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Diplomacy toward ASEAN**

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Identification of New Southern Policy Narratives within ROK's Digital Diplomacy toward ASEAN

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ABSTRACT

Republic of Korea (ROK) shifted its policy focus toward ASEAN through the New Southern Policy (NSP). As the core foreign policy to its southern neighbors, the NSP is envisioned to 'elevate' ASEAN status. The partnership has been backed by institutional and bureaucratic transformation to sustain the policy. Accordingly, ROK tapped on its digital resources to support this diplomatic engagement. Digital diplomacy, therefore, is an important strategy to engage the ASEAN public. However, was ROK's digital primacy translated well enough to support NSP's digital diplomacy? This paper utilizes explorative qualitative primary data collection of ROK's government tweets on two different levels of analysis; towards domestic and foreign audiences. The finding confirms that the government primarily used digital diplomacy in order to engage its domestic audience with domestic-political purposes, rather than foreign public of ASEAN with diplomatic goals. Meanwhile, on external engagement, this paper points out ROK's digital diplomacy deficit toward ASEAN. Not only does ROK's digital diplomacy strategy lack uniformity, but it also fails to create conversation about NSP.

Keywords : ASEAN, Republic of Korea, New Southern Policy, Digital Diplomacy, Twitplomacy

ABSTRAK

Republik Korea (ROK) mengalihkan fokus kebijakannya ke arah ASEAN melalui Kebijakan Selatan Baru (NSP). Sebagai kebijakan luar negeri inti bagi tetangga selatannya, NSP diharapkan dapat 'meningkatkan' status ASEAN. Kemitraan tersebut didukung oleh transformasi kelembagaan dan birokrasi untuk menopang kebijakan tersebut. Oleh karena itu, ROK memanfaatkan sumber daya digitalnya untuk mendukung keterlibatan diplomatik ini. Oleh karena itu, diplomasi digital merupakan strategi penting untuk melibatkan publik ASEAN. Namun, apakah keunggulan digital ROK diterjemahkan dengan cukup baik untuk mendukung diplomasi digital NSP? Makalah ini menggunakan pengumpulan data primer kualitatif eksploratif dari tweet pemerintah ROK pada dua tingkat analisis yang berbeda; terhadap khalayak dalam dan luar negeri. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa pemerintah terutama menggunakan diplomasi digital untuk melibatkan audiens domestiknya dengan tujuan politik domestik, daripada publik asing ASEAN dengan tujuan diplomatik. Sementara itu, pada keterlibatan eksternal, makalah ini menunjukkan defisit diplomasi digital ROK terhadap ASEAN. Strategi diplomasi digital ROK tidak hanya kurang seragam, tetapi juga gagal menciptakan percakapan tentang NSP.

Kata kunci : ASEAN, Republik Korea, Kebijakan Selatan Baru, Diplomasi Digital, Twitplomacy

Introduction

Republic of Korea's (ROK) relationship with the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) has been crafted institutionally through the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) Summit, along with China and Japan in 1997. However, the relationship has yet been maximized due to ROK over commitment beyond Southeast Asia. A 2020 ASEAN Survey published by ISEAS shows how ASEAN nationals perceive ROK's role in the region¹. Economic ties have been a driving force for ROK-ASEAN cooperation, giving satisfying results to the Prosperity pillar. However, despite this economic success, ASEAN nationals are more confident in China's and Japan's leadership in championing the global free trade agenda. People exchanges are positive in terms of tourism with ASEAN countries being popular destinations for Korean travelers. Vice versa, ASEAN tourists amounted as the third biggest group to visit ROK in 2018. Yet, this number doesn't prohibit Japan's dominations as the top destination for ASEAN nationals. In the Peace pillar, ROK has fallen short to be perceived as a trusted regional leader. In conclusion, amongst the APT members, ROK has yet to be favored positively in the region. However, the competitive advantage of ROK is best perceived on its telecommunication prominence especially the development of 5G.

ROK has been acknowledged as Information and Communication Technology's (ICT) world leader². Its digital society runs deep with its fast internet speed and 5G connection penetrating daily life. The adoption of the Digital Government Plan for 2020-2025 further strengthens its path towards digitization. In 2019 the ROK government ranked first in the Digital Government Index (DGI)³. South Korean are avid users of social media as it ranks third in the world with a usage rate of up to 87%⁴. ROK has received a strong external validation on its digital primacy not only in Southeast Asia but also internationally. Therefore, ROK is at a huge advantage when it comes to digital diplomacy; the use of the digital platform to conduct diplomacy. Digital diplomacy has become an invaluable instrument to be deployed by ROK mainly because domestic's enabling condition has led to the increasing digital diplomacy innovations that support ROK's digital external projection. Despite this positive take-out, the ROK's digital diplomacy is also seen as yet to reach its full potential as it fails to provide a strategic plan for its digital public diplomacy⁵.

