angela Xiao Wu, "Does the Great Firewall Really Isolate the Chinese? Integrating Access Blockage With Cultural Factors to Explain Web User Behavior," *The Information Society* 30, no. 5 (2014): 298-99.
[33] Louisa Lim, and Julia Bergin, "Inside China's audacious global propaganda campaign," *The Guardian*, December 7, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/dec/07/china-plan-for-global-media-dominance-propaganda-xi-jinping.
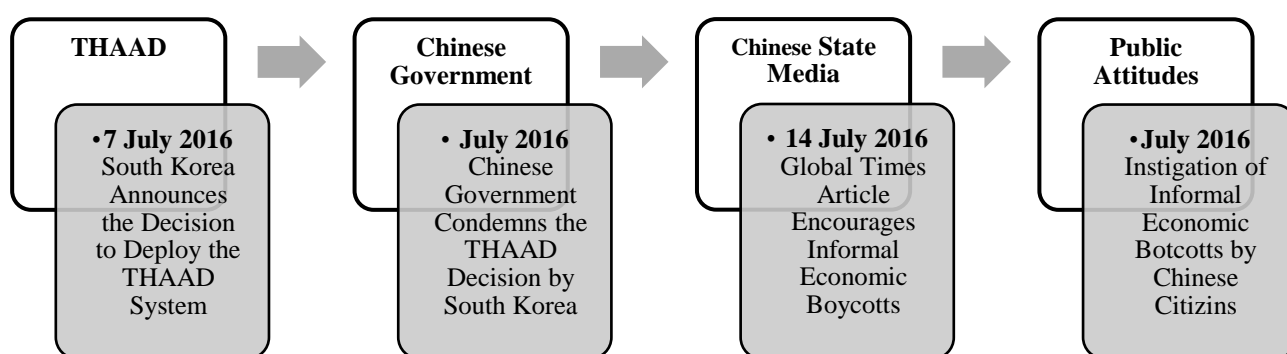[34] Xu, "Chinese state media," 79-81.

The interrelatedness of government, state media reporting, and public attitudes establish the ability to frame a preliminary model on its inner workings in this thesis. First, this hypothetical model will be concisely presented using empirical evidence from multiple studies, and then it will be tested in relation to the 2016 THAAD incident. This will subsequently reflect the actualization of its practices in the bilateral conflict between South Korea and China.

The Chinese government's views on foreign affairs are often represented throughout Chinese state media, as they are heavily skewed towards views in line with the Chinese Communist Party. According to Xu, such tactics are reflective of their transformative mediation approach, in which the process of exhibiting the government's views has become more subtle.[35] Then, due to the Chinese population's widespread consumption[36] and high levels of trust[37] in state media, public opinion is largely developing in line with the government perspective.

In **Figure (1)**, this hypothetical model is applied to the THAAD incident, in which informal economic sanctions targeting Lotte Group are reflective of the process in which public attitudes change.[38] Thus, this highlights the significance of Chinese state media's representation in the shaping and influencing of public attitudes within China, [39] and is key to understanding the limitations of South Korean public diplomacy targeted at the Chinese population.

Figure (1)

THAAD	Chinese Government	Chinese State Media	Public Attitudes
• 7 July 2016 South Korea Announces the Decision to Deploy the THAAD System	• July 2016 Chinese Government Condemns the THAAD Decision by South Korea	• 14 July 2016 Global Times Article Encourages Informal Economic Boycotts	• July 2016 Instigation of Informal Economic Botcotts by Chinese Citizins

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[35] Xu, "Commercial reform," 375-76.
[36] Guo, "Media Agenda Diversity," 2460.
[37] Xu, "Chinese state media," 80.
[38] Lim, and Ferguson, "Informal economic sanctions," 15-16.
[39] Global Times, "Seoul underestimates China's counter-THAAD resolve," *Global Times*, July 14, 2016, https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/994154.shtml.

3.3 Public Diplomacy: South Korea

Foundational in public diplomacy is the abundant nature of digital outreach to foreign publics. South Korea is a prime example of a nation that has developed its digital infrastructure swiftly, and has employed such methods in soft power initiatives by spreading Korean cultural products. Initially, following Park Chung-hee's presidency in the 1960s and 70s, investments in digital technology continuously increased.[40] Especially during the Kim Dae-jung presidency from 1997 onward did investments in digitalization skyrocket. This is often referred to as the birth year of *Hallyu*, a Korean term referring to the Korean Wave in which Korean culture quickly became popularized throughout the world.[41] Actually, this is one of the primary components of South Korea's contemporary approach to public diplomacy and nation branding. As mentioned by South Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the following objective is cited as a key policy.

> *Enhance the understanding and trust of the general foreign public and opinion leaders such as politicians, academics, foreign affairs specialists and journalists regarding our foreign policies with a view to creating a favorable environment to achieve our key diplomatic goals, such as establishing permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula.*[42]

In order to actualize this objective, South Korea intends to implement initiatives to increase their favorability not only among foreign publics, but also opinion leaders in several different fields. However, Woo Yael Paik highlights that South Korea's public diplomacy approach to China is still in the beginning phases, and is therefore underdeveloped and underexplored.[43]

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[40] Jan Melissen, and Emillie V Keulenaar, "Critical Digital Diplomacy as a Global Challenge: The South Korean Experience," *Global Policy* 8, no. 3 (2017): 297-298.

[41] Dal Yong Jin, Kyong Yoon and Wonjung Min, *Transnational Hallyu* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2021), 5.

[42] "Public Diplomacy Policies of the Republic of Korea," Republic of Korea: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed April 10, 2022, https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/wpge/m_22844/contents.do.

