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Master's Thesis of International Studies

**The New Southern Policy: An Analysis
of Thailand's Perspective**

신남방정책 : 태국의 관점 분석

August 2022

Graduate School of International Studies

Seoul National University

International Cooperation Major

Kanticha Bunvanit

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Examiner Professor Oh Yoon Ah

Submitting a master's thesis of International Cooperation

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Abstract

The New Southern Policy: An Analysis of Thailand's Perspective

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The New Southern Policy (NSP) refers to the Republic of Korea's foreign policy toward ASEAN and its member states under the initiative of President Moon Jae-in's administration. As Thailand is one of the NSP's target countries, this research aims to investigate Thailand's perspective regarding South Korea's engagement with Thailand through the NSP implementation under President Moon Jae-in's administration from 2017 to 2022 and to make an assessment of the two countries' cooperation progress under three pillars: "People," "Prosperity," and "Peace." This research was conducted using qualitative methods and descriptive analysis. The data collection relied on document-based research and in-depth interviews. The concept of national interest, developed by Charles O. Lerche, Jr. and Abdul A. Said, was used as the analytical framework to identify Thailand's national interests based on its foreign policy. Then, Thailand's foreign policy and its national interests were used to match with South Korea's NSP to examine how Thailand perceives the NSP. The findings reveal that four out of five measures of Thailand's foreign policy and South Korea's NSP share common national interests.

Therefore, they were able to cooperate with each other smoothly. Nonetheless, only one measure of Thailand's foreign policy and South Korea's NSP does not share a common national interest, but they still had some cooperation. Regarding the two countries' cooperation progress under the three pillars, the findings indicate that Thailand and South Korea made more progress in terms of input to enhance the cooperation in the economic domain under the Prosperity Pillar, while the socio-cultural cooperation and people-to-people exchange under the People Pillar made more progress in terms of the output from the outcome of the cooperation. The study concludes that, overall, Thailand has a positive perception toward the NSP.

Keywords: ASEAN, Foreign Policy, New Southern Policy, Southeast Asia, South Korea, Thailand

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List of Abbreviations

ACMECS	Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy
ACD	Asia Cooperation Dialogue
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
AKIIC	ASEAN-South Korea Industrial Innovation Center
AOIP	ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APSC	ASEAN Political-Security Community
ASCC	ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEM	Asia–Europe Meeting
BCG	Bio-Circular-Green Economy Model
BOI	Board of Investment of Thailand
CAAT	Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand
CLMV	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam
DPRK	Democratic People’s Republic of Korea
DSME	Daewoo Shipbuilding & Marine Engineering Co., Ltd.
EEC	Eastern Economic Corridor
EPS	Employment Permit System
EVs	Electric vehicles
HTMS	His Thai Majesty Ship
ICT	Information and Communications Technology

K-ETA	Korea Electronic Travel Authorization
KAI	Korea Aerospace Industry
KBS	Korean Broadcasting System
KEC	Korean Education Center
KIRIA	Korea Institute for Robot Industry Advancement
KOICA	Korea International Cooperation Agency
KOTCOM	Korea-Thailand Committee on Economic Cooperation
KOTRA	Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency
KTO	Korea Tourism Organisation
NAPCI	Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative
NSP	New Southern Policy
NSPP	New Southern Policy Plus
NSTDA	National Science and Technology Development Agency
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSMEs	Micro, small and mid-size enterprises
MPAC	Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity
OBEC	Office of the Basic Education Commission
PPP	Public-private partnerships
ROK	Republic of Korea
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEP	Sufficiency Economy Philosophy
SMEs	Small and mid-size enterprises
SOM	Senior Officials' Meeting

TAT	Tourism Authority of Thailand
THAAD	Terminal High Altitude Area Defense
TICA	Thailand International Cooperation Agency
TOPIK	Test of Proficiency in Korean
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education Training
WHO	World Health Organization
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
U.S.	United States
4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Background

The Republic of Korea (ROK, hereafter South Korea) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) established formal relations in 1989 when South Korea was granted the status of ASEAN's Sectoral Dialogue Partner and was subsequently elevated to Full Dialogue Partner in 1991 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021). From former President Roh Tae-woo's administration to former President Park Geun-hye's administration, South Korea's foreign policy never directly targeted ASEAN and its member states before (Ong K. et al., 2021). Nonetheless, ASEAN–South Korea relations have remarkably grown due to the increase of South Korea's presence in this region by participating in ASEAN-led multilateral platforms, enhancing economic cooperation through trade and investment, and increasing the number of socio-cultural and people-to-people exchanges (Lee J., 2019). As such, the development that derived from these interactions made South Korea notice the importance of ASEAN to its national interest and that closer engagement was needed.

To achieve this goal, during the state visit to Indonesia on 9 November 2017, President Moon Jae-in (hereafter President Moon) officially launched the New Southern Policy (NSP), stating that it would be a new diplomatic initiative toward ASEAN with the aim of upgrading South Korea's relations with ASEAN and its member states (referred to as NSP target countries) to an equivalent level with the four major powers that surround the Korean Peninsula, namely: China,

Japan, Russia, and the United States (U.S.) (Sohn, 2017; Presidential Committee on New Southern Policy, n.d.). Thus, it can be concluded that the NSP is the first South Korean foreign policy that gives priority to ASEAN. The NSP is made up of three pillars (3Ps), including: “People,” “Prosperity,” and “Peace.” These are divided into sixteen policy tasks, serving to promote cooperation in the areas of socio-cultural and people-to-people exchanges, economics, political and security between South Korea and ASEAN (Presidential Committee on New Southern Policy, n.d.). The People Pillar is composed of two-way travel and cultural exchanges at the people-to-people level, human-capacity-building, strengthening public administrative capacity, improving the rights of the NSP target countries’ immigrants and migrant workers in South Korea, and improving quality of life in areas such as healthcare cooperation. The Prosperity Pillar focuses on trade, investment, infrastructure development, government support for South Korean small and mid-size enterprises (SMEs) to enter the NSP target countries’ markets, cooperation in fields related to the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), and other cooperation based on the needs of each partner country. The Peace Pillar concentrates on high-level exchanges; building peace in the Korean Peninsula; defense cooperation; nontraditional security issues covering terrorism as well as; cyber and maritime security threats; and emergency response to disputes, natural disasters, and climate change (ibid., 14–19).

There was a revision of the organization structure to support the implementation of the NSP by the South Korean government. On 28 August 2018, the Presidential Committee on New Southern Policy was established under the Presidential Commission on Policy Planning to ensure that the implementation of the NSP worked smoothly (Presidential Committee on New Southern Policy, n.d.).

Additionally, the ASEAN and Southeast Asian Affairs Bureau within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the ROK was promoted to the same level as the China and Japan Bureau, and the Mission of the ROK to ASEAN was also upgraded (Oh, 2020).

Since the NSP was made public, South Korea has been actively engaged with ASEAN and its member states at bilateral, regional, and subregional levels, as evidenced by the explicit increase in the number of summits and high-level exchanges, such as President Moon visiting to all ten ASEAN countries within two years while he was in office, which made him the first South Korean president to successfully undertake this mission (Hoang and Ong, 2020). The global situation, however, was abruptly disrupted by COVID-19, when the World Health Organization (WHO) declared this disease to be a pandemic in March 2020 (WHO, 2020). At the 21st ASEAN-ROK Summit in 2020, President Moon later announced the New Southern Policy Plus Strategy (NSPP) to reaffirm South Korea's commitment to reinforce cooperation with ASEAN, particularly the agenda to handle the immediate challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic (Moon, 2020). Under the NSPP, the new seven initiatives consist of public health cooperation, education and human resources development, cultural exchanges, trade and investment, infrastructure development, cooperation on future industries, and transnational cooperation (Presidential Committee on New Southern Policy, 2021). In response to the COVID-19 crisis, South Korea recently provided contributions to the ASEAN Response Fund to support ASEAN in combatting the COVID-19 pandemic as well as vaccine distribution to some ASEAN countries (Kim, 2021; Ko, 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the ROK, 2020; Pongkhao, 2021; Sangiam and Thadaphrom, 2021).

2. Purpose and Significance of the Study

This research aims to investigate Thailand's perspective regarding South Korea's engagement with Thailand through the NSP implementation under President Moon's administration from 2017 to 2022. Since the introduction of the NSP, studies on the NSP have gradually manifested, mostly written by South Korean scholars who have mainly introduced the NSP, explained the motivations behind why this policy is being implemented toward ASEAN, and elaborated on the policy's goals (see, e.g., Choe; 2021; Kang; 2020; Kim, 2021; Kwak, 2018; Lee J., 2019; Oh, 2020). Apart from that, the assessment of South Korea's engagement with ASEAN and its achievements through the NSP implementation were also widely mentioned (see, e.g., Kim, 2021; Kwak, 2020; Lee J., 2020; Lee S.H, 2021). It can be inferred that the NSP has attracted the attention of domestic academics; thus, previous studies have been dominated by South Korea's perspectives. On the contrary, only a small number of Southeast Asian scholars have conducted research on the NSP to represent Southeast Asia's perspective, which means that the studies from the perspective of each Southeast Asian country that were related to the NSP have still been limited (see, e.g., Chiang, 2020; Hoang and Ong, 2020; Hoo; 2021; Rabena; 2021). The given explanation proves that there is more room to explore in this area.

Thailand has maintained cordial ties with South Korea for more than six decades. Prior to the diplomatic establishment, the relations between South Korea and Thailand dated back to the Korean War period (1950–1953), as Thailand dispatched troops to join United Nations (UN) international forces to prevent the invasion by North Korean forces on 22 October 1950 (Ministry of Patriots and

Veterans Affairs of the Republic of Korea, 2010). Furthermore, Thailand, which has been heavily influenced by Korean culture for a long time, became the leading consumer of Korean products as Thai society has shown a positive view toward the Korean wave (Hallyu) despite the shifting of content over the years (Global Asia Blog, 2021).

In multilateral fora, Thailand was one of the founding fathers of ASEAN in 1967, along with Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore, with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration (Flores and Abad, n.d.). As a result, this country has witnessed all of the steps that ASEAN has taken until today, including pursuing an amicable connection with South Korea as one of its external partners from the beginning. Thailand, thus, has consistently engaged with South Korea through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms, as proven by the said evidence.

During former President Park Geun-hye's administration (2013–2017), three of South Korea's foreign policies were introduced, which were the Trust Building Process in the Korean Peninsula, the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI), and middle power diplomacy (Choi K. et al., 2014). As a result, South Korea gave priority to Northeast Asian countries and aimed to build its middle power status (ibid., 2–3). Nevertheless, Thailand–South Korea relations have been growing gradually. According to the Annual Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand (2013), South Korea has been perceived as one of Thailand's vital partners since it has been key driving force in the global economy. Two significant visits by Thai Prime Ministers to South Korea took place during former President Park Geun-hye's presidential term: (1) Miss Yingluck Shinawatra, former Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand, attended the presidential inauguration ceremony of former President Park Geun-hye

in 2013; and (2) Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-Cha (hereafter Prime Minister Prayut) attended the ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit on the 25th Anniversary of the ASEAN-ROK Dialogue Relations in 2014 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, 2013, 2014).

In addition, the following meetings were held to discuss various areas of cooperation: (1) the meeting between Mr. Sihanak Phuangketkeow, former Permanent Secretary, acting for the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, and H.E. Mr. Yun Byung-Se, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the ROK, at the 4th Mekong-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Seoul, South Korea, in 2014; (2) the bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Prayut and former President Park Geun-hye at the ASEAN Summit in Nay Phi Taw, Myanmar, in 2014; (3) the bilateral meeting between H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, and H.E. Mr. Yun Byung-se, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the ROK, at the UN General Assembly in New York, U.S., in 2015; (4) the bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Prayut and H.E. Mr. Hwang Kyo-ahn, former Prime Minister of the ROK, at the 2nd Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) in Bangkok, Thailand, in 2016; and (5) the 1st Korea-Thailand Committee on Economic Cooperation (KOTCOM), which was co-hosted by Mr. Somkid Jatusripitak, former Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand and Mr. Yoo Il-ho, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Finance of the ROK in Seoul, South Korea, in 2016 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, 2013–2017; Royal Thai Embassy in Seoul, 2016).

On the other hand, the NSP was adopted as South Korea's foreign policy directly toward ASEAN and its member states during President Moon's administration. This means that South Korea has been paying more attention to this

region than it did during the previous administration, and it is hoped that this policy will lead to more cooperation. Since Thailand is one of the NSP's target countries and has a long history of engagement with South Korea, a study on the NSP implementation from Thailand's perspective indeed needs to be conducted.

For the reasons mentioned above, Thailand is suitable to be selected as the case study for South Korea's NSP implementation. In addition, no studies have been conducted to reflect Thailand's perspective on the NSP nor to make an assessment of the progress of cooperation between the two countries since the NSP was implemented. As a result, the purpose of this study is to fill a gap in the literature and contribute new knowledge to NSP studies.

3. Research Design

This research is conducted with the aim of answering the following questions:

1. How does Thailand perceive South Korea's New Southern Policy, which has been implemented under President Moon Jae-in's administration since 2017?
2. From Thailand's perspective, which area of cooperation between Thailand and South Korea has made the most tangible progress during the period of the NSP implementation?

Addressing the first research question, this research intends to examine how Thailand perceives the NSP. To measure Thailand's response to the NSP, the matching of Thailand's foreign policy and South Korea's NSP as well as their common national interests was used. Concerning the second research question, the

progress of cooperation in each pillar in 2017–2022 was measured by the dynamic of activities that have been done in each area of cooperation by looking at progress in terms of the input to enhance the cooperation and progress in terms of the output from the outcome of the cooperation.

The scope of this research covers the period of the NSP implementation during President Moon’s administration, starting on 9 November 2017, the first day of the NSP introduction, and going until 9 May 2022, the end of President Moon’s presidential term. This research was conducted with qualitative methods, and the data collection relied upon primary and secondary sources. The primary data was obtained from Thailand and South Korea’s official documents, publications issued by the relevant authorities, and speeches and statements delivered by officials on several occasions. Meanwhile, the secondary data was found in textbooks, journals, articles, and news from a variety of media sources that included content relevant to the NSP and NSPP. Besides that, in-depth interviews were also conducted with experts including the Advertising Director of the Korean Association of Thai Studies and the official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand to retrieve information about the relationship between Thailand and South Korea under bilateral, regional, and subregional frameworks. To answer the research questions mentioned above, the author adopted descriptive analysis as a method to analyze the collected data and used the concept of national interest, proposed by Charles O. Lerche, Jr. and Abdul A. Said, as the analytical framework to identify Thailand’s national interests based on its foreign policy. After that, matching between Thailand’s foreign policy and South Korea’s NSP was conducted to examine how Thailand perceives the NSP. It is anticipated that when the two countries share common national interests, Thailand will respond to the

NSP and be willing to engage with South Korea to strengthen their cooperation for mutual benefits. Finally, regarding their cooperation under the NSP's 3Ps, political-security cooperation under the Peace Pillar, economic cooperation under the Prosperity Pillar, and socio-cultural and people-to-people cooperation under the People Pillar were assessed to determine which area of cooperation has made the most tangible progress.

This research can be divided into four chapters as follows: The first chapter is an introduction, which includes the background of the study relating to the NSP and its evolution, the purpose and significance of the study, and the research design. The second chapter exhibits past literature reviews on the definitions and the concepts of national interest from various scholars, which will be discussed before being applied as the analytical framework. Next, the application of the analytical framework to identify Thailand's national interests based on its foreign policy will be discussed. The third chapter analyzes Thailand's reception toward the NSP by matching Thailand's foreign policy with South Korea's NSP. An assessment of Thailand–South Korea's cooperation progress will be given after the analysis process. In the fourth chapter, the conclusion discusses the findings and implications and the future direction of Thailand–South Korea relations.

II. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

1. Definition of National Interest

This research uses the matching of national interests as the analytical framework. In doing so, the literature review will first discuss the definition of “national interest” to fully explain the meaning of this word that is often used in the field of international relations. Numerous scholars have already defined this term. Four definitions are given as follows: (1) according to Morgenthau (1952, 244), “national interest” has this definition: “the survival of a political unit, such as a nation, in its identity is the irreducible minimum, the necessary element of its interests vis-a-vis other units.” (2) Another definition was given by Osgood (1964, 4), who argues that “national interests is understood to mean a state of affairs valued solely for its benefit to the nation. The motive of national egoism, which leads men to seek this end, is marked by the disposition to concern oneself with the welfare of one’s own nation; it is self-love transferred to the national group.” (3) Nuechterlein (1976, 247) asserts that this term means “perceived needs and desires of one sovereign state in relation to other sovereign states comprising the external environment.” (4) Lerche and Said (1964, 6) define this term as “the general, long-term, and continuing purpose which the states, the nations, and the government all see themselves as serving.”

The definitions given by each scholar might be slightly different, yet it can be generally inferred that national interest is an essential element for one country to achieve its national goals. Moreover, national interests have an influence on one

country's foreign policy formulation, which impacts its interaction with other states at the international level. In this case, Lerche and Said's definition of "national interest" is used for this research because it is seen as the shared purpose that both Thailand and South Korea aspire to achieve.

2. Literature Review on the Concept of National Interest

The interpretation of the meaning of national interest can differ in each nation depending on diverse factors such as the power of the state, its government system, its social structure, the degree of its dependence on other states, and so on (Frankel, 1963, 56). These differences make it difficult for one state to have a comprehensive understanding of the national interests of other states (ibid.). To overcome this barrier, scholars devised the concept of national interest, which allows all states to grasp the common ground. The following section elaborates on the literature of the existing concepts of national interest introduced by several scholars. Then, the author applied the most comprehensive concept to identify and construct the list of Thailand's national interests. Afterward, the constructed list was used to match common national interests between Thailand and South Korea based on Thailand's perspective.