In 2017, under President Moon Jae-in, ROK engagement with ASEAN was re-emphasized. Through the launching of New Southern Policy (NSP) President Moon argued to 'elevate' ROK – ASEAN relationship⁶. The underlying objective of this initiative was to diversify the political and diplomatic risk of great power dependency by improving closer ties with the ASEAN countries. To achieve this, the NSP focused on three main pillars: people, prosperity, and peace (3P). NSP is heralded as the prime policy towards Southeast Asia. Not only does it embolden ASEAN's

¹ S. M. Tang and et al, "The State of SEA Survey : 2020" (Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2020).

² ITU, "How the Republic of Korea Became a World ICT Leader," ITU News, February 12, 2018, <https://news.itu.int/republic-korea-leader-information-communication-technologies/>.

³ ROK Ministry of Interior and Safety, "Digital Government," 2020, <https://www.dgovkorea.go.kr/>.

⁴ Shim Woo-hyun, "Korea's Social Media Penetration Rate Ranks Third in World," The Korea Herald, September 7, 2020, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20200907000815>.

⁵ See Jan Melissen and Emillie V. de Keulenaar, "Critical Digital Diplomacy as a Global Challenge: The South Korean Experience," *Global Policy* 8, no. 3 (September 2017): 294–302, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12425>; Jeffrey Roberston, "Korea's Digital Diplomacy: The Most Technologically Advanced Avoider?," USC Center on Public Diplomacy, May 31, 2017, <https://usepublicdiplomacy.org/blog/korea%E2%80%99s-digital-diplomacy-most-technologically-advanced-avoider>; Jeffrey Roberston, "South Korea's Digital Diplomacy Deficit," *Policy Forum*, November 12, 2018, <https://www.policyforum.net/south-koreas-digital-diplomacy-deficit/>.

⁶ Jae-in Moon, "Presidential Committee on New Southern Policy," 2017, <http://www.nsp.go.kr/kor/main/main.do>.

engagement but it is also the most consistent foreign policy toward ASEAN⁷. Furthermore, The NSP was President Moon's core initiative policy⁸ and still very much touted closing to his presidency.

Amidst the NSP backdrop, ROK has been attempted to approach the partnership with full vigor and even scaled it up with the launch of NSP Plus. The institutional and bureaucratic transformation was taken with the establishment of the Presidential Committee on NSP to sustain the policy. Accordingly, ROK taps on its digital resources to support its diplomatic engagement with ASEAN. Digital diplomacy has become the most crucial and influential approach to openly engage and persuade the ASEAN public, leaders, and ultimately decision makers. However, was ROK's digital primacy translated well enough to support NSP's digital diplomacy? There are research on ROK's public diplomacy to ASEAN especially towards its individual members⁹, however, there is only a scant of digital diplomacy literature that specifically addressed ROK's NSP digital diplomacy engagement toward ASEAN. Therefore this paper tries to fill the gap in the research by focusing on the quest to chart the map of ROK's digital diplomacy strategy toward ASEAN.

Literature Review

Public diplomacy supports the attainment of foreign policy. Although, Mellisen cautions that a 'too close' nexus between foreign policy and public diplomacy might render its counter-productiveness¹⁰. Nevertheless, in essence, public diplomacy aims to support the foreign policy goals of a state. This is done through the states' communication function which argued by Hans Tuch that public diplomacy is "a government's process of communicating with foreign publics about understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions, and culture, as well as its national goals and policies"¹¹. On the normal condition, the public diplomacy activities are practiced to create positive opinion and image from actors abroad to support the fulfillment of state's foreign policy targets¹².

The changing terrain of the 21st century brought evolution to diplomacy, both in its conceptual frameworks and issues. Hocking¹³ argues that the rise of globalization gives way to a new direction of public diplomacy which is built upon technological development. The emergence of cyber diplomacy brings researchers' attention to the utilization of technology in the conduct of diplomatic ability. Digital diplomacy is seen as an important tool to support states' foreign policy as it enables direct interaction and engagement with foreign publics¹⁴.

⁷ Young-sun Kim, "The New Southern Policy Plus and ASEAN-Korea Relations," in *단행본 The New Southern Policy Plus Progress and Way Forward*, ed. Kwon-Hyung Lee and Yoon-Jae Ro (South Korea: Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP), 2021), 17–34.

⁸ Choe Wongi, "'New Southern Policy': Korea's Newfound Ambition in Search of Strategic Autonomy," 118, *Asie Visions* (French Institute of International Relations, January 26, 2021).

⁹ See Seksan Anantasirikiat, "Partnering for Tomorrow: Conceptualizing South Korea's Public Diplomacy Approach toward ASEAN," in *Koreas Soft Power and Public Diplomacy*, ed. Ayhan Kadir (Hangang Network, 2017); Yun Young Cho, "Public Diplomacy and South Korea's Strategies," *The Korean Journal of International Studies* 10, no. 2 (December 2012): 275–96; Kadir Jun Ayhan, "An Exploration of Korean Discourses on Public Diplomacy," *Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia* 19, no. 1 (July 31, 2020): 31–42, <https://doi.org/10.17477/JCEA.2020.19.1.031>; Naomi Karina Hutagalung, Junita Budi Rachman, and Akim Akim, "Diplomasi Publik Korea Selatan di Indonesia Melalui King Sejong Institute Center Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Hubungan Internasional* 15, no. 2 (December 19, 2019): 131–45, <https://doi.org/10.26593/jihi.v15i2.3415.131-145>.