[43] Woo Yaek Paik, "han'gugŭi taejungguk konggongoegyo chŏllyakkwa sirhaeng punsŏk," [An Analysis on the South Korea`s Strategy and Execution of Public Diplomacy toward China] *Korea and International Politics* 31, no. 3 (2015): 115.

Overall, the South Korean government outlined five universal goals within their public diplomacy. These are as follows: 1) share Korean culture, 2) deepen understanding of Korea, 3) gain global support for Korea's policies, 4) strengthen public diplomacy capacity, 5) promote public-private partnership.[44] These steps are intended to be achieved chronologically. However, due to the extensive nature of this process, much of the policies remain vague and rather broad. For instance, South Korea's approach is primarily reliant on foreign missions, programs, and *Hallyu* to champion South Korean culture.[45] Participation in such initiatives promoted by the South Korean government in China remains relatively low compared to the size of the Chinese population. This begs the question whether significant changes can be actualized. Moreover, even though the objectives of nation branding can be profitable, it does not concretely target the source of the diplomatic indifference resulting from THAAD. So, can public diplomacy truly be effective when the security issue is not directly addressed? Another key problem is the backlash to some *Hallyu* initiatives. As Jennifer Cho mentions, over 35% of surveyed Korean content companies noted economic losses directly caused by the THAAD incident.[46]

In short, the THAAD dispute which is primarily security related has brought about economic and political tensions between South Korea and China. In turn, this has led to negative representation of South Korea in Chinese state media, subsequently resulting in public attitude changes among Chinese citizens, of which some participated in the informal boycotts of South Korean companies. In response, South Korea employed both traditional and public diplomacy strategies to reconnect and improve relations with China. In the next chapter, both quantitative and qualitative data will be assessed in order to interpret the level of effect it has brought about.

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[44] "Introduction of the Public Diplomacy," Republic of Korea: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed April 10, 2022, https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/wpge/m_22841/contents.do.

[45] "Overview of the Public Diplomacy Programs," Republic of Korea: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed April 10, 2022, https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/wpge/m_22824/contents.do.

[46] Jennifer Cho, "Turning Out the Lights?: The Impact of THAAD on Hallyu Exports to China," *Korea Economic Institute,* April 12, 2017, https://keia.org/the-peninsula/turning-out-the-lights-the-impact-of-thaad-on-hallyu-exports-to-china/.

4. Mending Relations

South Korea has comprehensively developed its public diplomacy throughout the past decades through investments in foreign missions, outreach, and increasing cooperation with the private sector, including entertainment companies. Although their efforts are undoubtedly noticeable, the efficacy of their policies in achieving the objective cited in the previous chapter have not been properly measured. Hence, in this section the success of public diplomacy in relation to THAAD will be studied through relevant economic indicators, as well as qualitative data on foreign attitudes. Then, the significance of Chinese state media will be highlighted in order to develop an answer to the research question. For reference, the research question is as follows.

How effectively has South Korea's public diplomacy influenced Chinese citizens' views on South Korea against the backdrop of Chinese state media's critical reporting of the 2016 THAAD incident?

4.1 Economic Variables

As emphasized by Juan-Antonio Carrasco and Karen Lucas, quantitative data in the field of decision making research can be substantiated and deciphered through qualitative data, such as Q-methodology studies.[47] Accordingly, two economic variables have been selected on the basis of their inherent relation to attitude. First, observations on trade between South Korea and China will be structurally organized to comprehend any significant developments. Then, tourism data on Chinese travel to South Korea will provide background on the decision making process of Chinese tourists. Finally, these results are interpreted utilizing surveys, attitude studies, and Q-methodology studies to append a comprehensive understanding. At last, the significance of national security in relation to the efficacy calculation of public diplomacy will be presented.

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[47] Juan-Antonio Carrasco, and Karen Lucas, "Workshop Synthesis: Measuring Attitudes; Quantitative and Qualitative Methods," *Transportation Research Procedia* 11 (2015): 168.

On the surface, China's strategy of economic coercion may appear to have failed when consulting data on Chinese imports of South Korean goods before and after THAAD. Not only does South Korea remain one of the largest import partners of China (Appendix 1)[48], South Korea's export to China increased roughly 14% in 2017, ensued by a continuously rising trend (Appendix 2).[49] Although total trade variables reflect no significant change in import behaviors during the THAAD conflict, specific industries were targeted through informal sanctions.[50] For instance, Lotte Group dealt with sudden inspections, companies that withdrew their products from Lotte stores, and denial-of-service attacks.[51] As reflected earlier by Lim and Ferguson, three coercion strategies were employed: strategic regulation, informal blacklisting, and boycott fomentation.[52] The first two of these methods are, although informally, primary government-led initiatives. However, in relation to the efficacy of public diplomacy as a solution, the latter strategy is pivotal, as the broad Chinese public's participation poses a concern for South Korea.

In fact, the Chinese Communist Party's involvement with and influence over state media had a significant effect on the instigation of Lotte Group boycotts. This especially constitutes a challenge for South Korea's public diplomacy, as mass participation in boycotts appears to be instigated by well-trusted and consumed state media, such as the Global Times whose reporting promoted such sanctions, rather than an adversary government.[53] This suggests that Chinese citizens are inclined to believe their state media over South Korea's messaging. Hence, although trade has not significantly changed, the probability of effective public diplomacy has.

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[48] "International Trade," Statista, accessed April 12, 2022, https://www.statista.com/statistics/257042/chinas-main-import-partners-by-import-value/.