Morgenthau conceptualizes national interests into four categories. The first category is separated into vital and secondary interests based on the importance of national interests. The second category is divided into temporary and permanent interests based on the duration. The third category is broken into specific and general interests based on the specificity, and the last category is split into complementary and conflicting interests based on compatibility (Alfred, 2013).

Reynolds (1980, 51–53) is of the opinion that the security, welfare, and preservation or promotion of values are key national interests since he saw these three factors as the basic goals that influence foreign policy-making. On security, he says that the foreign policies of all states are always influenced by security since it is a perennial issue. On welfare, he asserts that no state is self-sufficient as long as there are deficiencies in materials, food, markets, capital, or technical skills. Then, the states generally try to make up for these shortfalls by trying to use their foreign policy to maximize welfare. Finally, in terms of the preservation or promotion of values, he argues that the values of some states may encourage decision-makers to strive to keep things as they are.

Holsti (1995, 83–114) says that national interests can be divided into five key elements. The first element is security. To enhance security, there are six common security policies for reducing threats, which are isolation, self-reliance, neutrality and nonalignment, alliance strategies, strains in alliances, and contracting out. The second element is related to autonomy. The third element is welfare. Foreign trade strategies for maximizing wealth are composed of autarky, mercantilism, free trade, economic coalitions, cartels, regional free trade agreements, and the new protectionism. The fourth element is status and prestige, which can be earned through various means such as military prowess and might, science and technology, industrialization, and sports. The last element is related to other purposes and goals such as protection of ethnic, ideological, or religious colleagues and the dream of world reorganization.

In addition to that, Holsti (1977, 145–159) classifies the range of objectives of foreign policy into three ranges. The short-range objectives are related to core values and interests that nations must be preserving at all times.

People are willing to make sacrifices for these types of goals as they are regarded as the most important things for their states. Examples of core values and interests are self-preservation, defense of strategically vital areas, and ethnic, religious, or linguistic unity. The middle-range objectives can be such that the states would place a demand on others. Given the wide range of middle-range objectives, they would, therefore, be divided into three subcategories: the need to pursue social welfare and economic development through international action, the aspiration to increase the state's prestige, and the aim for self-extension or imperialism through various forms. The state's long-term objectives rarely have a definite time limit, and the state imposes universal demand. These objectives are, for example, visions concerning the ultimate political or ideological organization of the international system.

Phanuphong (1987, 24–28) believes that national interest is the core element of foreign policy formulation and implementation, which he classifies into four categories: First, self-preservation refers to state survival, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Second, national security means the condition of being safe and free from threats. Third, the nation's prosperity means the country's development, both in material and non-material terms. The fourth element is national prestige. He further adds that the national interest can be broken down into three groups: short-term, medium-term, and long-term. He says that, to figure out which national interests are the most important ones, it is important to consider three things, which are priority, conflicting interests, and urgency.

According to Lerche and Said (1964, 9–12), states seek the same kind of satisfaction, or what are known as common objectives of states. They divide the objectives pursued by any foreign policy into six categories, and each state defines

its purpose within each category in terms that suit its dominant interest. First, self-preservation, which refers to the state's collective entity, people, and territorial manifestations, is a universal goal of state action. A state's primary goal in foreign policy is to maximize its prospects of survival in the world, which is the highest and most basic goal. Security is the second most important goal after self-preservation. Because the structure of the international political system is such that no state's existence is guaranteed, a state should then establish its relations with the other states in the world to offer itself the best possible chance of survival. In other words, it is known as a search for security. Third on the list of states' common objectives is what is referred to as well-being. The state attempts to enhance the living conditions of its people through the economy, which can be measured by the following indicators: macro-economic concepts, gross national product, and the rate of economic growth. Prestige is the fourth common objective. To achieve this objective, states generally behave in a way to appear impressive to other states to gain respect and status concessions from them. The fifth common objective is to advance and/or safeguard ideology. This objective has a lesser degree of pervasiveness yet is still critical to some states. The last common objective is power. Every state seeks to accumulate power as much as possible. Thus, increasing power is a major objective of policy.

It is clear from the literature reviews above that each scholar classifies concepts of national interest in different ways based on their own personal views. Morgenthau proposes a way to define the concept of national interest by using the significance of national interests, duration, specificity, and compatibility as the dividing factors. Thus, his concept of national interest is better suited for identifying the national interest in a country's case study. Holsti and Phanuphong

suggest another way to conceptualize the concept of national interest by employing a range of foreign policy objectives, which is helpful for studying the national interest in a country's case study as well. Lastly, Reynolds, Holsti, Phanuphong, and Lerche and Said define the concept of the national interest by dividing national interests into different subcategories. Reynolds only provides three subcategories, while Holsti proposes five subcategories and Phanuphong proposes four subcategories, respectively. After reviewing their literature, it was found that the content of their subcategories could not be covered enough to identify Thailand's national interests and the match between Thailand's foreign policy and South Korea's NSP. In contrast, Lerche and Said divide them into six subcategories, which provide the most comprehensive categories that enable this research to completely identify Thailand's national interests. Moreover, their subcategories are more relevant for matching between Thailand's foreign policy and South Korea's NSP to find their common national interests. Therefore, the concept of national interest provided by Lerche and Said was adopted as the main analytical framework of this research.

3. Matching Thailand's Foreign Policy and Its National Interests with South Korea

According to the Policy Statement of the Councils of Ministers, delivered by Prime Minister Prayut on 25 July 2019, the government intended to promote Thailand's role on the global stage by taking the opportunity to be the ASEAN Chairmanship in 2019 and playing a leading role in developing and fostering cooperation among countries to achieve sustainable development (Secretariat of the

Cabinet, 2019). Thus, the government of Thailand designated its current foreign policy to be composed of five measures (see **Appendix 1**). In this section, the gist of each measure is briefly summarized first. After that, the concept of national interest from Lerche and Said was applied to identify Thailand's national interests as follows:

1. Playing a constructive role in the region and the global stage

Thailand seeks to accomplish this goal through four methods: conducting diplomatic relations with other countries and the international community, emphasizing the importance of strategic development partnerships, playing a constructive role on the global stage, and contributing its effort to realize the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This could be considered that Thailand aspires to increase its interaction with other countries and the international community to fulfill three objectives: self-preservation, prestige, and power, so that the country could survive in the international system smoothly while gaining more reputation and prestige from playing constructive roles and obtaining more power at the same time.

2. Strengthening ASEAN solidarity

As ASEAN Chairman, Thailand sets the goal of strengthening ASEAN solidarity in three aspects, including political, economic, and socio-cultural. On top of that, Thailand strongly encourages the creation of concrete cooperation among ASEAN member states and between ASEAN and its Dialogue Partners to bring about sustainable development, as indicated in its Chairmanship's main theme of "Advancing Partnership for Sustainability," which enhances ASEAN centrality in

support of sustainable peace and progress in the region. Under this measure, it can be inferred that Thailand is looking for two objectives: prestige and power. Being the ASEAN Chairman allows Thailand to show its capability in coordinating with ASEAN members as well as ASEAN's Dialogue Partners. This could be counted as a golden chance for Thailand to be accepted by others to gain more prestige and power in the ASEAN community.

3. Promoting economic and cultural cooperation

Thailand promotes economic and cultural relations through various cooperation frameworks with the aim of opening up opportunities in trade and investment, knowledge, and innovation with countries that have potential and expertise from various parts of the world. Additionally, Thailand supports Thai entrepreneurs with expanding their businesses in areas where they have potential. In terms of culture, Thailand enhances cultural cooperation to acquire broader recognition. The third measure reflects that well-being is regarded as another essential objective as Thailand searches for economic opportunity both at home and abroad. In the same way, it could be said that Thailand strives to build its reputation and prestige through cultural cooperation.

4. Enhancing international cooperation in the area of security

Thailand attaches importance to enhancing international cooperation in the areas of security to tackle non-traditional threats and other transnational issues that affect the Thai people's livelihoods and human security. Thus, the fourth measure can be interpreted as meaning that Thailand is also concerned about the objective of security.

5. Engaging in proactive diplomacy for the people.

Finally, Thailand advocates the use of proactive diplomacy to preserve the interests of Thai people living abroad and promote the role of Thai communities in upholding Thai interests abroad. The final measure could be linked to the objective of self-preservation because it is related to people, despite the fact that these Thai nationals live outside the kingdom.

There are two reasons why Thailand's foreign policy should be matched with South Korea's NSP. First, it is regarded as Thailand's official current foreign policy, which indicates the priority that Thailand is trying to pursue to achieve its national interests. Therefore, it is appropriate to match the current foreign policies of these two countries together. Secondly, Thailand's foreign policy can be used as Thailand's collective perspective because it was designated by the Royal Thai Government. In this regard, the five measures mentioned above were used for matching with South Korea's NSP in Chapter 3.

III. THAILAND'S RECEPTION OF THE NEW SOUTHERN POLICY

In this chapter, Thailand's foreign policy and its national interests, as mentioned in Chapter 2, were used to match with South Korea's NSP to examine how Thailand perceives the NSP. The data on Thailand and South Korea's cooperation was collected from official documents, publications issued by the relevant authorities, speeches and statements delivered by officials, interviews, and news reports. The data was used for the analysis of Thailand's reception of the NSP and for the assessment of the cooperation progress between Thailand and South Korea under the three pillars.

1. Thailand's Reception of the New Southern Policy

In the previous chapter, Thailand's national interests were already identified through its foreign policy. In this section, each measure is matched up with South Korea's NSP. **Table 1** illustrates the matching between Thailand's foreign policy and South Korea's NSP and their common national interests.

Table 1. Common National Interests between Thailand and South Korea

No.	Thailand’s Current Foreign Policy	South Korea’s NSP	Common National Interest (s)
1.	Playing a constructive role in the region and on the global stage	NSP Peace Pillar Task 12: Increasing the number of summits and high-level exchanges (Actively engaging in summit diplomacy)	- Self-preservation - Prestige - Power
2.	Strengthening ASEAN solidarity	NSP Peace Pillar Task 12: Increasing the number of summits and high-level exchanges (Hosting the 2019 ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit and the inaugural Mekong-ROK Summit)	- Prestige - Power
3.	Promoting economic and cultural relations	NSP Prosperity Pillar Task 10: Enhancing the capacity for innovative growth through cooperation in “smart” technology and new industries (Creating new business opportunities in the NSP target countries)	- Well-being (for economic cooperation) - Prestige (for cultural cooperation)

Table 1. (continued)

No.	Thailand's Current Foreign Policy	South Korea's NSP	Common National Interest (s)
		<p>NSPP</p> <p>Initiative 4: Sustainable Economy, together (Building the foundation of mutually beneficial and sustainable trade and investment)</p> <p>NSP</p> <p>People Pillar</p> <p>Task 2: Expanding two-way cultural exchanges (Intensifying content exchanges with ASEAN member states and expanding Korean language education)</p> <p>NSPP</p> <p>Initiative 3: Gaining a deeper mutual understanding through culture (Promoting two-way cultural exchanges)</p>	

Table 1. (continued)

No.	Thailand's Current Foreign Policy	South Korea's NSP	Common National Interest (s)
4.	Enhancing international cooperation in the area of security	NSPP Initiative 1: Combatting COVID-19 and beyond (Comprehensive public health cooperation in the post-COVID-19 era)	- Security (for health cooperation)
5.	Engaging in proactive diplomacy for the people	NSP People Pillar Task 5: Advancing the rights of immigrants and migrant workers through enhanced protection	- Not completely aligned but yields benefit to both sides

Source: Author's compilation

The first measure, according to Lerche and Said's framework, shows that Thailand is concerned about self-preservation, prestige, and power. These objectives push Thailand to play a constructive role in the region and on the global stage. In other words, Thailand wishes to exist in the eyes of the international community. Therefore, the country tries to have as much interaction with others as possible to make sure that it can survive in the international system, being accepted by other countries so that it can accumulate more power. In the same way, South Korea also seeks similar objectives. Through the NSP, engaging with Thailand allows South Korea to deepen its bilateral relations to pursue the self-preservation objective, which is South Korea's desire to be more independent and less dependent on its major power partners. In this way, South Korea not only gains more acceptance from the Thai side but also increases its power in the Southeast

Asian region, including Thailand. Thus, the first measure of Thailand's foreign policy, especially conducting diplomatic relations with other countries, is in accordance with South Korea's effort to increase the number of summits and high-level exchanges under the Peace Pillar. As witnessed by the dynamic of high-level exchanges and ministerial-level exchanges during 2017–2022, where the Thai and South Korean leaders, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Ministers of Defense, met more frequently to discuss various areas of cooperation. Thailand's responses can be interpreted as meaning that the two countries share these three common national interests. As a result, Thailand has acted positively toward South Korea in all bilateral meetings.

In the second measure, Thailand, as the ASEAN Chairman in 2019, supports the concrete cooperation between ASEAN and its Dialogue Partners. South Korea itself has also been one of ASEAN's Dialogue Partners for more than three decades. Obviously, Thailand's second measure corresponds with South Korea's intention to be the host of the 3rd ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit and the 1st Mekong-ROK Summit, as indicated in the task of increasing the number of summits and high-level exchanges under the Peace Pillar. It is worth noting that Thailand and South Korea share similar values that enhance partnerships with other countries, as evidenced by Thailand's ASEAN Chairmanship theme of "Advancing Partnership for Sustainability" and the motto of the 3rd ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit, "Partnership for Peace, Prosperity for People." In this way, "Partnership" is seen as the fourth P, through which Thailand tries to contribute to fostering relations between ASEAN and its Dialogue Partners, including South Korea (Interview, 2022). Furthermore, the 3rd ASEAN-ROK

Commemorative Summit permitted Thailand and South Korea to work more closely with each other as co-chairs.

Thailand could play an important role at the regional level and fulfill its intention to encourage concrete cooperation between ASEAN and South Korea. It could be said that Thailand accomplished two objectives. First, Thailand gained prestige by being accepted for its dedication to working for ASEAN member states and South Korea. Secondly, Thailand, at the same time, gained more power in the Southeast Asian region by playing the role of ASEAN Chairman. In the same way, South Korea was able to gain prestige and be recognized by ASEAN member states as an active Dialogue Partner with ASEAN, and was able to gain power by increasing its presence in Southeast Asia. For all these reasons, both Thailand and South Korea shared the same objectives in terms of prestige and power. Therefore, Thailand responded by encouraging South Korea to establish more concrete ASEAN–South Korea cooperation.

The third measure can be divided into two sub issues. The first sub issue is related to the economy. Thailand aims to promote economic cooperation, particularly trade, investment, knowledge, and innovation, with other countries. Thus, well-being is an objective that Thailand focuses on. Likewise, South Korea also shares this objective with Thailand, as shown in (1) the NSP’s Prosperity Pillar in the task of enhancing the capacity for innovative growth through cooperation in “smart” technologies and new industries, especially for the purpose of creating new business opportunities in the NSP target countries; and (2) the fourth initiative of the NSPP, aspiring to build the foundation of mutually beneficial and sustainable trade and investment. Based on this objective, it can be seen that South Korea aims to boost economic cooperation with ASEAN countries, including Thailand. Since

South Korea's economy was impacted by China's reaction to the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) deployment, the NSP was created to enable South Korea to diversify its trading and investment markets (Interview, 2022). In Thailand, for instance, the Thailand-Korea Business Forum was held to bring Korean businessmen to explore new economic opportunities in Thailand. Referring to the commentaries of the Thai side, it can be concluded that Thailand responded positively to this initiative because Thailand put a lot of effort into inviting South Korean investors to increase their investment in Thailand. From Thailand's view, South Korea is perceived to be the potential investor that could contribute to Thailand's economy in the long run. Besides, Thailand is also interested in the creative economy as South Korea has expertise in exporting culture to the international market (Interview, 2022).

Another sub issue is cultural cooperation. Promoting Thai culture throughout the world is also vital since culture contributes to Thailand's objective of becoming a well-known country, so that would increase Thailand's prestige. Culture is regarded as a form of soft power for Thailand. In a similar manner, South Korea also promotes Korean culture worldwide. Consequently, prestige could be considered a shared objective. The third measure of Thailand's foreign policy regarding cultural cooperation meets with (1) the NSP's People Pillar in the task of expanding two-way cultural exchanges, particularly the tasks of intensifying content exchanges with ASEAN member states and expanding Korean language education; and (2) the third initiative of the NSPP, focusing on promoting two-way cultural exchanges. As a result, their cooperation on this issue has advanced, as both sides are willing to share their own cultures. As manifested in various comments made by the Thai leader and other officials, it is clear that Thailand has

always been open to Korean culture, especially Korean language, music, and dramas. On the other hand, Thailand is happy to share its culture with South Korea to enhance better understanding between their peoples through various events such as the Viva ASEAN and ROUND Music Festival 2021. It can be assumed that both sides aspired to disseminate their cultures to obtain widespread acceptance from the Thai and South Korean people. Thus, Thailand has had a favorable response to South Korea's NSP on this matter.

In the fourth measure, Thailand searches for security objectives by focusing on international cooperation in the area of security that mainly handles nontraditional threats and transnational issues. The COVID-19 pandemic has been perceived by Thailand as one of the nontraditional threats. Thus, Thailand's security objective is consistent with the NSPP's first initiative in combatting COVID-19. Consequently, both sides responded swiftly to fight against this crisis together. As indicated in Thailand's commentaries, South Korea's role in assisting ASEAN and its member states to overcome this difficult situation has been truly noteworthy. Granting funds and vaccine donations are examples of South Korea's contributions that have been well recognized by Thailand.