¹⁰ Jan Melissen, ed., *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2005), <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230554931>.

¹¹ Hans Tuch, *Communicating with the World: U.S. Public Diplomacy Overseas* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1990).

¹² Jessica Martha, "Pemanfaatan Diplomasi Publik oleh Indonesia dalam Krisis Covid-19," *Jurnal Ilmiah Hubungan Internasional COVID-19 Special Edition*, no.1 (April 2020): 121 - 130, <https://doi.org/10.26593/jihi.v0i0.3859.121-130>

¹³ B Hocking, "Rethinking the 'New' Public Diplomacy," in *The New Public Diplomacy. Studies in Diplomacy and International Relations*, ed. Jan Melissen (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

¹⁴ Ronit Kampf, Ilan Manor, and Elad Segev, "Digital Diplomacy 2.0? A Cross-National Comparison of Public Engagement in Facebook and Twitter," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 10, no. 4 (October 23, 2015): 331–62, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1871191X-12341318>.

Conversation on digital diplomacy can be traced back to the shift taking place in public diplomacy in which Mellissen argues for the rise of 'new public diplomacy'. The conceptual development of New Public Diplomacy (NPD) highlights the blurring of traditional distinctions between international and domestic information activities¹⁵. Making exploration on public diplomacy initiative through digital platform is not limited to foreign public, but also tapping into the domestic public and its subsequent external link. Furthermore, through this framework, digital diplomacy is seen in the light of communication theory. The term digital diplomacy has its focus on the utilization of social media within international relationships. Social media is perceived as a game-changer in the interaction between state actors.

Bjola and Holmes¹⁶ refer to digital diplomacy as the use of social media for diplomatic purposes. Digital diplomacy within this framework is defined as digitized public diplomacy. This entails a transformation in how states communicate their public diplomacy initiatives and engage foreign publics in the form of sustained dialogue. The use of social media takes into account SNS features like Facebook, Youtube, and Twitter in identifying public diplomacy activities. As suggested by the NPD approach, SNS allows the transformation of *monologue* to the *dialogue* of public diplomacy.

Increasing 'dialogue' in the conduct of digital diplomacy is apparent in the utilization of Twitter by government officials and heads of states. Hence Twitplomacy is presumed as effective two-way communication. The use of microblogging enables people to take part in diplomatic conversation, thus increasing their understanding and support of diplomatic policies¹⁷. Jin-young Lee¹⁸ examined the role of social media in the context of 'digital culture-public diplomacy'. Lee defined the new concept of digital culture-public diplomacy to be a new type of networking making which includes all of the citizens, target country or government, and its population, forming a P2P2G (people to people to government) diplomacy. Lee mentioned 'twitplomacy' with an example of Donald Trump's use of social media, especially Twiter, emphasizing the utilization of social media platforms as an unconventional channel of diplomatic communication with foreign governments.

To deduce the employability of digital diplomacy to attain foreign policy goals Bjola and Holmes propose an identification framework of states' digital diplomac¹⁹. This identification addresses three main dimensions: agenda-setting, presence-expansion, and conversation-generating. The first dimension focuses on information dissemination. This dimension looks at to what extent social media platforms set the agenda of discussion. Dialogue can be established when the sender and recipients are familiar with the topic discussed. States can influence agenda-setting by 'repeatedly providing relevant information to the issues'. What kind of information is being used is the central question of this dimension. The second dimension focuses on presence-expansion. This refers to the exposure, presence of states within the targeted public sphere. Social media in this sense helps to introduce, insert and re-assert the state's presence. How far social media reach the public is the central question of this dimension. The third dimension is conversation-generating. As NPD highlights the 'dialogue' character. This dimension underlines the engagement with the foreign public. What kind of mechanism is used by social media engagement is the central question to this dimension.

¹⁵ R Vickers, "He New Public Diplomacy: Britain and Canada Compared" 6, no. 2 (2004): 182–94, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-856X.2004.00133.x>.

¹⁶ Cornelius Bjola and Marcus Holmes, eds., *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

¹⁷ Shumin Su and Mark Xu, "Twitplomacy: Social Media as a New Platform for Development of Public Diplomacy," *International Journal of E-Politics* 6, no. 1 (January 2015): 16–29, <https://doi.org/10.4018/IJEP.2015010102>.

¹⁸ Jin-young Lee, "문화외교와 소셜미디어 활용: 디지털 문화공공외교의 대두와 개념화를 중심으로," *문화와 정치* 4, no. 5 (2018): 69–94.

¹⁹ Bjola and Holmes, *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*.