[49] "South Korea Total Exports to China," Global Economic Data, Indicators, Charts & Forecasts, accessed May 28, 2022, https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/korea/total-exports-to-china.

[50] Jiyeoun Song, "sadŭ paech'irŭl tullŏssan han'gukkwa chunggugŭi chŏngch'ijŏk kaldŭngi kyŏngjegwan'gyee mich'inŭn yŏngyang," [The Effects of Political Conflicts on Bilateral Economic Relations between South Korea and China in the Process of the THAAD Deployment] *Korea and International Politics* 36, no. 3 (2020): 138-140.

[51] Jonathan Cheng, "Chinese Retaliation Over Antimissile System Has South Korea Worried," *The Wall Street Journal. Eastern Edition*, March 3, 2017.

[52] Lim, and Ferguson, "Informal economic sanctions," 14-16.

[53] Sun-Ae Shin, Uk Hwang, and Jinkwon Lee, "Voluntary and Government Induced Consumer Boycotts: The Case of a Conflict Between China and Korea Regarding THAAD," *Journal of Economic Studies* 37, no. 1 (2019): 163.

Contrary to the aggregated trade numbers, the total share of Chinese tourism to South Korea did significantly decrease after the THAAD incident. In fact, this number dropped over 15% in 2017. Furthermore, two years later it was still 10% lower than in 2016 (Appendix 3).[54] Interestingly, in the same period Chinese tourism to Japan experienced a significant 32% increase.[55] Thus, THAAD has significantly influenced Chinese tourism to South Korea, with contemporary numbers still lower than before the dispute. Particularly the sum of Chinese group travel tanked in the months following the incident. According to Wooyeal Paik, in 2016 the share of Chinese group tourists to South Korea was estimated to be about 60%-70% in Seoul, and 90% in Jeju, two of the major tourism hubs for inbound travel. Since group tourism is often set in motion by Chinese outbound tourism companies, after the informal travel ban on Chinese group tourism in April of 2017 occurred, it nearly came to a total halt. This was to the detriment of the South Korean tourism industry which saw China's share of total visitors drop from 46.8 to 31.3% in 2017. This had a significant impact as China's total tourism share had risen to nearly 50% in the last decade (Appendix 3).[56] The travel ban, which had been verbally instigated by the China National Tourism Association lasted for over 18 months,[57] and finally appeared to be resolved in October of 2017[58] following high-level diplomatic meetings between South Korea and China.[59] This has led to a slowly increasing trend in tourism numbers. Yet, even with restrictions lifted, Chinese tourism behavior is still not completely restored. This raises the concern whether Chinese citizens' behavioral changes can be attributed to South Korea's public diplomacy, which had focused primarily on the culture angle following THAAD.

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[54] "Travel, Tourism and Hospitality," Statista, accessed April 13, 2022, https://www.statista.com/statistics/1053544/south-korea-visitor-arrivals-from-mainland-china-share/.

[55] Jung Suk-yee, "Number of Chinese Tourists Visiting South Korea Drops after China's Travel Ban," *BusinessKorea*, November 12, 2019, http://www.businesskorea.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=37900.

[56] Wooyeal Paik, "The Politics of Chinese Tourism in South Korea: Political Economy, State-Society Relations, and International Security," *Pacific Review* 33, no. 2 (2020): 335-48.

[57] Lim, and Ferguson, "Informal economic sanctions," 15.

[58] "Chinese Economic Coercion during the THAAD Dispute," The Asan Forum, accessed April 13, 2022, https://theasanforum.org/chinese-economic-coercion-during-the-thaad-dispute/.

[59] Republic of Korea: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Diplomatic White Paper 2018*, (Seoul: MOFA, 2018), https://www.mofa.go.kr/viewer/skin/doc.html?fn=20190704052659196.pdf&rs=/viewer/result/202204.

4.2 Attitude Analysis

Thus far two major developments in the economic domain ensuing THAAD are established. First, industry-specific informal sanctions were instigated by the Chinese government. Through the means of boycotts and strategic regulation, businesses that rely on a large Chinese consumer base dealt with decreased profit margins.[60] **Figure (1)** demonstrates this practice clearly. In addition, commenced by word-of-mouth communication, outbound group travel agencies from China imposed a strict halt on nearly all group travel. Thus, there is a distinct aspect of economic retaliation against South Korea following THAAD. Yet, although economic variables point to mass participation of the Chinese population, qualitative data is indispensable in understanding the inner motivations of consumer behaviors. Through the study of public opinion polling and Q-methodology research on sentiment, these economic phenomena will be clarified. Then, it points to the fundamental rationale that public diplomacy alone has not, and cannot significantly influence Chinese sentiments against the backdrop of a national security conflict.

First, data from various opinion polls signifies the magnitude of national security's importance among Chinese citizens. In fact, this is in line with research from the World Values Survey Wave 7 (2017-2020). The WVS survey executes opinion polling on major aspects of personal and public life. In 2018, when asked to choose between freedom and security, over 90% of Chinese respondents claimed security is significantly more essential to their lives (Appendix 4).[61] Similar sentiments are reflected in a 2016 Pew Research Center poll, in which 45% of Chinese participants claimed to be concerned over U.S. power and influence. Due to U.S. involvement with THAAD, such numbers reflect the public's disapproval (Appendix 5).[62]

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[60] Andrew Pentol, ''Lotte feels THAAD impact; operating profits slump,'' *TRBusiness,* April 2, 2018. https://www.trbusiness.com/regional-news/asia-pacific/lotte-feels-thaad-impact.