In the last measure, Thailand engages in proactive diplomacy to protect Thai nationals living abroad, particularly Thai people, laborers, and the private sector. The objective behind this measure is relevant to self-preservation. Even if the objectives of Thailand and South Korea are not completely aligned, South Korea's task under the People Pillar of advancing the rights of immigrants and migrant workers through enhanced protection is beneficial for Thai people who work and reside in South Korea. Simultaneously, the South Korean economy can be driven by Thai laborers who work in the manufacturing industry sector, and the

agriculture and livestock sector. Thai laborers also earn a better income, have a chance to improve their standard of living and quality of life, and live their lives in a safe environment. Yet, there is some cooperation between the two parties on this issue. For example, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Cooperation between the Department of Employment of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Korea Immigration Service of the Ministry of Justice of the ROK, as well as the MOU on Sending Thai Workers Legally Through the Employment Permit System (EPS), was signed. Furthermore, Thailand has been willing to collaborate with South Korea on illegal Thai labor in South Korea (Interview, 2022). It can be inferred that South Korea's task of protecting and advancing the rights of immigrants and migrant workers through enhanced protection supports Thailand's national interest. Though Thailand and South Korea's national interests are not completely aligned, Thailand may be satisfied with South Korea's policy and its sympathy on this matter.

This following part further discusses Thailand and South Korea's cooperation, covering diplomatic relations, political-security cooperation under the Peace Pillar, economic cooperation under the Prosperity Pillar, and socio-cultural and people-to-people cooperation under the People Pillar.

1.1 Diplomatic Relations

Thailand and South Korea officially established diplomatic relations on 1 October 1958 (Royal Thai Embassy in Seoul, 2021). In 2018, the two countries celebrated the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations (Royal Thai Embassy in Seoul, 2018). Both sides have continuously deepened their friendship and relations through the expansion of cooperation in

diverse areas ranging from political cooperation, economic cooperation, academic cooperation, art, culture, and people-to-people cooperation (ibid.).

Thailand–South Korea relations were upgraded to a strategic partnership when both sides signed the MOU between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea on the Thailand–Republic of Korea Strategic Partnership during the official visit to Thailand by former President Lee Myung-bak in November 2012 (Asia News Monitor, 2012). As the year 2022 marks the 10th anniversary of the signing of this MOU, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the ROK recently welcomed this issue and shared their views on how to reinvigorate the current strategic partnership during their bilateral meeting in August 2021. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, 2021). At the meeting, both sides agreed to make a Joint Action Plan to determine the direction of driving the relationship in the next five years (2022–2027) (Interview, 2022).

Prior to the high-level exchanges, Prime Minister Prayut, Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of the Kingdom of Thailand, and President Moon, on a visit to Belgium, held the first bilateral talks on the sidelines of the Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM) in 2018 (Cheong Wa Dae, 2018). The frequency of high-level exchanges between the two leaders began to have more dynamics in 2019 (see **Table 2**). President Moon made visits to Thailand twice; the first time was the official visit to Thailand from 1–3 September 2019, which was the first visit of a South Korean President in seven years after the last visit by former President Lee Myung-bak in 2012; and the second time was the visit to Thailand to attend the 35th ASEAN Summit and related summits from 2–4 November 2019

(Cheong Wa Dae, 2019; Royal Thai Government, 2019), while Prime Minister Prayut had a visit to South Korea to attend the 3rd ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit and the 1st Mekong-ROK Summit from 25–27 November 2019 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, 2019). In that year, Thailand took the role of the Chairman of ASEAN (ASEAN-Thailand Secretariat, 2019). Therefore, the 3rd ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit brought the two leaders an opportunity to collaborate even more closely as they were the co-chairs of this summit together (ASEAN Secretariat, 2019). Additionally, President Moon also held the ROK-Kingdom of Thailand Summit at the sideline of the 3rd ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit with Prime Minister Prayut (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, 2019). Looking only at the year 2019, the momentum of Thailand–South Korea relations was at a good stage since the two leaders had bilateral meetings with each other twice, and the South Korean president visited Thailand twice, and it is a rare occasion for such meetings to happen (Interview, 2022).

Table 2. High-Level Exchanges, 2017–2022

Year	To South Korea	From South Korea
2017	-	Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Park Joo Sun (Delegation to the Funeral of Thailand’s Late King Bhumibol)
2018	-	-
2019	Prime Minister, Prayut Chan-o-Cha (3 rd ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit and 1 st Mekong-ROK Summit)	1. President, Moon Jae-in (Official Visit to Thailand) 2. President, Moon Jae-in (35 th ASEAN Summit and Related Summits)
2020	-	-
2021	-	-
2022	-	-

Source: Cheong Wa Dae, 2019; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, n.d.; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand; 2019 (Compiled by the author)

During the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, both leaders kept in contact through a phone call to strengthen their ties once again on 28 May 2021 (Arirang News, 2021). Then, on 31 May 2021, Prime Minister Prayut also attended the 2nd Partnering for Green Growth and Global Goals 2030 Summit (2nd P4G Summit) via videoconference at the invitation of President Moon (Royal Thai Government, n.d.). This event is regarded as the one that could have created a dynamic in Thailand–South Korea relations. At first, Prime Minister Prayut was invited to attend this summit in person in 2020. To reciprocate the official visit of the South

Korean president to Thailand, the Thai side at the time considered arranging an official visit of the Thai Prime Minister to South Korea. However, this event did not occur due to the outbreak of COVID-19 (Interview, 2022).

Apart from the high-level exchanges, two Foreign Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the ROK also paid courtesy calls on Prime Minister Prayut: H.E. Ms. Kang Kyung-wha during the official visit to Thailand in July 2018 on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of Thailand–South Korea diplomatic relation and H.E. Mr. Chung Eui-yong during the official visit to Thailand in August 2021, respectively (MRG online, 2018; Royal Thai Government, 2021). Throughout the past meetings, Prime Minister Prayut has always expressed Thailand’s commitment to enhancing cooperation with South Korea in the possible areas (see **Appendix 3, Appendix 4**).

For the Foreign Ministers–level exchanges, a number of their bilateral meetings have taken place quite often since the launch of the NSP (see **Table 3**). The first visit to South Korea from the Thai side was made by H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, in May 2018, where he had a meeting with H.E. Ms. Kang Kyung-wha, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the ROK, to discuss ways to promote diplomatic ties on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of Thailand–South Korea diplomatic relations and the Korean Peninsula issue (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and Korean Culture and Information Service, 2018). Moreover, he also joined the delegation led by the Thai Prime Minister to the 3rd ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit and the 1st Mekong-ROK Summit in 2019 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, 2019). In return, H.E. Ms. Kang Kyung-wha visited Thailand twice: the first time was an official visit in July 2018 to

discuss bilateral trade, investment, and education cooperation as well as regional and international issues; and the second time was to attend the 35th ASEAN Summit and related summits, where they had a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of this summit to foster cooperation with South Korea through the ASEAN and Mekong-ROK mechanism (ASEAN-Thailand Secretariat; 2019, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, 2018).

Table 3. Foreign Minister–Level Exchanges, 2017–2022

Year	To South Korea	From South Korea
2017	-	-
2018	Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai	Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Ms. Kang Kyung-wha (Official Visit to Thailand)
2019	Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai (3 rd ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit and 1 st Mekong-ROK Summit)	Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Ms. Kang Kyung-wha (35 th ASEAN Summit and Related Summits)
2020	-	-
2021	-	Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Mr. Chung Eui-yong (Official Visit to Thailand)
2022	-	-

Source: ASEAN-Thailand Secretariat, 2019; Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and Korean Culture and Information Service, Republic of Korea, 2018; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, 2018, 2019, 2021 (Compiled by the author)

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai and H.E. Ms. Kang Kyung-wha, via phone call in March 2020, discussed ways for cooperation in responding to COVID-19 both at the bilateral and regional levels (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, 2020). In April 2021, H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai and H.E. Mr. Chung Eui-yong also had a phone call to continue exchanging views on the COVID-19 pandemic situation and discussed the possibility of promoting mutual cooperation in the field of public health and the COVID-19 vaccines (RYT9, 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, 2021). The high-level face-to-face diplomacy between the two Foreign Ministers resumed once again in August 2021 when H.E. Mr. Chung Eui-yong paid an official visit to Thailand to further discuss bilateral and regional issues (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, 2021). Based on the entire substance that the Thai Foreign Minister has discussed with his two Korean counterparts, Thailand, overall, has a positive response toward South Korea and the NSP (see **Appendix 5**).

To conclude, the high-level exchanges, the Foreign Ministers–level exchanges, and all telephone conversations are indicators proving that diplomacy has played an essential role in paving the way for the advancement of Thailand–South Korea cooperation. Thus, it could be interpreted that Thailand welcomed South Korea’s engagement through the NSP and was willing to work closely, both at bilateral and regional levels, over the past five years.

Regarding Thailand–South Korea diplomacy at the regional level, the countries have always supported each other’s roles in diverse regional forums. As Thailand was the ASEAN Chairman in 2019, the Thai side was pleased with the endorsement of this position from South Korea, its dedication to working together

in organizing the 3rd ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit and the 1st Mekong-ROK Summit, and other South Korea's proactive roles in subregional and regional frameworks (see **Appendix 3 No. 2; Appendix 5 No. 3, 6**). In addition, Thailand also appreciated South Korea's support of Thailand as the host of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in 2022 (see **Appendix 5 No. 6**). From the mentioned interaction, it could be concluded that South Korea received a positive response from the Thai side.

1.2 Political-Security Cooperation under the Peace Pillar

In general, Thailand and South Korea have strong relationship since there have been no political, security, or historical conflicts between the two countries (Interview, 2022). The political-security cooperation between the two countries has gradually developed under the Peace Pillar. Prime Minister Prayut and President Moon agreed to increase high-level visits for political, security, and military cooperation during the official visit to Thailand by President Moon in 2019 (see **Appendix 3 No. 2**). Later, during a bilateral meeting in 2021 between H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai and H.E. Mr. Chung Eui-yong, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening defense and security cooperation (see **Appendix 5 No. 6**). Furthermore, Thailand's perception toward South Korea can be observed from the visits of Ministers of National Defense of the ROK, the defense cooperation and related dialogues made by the Thai leader and high-ranking officers.

In the past five years, two Ministers of National Defense of the ROK, Mr. Song Young-moo and Mr. Suh Wook, paid visits to Thailand in 2018 and 2021, respectively (Secretariat of the Prime Minister, 2018; Royal Thai

Government, 2021). It is worth noting that their visits were only three years apart. Following the bilateral meeting with Mr. Song Young-moo, Prime Minister Prayut complimented the advancement of the South Korean defense industry and weapons (see **Appendix 7 No. 1**). On this occasion, Mr. Song Young-moo also had a bilateral discussion with General Prawit Wongsuwan, the former Minister of Defense of Thailand (Tnews, 2018). Concerning the opinion of Lt. Gen. Kongcheep Tantravanich, Spokesperson of the Ministry of Defense of Thailand, he opined that Mr. Song Young-moo's visit was regarded as an important visit because a visit by Ministers of National Defense of the ROK had rarely occurred in the past (see **Appendix 7 No. 2**). In 2021, Mr. Suh Wook was the most recent official visit to Thailand by a South Korean high-ranking officer, where he had a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Prayut. This time, Prime Minister Prayut expressed his gratitude to the South Korean military for their Cobra Gold participation over the past years, while expressing hope for expanding security cooperation, particularly in technology transfer and the defense industry (see **Appendix 7 No. 11**).

On defense cooperation, the two countries signed only one agreement during 2017–2022, which was an agreement on the Mutual Protection of Classified Military Information (see **Appendix 2**). In other words, the least number of agreements on political-security cooperation were signed compared to economic and socio-cultural domains in the same period. In terms of military exercise, South Korea has taken part in Cobra Gold since 2010, which is an exercise that is held annually and co-sponsored by Thailand and the U.S. (USARPAC Public Affairs Office, 2010). For twelve years, Thailand and South Korea have maintained a strong military relationship through these drills. In 2022, the scale of the

participation was downsized due to COVID-19. As a result, only forty-one participants from South Korea who joined in the latest drill (The Standard Team, 2022).

Thailand has strengthened the country's military capacity, both in naval force and air force, by purchasing major weapons from South Korea (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2022). The Daewoo Shipbuilding & Marine Engineering Co., Ltd. (DSME) successfully delivered a newly built high-performance frigate to the Royal Thai Navy on 22 December 2018 (KhaosodOnline, 2019). This frigate was called His Thai Majesty Ship (HTMS) Bhumibol Adulyadej and arrived safely for the welcoming ceremony in Thailand on 7 January 2019 (Naval Secretariat, 2019). In addition, Thai officers were sent to South Korea during the shipbuilding period to participate in training related to the frigate's platform and combat systems (Strategic Studies Center, 2013). While the Royal Thai Air Force purchased twelve T-50 Golden Eagle trainer/combat aircraft (T-50TH Version) from Korea Aerospace Industry (KAI), which were already delivered to Thailand between 2018 and 2020, an order for two more aircraft of the same version is expected to be delivered by 2023 (BBC, 2018; Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2022). By purchasing these major weapons from South Korea, it could be inferred that Thailand has trust in the technology and capacity of South Korea's defense industry.

On cyber cooperation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the ROK co-hosted the 1st Thailand-Republic of Korea Cybersecurity Dialogue on 25 March 2022 to enhance cybersecurity cooperation, where thirteen cyber-related agencies from both countries also participated (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand,

2022). This is the two countries' newest area of cooperation, and Thailand is the first ASEAN country to convene a dialogue with South Korea (Interview, 2022).

Concerning geostrategic issues, Thailand acknowledges South Korea's concern over the Korean Peninsula issues. The development of the Korean Peninsula issues has been constantly monitored by the Thai side, as can be noted from the expressions of the Thai Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister as they have welcomed the positive developments, such as the success of convening the 1st Inter-Korean Summit, the U.S.-North Korea Summit in 2018, and the acceptance of North Korea's participation in the 2018 Winter Olympics (see **Appendix 3 No. 1; Appendix 4 No. 1; Appendix 5 No. 1, 2; Appendix 6 No. 1; Appendix 7 No. 1**), as shown in the following examples below:

Prime Minister Prayut's dialogue at the bilateral meeting with H.E. Ms. Kang Kyung-wha, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the ROK, in Thailand, 2018:

The Prime Minister congratulated the success of convening the 1st Inter-Korean Summit between the South Korean president and the North Korean leader on 27 April and the U.S.-North Korea Summit on 12 June, saying that these summits reflect the intention of building sustainable peace, stability, and security in the Korean Peninsula.

(Bangkokbiznews) (Unofficial translation by the author)

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai's dialogue at the bilateral meeting with H.E. Ms. Kang Kyung-wha, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the ROK, in Thailand, 2018:

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand welcomed recent positive developments on the Korean Peninsula and praised the ROK government, especially the active role of President Moon Jae-in, for the efforts to achieve sustained peace, stability and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, 2018)

On top of that, the Thai side has always expressed support for the establishment of the peace process and denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in the past bilateral meetings and the ASEAN-ROK Summits (see **Appendix 3 No. 1, 4; Appendix 5 No. 3, 5, 6; Appendix 6 No. 3; Appendix 7 No. 1**), as can be seen from the sample dialogues as follows:

Prime Minister Prayut's dialogue at the ROK-Kingdom of Thailand Summit in South Korea, 2019:

Prime Minister Prayut expressed his support for the President's efforts for the denuclearization for the Korean Peninsula and the peace process, stressing that Thailand will stand together to help achieve this goal. (Cheong Wa Dae, 2019)

Prime Minister Prayut's dialogue at the 21st ASEAN-ROK Summit, via videoconference, 2020:

The Prime Minister of Thailand believed that peace and stability are solid foundations for prosperity and sustainable development. Thailand supports the ROK's efforts to promote peace on the Korean Peninsula for the realisation of prosperous and denuclearised Korean Peninsula. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, 2020)

Considering COVID-19 as a nontraditional threat, on health cooperation, Thailand praised South Korea's efforts to fight against COVID-19 together with ASEAN and its member states. Likewise, Thailand has been interested in cooperating with South Korea in this area explicitly. These actions can be seen in the dialogues given by the Thai Prime Minister and other high-ranking officers. At the outset of the COVID-19 outbreak, H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai was confident that South Korea would be able to effectively contain the disease due to its strong quarantine capabilities (see **Appendix 5 No. 4**). To tackle COVID-19, Thailand and South Korea agreed to promote Partnership for Health by holding the first ROK-Thailand Foreign and Health Minister's 2+2 Dialogues on Health Security, which were mentioned twice in the telephone conversations between (1) H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai and H.E. Mr. Chung Eui-yong and (2) Prime Minister Prayut and President Moon, respectively (see **Appendix 3 No. 6; Appendix 5 No. 5**) and at the bilateral meeting between (1) H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai and H.E. Mr. Chung Eui-yong. Recently, a meeting at the Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM)-level was held to prepare for this dialogue (Interview, 2022). In addition, Prime Minister Prayut praised South Korea for its rapid response to COVID-19, reiterated Thailand's endorsement of the South Korean Prime Minister's declaration

promoting South Korea to become the global hub for COVID-19 vaccine production, and expressed his gratitude to South Korea for allocating COVID-19 vaccines to Thai residents in South Korea (see **Appendix 4 No. 2; Appendix 7 No. 11**). In a similar manner, Ms. Traisulee Traisorankul, Deputy Spokesperson of the Office of the Prime Minister, disclosed that Thailand's cabinet approved receiving 470,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine from South Korea, in which Mr. Anutin Charnvirakul, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Health of the Kingdom of Thailand, on behalf of the Royal Thai government, thanked South Korea for this donation (see **Appendix 7 No. 9, 10**).