Methodology

To answer the question above this paper aims to analyze ROK digital diplomacy engagement to support NSP policy. The paper will be divided into several sections. The first section provides the theoretical foundation of digital diplomacy. As a new concept generated along with the increasing usability of Social Networking Services (SNS) in state affairs, digital diplomacy is still evolving. The second section identifies the mapping of the ROK government's NSP communication through Twitter towards its domestic audiences and how NSP is tied to ROK's domestic politics. The third section analyzes ROK's NSP digital mapping through the use of Twitter towards ASEAN. The last section of this paper concludes our findings and recommends some caveats that are worth to be addressed on the delivery of NSP's digital diplomacy to ASEAN.

This paper limits its research by considering a few things. First, empirical explorative qualitative primary data collection of tweets from ROK will be used to analyze the digital conversation regarding NSP both within ROK domestic audiences and toward ASEAN.

Second, a two-level analysis will be pursued; one level is directed towards domestic audiences within South Korea and the other level is directed toward the foreign audiences located in each of the ASEAN Member States (AMS). On the domestic level, this paper looks at non-state actors' tweets that utilize NSP as a stepping point to endorse political figures from the Democratic party. On the ASEAN level, the analysis will look at official communication done by state actors mainly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) Korea, President Moon Jae-in, and The Blue House account. These state actors are chosen due to their close engagement in the NSP policy. NSP is the highlight of President Moon's policy towards ASEAN. His policy is supported by the President's Blue House and exported by MOFA through foreign policy exercises. Analysis of digital diplomacy toward AMS will also be focused on state actors that are located in AMS, including the ROK embassy in each AMS, ROK Mission to ASEAN, and Korea Cultural Centre (KCC). ROK embassy and ROK mission to ASEAN are chosen due to their role as the in-country extension of MOFA Korea. KCC is chosen as cultural relations serving as the strongest engagement link in South Korea-AMS relations.

Third, in the understanding of NSP's digital conversation toward ASEAN this paper utilizes Bjola's three-dimension. In information-dissemination dimension, NSP identification looks at the amount of Twitter on New Southern Policy topics that have been posted and what kind of conversation (agenda setting) has taken place. In the presence-expansion dimension, NSP identification looks at whether NSP's Twitter reach expands its engagement by tagging itself to a broader discussion on ROK-ASEAN issues. Lastly, in the conversation-generation dimension, NSP identification looks at whether the engagement is taken in the form of monologue or dialogue.

Analysis

a. Locating South Korea Digital Diplomacy within the ASEAN Plus 3 (APT)

In comparison to its counterparts within the APT, China and Japan, ROK's digital diplomacy has been superior. ROK digital society is created with the support of digital infrastructure that led to the utilization of digital technology in every aspect of human interaction, including digital government. Connectivity is strong with fast internet connection, allowing for high frequencies of social media usage. Both government and the people have been integrating technology into their daily life. This primacy has been acknowledged externally. The 2019 OECD report on digital government ranked ROK the top of digital design. This refers to the 'rooting of digital transformation in

governments and rethinking the relationship between technology, governments and human interactions²⁰. Thus, ROK appears to have what it takes to be the leader in digital diplomacy.

Mellisen and de Keulenaar²¹ acknowledged that ROK's digital culture is Seoul's diplomatic asset. They argue that the ROK export of communication infrastructure emboldened its 'technological credential' regionally. Its digital knowledge resources have boosted Seoul's standing in multilateral settings on digital issues. ROK's digital culture allows for increasing communication with foreign audiences through online platforms and as a result, MOFA benefits from this state-art technology in projecting ROK foreign policy. However, despite this positive development, Mellisen argues that ROK is better at communicating in Korean and with South Korean at home and abroad than with the foreign public. A similar tone of disappointment was also shared by other scholars. Kim²² highlights that ROK has not made serious attempts to use its digital infrastructure as a means of diplomatic strategy. He strongly suggests that ROK should conceive more active digital diplomacy as a response to the global phenomenon of digitalization. Roberston²³ argues the ROK lacks a strategic plan for digital public diplomacy. Yet, despite these shortcomings, ROK has the needed basic resources to elevate and fulfill the widespread expectation.

There is scant research on how Japan government deploys its digital diplomacy strategy toward ASEAN. Empirical analyses on Japan's use of the digital platform in ASEAN countries show that the official embassy utilizes mainly Facebook to engage with AMS audiences. Twitter is used in Philippine by Japanese Ambassador @AmbJPNinPH and more personal use in Malaysia @Amb_Takahashi. Meanwhile, Instagram is used in Indonesia with the Japanese Ambassador's official account @jpnambindonesia which has followers reaching 149K. Youtube is preferred as an embassy's diplomatic platform aside from Facebook, especially in Thailand, Cambodia, and Myanmar. The majority of the messages refer to the promotion of Japanese culture, references towards events, and activities of the ambassador as Japanese digital diplomacy highlights the information and dissemination stage.

Park and Lim²⁴ use network analysis to map the information networks within the utilization of media between ROK – Japan. Comparison of the organization of social media practices shows that Japanese organization is less successful in employing two-way communication to engage with the public. Within a different context, Bjola and Jiang look at Japanese digital diplomacy towards China in which they argued the Japanese government "exerts a strict control over its agenda"²⁵. Just like its engagement with ASEAN, in stage information dissemination, Japan opts for non-political content that focuses more on its cultures as the main messages to increase the country's attractiveness.