[61] Yang Zhong, *World Values Survey Wave 7 (2017-2020) China* (Shanghai: Center for Public Opinion Research Shanghai Jiao Tong University, 2019), https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV7.jsp.

[62] Richard Wike and Bruce Stokes, *Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey* (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2016), https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2016/10/05/2-china-and-the-world/.

So far, the significance of national security for the Chinese population is established through attitude surveys. These results should not be underemphasized as the security element is dominant in both the Chinese government and state media's representation of THAAD. As the Chinese consider national security issues to be of top priority, their attitudes towards South Korea are largely impacted by the presence of any national security infringement. Besides, as established earlier, awareness and perspectives on related topics are primarily acquired by virtue of Chinese state media. The implications of this for South Korean public diplomacy are extensive, as Chinese citizens are inclined to trust state media more than foreign actors.[63]

Such sentiments are further developed as See-Won Byun underlines the widespread support among Chinese citizens for economic retaliation, specifically targeting *Hallyu* products, which encountered major financial losses after 2016. This points to one of the main limitations of South Korean public diplomacy. Even if cultural products reach China, when a security conflict of this magnitude erupts the Chinese public tends to partly refrain from the consumption of set goods, essentially nullifying its effectiveness in reshaping attitudes of South Korea.[64]

Interestingly, nearly 95% of Chinese respondents to the World Values Survey claimed to have quite a lot or a great deal of trust in their government (Appendix 6). [65] Combined with high levels of trust in state media, it appears that attitudes are primarily shaped by a top-down design. Mazzocco and Kennedy's research is indicative of this alignment between government and public opinion.[66] So, in order to substantially change the Chinese public's views, South Korea must first tackle its diplomatic estrangement from China. Until now, it appears that only traditional diplomatic approaches, such as bilateral meetings have achieved these desired results.

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[63] Xu, "Chinese state media," 80.

[64] See-Won Byun, "Chinese Views of South Korea: Aligning Elite and Popular Debates," *Joint U.S.-Korea Academic Studies 31* (2020): 162.

[65] Yang Zhong, *World Values Survey Wave 7 (2017-2020) China* (Shanghai: Center for Public Opinion Research Shanghai Jiao Tong University, 2019), https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV7.jsp.

[66] Ilaria Mazzocco and Scott Kennedy, "Public Opinion in China: A Liberal Silent Majority?," *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, February 9, 2022, https://www.csis.org/features/public-opinion-china-liberal-silent-majority.

Finally, nationalism and resentment of foreign influence are key factors in the relatively narrow effect South Korean public diplomacy has had among the Chinese in relation to THAAD. Indeed, a hierarchical regression analysis done on Chinese attitude developments regarding tourism to South Korea confirms that conceptions of South Korea worsened considerably in 2016.[67] Besides, two separate Q-methodology studies done on Chinese sentiment quantification confirm the earlier findings on the importance of nationalism and national security. The first study re-establishes the striking character of patriotism among Chinese tourists (Appendix 7).[68] The second study builds on these findings by highlighting the causation that political conflict assuredly negatively impacts a country's image.[69] Hence, it once more appears that political conflict has to be resolved in order to generate significant improvements in national image. In this case, only high-level diplomatic meetings directly about the THAAD incident have resulted in concrete betterment, including increased friendly dialogue and higher bilateral favorability.

Even though direct questionnaires on public diplomacy's effects are rare, a poll done by the Pew Research Center in 2016 bears out the resentment of foreign influence among the Chinese. Approximately 77% of respondent claimed that the Chinese way of life should be protected against foreign influence (Appendix 8).[70] Research by Eric V. Larson corroborated the synonymous nature of influencing a foreign public and public diplomacy.[71] This points to a major obstacle for South Korean public diplomacy, as such policy is often shunned in China. Hence, these findings reflect a rather deficient South Korean public diplomacy strategy.

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[67] Sungjun Park, and Heejung Lee, "han'gugŭi sadŭ paech'i kyŏljŏng chŏn'gwa hu chungguginŭi han'guge taehan insik pyŏnhwa pigyo yŏn'gu - han'guk kwan'gwangŏpkye mit yut'ong ch'aenŏrŭi sisajŏmŭl chungsimŭro-," [How has Chinese Perception toward South Korea Changed After THAAD?－Implications to Korean Tourism Industry and Marketing Channels－] J*ournal of Korean Logistics Society* 28, no. 1 (2018): 16-19.
[68] Juan et al., "Constraints of Chinese Tourists," 1266-71.
[69] Usŏn Chun, Sohyŏn An, and Ch'unggi I, "sadŭ paech'i kaldŭngŭro inhan chunggukkwan'gwanggaegŭi han'gukpangmun cheyage kwanhan chugwansŏng yŏn'gu -kpangbŏmnonŭl chungsimŭro-," [A Study on the Subjectivity of Chinese Tourists' Visit to Korea due to the Conflict of THAAD Deployment - Q Methodology] *Korea Tourism Association International Conference* 28, no. 0 (2017): 160-62.
[70] Richard Wike and Bruce Stokes, Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2016), https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2016/10/05/2-china-and-the-world/.
[71] Eric V. Larson and United States Army, *Foundations of Effective Influence Operations a Framework for Enhancing Army Capabilities* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Arroyo Center, 2009), 133-35.