At the regional level for this area, Thailand acknowledged South Korea's two contributions to the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund during 2020–2021 and the sharing of its experiences in responding to public health emergencies, as can be seen from Prime Minister Prayut delivering his speeches at the 21st and 22nd ASEAN-ROK Summits (see **Appendix 6 No. 3, 4**).

1.3 Economic Cooperation under the Prosperity Pillar

The Prosperity Pillar is an aspect that has been driven the most by the South Korean side. Since the implementation of the NSP, South Korea has sought to strengthen economic cooperation with Thailand, as evidenced by the increased frequency with which it has approached the Thai side to ask for support on investment facilitation issues and the growing number of South Korean companies that have approached the Royal Thai Embassy in Seoul and the Board of Investment of Thailand (BOI) regarding investment issues (Interview, 2022). Simultaneously, the Thai side has reacted favorably to enhanced economic cooperation with South Korea. Thailand has encouraged South Korea to invest in

the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), particularly in bio-health, robotics and automation, 5G, semiconductors, smart cities, clean energy, and electric vehicles (EVs) (Interview, 2022). Furthermore, Thailand–South Korea concluded five MOUs in the domain of economics, which is considered the highest number out of the total MOUs that were signed during 2017–2022 (see **Appendix 2**).

Besides, several events were held to boost economic cooperation between both sides during 2018–2019. First, Mr. Paik Un-gyu, the Minister of Trade, Industry, and Energy of the ROK, and 180 South Korean businessmen from 120 companies paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Prayut on the occasion of visiting Thailand to attend the business seminar “Korea-Thailand 60th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations: Maekyung Thailand Forum” in May 2018, where many leading Korean companies such as Samsung Electronics, LG Electronics, Hyundai Motors, Lotte Chemical, POSCO, and Korea Telecom attended this seminar to look for opportunities to expand and invest in Thailand (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, 2018). When H.E. Ms. Kang Kyung-wha, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, met with Prime Minister Prayut in July of the same year, she also expressed her congratulations on the successful visit to Thailand of this Korean delegation group (see **Appendix 4 No. 2**). Second, an investment and market research mission to Bangkok was organized under the collaboration of the ASEAN-Korea Center, the BOI, and the Korea Institute for Robot Industry Advancement (KIRIA) to bring the Korean delegation from twelve companies to attend several activities, such as the “Thailand-Korea Investment Promotion Seminar on Robotics & Automation,” visiting the EEC and local companies, and meeting with Thai government officials and business representatives, etc. (ASEAN-Korea Center, 2018). Third, the Thailand-Korea

Business Forum was organized during the official of President Moon visit to Thailand in September 2019, where more than 600 Thai and Korean investors attended to listen to the presentation on the topic of “Thailand’s potential and business opportunities for Korean investors” presented by Ms. Duangjai Asawachintachit, the Secretary General of the BOI (Board of Investment of Thailand, 2019).

Prime Minister Prayut mentioned economic cooperation with South Korea on several occasions, both at the bilateral and regional levels, which was thirteen times in total (see **Appendix 3 No. 2, 4, 5, 6; Appendix 4 No. 1, 2; Appendix 6 No. 1, 3, 4, Appendix 7 No. 3, 6, 7, 8**). According to him, Thailand endorsed the NSP and the NSPP since they corresponded to Thailand’s 4.0 Policy, seeing that there was the possibility of promoting economic cooperation with each other (see **Appendix 3 No. 5, 6; Appendix 4 No. 2**). For example, he thought that the official visit of President Moon brought many good opportunities for Thailand, as can be clearly seen from his statement below:

Prime Minister Prayut’s speech at the Thailand-Korea Business Forum, in Thailand, 2019:

I am very glad to hear that President Moon led the group of Korean businessmen who have played an important role in the Korean industry to visit Thailand. This is a good sign that more than 100 leading Korean companies pay attention to Thailand’s economy and are interested in investing in Thailand.... I would like to commend the NSP under the leadership of President Moon, who announced the expansion of cooperation in various

fields, especially economics, in the Southeast Asian region. This policy has a profound meaning and is of great importance not only to Thailand but also to this region, which is currently in the stage of economic development. Therefore, it requires a good partner to create mutual benefits in the future.... I view that President Moon's visit to Thailand is a very good opportunity for Thailand to link up its economic, trade, and investment policies with South Korea's NSP, and I hope to see South Korea's stronger role as an investor in Thailand. (Royal Thai Government, 2019) (Unofficial translation by the author)

Another Thai officer expressed a similar view. The Secretary General of the BOI, Ms. Duangjai Asawachintachit, stated that the Thailand-Korea Business Forum was beneficial for the South Korean private sector to explore investment opportunities in Thailand (see **Appendix 7 No. 4**). Thailand enthusiastically looks forward to South Korean investments, as can be seen from Prime Minister Prayut's gestures by expressing Thailand's readiness to accommodate new investments from South Korea and extending the invitation to South Korean investors three times through his counterparts to invest in various fields such as the 4IR sectors and high-tech industries in the EEC during 2018–2021 (see **Appendix 3 No. 4, 5, 6; Appendix 4 No. 1, 2**). As a result, in the first quarter of 2021, there was an increase in the number of South Korean investors in Thailand, which was the highest number among all foreign investors (see **Appendix 4 No. 2**). Apart from extending the invitation to South Korean investors from the Thai Prime Minister, the Thai Foreign Minister also encouraged South Korea to increase investment in the high-

tech industries in the EEC at the bilateral meeting with H.E. Mr. Chung Eui-yong in 2021 (see **Appendix 5 No. 6**).

On the economic front, the bilateral trade between Thailand and South Korea during 2017–2020 was quite stable. The highest trade value was \$13.3 billion in 2019, while the lowest was \$11.5 billion in 2018. In 2020, Thailand–South Korea trade totaled \$11.9 billion, but Thailand still had a trade deficit with South Korea (see **Table 4**). In that same year, South Korea held the 15th rank as Thailand’s export market destination, accounting for \$4,243 million, 1.8% of the shares, and it has become one of Thailand’s top ten most important trading partners, recognized as the sixth-largest source of Thailand’s imports at \$7,660 million, 3.7% of the shares (see **Table 5**). The Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Commerce of the Kingdom of Thailand (2020) revealed that the top-five exporting goods to South Korea in 2020 were rubber products, computer equipment and components, circuit boards, chemicals, and aluminum products. On the other hand, iron and steel, circuit boards, chemicals, machinery and components, and electrical machinery and components were the top five goods that Thailand imported from South Korea that same year.

Table 4. Thailand Trade with South Korea, 2011–2020

(US\$ millions)

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Export	4,577	4,778	4,589	4,520	4,104	4,044	4,667	4,687	4,718	4,243
Import	9,215	8,979	9,060	8,547	7,039	7,272	8,056	6,854	8,635	7,660
Total	19,793	13,758	13,650	13,067	11,143	11,316	12,723	11,542	13,353	11,903
Balance	-4,638	-4,201	-4,471	-4,027	-2,935	-3,228	-3,389	-2167	-3,917	-3,417

Source: ASEANstats, 2022 (Compiled by the author)

Table 5. Thailand Trade with Major Trading Partners, 2020

	Exports			Imports	
	Value	Share		Value	Share
	(US\$ millions)	(%)		(US\$ millions)	(%)
1. U.S.	34,342	14.84	1. China	49,841	24.0
2. China	29,748	12.9	2. Japan	27,711	13.4
3. Japan	22,875	9.9	3. U.S.	15,011	7.2
4. Hong Kong	11,291	4.9	4. Malaysia	10,251	4.9
5. Vietnam	11,169	4.8	5. Taiwan	8,209	4.0
15. South Korea	4,243	1.8	6. South Korea	7,660	3.7
Other	117,737	50.9	Other	88,757	42.8
Total	231,408	100	Total	207,444	100

Source: ASEANstats, 2022 (Compiled by the author)

Pertaining to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), the BOI disclosed that, in 2021, South Korea became the eighth largest investor in Thailand, after Japan, China, Singapore, the U.S., Taiwan, Austria, and Italy, with 12,419 million Baht, or approximately \$369 million (see **Table 6**). In the same year, twenty-eight South Korean FDI projects were approved by the BOI to promote their investment in Thailand, and the FDI from South Korea increased dramatically because of the

joint investment project between South Korea and Norway to manufacture medical gloves in Thailand (Board of Investment of Thailand, 2021). As a result, the investment value in 2021 from South Korea increased five times when compared with the year 2020. Besides that, the number of South Korean enterprises in Thailand has been gradually increasing. The number of South Korean enterprises has shifted from 1,036 in 2017 to 1,195 in 2020 (see **Table 7**).

Table 6. South Korea’s FDI in Thailand, 2017–2021

Year	Number of Projects	Investment Value (Million Baht)	Ranks
2017	27	3,204	12
2018	26	2,676	14
2019	31	3,037	10
2020	19	2,340	12
2021	28	12,419	8

Source: Board of Investment of Thailand, 2017-2021 (Compiled by the author)

Table 7. Number of Korean Enterprises in Thailand, 2017–2020

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of Korean Enterprises	1,036	1,087	1,157	1,195

Source: ASEAN-Korea Center, n.d. (Compiled by the author)

From Thailand’s perspective, economic cooperation between ASEAN and South Korea is needed to bring mutual prosperity. During the ASEAN-ROK Summits from 2017–2021, Prime Minister Prayut has suggested ways to promote economic engagement between South Korea and ASEAN. For instance,

encouraging utilization of the ASEAN-ROK Free Trade Area, the ASEAN-ROK Economic Minister’s Joint Initiatives on Bolstering Economic Connectivity between ASEAN and South Korea in response to the COVID-19 outbreak and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement, motivated the enhanced development of the digital economy, smart cities, and future industries, and persuaded South Korean investors to invest in EEC and the special economic zones along the Thai border to boost the economy in the Mekong Basin area (see **Appendix 6 No. 1, 3, 4**).

In addition, Thailand recently showed its willingness to cooperate with South Korea and other ASEAN countries as Mrs. Oramon Saphaweetham, Director-General of the Department of Trade Negotiation, said that the Thai cabinet approved the Ministry of Commerce of the Kingdom of Thailand to sign the MOU on the establishment of the ASEAN-Korea Industrial Innovation Center (AKIIC) on 1 March 2022. The MOU is expected to be signed in the first half of 2022, and the center will be located in South Korea. She pointed out that the establishment of the AKIIC would allow South Korea to cooperate with ASEAN in developing innovations for advancing the industrial sector to create value-added for commercial purposes as well as increase science and technology capacity between the two sides (see **Appendix 7 No. 14**).

1.4 Socio-Cultural and People-to-People Cooperation under the People Pillar

Under the “People Pillar” of the NSP, Thailand and South Korea have enjoyed regular socio-cultural and people-to-people exchanges. Thailand, in general, has been favorable to the interaction with South Korea, as evidenced by

the signing of three MOUs in the socio-cultural domain between 2017 and 2022 (see **Appendix 2**). In terms of the number of MOUs, this field of cooperation had the second highest number of MOUs inked, only after the economic domain. Additionally, important cultural events and related activities were continuously organized to promote their relations.

On Korean language promotion and educational cooperation, Prime Minister Prayut and President Moon agreed to set up a Korean Study Center and promote the Korean language during President Moon's visit to Thailand in 2019 (see **Appendix 3 No. 2**). On the same occasion, the MOU between the Ministry of Education of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Ministry of Education of the ROK on Cooperation in the Field of Korean Language Education was signed by Mr. Nutthaphon Teepsuwan, Minister of Education of the Kingdom of Thailand, and Ms. Yoo Eun-hae, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education of the ROK (Ritman, 2019). The objective of this MOU is to promote cooperation with teaching the Korean language in Thai primary and secondary schools, such as training for Thai teachers who teach the Korean language; developing Korean language curriculum, textbooks, and teaching materials; teaching and learning evaluation; sending native Korean teachers to teach Korean language in Thailand; and granting scholarships for Thai students to pursue their studies in South Korea (ibid.).

Moreover, Mrs. Naraporn Chan-O-Cha, the spouse of the Thai Prime Minister, and the first lady Kim Jung-sook, the spouse of President Moon, attended Thailand's 2019 National Korean Speech Competition for Secondary and Higher Education students as the guests of honor (Royal Thai Government, 2019). Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education of the ROK, Minister of Education of the

Kingdom of Thailand, Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General of the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC), Director of the Korean Education Center (KEC), and more than 180 students from schools and Korean language institutes participated in this event (ibid.). Mrs. Naraporn Chan-O-Cha emphasized the importance of studying foreign languages, saying that languages can lead learners to explore the world and gain new opportunities for themselves and their country. She is of the view that Thailand–South Korea relations have developed both at the government and people’s level. She opined that the K-pop trend has a lot of influence on Thai people, making them interested in learning the Korean language, and that Thai students who have proficiency in the Korean language will be ambassadors of goodwill in fostering stronger relations between the younger generations of the two countries (see **Appendix 7 No. 5**). At present, the Thai government organizes this event annually and administers the Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK) in six cities nationwide as approximately 40,000 middle school students are studying the Korean language, which is the highest number of any country outside South Korea (Kim and Lee, 2019). It is obviously perceived that the popularity of learning the Korean language as a foreign language is increasing among Thai youth these days.

In the area of cultural cooperation at the bilateral level, Prime Minister Prayut has a positive perception of Korean culture and tourism. For instance, in his conversation with Mr. Song Young-moo, the Minister of National Defense of the ROK in 2018, he commended South Korea’s policy implementation on promoting the Korean wave, which has led to the rapid rise of its popularity in Thailand, resulting in an increase in visitor exchanges from both sides; in his conversation addressed to President Moon during the official visit to Thailand, he

stated that he personally enjoys watching the Korean series called “Descendants of the Sun” and opined that Korean movies, singers, and music are very popular among Thai people; and in another conversation addressed to President Moon at the sideline of the 3rd ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit, he said that he personally loves eating Korean food and cooking it together with his daughter (see **Appendix 7 No. 1; Appendix 3 No. 3, 4**). Furthermore, the discussion to advance people-to-people exchanges, cultural, cooperation and educational cooperation was raised several times, including (1) during the bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Prayut and President Moon on the sidelines of the 3rd ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit, (2) during the bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Prayut and H.E. Mr. Chung Eui-yong, and (3) during the bilateral meeting between H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai and H.E. Mr. Chung Eui-yong during his official visit to Thailand (see **Appendix 3 No. 5; Appendix 4 No. 2; Appendix 5 No. 6**).

In terms of cultural cooperation at the regional level, Prime Minister Prayut also gave importance to this area by expressing his congratulations on the opening of the ASEAN Cultural House, located in Busan, which recently operated in September 2017, encouraging ASEAN countries and South Korea to organize cultural exchanges and youth exchanges to expand the wider network between their peoples, and suggesting that the relevant authorities, namely, the ASEAN-Korea Center in Seoul, ASEAN-Korea Cultural Center in Bangkok, and ASEAN Cultural House in Busan, should hold joint activities (see **Appendix 6 No. 1**). The cultural cooperation between ASEAN and South Korea has become even more robust. In September 2019, ASEAN Cultural House signed the MOU with the ASEAN Cultural Center to enhance cooperation on culture and people-to-people exchange (Korea Foundation, 2019). The first cooperation between these two organizations

was the organizing of “the Viva ASEAN”, an ASEAN cultural roadshow featuring ten ASEAN traditional performances in four cities in South Korea: Seoul, Busan, Gwangju, and Cheongju to celebrate the 3rd ASEAN-Republic of Korea Commemorative Summit and the ASEAN Cultural Year 2019 (ASEAN Culture House Monthly, 2019).

Additionally, as Mr. Itthiphol Kunplome, Minister of Culture of the Kingdom of Thailand said, his ministry has a policy to push forward Thailand’s soft power, which is in accordance with Thai government policy to promote Thailand’s image, prestige, and culture at the international level. To meet this goal, the Ministry of Culture of the Kingdom of Thailand agreed to participate in the 2nd ASEAN-Korea Music Festival, under the theme “ROUND Music Festival 2021,” by appointing a well-known Thai singer, Mr. Popethorn Soonthornyanakij, also known as Two Popethorn, as a representative to conduct his performance together with other South Korean and ASEAN artists. This music show was organized by the collaboration of the ASEAN Secretariat and the South Korean Government, and it was done through an online platform (see **Appendix 7 No. 13**). It can be implied that Thailand intends to promote people-to-people exchanges and develop mutual understanding between South Korea and ASEAN regarding culture and artists.

In the realm of tourism, statistics from the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) show that two-way exchanges between Thai and South Korean tourists have gradually increased since the NSP’s inception (see **Table 8**). In 2019, the number of Korean tourists visiting Thailand was in fourth place, after China, Malaysia, and India, with a total of 1,890,973 people, whereas around 558,595 Thai tourists visited South Korea in the same year (TAT Intelligence Center, 2022).

Transportation is an essential factor that enables people from the two countries to travel across borders. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak in 2019, eight airlines, including Thai Airways, Asiana Airlines, Korean Air, Jeju Air, Eastar Jet, Jin Air, Thai Airasia X, and T’way Air, operated multiple direct flights between Thailand and South Korea (see **Appendix 8**). However, the exchange of people was disrupted due to the spread of COVID-19 as the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT) issued the first announcement of a temporary ban on all international flights to Thailand from 3 April 2020 and continued the extension of this announcement until 30 June 2020 (Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand, 2020). In a like manner, the Embassy of the ROK in Thailand announced the temporary suspension of the visa waiver for entry into South Korea from Thailand from 13 April 2020 onward (Embassy of the ROK in Thailand, 2020).