In comparison, as a rising great power, China's digital diplomacy reached its peak only during the COVID-19. Considered as a new player in digital diplomacy, Chinese diplomats engaged in SNS only in 2018. Yet Beijing has leashed its digital Wolf Warrior Diplomacy in its response to global criticism of the virus's origins²⁶. Chinese foreign ministry has increasingly become aggressive and

²⁰ OECD, *Financing SMEs and Entrepreneurs 2020: An OECD Scoreboard*, Financing SMEs and Entrepreneurs (OECD, 2020), 26, <https://doi.org/10.1787/061fe03d-en>.

²¹ Jan Mellisen and Emillie V. de Keulenaar, "Critical Digital Diplomacy as a Global Challenge: The South Korean Experience," *Global Policy* 8, no. 3 (September 2017): 294–302, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12425>.

²² Sangbe Kim, "글로벌 IT전략과 디지털 외교전략," *SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY POLICY* 142 (2003): 38–48.

²³ Roberston, "Korea's Digital Diplomacy."

²⁴ Se Jung Park and Yon Soo Lim, "Information Networks and Social Media Use in Public Diplomacy: A Comparative Analysis of South Korea and Japan," *Asian Journal of Communication* 24, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 79–98, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2013.851724>.

²⁵ Cornelius Bjola and Lu Jiang, "Social Media and Public Diplomacy: A Comparative Analysis of the Digital Diplomatic Strategies of the EU, US and Japan in China," in *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, ed. Cornelius Bjola and Marcus Holmes (New York: Routledge, 2015), 77.

²⁶ Chris Alden and Kendrick Chan, "Twitter and Digital Diplomacy: China and COVID-19," Strategic Update, Digital IR (LSE IDEAS, June 2021).

confrontational in its use of diplomacy—from what used to be "conservative, passive and low key to assertive, provocative and high-profile"²⁷. As such Beijing's decision to engage digitally saw a rise in the utilization of digital media to counter criticism and influence public debate. Huo and Maudo²⁸ explore China's digital diplomacy amidst the pandemic in detail. Beijing uses two main SNS platforms; Facebook and Twitter as their preferred channel of communication, favoring the former over the latter. Both platforms are banned within China but they are used by Chinese diplomats to send messages abroad. When it comes to Southeast Asia, they found that China's messages are generally more positive, with a limited wolf-warrior approach style aimed mostly toward Western political leaders. However, this does not mean Beijing avoids digital confrontation with ASEAN political leaders²⁹.

On the information dissemination stage, China's digital diplomacy share similar content to ROK's which focuses on the dissemination of past official meetings' records and highlighting top policy related to ASEAN. China's trade and investment link to ASEAN is often highlighted along with a heavy emphasis on China's portrayal as a supportive partner. China's digital diplomacy has not allowed space for the generation of conversation as its style is more conservative. Diplomats are forwarding messages externally only from state media to ensure information is streamlined³⁰.

b. South Korea Digital Diplomacy: A Domestic Tool

Further scrutiny on Twitter domestic conversation reveals that although NSP is a foreign strategy toward ASEAN countries, the term 'NSP' is used for domestic political objectives. Most tweets related to NSP are coming from President Moon, the Executive Branch, and pro-Moon politicians from the Democratic Party. No tweets from conservative politicians on NSP are present. The main theme of their tweets is to advertise and tout the outcome of NSP as a major achievement by the Moon administration. As such they have largely targeted the domestic audience rather than the ASEAN audience.

The following tweets from non-state actors show how ordinary people have taken part in forming the digitized dialogue on NSP at a domestic level. Most tweets from private accounts on Twitter are connecting NSP and its accomplishments to President Moon. Adherents of the Democratic Party in ROK show great interest in NSP seeing it as one of the most conspicuous achievements by President Moon in terms of foreign policy and affairs. Endorsement is openly given through social media platform from not only high level politicians but ordinary citizens. For example, the former president, Roh Moo-Hyun compliments Moon Jae-In as a man with insight and prescience and states that the ROK-ASEAN relationship has been reinforced thanks to President Moon's NSP.

"노무현의 인물평, "문재인은 통찰력과 혜안이 있다." 무한한 성장 가능성의 아세안이 신뢰하는 문재인인 신남방정책이 이룬 성과. 한-아세안..평화.번영.동반자 관계" 선언 |" (@copperdie, Nov 26 2019 RT 296)

²⁷ Zhiqun Zhu, "Interpreting China's 'Wolf-Warrior Diplomacy,'" May 15, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/05/interpreting-chinas-wolf-warrior-diplomacy/>.

²⁸ Fangyuan Huo and Richard Maude, "Chinese Digital Diplomacy in Southeast Asia During the Pandemic - Asia Society Policy Institute," Southeast Asia and COVID-19 - Asia Society Policy Institute, September 21, 2021, <https://southeastasiacovid.asiasociety.org/chinese-digital-diplomacy-southeast-asia-pandemic/>.