5. Discussion

The foremost purpose of this thesis was to explore the effectiveness of South Korea's public diplomacy aimed at China against the backdrop of critical Chinese state media reporting on THAAD. Through a mixed methodology approach, both economic circumstances and key qualitative analyses on Chinese consumer conduct and opinion polling were taken into consideration. In accordance with the research findings, three pivotal discoveries are outlined as follows. First, the influence and practices of Chinese state media significantly decreased South Korean public diplomacy's effectiveness in China. Second, traditional diplomacy has yielded considerably more concrete results during the security friction between South Korea and China than public diplomacy has. Finally, South Korea's public diplomacy has not been significantly successful in China due to its lack of proper coordination and focus. In the ensuing chapters, the three key findings will be further developed and equated to established research.

Chinese State Media

The significant impact of Chinese state media on public opinion is underscored in the research findings. In line with earlier investigations into Chinese state media, two major characteristics structurally impede South Korean public diplomacy's success in China. These are the alignment between party and state media, as well as Chinese confidence in their reporting. In accordance with research done by Minghua Xu[72] and Maria Repnikova[73], the representation of Chinese Communist Party views in state media remains high, in spite of commercialization. Besides, the Chinese population overall reports significant trust in their own government and media. In fact, findings from the World Values Survey[74] corroborate Jie Xu's[75] earlier assertion. Thus, the hypothetical model on Chinese state media in **Figure (1)** is validated through these findings.

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[72] Xu, "Commercial reform," 375-76.
[73] Maria Repnikova, *Media Politics in China: Improvising Power Under Authoritarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 74-75.
[74] "World Values Survey."
[75] Xu, "Chinese state media," 80.

This establishes a predicament for South Korea. Since the objective of public diplomacy is cited as enhancing the understanding of a foreign public and increasing support regarding foreign policy, its outreach to the Chinese population is fundamental for the South Korean government. Even so, the target group appears to rely mostly on state media reporting in the development of public opinion. Hence, South Korea's favorability is primarily constituted by state media and government representation. Influencing the Chinese government proved to be more productive through traditional diplomatic approaches than through soft power initiatives. Interestingly, this contrasts previous accounts on public diplomacy's effectiveness by Benjamin E. Goldsmith, Yusaku Horiuchi, and Kelly Matush, who concluded that public diplomacy significantly sways public opinion.[76] Although this is possibly true in some cases, these statements are too extensive and fail to recognize the contextualization necessary to suggest such notions. In this case, China is clearly distinguished by its impactful state media, which is repeatedly overlooked in Western-oriented theories on public diplomacy. In conclusion, the context of Chinese state media necessitates South Korea to turn to other methods of conveying their public diplomacy message, as contemporary attempts have not yielded the desired effects.

Traditional Diplomacy

Also, according to the findings national security remains a top priority for the Chinese. On top of this, foreign influence is deemed undesirable by almost four out of five people, which constitutes a negative forecast for public diplomacy. As established by Mazzocco and Kennedy, this feeling of nationalism is further expanded through top-down sentiment influence.[77] In the case of THAAD, the national security infringement aspect was emphasized throughout Chinese state media, resulting in nationalism dominating Chinese attitudes towards South Korea.

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[76] Benjamin E. Goldsmith, Yusaku Horiuchi, and Kelly Matush, "Does Public Diplomacy Sway Foreign Public Opinion? Identifying the Effect of High-Level Visits," *The American Political Science Review* 115, no. 4 (2021): 1355.
[77] Mazzocco and Kennedy, "Public Opinion."

Since this top-down sentiment phenomenon is indicative of a more compelling force than public diplomacy's foreign influence, South Korea has to persuade the minds and hearts of the Chinese government first in order for favorable sentiments to reach through to the general population. In this case, public diplomacy has proven not up to par in comparison to traditional diplomacy. In fact, this is in line with the quantitative and qualitative research findings on tourism. In 2017, a significant drop in visits to South Korea took place subsequent to the THAAD incident. Through Q-methodology studies, nationalism manifested as the driving factor for this change in behavior. Although South Korean public diplomacy had continuously been employed in China, only in October of 2017 when a political agreement on THAAD was established did economic sanctions ease, and consumption of South Korean goods increase.[78] This agreement is reflective of traditional diplomacy through high-level meetings.

Overall, this indicates that Chinese consumer behavior and attitudes frequently follow the same trends as that of the national government. One of the reasons that traditional diplomatic meetings have resulted in more concrete results regarding Chinese views on South Korea is the fact that it directly dealt with the national security issue. In the case of public diplomacy, there is no significant mention of the THAAD incident, which from a Chinese standpoint is the main factor driving their persisting unfavorable views of South Korea. So, in the case of these national security concerns, traditional diplomacy has shown to be significantly more effective in shaping a positive image of South Korea, due to its direct targeting of the security matter. The case study of THAAD therefore signifies one of the common limitations to public diplomacy. Although Groen and Lee's perspective on this marks a relevant conversation on the intentions of South Korean public diplomacy, it fails to take into consideration the significant impact of national security as a limiting factor to mere cultural and social diplomatic means.[79]

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[78] The Asan Forum, "Chinese Economic Coercion."
[79] Green and Lee, "Nation Brand Management," 58-61.

Coordination & Strategy

Furthermore, a critique of South Korea's public diplomacy has been its lack of coordination and strategic capabilities. In fact, as discussed previously, the contents within South Korean public diplomacy are rather broad, consisting of cultural events, digital outreach, and language acquisition programs. Such affairs promote general Korean cultural phenomena. However, these practices are not led by a centralized institution, but rather several governmental and non-governmental organizations. The extensiveness of participation by such actors is highlighted by Choi[80] and South Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[81] These sentiments are also expressed by Miyŏng Chu, who substantiates the unspecific nature of South Korean public diplomacy.[82]

In fact, the lack of strategic approaches and concrete goals to varying regions might shed light on the ineffectiveness of public diplomacy in producing substantial outcomes. Earlier research findings have shown that nationalism is a top priority among the Chinese audiences. Thus, the lack of a targeted approach that takes this into account might have hindered public diplomacy's success within China. Although public diplomacy is inclined to lean on cultural rather than security issues in its practices, this has certainly limited its capabilities in China.