Table 8. Number of Tourists from South Korea to Thailand and Number of Tourists from Thailand to South Korea, 2017–2019

Year	Korean Tourists to Thailand (Persons)	Thai Tourists to South Korea (Persons)
2017	1,709,067	456,618
2018	1,796,426	515,658
2019	1,890,973	558,595

Source: Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2022 (Compiled by the author)

In a recent development, both countries have reopened their borders to foreign travelers. Thailand has enabled international visitors from sixty-three countries, including South Koreans, to enter the country from 30 October 2021 onward (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, 2021). South Korea

launched the K-ETA (Korea Electronic Travel Authorization) application for Thai visitors on 1 April 2022, allowing them to stay in South Korea for up to 90 days (Korea Electronic Travel Authorization, 2022). With the mentioned measures, there is hope that people-to-people exchanges will recover in the post-COVID-19 era soon. The survey was conducted on the overseas travel plans of Thai users from October to November 2021 by Youtrip, a multi-currency mobile wallet application together with Kasikorn Bank, which revealed that Thai people would be ready to travel abroad in the next 6 months. The top three destinations that they wished to visit were Japan, the U.S., and South Korea (workpointTODAY, 2021). The result of this survey shows that South Korea has always been a popular tourist destination for Thai people.

Other than the dynamics in the tourism sector, the number of Thai nationals in South Korea has surged three years in a row from 2017 to 2019 but suddenly dropped in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic (see **Table 9**). Compared with other ASEAN nationals, Thai nationals in South Korea had the second-largest number, after Vietnamese nationals, in 2020 (ASEAN-Korea Center, n.d.). Among them, they reside in South Korea for several purposes, such as studying, working, or marrying Korean nationals (Interview, 2022).

Table 9. Number of Thai Nationals in South Korea, 2017–2020

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of Thai Nationals (Persons)	153,259	197,764	209,909	183,152

Source: ASEAN-Korea Center, n.d. (Compiled by the author)

Regarding labor cooperation, Thailand has been one of South Korea's partner countries that signed the MOU on sending workers to South Korea under the EPS since 2004 (Labour Section, Royal Thai Embassy in Seoul, 2018). During the official visit of President Moon to Thailand, the two leaders also mentioned the promotion of legal employment of Thai workers under the EPS system (see **Appendix 3 No. 2**). With this MOU, the Ministry of Labour of the Kingdom of Thailand has continually sent legal Thai workers to work in South Korea (see **Table 10**). As of 2022, there are approximately 13,657 Thai workers in South Korea, most of them working in three cities: Gyeonggi-do, Chungcheongnam-do, and Incheon (Department of Employment, 2022). Mr. Suchart Chomklin, Minister of Labour of the Kingdom of Thailand, recently disclosed that the 11th Korean language and working skills test (Point System) had just opened in March and April 2022 for the application of Thai nationals who are interested in working in South Korea's manufacturing industry sector, and the agricultural and livestock sector, for more than 6,000 positions (Royal Thai Government, 2022). He also said that Prime Minister Prayut and General Prawit Wongsuwan, the Deputy Prime Minister who is in charge of the Ministry of Labour of the Kingdom of Thailand, have put a lot of effort into encouraging Thai workers to work abroad so that they can earn a good salary and help develop their home country when they return to it (see **Appendix 7 No. 12**). According to the abovementioned evidence, it can be implied that Thailand has always perceived South Korea as an attractive country for Thai workers, as can be noticed from the constant sending of workers to South Korea for eighteen years and the positive comment made by the Minister of Labour of the Kingdom of Thailand on sending Thai workers abroad.

**Table 10. Number of Thai Nationals Who Were Allowed to Work
in South Korea, 2017–2021**

Year	Male (Persons)	Female (Persons)	Total (Persons)
2017	4,927	1,130	6,057
2018	5,680	746	6,426
2019	4,629	752	5,381
2020	592	125	717
2021	2,591	428	3,019

Source: Overseas Employment Administration Division, Department of Employment,
2017–2021 (Compiled by the author)

2. Assessment on Thailand–South Korea’s Cooperation Progress

The following part makes an assessment of the cooperation between Thailand and South Korea under the three pillars to determine which area of cooperation has made the most tangible progress. The assessment is done in two ways: by looking at progress in terms of input to enhance the cooperation and by looking at progress in terms of output from the outcome of the cooperation.

1. Progress in terms of input to enhance the cooperation

By matching Thailand’s foreign policy and South Korea’s NSP, it turned out that Thailand and South Korea shared well-being as a common national interest for economic cooperation. It is obvious that both sides enthusiastically seek to accelerate economic growth for prosperity. Thus, economic cooperation has become the essential issue that they are trying to push forward. As a result, the economic cooperation under the Prosperity Pillar has made the most tangible

progress in terms of input to enhance the cooperation. The indicators used to prove this point are as follows:

First, regarding the number of MOUs, judging from the number of MOUs signed among the political-security domain, economic domain, and socio-cultural domain during 2017–2022, Thailand and South Korea signed five MOUs related to the economic domain, which is the highest number of all domains, while three MOUs in the socio-cultural domain and one political-security domain were signed. This could mean that both sides agreed to put economic cooperation at the top of their list of priorities as this would allow them to work together more closely in the future to deepen their cooperation.

Second, three events related to the economy—the Korea-Thailand 60th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations: Maekyung Thailand Forum, the Thailand-Korea Investment Promotion Seminar on Robotics & Automation, and the Thailand-Korea Business Forum—were all organized to bring Korean companies and investors to Thailand to explore the possibility of investing. These events, in some ways, pave the way to advance Thailand–South Korea’s economic cooperation. It is important to note that these events were held within the years 2018–2019. This means that South Korea made a great effort to engage and pay more attention to Thailand by holding economic promotion events more often.

Third, in terms of the frequency of the topics of cooperation that were mentioned by the Thai side, economic issues have been discussed more often than other issues since the NSP was launched, and several attempts to extend invitations to South Korean investors to invest in the EEC through their South Korean counterparts were made. It can be inferred that Thailand pays much attention to this issue. In the same way, the growing number of South Korean companies that have

approached the Royal Thai Embassy in Seoul and the BOI regarding investment issues is evidence that they are interested in entering Thailand to make investments.

With these indicators, it can be understood that Thailand and South Korea have made significant efforts to strengthen their economic cooperation. However, despite their strong efforts, the outcome remains slightly changed. At least, there were some developments, such as the increasing number of Korean investors in Thailand in the first quarter of 2021, the increase of South Korean enterprises in Thailand during 2017–2020, and the increase of FDI investment value in 2021, which resulted in the shifting of the ranking of South Korea's FDI in Thailand from the twelfth rank in 2020 to the eighth rank in that year (see **Table 6–7**).

2. Progress in terms of output from the outcome of the cooperation

According to the congruence between Thailand's foreign policy and South Korea's NSP, Thailand and South Korea share prestige as a common national interest for cultural cooperation. Both sides use culture as a tool to gain recognition and acceptance from the Thai and South Korean people. During the NSP implementation, Thailand–South Korea also actively promoted cultural cooperation with each other, as can be seen through the discussion at the official level as well as the cultural events. The popularity of Korean culture has increased among Thai people, resulting in greater interaction between Thai and South Korean people and an increase in people-to-people exchanges in various dimensions. Therefore, socio-cultural cooperation and people-to-people exchanges under the People Pillar have achieved the most tangible progress in terms of output from the outcome of the cooperation. The following indicators help to illustrate this point:

First, the effort to promote the Korean language and educational cooperation has resulted in an increase in the popularity of the Korean language among the younger generation. Recently, the number of Thai middle school students studying the Korean language has reached approximately 40,000. This is a good foundation to make Thai students and South Korean people become closer to each other since learning the Korean language enables them to understand Korean culture and communicate better.

Second, the number of tourists from South Korea to Thailand and the number of tourists from Thailand to South Korea steadily increased during 2017–2019 (see **Table 8**). This means that there are more dynamics in terms of the exchange of visits at the people-to-people level, allowing Thai and South Korean people to interact with one another as well as gain a better understanding of one another's culture and way of life.

Third, the number of Thai nationals in South Korea also increased during 2017–2019 (see **Table 9**). However, the number of Thai nationals dropped in the year 2020, which was caused by the impact of COVID-19. With this number, it can be inferred that South Korea has become the destination where Thai people are most interested in living.

Fourth, on labor cooperation, Thailand constantly sends workers to South Korea. Although the number of workers that were sent to South Korea was quite different each year, it still reflects that there is constant interaction between Thailand and South Korea at the people-to-people level. As a consequence, Thai workers have also had a chance to interact with Korean people. Thus, they probably experience Korean culture and lifestyle while they work in this country, which would bring them even closer.

Based on these four indicators, it is clear that Thailand and South Korea already have solid relationships in people-to-people exchanges during the period of the NSP implementation.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. Findings and Implications

This research has investigated Thailand's perspective regarding South Korea's engagement with Thailand through the NSP implementation from 2017 to 2022. The study was conducted by gathering data from primary and secondary sources and conducting in-depth interviews. For the analysis of the obtained data, the concept of national interest developed by Lerche and Said was chosen as the analytical framework to identify Thailand's national interests based on its foreign policy and to match with the NSP. Thailand's reception toward the NSP was discussed by matching Thailand's foreign policy and South Korea's NSP to show that their cooperation is strengthened when both sides share common national interests.

The author provides the findings of this research by answering the research questions as follows:

1. How does Thailand perceive South Korea's New Southern Policy, which has been implemented under President Moon Jae-in's administration since 2017?

Overall, Thailand always has had a positive perception toward the NSP, evidenced by its enthusiasm to welcome this policy through the three Pillars of People, Prosperity, and Peace, both at the bilateral and regional levels. From Thailand's perspective, the NSP is the foreign policy that enables South Korea to strengthen its existing ties with all ten ASEAN member states, including Thailand.

This policy helps South Korea to increase its presence in Southeast Asia, particularly through the visit to all ASEAN countries by President Moon. Referring to the matching of Thailand's foreign policy and South Korea's NSP, the first four measures of Thailand's foreign policy show that both sides share common national interests. Thus, Thailand accepts to cooperate with South Korea under the NSP when Thailand shares common national interests with South Korea. Although the last measure does not directly share the common national interests with South Korea's NSP, the two countries still gain benefit and have some cooperation related to immigrants and migrant workers. Sharing common national interests has led the two countries to enhance cooperation in various areas efficiently. However, even if they share common national interests, the progress of cooperation in each area is different depending on how much the two sides pay attention to them.

2. From Thailand's perspective, which area of cooperation between Thailand and South Korea has made the most tangible progress during the period of the NSP implementation?

The findings revealed that economic cooperation under the Prosperity Pillar has made the most tangible progress in terms of input to enhance cooperation. As Thailand and South Korea share well-being as a common national interest, both of them aspire to boost economic cooperation so that they can enjoy the benefits of a win-win situation. South Korea seeks to diversify its economic partners, whereas Thailand, on the other hand, hopes to be a manufacturing hub and is looking for foreign investors, particularly those investing in the EEC. The progress can be seen through three indicators, including the number of signed MOUs in the economic domain, the events related to promoting economic cooperation, and Thailand and South Korea's interaction related to economic

cooperation. On the contrary, socio-cultural cooperation and people-to-people exchanges under the People Pillar have made the most tangible progress in terms of output from the outcome of the cooperation. Sharing prestige as a common national interest made Thailand and South Korea eager to promote cultural exchange to enhance people-to-people exchange. Progress in this area of cooperation can be based on the number of Thai middle school students studying Korean, the number of tourists from South Korea to Thailand, the number of tourists from Thailand to South Korea, the number of Thai nationals in South Korea, and the number of Thai workers in South Korea.

2. The Future Direction of Thailand–South Korea Relations

Thailand–South Korea relations have become even closer because of the NSP implementation. As discussed in the previous chapter, this policy has boosted the dynamics of cooperation in all areas between the two countries over the past five years. The dynamic of their cooperation at bilateral, regional, and subregional levels should continue, and it requires the support of both the Thai government and the South Korean government to maintain consistent engagement in the future. As Thailand and South Korea have already enjoyed strong relations under the People Pillar, expanding their cooperation in other areas is possible as well. In the future, there is more room for the two countries to explore and expand their cooperation in potential areas as follows:

First, in the area of security and defense cooperation, as Prime Minister Prayut expressed, the Thai side is interested in technology transfer and the defense industry. It is possible for South Korea, a country that has obtained modern high

technology in this area, to share its knowledge and experience as well as provide training sessions with the relevant Thai authorities so that Thailand will be able to develop improved defense industry capability. Apart from that, the number of South Korean participants in the Cobra Gold military exercise should be increased when COVID-19 returns to normalcy. It is believed that having more interaction between the Thai and South Korean officers would enable them to work together more closely and have a better understanding, which would lead to stronger defense cooperation to cope with both traditional and nontraditional threats.

Second, economic cooperation still provided a lot of opportunities for both sides to expand, especially in bilateral trade. It is true that the NSP was implemented, but it turned out that there was no significant change in the value of bilateral trade during 2017–2020. Thus, Thailand and South Korea should encourage the relevant stakeholders, such as businessmen, to ramp up their trading activities to reach a larger trading value. For investment, there were positive changes in terms of the number of South Korean enterprises and South Korea's FDI in Thailand during the period of the NSP implementation. Still, there is the possibility for South Korea to become the leading investor in Thailand. Investing in the areas of the 4IR sectors and high-tech industries is welcome by the Thai side. Thus, facilitating South Korean companies to invest more in the EEC should be continued by both Thailand and South Korea's relevant authorities.

Third, concerning cultural cooperation, South Korea has succeeded in using culture as a soft power to gain recognition from the international community. Likewise, Thailand has made an effort to promote Thai culture as a soft power to become a more well-known country. Therefore, sharing the successful story of using culture as the soft power from South Korea would be useful for Thailand to

adapt South Korea's soft power pattern to promote its culture. Besides, cultural events should be conducted in a face-to-face format when the COVID-19 situation allows it so that the people from both sides can resume interacting with each other. Constructive activities such as language and cultural exchanges among youth are also encouraged.

This research possesses some limitations as follows: First, the five measures of Thailand's foreign policy cover only nontraditional threats and transnational issues related to security. For this reason, there is a limit on the analysis of defense cooperation and traditional threats. Thus, it would be useful for future studies to pay more attention to this area as well. Another limitation is the difficulty in getting access to official information in detail and officials' opinions on the NSP from open sources. For the next study, conducting more in-depth interviews is recommended to get more information from the officers in government, private, academic, and public sectors so as to cover a wide range of issues more comprehensively.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Thailand's Foreign Policy

Promoting Thailand's Role on the Global Stage

The Government shall use the opportunity of Thailand's Chairmanship of ASEAN for the year 2019 to promote the country's role on the global stage so that Thailand can play a leading role in developing and fostering cooperation among countries to realise sustainable development, by undertaking the following measures:

Playing a constructive role in the region and on the global stage by conducting diplomatic relations with countries in the region and the wider international community in a balanced and stable manner on the basis of the principles of mutual trust, mutual respect and mutual benefit; emphasising the importance of strategic development partnerships and promoting Thailand's constructive role on the global stage, as well as contributing to efforts to realise the United Nations *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*.

Strengthening ASEAN solidarity in all aspects – political, economic, and socio-cultural – especially under Thailand's ASEAN Chairmanship; advocating concrete cooperation among ASEAN Member States and between ASEAN and its Dialogue Partners to achieve sustainable development in accordance with the Chairmanship theme of “Advancing Partnership for Sustainability”; and enhancing ASEAN centrality in support of sustainable peace and progress in the region.

Promoting economic and cultural relations under various cooperation frameworks in order to open up opportunities in trade and investment, knowledge and innovation with countries that have potential and expertise in Europe, the

Middle East and South Asia, among others; supporting business expansion in areas where Thai entrepreneurs have potential; enhancing cultural cooperation by promoting Thai uniqueness, identity, arts and culture, in order to gain wider recognition on the global stage.

Enhancing international cooperation in the area of security to address non-traditional threats such as cybersecurity, human trafficking, transnational crime, maritime safety and security, irregular migration and other transnational issues affecting the Thai people's livelihood and human security.

Engaging in proactive diplomacy for the people to protect the interests of the Thai people, labour and private sector overseas, and to promote the role of Thai communities in upholding Thai interests abroad.

Appendix 2. List of Thailand–Korea Treaties between 2017 and 2022

Domain	Year	No.	Agreements/MOUs
Economic (5)	2019	1.	Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Industry of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy of the Republic of Korea on Industrial Cooperation in response to the Fourth Industrial Revolution
	2019	2.	Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the Water Resources Management between the Office of National Water Resources of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea
	2019	3.	Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Railways Sector between the Ministry of Transport of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport of the Republic of Korea
	2019	4.	Memorandum of Understanding on the Cooperation in Smart City between the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport of the Republic of Korea
	2019	5.	Memorandum of Understanding between the Eastern Economic Corridor Office of Thailand and the Korea-Trade Investment Promotion Agency
Political-security (1)	2019	1.	Agreement between the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Government of the Republic of Korea on Mutual Protection of Classified Military Information
Socio-cultural (3)	2019	1.	Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Education of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea on Cooperation in the Field of Korean Language Education
	2019	2.	Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Ministry of Science and ICT of the Republic of Korea on the Cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation
	2019	3.	Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between the Department of Employment of the Ministry of Labour of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Korea Immigration Service of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Korea

Source: Department of East Asian Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, 2019, n.d. (Compiled by the author)

Appendix 3. Dialogues Made on the Occasion of Bilateral Meeting/Phone Conversations between the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand and the President of the Republic of Korea between 2017 and 2022

No.	Year	Occasions	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
1.	2018	Bilateral Talks on the Sidelines of the Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM)	Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prime Minister Prayut said that right before the ASEM Summit he had heard from the North Korean Ambassador to Thailand that President Moon and Chairman Kim Jong Un were having productive dialogues and making progress in promoting peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. The Prime Minister expressed his full support for the two leaders’ efforts. (Cheong Wa Dae, 2018)
2.	2019	President Moon Jae-in’s Official Visit to Thailand	Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Prime Minister expressed pleasure and honor for President Moon Jae-in’s visit to Thailand, which is the first visit of a South Korean President in 7 years, and emphasized that Thailand’s ASEAN chairmanship this year would further develop partnership between Thailand and South Korea toward tangible achievements. - On economic cooperation, both parties agreed on promoting more investment opportunity and cooperation, and on finalizing Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) within this year. The Prime Minister was pleased with the signing of memorandum between the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) and Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) on water management, smart city development, rail system cooperation, and industrial development under the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR).