²⁹ See Yen Nee Lee, "China Urges 'basic Manners' after Philippine Foreign Secretary Slams Beijing in Blunt Tweet," CNBC, May 5, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/05/05/beijing-urges-basic-manners-after-philippines-blunt-south-china-sea-tweet.html>; Raissa Robles, "Philippine Diplomat Sorry for China Rant, Told Only Duterte Can Curse," South China Morning Post, May 4, 2021, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3132259/philippine-diplomat-says-sorry-tweet-rant-against-china-told>.

³⁰ Alden and Chan, "Twitter and Digital Diplomacy : China and COVID-19."

[Roh Moo-hyun's character review, "Moon Jae-in has insight and insight." The achievements of Moon Jae-in's New Southern Policy, which ASEAN trusts with unlimited growth potential. Korea-ASEAN Declaration of "Peace, Prosperity and Partnership"]

"이래서 신남방정책 신북방정책 펼치고 문프와 이낙연 총리가 여러나라 다니신 건지... 미국중국 의존도 낮추려고 노력한 결과가 이렇게 확실하게 나타나는구나. 진짜 문재인 정부 최고야ㄷㄷ" (@hydrangea3m, Nov 7 2021, 339 RT)

[I wonder if this is why Moon and Prime Minister Lee Nak-Yeon went to various countries after implementing the New Northern Policy and the New Southern Policy... The Moon Jae-in government is really the best ㄷㄷ"]

NSP is heralded because of its potential to reduce ROK's dependency on great power struggles as diversifying ROK's cooperation partners at an international level will guarantee ROK with more political flexibility and leverage amid the intensifying US-Sino competition. This argument is shared widely by the pro-Moon tweets highlighting NSP as president's Moon achievement to strengthen ROK positions.

"사드 중국눈치뻘에 철수시키네 그랬지? 대통령님이 신남방 정책을 왜 펼쳤겠냐? 무역하고 소통할 대상이 다양해질수록 중국에 대한 협상력이 올라간다는 거 몰라? 중국에 아쉬운 소리 할 필요가 줄어들니까. 그건 북한에 대해서도 마찬가지고. 한국이 무장수준을 높일수록 북한의 협상력은 줄어듦. twitter.com/TheBlueHouseKR..." (@술렁술렁술개비, 11 Feb 2022, RT 16)

["THAAD was withdrawn because of China's ignorance, wasn't it? Why did the President pursue the New Southern Policy? Don't you know that the more diversified the target of trade and communication, the stronger the bargaining power with China? Because there is less need to say sorry to China. The same goes for North Korea. North Korea's negotiating power decreases as South Korea raises the level of its armed forces. twitter.com/TheBlueHouseKR... "]

Within the domestic conversation on Tweeter, NSP is highlighted as the primary foreign policy to tally win against the conservative party and pave the way to support the incumbent from Democratic Party in further election. The direct mention to Lee Nak-Yeon and Kang Kyung-Hwa, the two main figures from the Moon administration, each of which served as a prime minister and then-Minister of Foreign Affairs or toward Presidential candidate for the 2022 election, Lee Jae-Myung, illustrates NSP as a tool of domestic politics.

"문프가 확립해 놓은 다자외교, 신남방정책과 신북방정책을 가장 잘 이해할 수 있는 사람은 현재 민주당에서 이낙연과 강경화 외에는 존재하지 않을 거야. 서로의 이해관계를 조율할 수 있어야 하고, 고압적이지 않아야 한다고. 한국이 돈이 있다고 줄부처럼 행세하면 망해." (@SisterDee0, Sep 11 2021 RT 320)

[There is no one in the current Democratic Party who can best understand the multilateral diplomacy, New Southern Policy, and New Northern Policy established by Munp except Lee Nak-Yeon and Kang Kyung-Wha. They should be able to

reconcile their interests and not be overbearing. If Korea pretends to be a pawn because it has money, it will be ruined.]

"#문재인 정부 신남방 정책 효과!! #이재명 만이 이어갈수 있다!!
<https://t.co/7ezMoSvLwm>" (@Y.KIM, 15 Feb 2022, ret 79)
["The effect of the #MoonJae-in government's New Southern Policy!! #Only Jaemyung Lee can continue]

From the above reading, one can conclude that NSP has become a very 'partisan' issue in ROK, thus Twitter has been used as a political tool to compete with the opposing party.