Nevertheless, public diplomacy certainly can be and has been a strategically motivated tool for South Korea. Although no significant effects of public diplomacy on Chinese citizens' perceptions of South Korea can be concluded in relation to THAAD, the following achievement of public diplomacy should be noted. The *Hallyu* phenomenon has swiftly popularized South Korean pop culture throughout many nations.[83] This has tremendously increased worldwide interest in South Korean culture and language. These wins in such foreign outreach should not be underscored as incredible economic benefits have accompanied popularized Korean culture.

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[80] Choi, "Public Diplomacy Strategy," 18-21.
[81] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Public Diplomacy Programs."
[82] Miyŏng Chu, "kŭllobŏl silloegukka imiji hyŏngsŏngŭl wihan han'gugŭi konggongoegyo yŏn'gu," [A Study on the Public Diplomacy for Global Trust Korea] *Political Information Research* 18, no. 2 (2015): 51-53.
[83] Jin, Yoon and Min, *Transnational Hallyu*, 5.

6. Limitations

Due to the nature of the research inquiry, quantification of sentiment remains at the forefront. The challenges regarding this field of study gave rise to various limitations and implications. By structurally outlining the shortcomings and subsequent solutions to these matters, future academic research can lay out more refined findings. First, a mixed methodology approach was implemented to uncover the developments and motives behind shifts in Chinese sentiment. Quantitative data on trade and tourism were further informed by surveys, Q-methodology, and attitude studies. Although such methodology has resulted in an increased understanding of the research topic, direct causation between public diplomacy and public attitudes remains complex to conclude. So, this study is limited due to the abundant variables that inform public opinion. Since public diplomacy cannot be completely isolated from these other phenomena, direct causation through merely public diplomacy cannot be deduced with complete certainty. In fact, this remains one of the most common limitations in the field of sentiment research.

So far, the research findings clearly outline three key factors that have limited public diplomacy's effectiveness in China. Interestingly, there are trends that appear to structurally impede on public diplomacy's success within China, such as nationalism and national security. Moreover, a connection between government and state media reporting proved significant. However, the lack of widespread public opinion polling within China hindered the attempt to find more substantial connections between public diplomacy and citizen's opinion. According to Mazzocco and Kennedy, self-censorship might also further these difficulties.[84] Future researchers will therefore benefit from extensive public opinion polling in China, specifically regarding attitude formation in relation to South Korea. This will subsequently set about a significantly broader understanding of the context in which bilateral understanding is developed.

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[84] Mazzocco and Kennedy, "Public Opinion."

Frankly, another major limitation within this research is inherent to public diplomacy. As described by Nye, public diplomacy's objective of influencing foreign attitudes towards a nation or government is realized through soft power initiatives centered around cultural exchange.[85] Unlike traditional bilateral meetings in which disagreements are often addressed directly, public diplomacy's effects on building cultural understanding are frequently prolonged processes. In fact, this is even truer in the case of China, in which foreign influence is generally frowned upon.[86] This requires a critical approach to communication strategies. So, although this research cannot conclude any significant impacts of South Korean public diplomacy within China thus far, subsequent researchers may establish contrasting outcomes if South Korea increases its public diplomacy resources and critically considers the issue of Chinese security and nationalism. In short, the findings reflect merely a context-bound interpretation. Conclusive statements on general public diplomacy's efficacy may distinguish themselves from this.

In addition, the major reason for South Korean public diplomacy's relative failure in significantly influencing Chinese attitudes lies in the isolated variable of the THAAD incident. In line with the research findings, THAAD and its national security implications are of primary concern for the Chinese population. This has led to increased nationalistic sentiments, which in turn nearly nullified public diplomacy's effectiveness in China. So, in the case where no such national security conflict exists, public diplomacy might achieve considerably more results. In conclusion, the implications for future research can be summarized as follows. First, an increase in Chinese opinion polling on public diplomacy will shed light on the extent of causation between public diplomacy and foreign opinion. Then, if THAAD is no longer a primary concern among Chinese audiences, replicating a mixed methodology study will likely yield contrasting results. This can confirm the earlier assertion that national security constitutes a pivotal aspect.

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[85] Nye, *Soft Power: the Means to Success in World Politics*, 5.
[86] Wike and Stokes, "Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey."

Conclusion

International security conflicts call for effective and long-lasting solutions. So, when the South Korean and Chinese governments clashed over the announcement of the THAAD system in 2016, the need for problem-solving became even more apparent. In restoring bilateral relations to a previously satisfactory degree, both the Chinese public and government were approached through several diplomatic means. South Korea employed extensive public diplomacy procedures to increase Chinese favorability and support for their foreign policy. However, the effectiveness of this approach on the backdrop of an influential Chinese state media remained underexplored in academic literature, and subsequently called for further investigation.

Through a multilayered approach several key findings demonstrate the rather limited effects of public diplomacy during the THAAD conflict. In fact, the Chinese state media's alignment with the Chinese Communist Party significantly increased negative perceptions of South Korea among the Chinese audience. The findings corroborated the principle that the Chinese favor their own state media over foreign influence, resulting in an overall rejection of South Korean public diplomacy. Moreover, the findings show that consumer behavior, often linked to perception, only appeared to develop significantly after traditional diplomatic steps resulted in friendlier relations. This further builds on the understanding that Chinese public opinion is largely in line with, and affected by the state's perspective.