No.	Year	Occasions	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With regard to political, security, and military cooperation, both parties came to terms on more exchange of high-level visits, and the development of bilateral mechanism for strategic partnership. The signing of an Agreement for the exchange of classified military information today also reflects mutual trust and cooperation. - At the people-to-people cooperation, both Thailand and South Korea are ready to build on existing cooperation on film and creative economy, to set up Korean Study Center and promote Korean language study in Thailand, as the memorandum on Korean language study has also been signed today. The two parties also agreed on promoting legal employment of Thai workers in Korea according to a memorandum on Thai labor employment in South Korea under the Employment Permit System (EPS). - On regional cooperation, this year marks the 30th anniversary of ASEAN-South Korea relations. The Prime Minister was pleased that South Korea endorses Thailand's ASEAN chairmanship and the ASEAN centrality, and was anticipating South Korea's development partnership under the ACMECS framework.

No.	Year	Occasions	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Prime Minister thanked South Korea for its friendship and determination to develop strategic relations in a tangible manner in order to enhance potentiality and mutual relations in all dimensions on the basis of mutual interests. (Royal Thai Government, 2019)
3.	2019	President Moon Jae-in's Official Visit to Thailand	Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - He said he has enjoyed watching a Korean drama, titled "Descendants of the Sun," which features a love story between a special forces soldier and a female doctor. - "Among Thai people, South Korean movies, singers and K-pop music are popular, as well as South Korea's home appliances," he said. (The Korea Times, 2019)
4.	2019	The ROK-Kingdom of Thailand Summit (At the Sideline of the 3 rd ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit)	Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - President Moon said, "I hope more Korean businesses will be able to participate in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) development project as part of the Thailand 4.0 Policy, which promotes the construction of roads, rail lines, and a new airport." In reply, Prime Minister Prayut said he was pleased at the signing of an MOU on EEC investment and cooperation. He noted that a promise between the two leaders to expedite implementation made this concrete outcome possible. Prime Minister Prayut added that the Thai Government will provide all possible convenience to Korean investors who excel in innovative industries related to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, such as automobile, electric vehicles, digital robots and hydrogen-powered vehicles.

No.	Year	Occasions	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prime Minister Prayut expressed his support for the President's efforts for the denuclearization for the Korean Peninsula and the peace process, stressing that Thailand will stand together to help achieve this goal. - Finally Prime Minister said he ate two Korean meals upon his arrival in Korea yesterday. The Prime Minister expressed special affection for Korean cuisine, saying he and his daughter love Korean food so much that they prepare them for themselves. (Cheong Wa Dae, 2019)
5.	2019	The ROK-Kingdom of Thailand Summit (At the Sideline of the 3 rd ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit)	Mrs. Narumon Pinyosinwat, Government Spokesperson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prime Minister Prayut thanked South Korea for supporting Thailand's ASEAN chairmanship this year and for its support for cooperation in various fields, both in the ASEAN framework and subregional framework. Thailand supported the constructive role of South Korea and this region. He expressed his appreciation for NSP implementation, which is in line with the Thailand 4.0 Policy, reflecting South Korea's determination to strengthen comprehensive relations with ASEAN. He also admired South Korea's role in the Mekong cooperation framework and was pleased to learn that the meeting was expected to elevate to the summit level for the first time this year.

No.	Year	Occasions	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both sides agreed to cooperate on bilateral and multilateral cooperation such as water management, infrastructure development, Micro, small and mid-size enterprises (MSMEs), education, and people-to-people exchange. South Korea is willing to exchange knowledge and expertise in innovation with Thailand. - The Prime Minister had extended an invitation to Korean investors to invest in the EEC, particularly in the industry 4.0 and 4IR sectors, including automotives, electric vehicles, biotechnology, digital and robotics, as well as BCG agricultural cooperation. (Royal Thai Government, 2019) (Unofficial translation by the author)
6.	2021	Telephone Conversation with H.E. Mr. Moon Jae-in	Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prime Minister Prayut highlighted promoting cooperation through linking of the two countries' corresponding national development strategies, including with the ROK's New Southern Policy (NSP) and New Southern Policy Plus (NSPS). He proposed strengthening Thailand-ROK strategic partnership in the post-COVID-19 era in three key areas, or 3 Partnerships (3Ps), namely, partnership for green economy, partnership for future industries and partnership for health.

No.	Year	Occasions	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prime Minister Prayut emphasised the importance of developing green economy partnership by building upon the Thai government’s implementation of the Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) Economy Model to achieve balanced and sustainable growth. Links could be identified between the BCG Model and the ROK’s Green New Deal. - The Thai Prime Minister invited the ROK side to invest in high-tech industries in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) and proposed that the Office of EEC and the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) work together to push forward for concrete cooperation. - The two leaders agreed to promote health partnership, including through the early convening of the First ROK-Thailand Foreign and Health Ministers’ 2+2 Dialogue on Health Security and the conclusion of an Agreement on Health Cooperation to pave the way for furthering medical and health cooperation in the future. (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, 2021)

Appendix 4. Dialogues Made on the Occasion of Bilateral Meetings between the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea between 2017 and 2022

No.	Year	Occasions	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
1.	2018	Bilateral Meeting between Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha and H.E. Ms. Kang Kyung-wha, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the ROK during the Official Visit to Thailand	Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Prime Minister congratulated the success of convening the 1st Inter-Korean Summit between the South Korean president and the North Korean leader on 27 April and the U.S.-North Korea Summit on 12 June, saying that these summits reflect the intention of building sustainable peace, stability, and security in the Korean Peninsula. - The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the ROK congratulated on the successful visit to Thailand of South Korean businessmen last May. She opined that Thailand and South Korea should increase trade value and investment through South Korea's New Southern Policy with Thailand's economic development policies and EEC projects. The Prime Minister replied that Thailand is ready to accommodate new investments. He hoped that the South Korean side would see the potential and opportunities to promote trade and investment with Thailand more clearly. (Bangkokbiznews, 2018) (Unofficial translation by the author)

No.	Year	Occasions	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
2.	2021	Bilateral Meeting between Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha and H.E. Mr. Chung Eui-yong, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the ROK during the Official Visit to Thailand	Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Prime Minister welcomed the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea to Thailand...South Korea has been Thailand's close friend and an important strategic partner. The Thai Government stands ready to cooperate with the South Korean counterpart to further forge relations into the future, and to endorse Korea's New Southern Policy and New Southern Policy Plus in a bid to strengthen relations and cooperation in the green economy, S-Curve industries, and public health. - Both parties were also pleased with the increasing number of investors from South Korea in Thailand, the highest number among all foreign investors during the first quarter of this year....The Prime Minister and Korean Foreign Minister also agreed on the expansion of cooperation in the areas of mutual interest. The Prime Minister extended his invitation for South Korean private sector to invest in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) in the fields of future automotive industry, semiconductor, and bio-health, on which the Minister affirmed Korean investors' interest to invest in the EEC, especially in the Smart City.

No.	Year	Occasions	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With regard to public health cooperation, the Prime Minister commended Korea's effective response to COVID-19, and emphasized Thailand's endorsement over the South Korean Prime Minister's declaration to promote Korea as global hub for COVID-19 vaccine production within 2025. They also agreed on the exchange of cooperation for the development of Thailand's ChulaCov19 and COVID-19 vaccines Korea is manufacturing in a bid to tackle the increasingly violence of the disease. - The Prime Minister and Korean Foreign Minister also discussed culture and people-to-people cooperation, and hoped for an increase of tourism activities between each other's country after the COVID-19 situation eases. The Prime Minister also thanked the Korean Government for providing COVID-19 vaccines to the Thai citizens, especially workers, and affirmed Thailand's commitment to also provide vaccines to foreign citizens in the country including the South Koreans. (Royal Thai Government, 2021)

Appendix 5. Dialogues Made on the Occasion of Bilateral Meetings/Phone Conversations between the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea between 2017 and 2022

No.	Year	Occasions	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
1.	2018	Bilateral Meeting between H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai and H.E. Ms. Kang Kyung-wha, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the ROK during the Visit to South Korea	H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand	- Minister Don praised the Korean government’s efforts to bring forward denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula and to establish peace across the region, and to strengthen its relationship with ASEAN members. “Thailand will make sure that Mekong River countries continue to provide the necessary support,” said the Thai minister. “Thailand will continue to cooperate with Korea to ensure a smooth implementation of its New Southern Policy.” (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and Korean Culture and Information Service, 2018)
2.	2018	Bilateral Meeting between H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai and H.E. Ms. Kang Kyung-wha, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the ROK during the Official Visit to Thailand	H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand	- The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand welcomed recent positive developments on the Korean Peninsula and praised the ROK government, especially the active role of President Moon Jae-in, for the efforts to achieve sustained peace, stability and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula. (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, 2018)

No.	Year	Occasions	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
3.	2019	Bilateral Meeting between H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai and H.E. Ms. Kang Kyung-wha, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the ROK during the Visit to Thailand to attend the 35 th ASEAN Summit and Related Summits	H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minister Kang mentioned that the ROK government will closely consult with Thailand, the Chair of ASEAN, for substantive preparation for the 2019 ASEAN - ROK Commemorative Summit and the 1st Mekong - ROK Summit to be held in Busan this November. Minister Don hoped that the upcoming Commutative Summit will provide a significant momentum for the development of the ROK - ASEAN relations; welcomed holding the historic inaugural Mekong - ROK Summit; and suggested continuing close consultation for the success of the two forthcoming Summit. - In the meeting, Minister Kang explained the ROK's efforts to make progress in the recent situation on the Korean Peninsula such as holding a meeting of the ROK-the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) - the United States (U.S.); extend to the Thailand government for having conveyed its consistent and active support for the ROK's government's efforts to establish peace on the Korean Peninsula, and asked for Thailand's continued support in the future. Minister Don replied that the Thai government will continue to support the ROK's government's effort to make progress in achieving complete denuclearization and the establishment of peace process on the Korean Peninsula. <p>(The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, 2019)</p>

No.	Year	Occasions	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
4.	2020	Telephone Conversation between H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai and H.E. Ms. Kang Kyung-wha, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the ROK during the Official Visit to Thailand	H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minister Don said with confidence that the ROK government will successfully bring the COVID-19 outbreak under control soon based on its quarantine capabilities. - He also asked for the ROK government's interest in protecting Thai nationals in the ROK, saying that a number of Thai nationals are staying in the ROK... and agreed to continue to work together to facilitate regional cooperation on public health issues. (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, 2020)
5.	2021	Telephone Conversation between H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai and H.E. Mr. Chung Eui-yong, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the ROK during the Official Visit to Thailand	H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - both ministers pointed out the need to institutionalize cooperation in the area of public health and disease control, including of tackling COVID-19, and agreed to hold the first Republic of Korea - Thailand Foreign and Health Ministers' 2+2 Dialogue on Health Security at an appropriate time. - Minister Chung explained the Korean government's effort to achieve complete denuclearization and established permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula, and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Don reaffirmed the Thai government's firm support for the Korean Peninsula Peace Process. (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, 2020)

No.	Year	Occasions	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
6.	2021	Bilateral Meeting between H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai and H.E. Mr. Chung Eui-yong, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the ROK during the Official Visit to Thailand	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand (Joint Press Statement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both sides welcomed the 10th anniversary of the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea on the Thailand-Republic of Korea Strategic Partnership in 2022 and shared the view on the importance of reinvigorating the current Strategic Partnership to align with national development strategies and respond to challenges posed by the changing regional and global strategic landscape as well as the COVID-19 pandemic. - Both sides acknowledged the close defense and security cooperation between Thailand and the Republic of Korea and agreed to continue strengthening cooperation in these areas. - Both sides expressed appreciation for the support and assistance extended to each other in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and agreed to collaborate closely towards a sustainable post-COVID-19 socio-economic recovery through a strengthened partnership for (1) future industries, (2) green economy, and (3) health.

No.	Year	Occasions	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
				<p>- <u>Partnership for future industries</u>: Both sides affirmed the commitment to facilitate trade and investment, share best practices on the balanced development of industry and infrastructure between urban and rural areas, including smart cities and intensify cooperation in technology and innovation and digital economy as well as human resource development to upskill the workforce. The Thai side encouraged the Republic of Korea to increase investment in high-tech industries such as next generation automobile, smart electronics especially semiconductors, robotics and automation, and bio-health, digital, medical, bio-circular-green industries (BCGs), particularly in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) through the support of relevant public agencies and private organizations from both sides, including the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) and the Board of Investment (BOI) of Thailand. The ROK side requested the Thai government's continued support for the Republic of Korea to participate and invest in major infrastructure projects in Thailand, which open for international bidding.</p>

No.	Year	Occasions	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Partnership for green economy</u>: Both sides agreed to explore synergies between Thailand’s Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) Economy model and the ROK’s Green New Deal with a view to promoting green investment and green technologies for sustainable development. Both sides also welcomed the fruitful outcome of the 2nd Joint Steering Committee (JSC) on 11 August 2021 as a step forward in cooperation on water resources management. Both sides noted the ROK’s bid for the 28th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28). - <u>Partnership for health</u>: Both sides expressed the determination to enhance cooperation in emerging infectious diseases and public health threats and explore collaboration in vaccine research, development, production and distribution. The two Ministers looked forward to finalizing the draft agreement on health cooperation and the convening of the First ROK-Thailand Foreign and Health Ministers’ 2+2 Dialogue on Health Security at the earliest date of mutual convenience with a view to enhancing the partnership between the two countries in this area. - Both sides welcomed the vibrant people-to-people relations and educational and cultural exchanges between Thailand and the Republic of Korea and supported a continued collaboration in these fields.

No.	Year	Occasions	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Thai side expressed appreciation to the Republic of Korea for the proactive role in sub-regional and regional frameworks, particularly in the ASEAN-ROK, Mekong-ROK Cooperation and ACMECS of which the Republic of Korea is a Development Partner. In this regard, both sides agreed to cooperate for the success of the forthcoming 11th Mekong-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting and the 3rd Mekong-ROK Summit later this year, which would further strengthen the partnership between Thailand as well as Mekong countries and the Republic of Korea towards peace, prosperity and sustainability in the Mekong sub-region. - In addition, both sides recognized that ASEAN-Korea Free Trade Agreement has been an important mechanism in accelerating trade and investment in the region and viewed that the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP) will enable the region to achieve post-pandemic economic recovery. - Both sides agreed to work closely to launch the ROK-ACMECS Cooperation Project utilizing the ROK's contribution to the ACMECS fund. The Thai side expressed appreciation to the Korean side for the support for Thailand's APEC host year in 2022.