c. South Korea Digital Diplomacy: Analyses of Three Dimensions

Research on Digital Diplomacy conducted by ROK government for domestic audiences reveals several caveats. Twitplomacy is apparent within the ROK government's effort to engage with domestic audiences. MOFA Korea uses its official Twitter account @mofa_kr, the Blue House uses Twitter account @TheBlueHouseKR, and President Moon Jae-in's personal official Twitter account @Moonriver365. All Twitter accounts are delivered in Korean language, re-emphasizing their target audiences as domestic. Although MOFA and the Blue House have their English equivalents, @MOFAkr_eng, and @TheBlueHouseENG, they have significantly less influence than those in Korean with a smaller number of retweets and likes on average. In terms of both content depth and frequency, their English accounts were also highly limited compared to the Korean ones (Roberston, 2017). The landscape of digital diplomacy initiatives done towards ASEAN adopts a varied SNS platforms. Foremost, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are chosen as the official platform. Twitter is used only in 5 out of 10 AMS, namely Indonesia @korembindonesia, Singapore @KoreaEmbassySG, The Philippines @KoEmPhilippines, Vietnam @koremb_vietnam, and Thailand @koreaembthai. All Twitter accounts utilize English as the main language. For the rest of AMS, Malaysia, Cambodia, Brunei, Laos, and Myanmar, prefer the use of Facebook as its SNS platform. Out of four Korean Cultural Centres that are located in Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Thailand, only two utilize Twitter as their main digital diplomacy platform, Indonesia @KCC_Indonesia, and The Philippines @KCCPHIL. Twitter's official account of KCC Indonesia uses Bahasa Indonesia as its main language of engagements meanwhile KCC Philippines utilizes English as its main language. Additionally, the ROK Mission to ASEAN adopts Twitter as its main digital diplomacy platform. English as the main language signifies the aim to reach wider foreign audiences.

The information-dissemination dimension shows that Twitter post done by the ROK government towards its domestic audiences is far exceeded in number in comparison to the amount of Twitter post done towards AMS's foreign public audiences. @mofa_kr publishes 50 tweets from the year NSP launched in 2101 until 2021, showing a consistent effort in actively projecting the policy. It even adopted the hashtag of #신남방정책. While @TheBlueHouseKR publishes 23 tweets from middle 2020 - 2021. @Moonriver365 publishes 11 tweets from middle 2018 – early 2021.

Applying Bjola's three dimensions in analyzing ROK's digital diplomacy toward AMS to be challenging due to the varied engagement level in the utilization of Twitter strategy. Out of the 5 AMS who use Twitter, only 1 embassy ROK Embassy to Indonesia ever mentioned NSP during the three-year (2017 – 2021) period. The tweet itself did not refer to NSP as their focus but framed on the issue of COVID-19 aid by ROK government to Indonesia as part of the NSP framework. The first stage of information-dissemination is argued very low within ROK bilateral engagement strategy as the insufficient number of tweets fails to share information about NSP.

ROK Mission tweets within the framework of NSP fare better in the information-dissemination stage. The message introduces NSP with references to documents and events conducted in cooperation with state and non-state actors. Coverage on ambassadorial meetings on NSP, public socialization on topics related to NSP, and academic discussion involving prominent research centers and universities are delivered to share knowledge about ASEAN and create framing on the importance of ROK-ASEAN collaboration. In comparison to ROK bilateral engagements with AMS members, ROK mission to ASEAN exhibits continued efforts in promoting NSP through twitplomacy strategies.

ROK government engagement towards its domestic audience on NSP is strong. The first stage is dominating in which the tweets generally are focusing more on the information dissemination stage. The agenda-setting was highlighted on the benefits of NSP, especially by President Moon Jae-in's attempt to disseminate his administration achievements and gain domestic public support.

The presence-expansion stage looks at how ROK inserts and re-inserts its presence within the digital diplomacy narrative. A similar pattern can be concluded that domestic engagements are far better than external engagements. Within ROK bilateral engagements with Indonesia, the reference to NSP as the background of COVID-19 aid shows an extent of the presence-expansion stage. ROK re-inserts its presence and its genuine interest to cooperate amidst the pandemic. The highlight on COVID-19 assistances has been played by the ROK government to promote itself as a reliable friend through various narratives buildings. However, this stage is not supported by a solid information-distribution stage due to their insufficient corresponding tweets. It implies that despite efforts to (re)insert ROK presence in ASEAN, there is a lack of communication strategy in the utilization of Twitter as part of ROK digital diplomacy.

The ROK Mission's twitplomacy approach to the regional block relies heavily on the information-dissemination stage. Far way better than the ROK embassy's bilateral engagements, ROK mission has been continuously combining Bjola's first and second stage in their Twitter posts. This combination takes place, especially in Twitter posts that refer to public outreach activities such as academic discussion, public presentation, and policy discussion. However, the presence expansion takes place not within the Twitter platform, instead, the platform only serves as a gateway for ROK to re-insert its presence within the actual discussion activities.

Within the context of the domestic audience, Korea MOFA's second stage analysis argued that there is no need for ROK to re-insert its presence towards its domestic audiences. However, Korea MOFA utilizes this stage to communicate government efforts to (re)insert its presence in AMS to gain domestic public support. The Twitter posts highlight achievements and benefits of NSP policy with depiction on the successful milieu of economic relationships such as Comprehensive Economic Partnership (CEPA) and increased Tourism exchanges.

The conversation-generating looks at what kind of engagement take place regarding the NSP narrative. As NPD argues that there is a transition from one-way to two-way communication in public engagement. This section identifies whether twitplomacy is engaged mostly in monologue or dialogue. As previously argued bilateral engagement was disappointingly limited. Within the single tweet from the ROK embassy to Indonesia a reference towards NSP can be found, yet it is secondary in nature. COVID-19 aid was the main message. It gained traction where dialogue take place as a result of the Indonesian public's positive response to the COVID-19 aid.