Importantly, concluding direct causation between public diplomacy and public opinion remains a delicate matter. Currently, due to a lack of public opinion polling within China and a public diplomacy strategy that is still fully in development, ensuing research may in fact find contrasting results. Due to the importance of problem-solving for a middle power state such as South Korea, the efficacy of public diplomacy requires solid investigation and contextualization. So, as South Korea continues to develop its public diplomacy practices, policy-makers will benefit from the lessons of the past. Only then can public diplomacy truly elevate its potency.
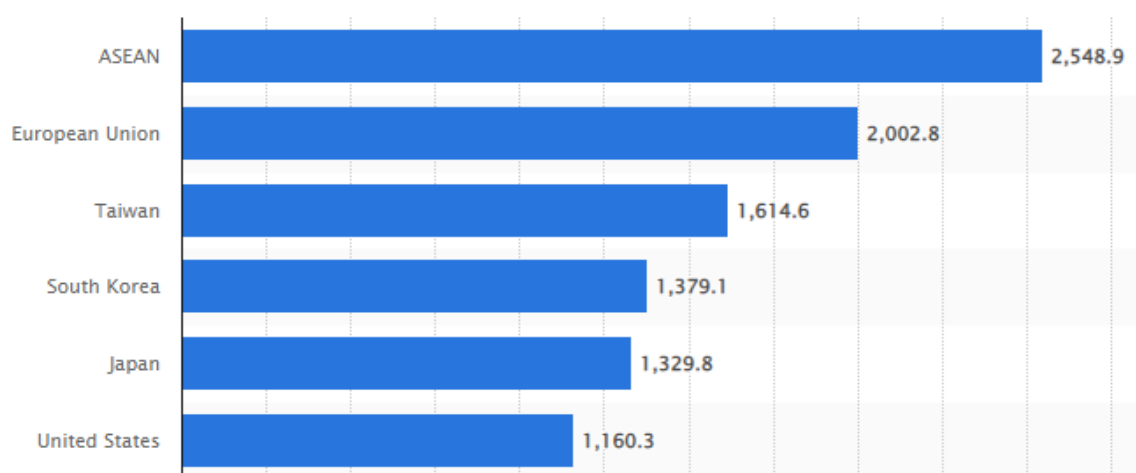
Appendices

Appendix 1

Content: China's leading important partners in 2021, by import value in billion yuan.

Source: Statista (Accessed April 12, 2022)

https://www.statista.com/statistics/257042/chinas-main-import-partners-by-import-value/

Appendix 2

Content: Chinese imports from South Korea, by value in USD.

Source: Global Economic Data, Indicators, Charts and Forecasts (Accessed May 28, 2022)

https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/korea/total-exports-to-china

Appendix 3

Content: Share of visitor arrivals from Mainland China to South Korea from 2009 to 2019.

Source: Statista (Accessed April 13, 2022)

https://www.statista.com/statistics/1053544/south-korea-visitor-arrivals-from-mainland-china-share/
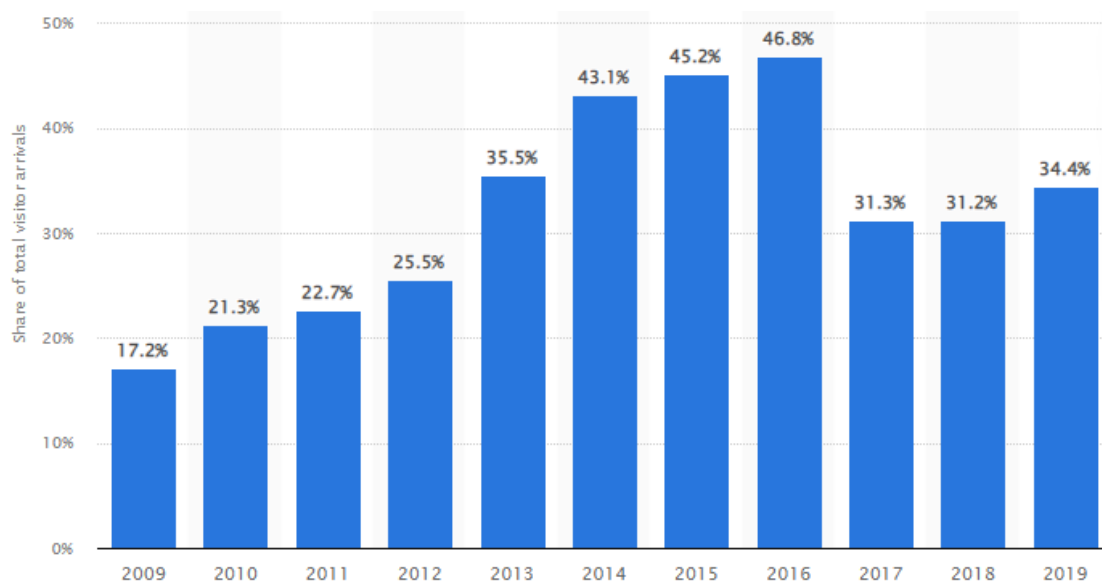
Appendix 4

Content: Importance of freedom and security, according to Chinese citizens in 2018.

Source: World Values Survey Wave 7 (2017-2020) China (Accessed April 14, 2022)

https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV7.jsp

Q150- Most people consider both freedom and security to be important, but if you had to choose between them, which one would you consider more important?