No.	Year	Occasions	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
				<p>- Both sides reaffirmed the commitment to ASEAN centrality and bring about the four areas of cooperation under the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) into fruition as well as supported the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework. Thailand reiterated support to the Republic of Korea for the unwavering efforts to achieve complete denuclearization and establishment of permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula and to advance inter-Korean dialogue, engagement, and cooperation, while the Republic of Korea expressed support for the roles of ASEAN in resolving the situation in Myanmar. (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, 2021)</p>

Appendix 6. Speeches Made on the ASEAN-ROK Summit between 2017 and 2021 and 3rd ASEAN-ROK

Commemorative Summit in 2019

No.	Year	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
1.	2017	Lt. Gen. Weerachon Sukonthatipak, Deputy Spokesperson of the Office of the Prime Minister (19 th ASEAN-ROK Summit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Thai Prime Minister understood South Korea’s concern about the threat of North Korea’s nuclear and missile development, which is a global problem that requires the cooperation of all parties to solve. Thailand commended President Moon Jae-in’s “Berlin Initiative” as a peaceful solution for all concerned parties and also supported implementation under the UN Security Council resolutions to make the Korean Peninsula free from nuclear weapons and become a peaceful and stable region. - In terms of promoting strategic partnership relations between ASEAN and South Korea, the Prime Minister has proposed the following guidelines for cooperation. First, on economic cooperation and sustainable development, he encouraged South Korean investors to invest in the EEC and in special economic zones along the Thai border under the concept “Thailand Plus One” to promote regional connectivity between the Mekong River basin and the region, pushing ASEAN to become involved in the value chain of the Asia-Pacific region and the world, narrowing the development gap in the region by distributing prosperity to all ASEAN member states. Besides, the knowledge sharing in which South Korea has expertise, such as forest management, clean energy, green growth, MSMEs, innovation and Information and Communications Technology (ICT), and human development, will help the region to develop in a sustainable way without leaving anyone behind. Secondly, on cultural cooperation, he congratulated the opening of the ASEAN

No.	Year	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
			<p>Cultural Center in Busan last September, which is an important channel to promote cultural exchanges and mutual understanding between the people to form the foundation of closer relations and cooperation. He asked for more cultural exchanges and youth exchanges to be organized, particularly those between youth from middle-sized cities and rural areas, to establish a wider network between the ASEAN and South Korean people.</p> <p>(Thailand E-government, 2017) (Unofficial translation by the author)</p>
2.	2019	<p>Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Thailand (Joint Press Conference by the Co-Chair of the 3rd ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit)</p>	<p>- Regarding the bilateral relationship between Thailand and the ROK, it was my great honour to have been able to welcome President Moon to Thailand twice, in September and November. And on the 25th of November, President Moon and I had a bilateral meeting here in Busan. We witnessed the signing of three Memorandums of Understanding, namely, on cooperation in the Eastern Economic Corridor or EEC; on cooperation in science, technology and innovation; and on cooperation in the exchange of labour force information. These MoUs will help to contribute to closer and more comprehensive bilateral relations.</p> <p>(The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, 2019)</p>
3.	2020	<p>Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Thailand (21st ASEAN - ROK Summit)</p>	<p>- On public health, the Prime Minister of Thailand expressed appreciation for the ROK's contribution to the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund and exchange of experiences and good practices in responding to public health emergencies.</p>

No.	Year	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On economic recovery and improving people’s livelihood, the Prime Minister of Thailand emphasised that regional economic integration and supply chain resilience between ASEAN and Korea should be further enhanced to increase two-way trade and investment flows. He also suggested the full utilisation of the ASEAN-ROK Free Trade Area, the ASEAN-ROK Economic Ministers’ Joint Initiatives on Bolstering Economic Connectivity between ASEAN-ROK in response to the COVID-19 Outbreak and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement. He highlighted that ASEAN and the ROK should jointly develop digital economy, by making use of technology, innovation and e-commerce, to promote economic recovery and cope with the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), especially for the MSMEs, start-ups and local entrepreneurs, as they are the engines of the grassroots economy, to ensure their access to appropriate financing facility and equip them with necessary skills for the 4IR. - On Connectivity, Thailand invited the ROK to consider expanding cooperation on the projects under the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC 2025), by focusing on development of smart and environment-friendly infrastructure and green development through the ASEAN Catalytic Green Finance Facility, which are in line with the ROK’s “Green New Deal” policy. Moreover, Thailand supports the ROK’s active and continuous role in human capital development, particularly through the Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) projects.

No.	Year	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Prime Minister of Thailand believed that peace and stability are solid foundations for prosperity and sustainable development. Thailand supports the ROK’s efforts to promote peace on the Korean Peninsula for the realisation of prosperous and denuclearised Korean Peninsula. (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, 2020)
4.	2021	Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Thailand (22 nd ASEAN-ROK Summit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On public health, the Prime Minister expressed appreciation to the ROK for its additional contribution of 5 million USD to the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund. - On economic recovery and improving people’s livelihood, the Prime Minister emphasised that ASEAN and the ROK should focus on the development of smart infrastructure, smart city and future industries, as well as enhancing regional economic integration and supply chains resilience. He also stressed the importance of the early entry into force of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement. In addition, the Prime Minister highlighted on digital economy by utilising digital technology and e-commerce should be enhanced to promote economic recovery, especially for MSMEs, start-ups and local entrepreneurs, to ensure their access to financing facilities and equip them with necessary skills for the 4IR. - On connectivity, the Prime Minister focused on the development of smart and green infrastructure and invited the ASEAN Member States and the ROK to explore cooperation on alternative approaches such as the Bio-Circular-Green Economy Model or the BCG, which is in line with the ROK’s “Green New Deal” policy.

No.	Year	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
			<p>- On human capital development, the Prime Minister of Thailand highlighted the importance of people-to-people ties, especially among youth and younger generation, particularly through the use of “soft power” such as music, movies, sports, social and digital media, and by famous artists, such as Black Pink and BTS. He also encouraged more joint activities by the ASEAN-ROK Centre in Seoul, ASEAN-ROK Cultural Center in Bangkok and ASEAN-ROK Culture House in Busan. (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, 2021)</p>

Appendix 7. Other Dialogues, 2017–2022

No.	Year	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
1.	2018	Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Thailand (The Visit to Thailand of Mr. Song Young-moo, Minister of National Defense of the ROK)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Prime Minister praised the South Korean defense industry and its modern weapons. He commended the NSP, which is consistent with the Thailand 4.0 policy and the EEC project. On this occasion, he also invited South Korean investors to invest in Thailand. - The Prime Minister praised South Korea’s policies in promoting the Korean wave, such as culture, movies, music, singers, and actors, which are gaining more popularity in Thailand. There has been an increase in both the number of Koreans visiting Thailand and the number of Thais peoples visiting South Korea. He hoped that Thailand and South Korea would continue to work together to further develop their cultural and people-to-people ties. - The two sides exchanged views on the situation on the Korean Peninsula. According to the Prime Minister, Thailand does not want a war to erupt on the Korean Peninsula because it would result in a loss. He was confident that South Korea will be able to solve the problem through peaceful processes and noted that the situation is improving through the resumed meeting between South Korea and North Korea as well as North Korea’s acceptance to attend the Winter Olympics. So, it is regarded as a good sign. Thailand reiterated that Thailand would support the problem’s resolution through peaceful means, and Thailand has also complied with the UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions. (The Secretariat of the Prime Minister, 2018) (Unofficial translation by the author)

No.	Year	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
2.	2018	Lt. Gen. Kongcheep Tantravanich, Spokesperson of the Ministry of Defense of Thailand (The Visit to Thailand of Mr. Song Young-moo, Minister of National Defense of the ROK)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The visit of Mr. Song Young-moo, Minister of National Defense of the ROK, was considered to be an important visit to Thailand because visits of the Minister of National Defense have happened rarely in the past. (Tnews, 2018) (Unofficial translation by the author)
3.	2019	Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Thailand (Keynote Speech at Thailand-Korea Business Forum)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am very glad to hear that President Moon led the group of Korean businessmen who have played an important role in the Korean industry to visit Thailand. This is a good sign that more than 100 leading Korean companies pay attention to Thailand's economy and are interested in investing in Thailand. - It gives me great pleasure to be a witness to the signing of the MOUs between Thailand and Korean organizations, including the signing between the Office of the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) and the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA). All the relevant agencies that have signed the MOUs are ready to cooperate in several areas, such as investment, technology, industry, transportation, and human resource development. This cooperation will extend to countless collaborations in the private sector from now on.

No.	Year	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As Thailand is one of the ASEAN members and serves as ASEAN Chairman this year [2019], I would like to commend the NSP under the leadership of President Moon, who announced the expansion of cooperation in various fields, especially economics, in the Southeast Asian region. This policy has a profound meaning and is of great importance not only to Thailand but also to this region, which is currently in the stage of economic development. Therefore, it requires a good partner to create mutual benefits in the future. - The Thai government recognizes the important role of South Korea, especially in trade and investment, as South Korea has the strength to use its economic and industrial power together with its unique cultural power to accomplish leapfrog economic progress, which has turned South Korea into a main engine in driving the economy in Asia. In addition, South Korean entrepreneurs, from large companies to SMEs and startups, own advanced technology and outstanding innovation. South Korean investors are one of Thailand's key foreign investors, and South Korea has always been Thailand's target country in promoting investment. - I view that President Moon's visit to Thailand is a very good opportunity for Thailand to link up its economic, trade, and investment policies with Korea's NSP, and I hope to see South Korea's stronger role as an investor in Thailand. <p>(Royal Thai Government, 2019) (Unofficial translation by the author)</p>

No.	Year	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
4.	2019	Ms. Duangjai Asawachintachit, Secretary General of the Thailand Board of Investment (BOI) (Thailand-Korea Business Forum)	- The Thailand-Korea Business Forum was organized to exchange information on economics and investments, as well as provide a chance for leading businessmen from Thailand and South Korea to meet with one another. It is, therefore, a good opportunity to introduce economic and investment policies and the availability of various factors to support investment and business opportunities in Thailand. "I am confident that this event will help the South Korean private sector to acknowledge Thailand's potential and its readiness to become the business hub of this region and an investment base for South Korean investors." (Royal Thai Government, 2019) (Unofficial translation by the author)
5.	2019	Mrs. Naraporn Chan-o-cha, Spouse of Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister and Defense Minister of Thailand (Thailand's National Korean Speech Competition for Secondary and Higher Education Students)	- Mrs. Naraporn congratulated the winning team and emphasized the importance of studying foreign languages. It is the key to exploring the society, culture, and ways of life of other countries and the world. It also creates a plethora of new opportunities, not only for language learners but also for our country, Thailand. The relationship between Thailand and South Korea has developed both at the government and people's level. Nowadays, the number of Thai people who are interested in studying the Korean language has increased due to the popularity of the K-pop trend, which includes movies, songs, and drama series, in Thailand. Thai students who have proficiency in Korean language are, thus, recognized as goodwill ambassadors, playing a role in strengthening relations between the young generations in the two countries. This will be an advantage for further cooperation development in the future. (Royal Thai Government, 2019) (Unofficial translation by the author)

No.	Year	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
6.	2019	Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Thailand (Congratulation Speech at the ASEAN-ROK CEO Summit 2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am of the view that the private sector plays a crucial role in regional economic development. Indeed, feedback from, and the support of, the private sector is essential because they are key to driving the economy. Thus, there is a need to deepen public-private partnership, as stated in the Plan of Action for Implementing the ASEAN-ROK Joint Statement for Peace, Sustainability and Partnership. In this regard, the ASEAN private sector has been making plans and setting goals to enhance their capacity in response to the challenges of this age of rapid change in the following areas... (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, 2019)
7.	2019	Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Thailand (Remarks at the Opening Ceremony of the ASEAN-ROK Startup Summit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At the outset, I would like to commend the Republic of Korea on the remarkable and rapid success of its startup businesses in the global arena. This is indeed a good example of what public-private partnerships (PPP) can achieve. I believe that the ROK's experiences and success in this area could be shared with startup businesses in Thailand and the ASEAN Member States and will be valuable in our efforts to build an ASEAN Community that is people-centered, leaves no one behind and looks to the future. - ASEAN and the Republic of Korea should continue to give importance to cooperation in the area of startups because it is consistent with the policies of both sides to promote economic growth that is dynamic, inclusive and sustainable...In this regard, I am pleased that the Memorandum of Understanding between Thailand's Minister of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation and the Ministry of Science and ICT of the Republic of Korea was signed yesterday. I hope that the relations and cooperation in the areas of innovation and startups between ASEAN and the Republic of Korea will be further strengthened and continue to grow thereafter. (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, 2019)

No.	Year	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
8.	2021	Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Thailand (Keynote at the 2 nd Partnering for Green Growth and Global 2030 Summit)	- I commend the Republic of Korea (ROK)'s New Southern Policy Plus and view that Thailand and the ROK should strengthen our partnership through knowledge and technology exchanges under Thailand's BCG Economic Model and the ROK's Green New Deal policy, along with other countries' green recovery approaches through international platforms, including APEC, of which Thailand will assume the chairmanship in 2022. (Royal Thai Government, n.d.)
9.	2021	Ms. Traisulee Traisorukul, Deputy Spokesperson of the Office of the Prime Minister (Thai Cabinet Meeting on the Agenda of Receiving Vaccines from South Korea)	- Thailand's cabinet has approved Thailand to receive 470,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccine donation from South Korea. In this regard, the cabinet granted the power to the Minister of Public Health to sign (1) the draft of the Donation Agreement between Thailand and South Korea and (2) the draft of the Tripartite Agreement between Thailand, South Korea, and AstraZeneca company. Vaccination priority will be given to Korean citizens residing in Thailand. (efinanceThai, 2021) (Unofficial translation by the author)
10.	2021	Mr. Anutin Charnvirakul, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Health of Thailand (The Handover Ceremony of the AstraZeneca Vaccine Donation from South Korea)	- He expressed his sincere gratitude to the South Korean government for the AstraZeneca vaccine donation. The South Korean government has always supported the Thai government. This time, it was a collaboration between the Ministry of Public Health of Thailand and the Ministry of Health and Welfare of South Korea. Approximately 70% of Thai people are expected to receive a vaccination in the near future. This was the first time that South Korea donated COVID-19 vaccines directly to other countries, other than providing the financial donations to COVAX, which is a project led by the World Health Organization and alliance organizations to provide and distribute vaccines to middle-income and poor countries in an equal and fair manner. (TNN Online, 2021) (Unofficial translation by the author)

No.	Year	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
11.	2021	Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Thailand (The Visit to Thailand of Mr. Suh Wook, Minister of National Defense of the ROK)	- He expressed his appreciation to South Korea for providing vaccines for Thai nationals who were residing in South Korea and for South Korea's military forces' participation in the past Cobra Gold military exercise. He appreciated South Korea's effort to push forward constructive cooperation between ASEAN and Korea in various fields and expressed Thailand's readiness to support the Joint Action Plan preparation. He also thanked South Korea for having the highest number of foreign investors investing in the EEC during the first quarter of this year. Moreover, he hoped to expand cooperation in both security and economic areas with South Korea, particularly in technology transfer and the defense industry. (Royal Thai Government, 2021) (Unofficial translation by the author)
12.	2022	Mr. Suchart Chomklin, Minister of Labour of Thailand (Press Release on the Opening for Applications of the 11 th Korean language and Working Skills Test (Point System))	- Gen. Prayut Chan-o-Cha, Prime Minister and Gen. Prawit Wongsuwan, the Deputy Prime Minister who is the supervisor for the Ministry of Labour, have attached importance to encouraging Thai workers to work abroad. Working abroad is a chance for them to earn an income for a living, improve their quality of life, and gain working experience to help develop the country when they return home. (Department of Employment, 2022) (Unofficial translation by the author)

No.	Year	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
13.	2022	Mr. Itthiphol Kunplome, Minister of Culture of Thailand (Publication on 2 nd ASEAN-Korea Music Festival)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - He revealed that the Ministry of Culture has a policy to push forward Thailand’s soft power in accordance with Thailand’s government policy to promote Thailand’s image, prestige, and culture at the international level. Therefore, the Ministry of Culture agreed to participate in the 2nd ASEAN-Korea Music Festival in South Korea through an online platform. It was a collaboration between the ASEAN Secretariat and the South Korean government, funded by the ASEAN-Korea Cooperation Fund. The Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) was assigned to be the project operator, and the ASEAN-Korea Music Committee was set up, composed of representatives from ASEAN countries and South Korea, to supervise the project. This music festival aims to promote people-to-people exchange and develop understanding between South Korea and ASEAN countries on culture and artists, especially to build friendship among the younger generation through pop music. - He added that the main activity of this project was the 2nd ASEAN-Korea Music Festival, under the theme “ROUND Music Festival 2021,” on 9 January 2022, where the Korean artists performed live music shows. While the ASEAN artists sent their music videos to be shown on the same occasion, after that, the recording of this show was uploaded on KBS’s and ROUND’s YouTube channels. Thailand appointed Mr. Popethorn Sunthornyanakij or Two Popethorn, a famous Thai artist both at the domestic and international level, to conduct musical performances with three songs: “Poot Thammai” (“Don’t Say That You Do”), “Tae Yang Khittheung” (“But I Still Miss You”), and “Ying Klai Ying Chat” (“The Farther, the Clearer”). Apart from the music show, the ROUND Music Forum, titled “Exploring ASEAN Music,” was conducted by ASEAN and South Korean experts from the music industry and broadcast via

No.	Year	Commentators	Dialogues (Speech/Statements/Observation)
			<p>ROUND's YouTube channel from December 2021 to January 2022. As for Thailand, Mr. Anant Narkkong, Silpathorn Artist 2019, was invited to be the Thai representative to present his music study project under the title "An Exploration of Thai Traditional Music." (Royal Thai Government, 2022) (Unofficial translation by the author)</p>
14.	2022	<p>Mrs. Oramon Saphaweetham, Director-General of the Department of Trade Negotiation (The Approval to Sign the MOU on the Establishment of AKIIC)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - She disclosed on 11 March 2022, that Thailand's Cabinet approved the signing of the MOU on the establishment of the ASEAN-South Korea Industrial Innovation Center (AKIIC). The Cabinet authorized the Minister of Commerce to sign the said MOU, which is expected to take place in the first half of this year. The AKIIC will be established for purposes such as conducting joint research, knowledge exchange, technology transfer, and taking technology for commercial use. - She said that the establishment of the AKIIC is an initiative of South Korea, a country that is famous for its advanced science, technology, and innovation, to cooperate with ASEAN in developing innovations for advancing the industrial sector to create value-added for commercial purposes as well as increase science and technology capacity between the two sides. The AKIIC will be established in South Korea. In addition, the National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA) will be Thailand's representative at the AKIIC Executive Committee to push forward cooperation in industrial fields that Thailand will benefit from, such as Industry 4.0, modern vehicles, smart agriculture, high-performance batteries, medical equipment, and the entertainment industry. (M Report, 2022) (Unofficial translation by the author)

Appendix 8. Direct Flights between Thailand-South Korea in 2019

No.	Airways	Flights
1.	Thai Airways	Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) ↔ Seoul Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) ↔ Busan Seoul ↔ Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) Busan ↔ Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi)
2.	Asiana Airlines	Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) ↔ Seoul Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) ↔ Busan Seoul ↔ Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) Busan ↔ Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi)
3.	Korean Air	Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) ↔ Seoul Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) ↔ Busan Seoul ↔ Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) Busan ↔ Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi)
4.	Jeju Air	Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) ↔ Seoul Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) ↔ Busan Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) ↔ Muan Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) ↔ Jeju Seoul ↔ Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) Busan ↔ Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) Muan ↔ Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) Jeju ↔ Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) Chaingmai ↔ Seoul Seoul ↔ Chaingmai
5.	Eastar Jet	Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) ↔ Seoul Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) ↔ Busan Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) ↔ Jeju Seoul ↔ Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) Busan ↔ Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) Jeju ↔ Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi)
6.	Jin Air	Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) ↔ Seoul Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) ↔ Busan Seoul ↔ Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) Busan ↔ Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) Phuket ↔ Seoul Seoul ↔ Phuket
7.	Thai Airasia X	Bangkok (Donmuang) ↔ Seoul Seoul ↔ Bangkok (Donmuang)
8.	T'way Air	Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) ↔ Seoul Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) ↔ Daegu Seoul ↔ Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) Daegu ↔ Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi)

Source: Creatrip, 2019 (Compiled by the author)

Appendix 9.