Within ROK mission's post on public outreach activities, not only ROK government embarks on a monologue-led sharing information model, but it also opens the possibility for dialogue. Conversation generation is viable and fares better in comparison to Korean embassy Twitter. However, it is still low with the maximum retweet only reaching 10 posts. On the other hand, the president's private account appeared to be more actively engaged in bilateral communication with ASEAN leaders. Still, most of the dialogue was between two heads of governments including South

Korea, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Brunei. In this sense, President Moon's digital diplomacy in Twitter was used as a supplementary means for summit diplomacy, not for public diplomacy.

The conversation-generating in South Korea's twitplomacy was largely focused on its population rather than foreign audiences. The highest traction of dialogue comes from domestic audiences engagements. Tweeting by Korea MOFA attracts 16-699 retweets. This number is on par with the Blue House tweets reaching 180-650 retweets. However, very high traction comes from President Moon Jae-in's personal Twitter reaching 970-3600 retweets.

Additional findings reveal that the utilization of NSP hashtags is not adopted comprehensively. Hashtag (#) is one strong feature provided by Twitter to ensure access toward wider audiences and at the same time allow to monitor and grasp public opinion rapidly sometimes in real-time. Therefore by utilizing hashtags, a conversation in the digital media has more opportunity to be seen due to its 'tagging' function. This is particularly important on all three stages Bjola mentioned. Hashtag helps not only to disseminate information by allowing people to get access to more content despite the limited characters allowed by the Twitter platform (280 characters). But more importantly, hashtag boosts the presence expansion by tagging it into a wider conversation. In a way hashtags serve as a brand or identifier of a certain message and in return will trigger the generation of conversation surrounding the hashtag itself. Within the domestic message, hashtag #신남방정책 can be found embedded in the Twitter posts. However, in foreign audiences' engagement, related hashtag on NSP is yet to be found. Observation shows that the utilization of twitplomacy is not widely shared on two levels. The level of sender shows a different view between the ROK embassy and ROK mission to ASEAN on the importance of digital diplomacy. The lack of a centralized digital diplomacy strategy left a vacuum at the end level on how to engage with foreign publics. It is usually left out to individual diplomats' preferences and their personal technological capacity to respond to this increased need for digital diplomacy. As a result, some embassies can take up the role to create engaging dialogue and fill the void while the others retain their status quo on using Twitter as a monologue platform.

The second level is from AMS's point of view. The decision to utilize varied SNS platforms as engagement channels can be both advantages and disadvantages. Advantages because the choice, only if carefully planned and considered, reflects the digital communication trend of the foreign public in which the embassy resides. This will allow the engagement to take form on the same platform. The disadvantage occurs when the choice of platform has not been confirmed accordingly to the public's trend. This different channel gap blocked information transfer failing digital diplomacy to reach the foreign public attention. Nevertheless, the lack of a centralized public diplomacy strategy affects the two levels negatively; from ambiguity on technical issues such as a preferred platform to content issues such as agenda framing and subsequent goals to be achieved.

The utilization of 'language of delivery' is in line with aimed target audiences. The use of Korean by the ROK government is fitting to engage domestic audiences. The use of English for engagement in Southeast Asia by ROK mission is suitable on the basis that it is aimed at all AMS, not toward a specific country. However, the use of English in Korean embassy twitter implies two things. First, English is a lingua franca that can be understood by the general public. Therefore ROK embassy tries to engage with interested wider audiences aside from in-country Korean nationals and the foreign public. Second, the use of English also means exclusivity. Since not all AMS public obtain English competencies, ROK posts are only able to be consumed by the specific, mostly elite and educated public.

Conclusion

This research provides the digital diplomacy map of South Korea's digital diplomacy toward ASEAN. Within ROK's digital diplomacy strategy on the two levels of outreach, the finding shows that internal engagement is better than external engagement. Yet, further scrutiny shows that domestic engagement has a different aim compared to external engagement, in which NSP is used as a political tool. In lieu of proactive reciprocal communication with their target audiences, they have focused on simply disseminating relevant information as to ASEAN or NSP. As a result, shown in this research, the digital diplomacy of South Korea lingers largely in the Bijola's first dimension—information dissemination—toward the domestic audience. ROK's lack of a strategic plan for digital public diplomacy has been already pointed out by several media and researchers. Despite its leading role in technological innovation and digital resources and resources, South Korea failed to reach its full potential for digital diplomacy. One of the compelling reasons for South Korea lagging in terms of digital diplomacy is that the digital diplomacy channels—Twitter in this case—of South Korea conveys information in Korean, blocking foreign audiences from accessing the channels in the first place. The other contributing factor for this is the hesitancy for adoption and innovation within the core agencies of digital diplomacy. For now, Seoul is faced with the challenge of establishing effective communication with foreign audiences through its digital diplomacy.

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