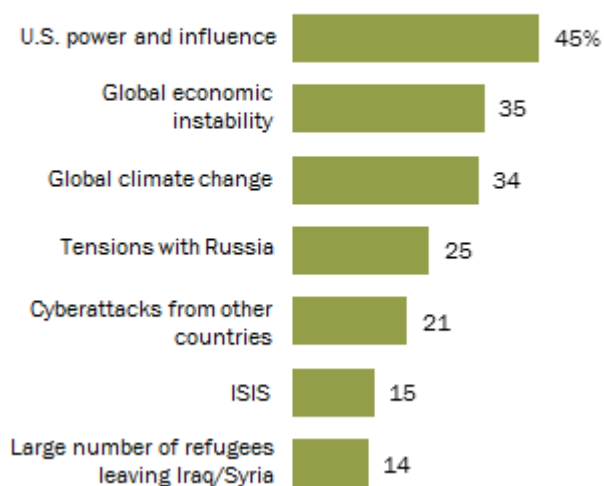|	TOTAL	Sex		Age		
		Male	Female	Up to 29	30-49	50 and more
Freedom	7.1	8.9	5.2	7.5	7.8	5.8
Security	92.7	91.0	94.3	92.4	91.9	94.0
Don´t know	-	-	-	-	-	-
No answer	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.3
Missing; Not available	-	-	-	-	-	-
(N)	(3,036)	(1,503)	(1,533)	(679)	(1,348)	(1,010)

Appendix 5

Content: Issues deemed major threats by Chinese citizens in 2016.

Source: Pew Research Center (Accessed April 14, 2022)

https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2016/10/05/2-china-and-the-world/

Chinese most concerned about U.S.

% saying each is a major threat to China

Issue	%
U.S. power and influence	45%
Global economic instability	35
Global climate change	34
Tensions with Russia	25
Cyberattacks from other countries	21
ISIS	15
Large number of refugees leaving Iraq/Syria	14

Appendix 6

Content: Chinese citizen's trust in their government in 2018.

Source: World Values Survey Wave 7 (2017-2020) China (Accessed April 14, 2022)

https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV7.jsp

Q71- I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all? The government (in your nation's capital)

	TOTAL	Sex		Age		
		Male	Female	Up to 29	30-49	50 and more
A great deal	47.6	49.1	46.2	43.5	43.9	55.4
Quite a lot	47.0	44.8	49.2	47.8	50.7	41.5
Not very much	4.4	4.8	3.9	7.9	4.2	2.2
None at all	0.7	0.8	0.6	0.7	0.9	0.5
Don't know	0.1	0.2	-	-	0.1	0.0
No answer	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.3
Other missing; Multiple answers Mail (EVS)	-	-	-	-	-	-
(N)	(3,036)	(1,503)	(1,533)	(679)	(1,348)	(1,010)

Appendix 7

Content: Typology of Chinese tourist's subjectivity.

Source: Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research (Accessed April 15, 2022)

Note: Graph 1 establishes tourism decline. Graph 2 displays motives behind canceled travel.
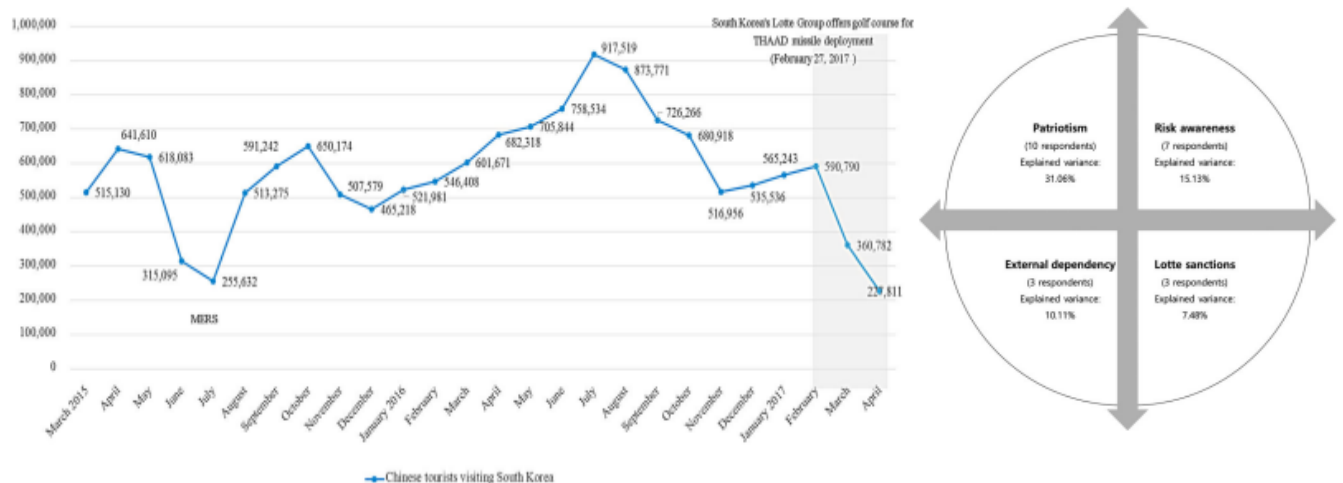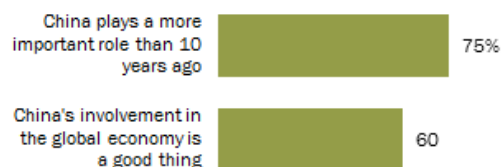

Appendix 8

Content: Foreign relations concerns among Chinese citizens in 2016.

Source: Pew Research Center (Accessed April 15, 2022)

https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2016/10/05/chinese-public-sees-more-powerful-role-in-world-names-u-s-as-top-threat/

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