Interview#1

Questions and Answers:

1. How does the New Southern Policy (NSP) correspond to Thailand's foreign policy?

South Korea introduced the NSP, which consists of sixteen tasks. The purpose of adopting this policy is to enhance its relationship with ASEAN at both a bilateral and multilateral level. The NSP's 3Ps of "People, Prosperity, and Peace" are in line with the ASEAN's three Pillars; the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). Thailand was the ASEAN Chair in 2019, which coincided with the 30th anniversary of the ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit in Busan and the 1st ASEAN-Mekong Summit. It is worth noting that Thailand and South Korea share similar values that enhance partnerships with other countries, as evidenced by Thailand's ASEAN Chairmanship theme of "Advancing Partnership for Sustainability" and the motto of the 30th anniversary of the ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit, "Partnership for Peace, Prosperity for People." In this way, partnership is seen as the fourth P, through which Thailand tries to contribute to fostering relations between ASEAN and its Dialogue Partners, including South Korea. Additionally, Thailand promotes itself as a "sustainable country" that adheres to the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great's Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) to achieve the SDGs. Thus, Thailand also plays a role as the bridge builder for sustainable development between South Korea and the

Mekong subregion. In 2020, the Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) cosigned a third Three-year Action Plan (2020–2022) agreeing to promote cooperation at the bilateral and trilateral level and support the exchange of experiences through training courses and the exchange of experts in various areas of cooperation.

2. What was Thailand's response to the NSP in the past five years?

As an aggregator of opinions from various sectors, including the government sector and business and media sectors, I am of the view that Thailand was very pleased to learn that South Korea is interested in ASEAN. Thailand warmly welcomed South Korea's proactive engagement in subregional and regional frameworks. Therefore, Thailand has always found the ways and means to create available space that is suitable to expand cooperation with South Korea in every framework. The presence of South Korea in the Southeast Asian region increases the number of players in the region. From the perspective of ASEAN and Thailand, the higher the number of players in the region, the greater the chance for bargaining and negotiating will be.

In addition, Thailand is happy to see that South Korea is trying to strengthen relations with other countries apart from its neighboring countries, namely Japan, China, and Russia. Generally, these neighboring countries have a lot of influence in formulating South Korea's strategies. However, at that time, the immediate cause that suddenly motivated South Korea to implement the NSP derived from the trade sanctions imposed by China. This made President Moon pledge to increase the trade value of 2.2 trillion Won with ASEAN. At the same

time, it is beneficial for ASEAN because this is a good opportunity to diversify its trading partners other than the existing ones like China. As a result, it is possible to view this as a win–win situation for both parties.

The NSP also enlarges the diplomatic space between ASEAN and South Korea. Thailand appreciates not only South Korea’s good intention to engage with ASEAN but also recognizes South Korea’s effort to raise public awareness about ASEAN among Korean society through various events and seminars, as well as President Moon’s interviews in various media. From my evaluation, it could be said that awareness of ASEAN in South Korea has increased at the government level, but the other levels have not paid much attention to it.

3. In your view, in which areas of cooperation do you think South Korea sought to engage with Thailand the most? Why?

Thailand and South Korea have shared strong people-to-people ties already. Under President Moon’s administration, South Korea has wisely taken advantage of these existing ties to build on further cooperation through the NSP. Within this policy, there are sixteen tasks, which are goals that South Korea intentionally proposed to cooperate with ASEAN and its member countries. Therefore, the diversity of these tasks can be seen as South Korea’s strength because they are very flexible. This allows partner countries to feel free to choose the possible areas of cooperation. For instance, Thailand is keen on health cooperation, which matches with one of the NSP’s tasks. It would be easier for both sides to expand cooperation when the area of cooperation meets their mutual

needs. I opine that the NSP made Thailand feel equal to South Korea as it is perceived as a two-way and symmetrical relationship.

4. In which areas of cooperation do you think Thailand was more willing to engage with South Korea? Why?

Thailand is eager to hear about South Korea's success stories in the K-pop industry, economic development, politics, and democracy. South Korea is regarded as a successful case that shifted itself from a developing country to a developed country within a short period of time. In the past, people used to compare Thailand with South Korea in various dimensions. But when time passed, it turned out that South Korea had taken off from its developing country status while Thailand remains a developing country. It would be great if South Korea could share these stories as a part of its soft power through public diplomacy with Thailand and other developing countries such as Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam (CLMV). Thailand is also interested in the creative economy as South Korea has expertise in exporting culture to the international market. Thailand wishes to learn how to make it successful and, at the same time, seeks to cooperate with South Korea by using Koreans' platform to export Thai culture to South Korea and the international market such as the collaboration on movie production between Thailand and South Korea on the movie "The Median."

5. Among the three pillars: socio-cultural, economic, and political-security, which one do you think has the most progress in terms of cooperation between South Korea and Thailand? Please explain.

The People Pillar has made remarkable progress. This pillar is the strong point for Thailand and South Korea to further expand their cooperation in the future. A lot of Thai people reside in South Korea, and they have come for several purposes, such as studying, working, or marrying Korean nationals. Over the past two years, the number of retail stores for Korean goods and products has been increasing in Thailand, reflecting that South Korea has gained popularity among Thai people. Also, the Korean language has received more attention from Thai students, as can be seen from the increasing number of learners—approximately 40,000 people. In the music and entertainment industries, the number of Thai singers debuting in South Korean bands has increased. These artists, such as Lisa (BLACKPINK) and Bambam (GOT7), are good examples of public figures that increase Korean popularity in Thai society. They have played an important role in strengthening the People Pillar.

The script was written based on the author's interview with Mr. Seksan Anantasirikiat, Advertising Director of the Korean Association of Thai Studies, conducted via Zoom meeting, on 1st May 2022.

Interview#2

Questions and Answers:

1. How does the New Southern Policy (NSP) correspond to Thailand's foreign policy?

The NSP corresponds to Thailand's current foreign policy in three ways.

First, the goal of the two countries' policies is consistent as they use a people-centered approach to push their policies forward. With this approach, the benefits will return to the people. For South Korea, the NSP was implemented under the vision of a "People-centered Community of Peace and Prosperity," which consists of three pillars, aiming to create a people-centered community. By the same token, Thailand's foreign policy aims to put people at the center, as the Thai Prime Minister declared that no one should be left behind.

Second, on a bilateral level, Thailand wishes to attract more trade, investment, best practices and innovation from South Korea. In other words, Thailand intends to build its economy through foreign policy. For these reasons, Thailand needs solutions such as promoting investment, promoting trading value, and attracting innovation to the country to enhance its knowledge by learning from more developed nations. In the same way, South Korea is willing to promote economic cooperation. Aside from making investments in Thailand, South Korea, which considers itself a country that has expertise in innovation advancement, is also ready to share technology transfer. Thus, the NSP is getting in line with Thailand's foreign policy in terms of economic development. The EEC is an area in which Thailand wishes South Korea would invest. According to the telephone conversation between Prime Minister Prayut and President Moon, Thailand's

demands are for South Korea to invest in the following areas through three partnerships: (1) partnership for health such as investing in the bio-health industry; (2) partnership for future industries such as investing in the field of robotics and automation, 5G, semiconductors, and smart cities; Thailand believes that South Korea has been developing smart cities for a long time and is ready to share its knowledge with other countries, including Thailand; and (3) partnership for the green economy, which includes investments in the clean energy industry and electric vehicles (EVs).

Third, on the international stage, the strategic competition between the superpowers, especially China and the U.S., affects East Asia and Southeast Asia. Thailand, a middle-sized nation, does not wish to take sides with either of these two superpowers. Therefore, Thailand's foreign policy seeks to establish a balance between them. As South Korea is a middle power, this could be an alternative for Thailand to strengthen relations with South Korea as well as persuade it to play a constructive role in the Mekong subregion and ASEAN as a balancer to minimize the competition between the two superpowers in this region. Likewise, South Korea is also facing competition between these superpowers in East Asia. Hence, the NSP is linked with Thailand's foreign policy because South Korea shifted its attention to Southeast Asia.

2. What was Thailand's response to the NSP in the past five years?

To get a clear picture, the timeline is used to explain the main events and the interaction between Thailand and South Korea during the NSP implementation from 2017 to 2022, or for five years. President Moon took office in the middle of

2017, and the NSP was later announced at the end of that same year in Indonesia. After that, President Moon pledged to visit all ten ASEAN countries within two years, and his missions were successfully completed. The first event that reflected the interaction in promoting the NSP with Thailand was the official visit of President Moon on 1–3 September 2019. This visit was important to Thailand as it was the first official visit of the South Korean president in seven years. Even though it was an important event, it reflects that Thailand was not the top country on which South Korea placed importance when compared to Indonesia and Vietnam. Among ten ASEAN countries, Thailand was the eighth country that President Moon visited. However, the effort to push the NSP forward showed that South Korea paid more attention to Thailand, and this led to the official visit of President Moon. Coincidentally, Thailand was the ASEAN Chairman in 2019. As a result, a lot of high-level exchanges took place that year, which were regarded as good opportunities for the two leaders to discuss how to promote the NSP policy and Thailand 4.0 policy. In early November 2019, President Moon visited Thailand again to attend the 35th ASEAN summit. At the end of the same month, Prime Minister Prayut visited South Korea to attend the 3rd ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit and the 1st Mekong-ROK Summit. During this visit, the bilateral meeting was also convened, which was the second bilateral meeting after the first one that took place when President Moon visited Thailand in September 2019. This means that the leaders of both countries had bilateral meetings with each other twice in that year, which rarely happens. A South Korean President's visit to Thailand twice in a year also rarely happens. The momentum was quite good as there was a lot of discussion on several issues, including convincing South Korea to invest in the EEC; signing several MOUs, such as the MOU between the

Eastern Economic Corridor Office of Thailand and the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA); and the Agreement between the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Government of the Republic of Korea on Mutual Protection of Classified Military Information. However, the momentum was halted because of COVID-19, particularly in 2020. Then in 2021, three main events took place. The first event was on 28 May 2021, Prime Minister Prayut and President Moon had a discussion via telephone on the topic of strengthening Partnerships (3Ps), namely, the partnership for the green economy, partnership for future industries, and partnership for health. A few days later on 31 May 2021, Prime Minister Prayut attended the 2nd Partnership for Green Growth and Global Goals 2030 Summit (2nd P4G). At first, the South Korean side invited the Thai Prime Minister to attend the meeting in person in 2020. At that time, there was an idea to make an official visit by the Thai Prime Minister to South Korea for reciprocation of the official visit of the South Korean president. However, it did not occur because of COVID-19. Meanwhile the 2nd P4G was converted to an online format. Nevertheless, this event could create a dynamic in Thailand–South Korea relations. The last event was the official visit of H.E. Mr. Chung Eui-yong, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the ROK in August 2021. At the bilateral meeting between the Thai and South Korean Foreign Ministers, as the year 2022 marks the 10th anniversary of the Strategic Partnership, both sides agreed to make a Joint Action Plan to determine the direction of driving the relationship in the next five years (2022–2027).

3. In your view, in which areas of cooperation do you think South Korea sought to engage with Thailand the most? Why?

Thailand and South Korea's relations can be divided into three parts: political-security cooperation; economic cooperation; and socio-cultural and people-to-people cooperation. Thailand and South Korea have a strong relationship in terms of political-security cooperation as well as people-to-people. There have been no political, security, or historical conflict between the two countries. In the people-to-people cooperation, there was an exchange of tourists. Before the COVID-19 outbreak, around 1.8 million South Korean tourists visited Thailand and around 500,000 Thai tourists visited South Korea. This shows that the dynamic between people-to-people has been outstanding and that South Korea has gained a lot of popularity among Thai people. South Korea also attempted to cooperate with Thailand in this area, just like it did with other countries. As these areas are already strong, there is no big difference in terms of contribution and outcome. Therefore, to answer this question, South Korea sought to enhance economic cooperation with Thailand. Since the NSP was implemented, it is clear that the South Korean side approached the Thai side more often, such as requesting investment facilitation support. The NSP was launched with the purpose of diversifying South Korea's trading and investment markets due to the impact of China's reaction to the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) deployment. As South Korea already invests immensely in Vietnam and Indonesia, it can be argued that the interest in investing in Thailand was quite low before the NSP was introduced. But after the NSP was implemented, South Korea paid more attention to Thailand and was willing to enter the Thai market. However, the responses from Thailand might

not be fast enough or meet South Korea's demands. Thus, the outcome was still unclear. Looking at the trading value, it did not reflect the explicit change as there was disruption by COVID-19 in 2020–2021. The trading value in 2021 reached approximately \$15 billion, which is the highest trading value in record history. For the investment, there was the joint project between South Korea and Norway to manufacture medical gloves. Thus, the investment value has immensely increased. Moreover, there was an increasing number of South Korean companies trying to approach the Royal Thai Embassy in Seoul and the BOI for making investments in medical masks and studying the feasibility of manufacturing electric car batteries, but these were still in the discussion process. So, there have been no tangible outcomes or projects yet.

4. In which areas of cooperation do you think Thailand was more willing to engage with South Korea? Why?

Thailand would like to cooperate more with South Korea in terms of the economy, trade and investment. South Korea now has investments in Thailand, including Samsung Electronics, which manufactures washing machines, and POSCO, which produces steel. Yet, there is no investment in new industries that meet Thailand's demand. As a result, Thailand aims to promote investment in future industries. Apart from investment, Thailand seeks to learn from South Korea about science, technology, and innovation as well as human resource development, particularly skilled labor. In the past, there has been discussion on the opening of a South Korean university that specializes in technology in the EEC area, but there

has been no tangible outcome yet. Lastly, Thailand is also willing to cooperate with South Korea on illegal Thai labor in South Korea.

5. Among the three pillars: socio-cultural, economic, and political-security, which one do you think has the most progress in terms of cooperation between South Korea and Thailand? Please explain.

Socio-cultural cooperation and people-to-people exchange under the people pillar have made the most tangible progress, because cooperation under this pillar could bring people closer. From the international relations aspect, this pillar is very important. The cooperation will be able to expand into other areas easily when the people of the two countries have a good understanding and do not have any conflicts. In contrast, cooperation will be difficult to expand when the people of the two countries cannot get along well with each other. The indicators for proving this point are (1) the high number of tourist exchanges; (2) the sending of legal Thai workers to South Korea; (3) the meetings through various mechanisms such as the Consular Dialogue, which has already been held five times; (4) the cooperation between the TAT and the Korea Tourism Organisation (KTO); and (5) the number of direct flights between Thailand and South Korea before the COVID-19 outbreak.

In the second place, political-security cooperation has also made progress. The indicators are: (1) the signing of the Agreement between the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Government of the Republic of Korea on Mutual Protection of Classified Military Information, which reflects that both sides have a closer relationship; (2) South Korea's participation in the Cobra Gold military

exercise; (3) the convening of the cyber security dialogue on 25th March 2022, which is the newest area of cooperation between the two countries, and Thailand being the first ASEAN country to convene this kind of dialogue with South Korea; and (4) the effort to enhance health cooperation, in which South Korea proposed the ROK-Thailand Foreign and Health Minister's 2+2 Dialogues. Recently, a meeting at the Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) level was held to prepare for the convening of this dialogue. Until now, the ministerial level has not convened yet.

Lastly, the least advanced area of cooperation is the economy. South Korea has paid attention to Thailand, but how responsive Thailand will be remains to be seen. Thus, the development in this area may not be very noticeable.

The script was written based on the author's interview with Mr. Natouch Thammanurak, Counsellor, Department of East Asian Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, conducted via Zoom meeting, on 21st June 2022.

초록

신남방정책: 태국의 관점에서 분석

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신남방정책 (NSP) 은 문재인 정부 주도하에 아세안(ASEAN)과 그 회원국에 대해 시행된 대한민국의 외교정책을 의미한다. 본 연구는 신남방정책 대상 국가 중 하나인 태국에 대하여 2017년부터 2022년까지 문재인 정부에서의 신남방정책 구현을 통한 한국과 태국의 관계에 대한 태국의 관점을 조사하고 '사람', '번영', '평화'라는 3대 축으로 양국의 협력 진전을 평가하는 것을 그 목적으로 하고 있다. 본 연구는 정성적 방법과 기술적 분석을 사용하여 수행하였다. 연구를 위한 데이터는 문서 기반 조사와 심층 인터뷰를 통해 수집하였다. 외교 정책을 기반으로 태국의 국익을 식별하기 위한 분석 프레임워크에는 Charles O. Lerche, Jr.와 Abdul A. Said가 개발한 국익 개념을 사용하였다. 그런 다음 태국의 외교정책과 국익을 한국의 신남방정책과 비교하여 태국이 신남방정책을 어떻게 인식하고 있는지 살펴보았다. 그 결과 태국의 외교정책과 한국의 신남방정책은 5개 항목 중 4개 항목이 공통의 국익을 공유하고 있는 것으로 나타났으며, 이로 인해 서로 원활하게 협력할 수 있었음을 알 수 있었다. 그리고 태국의 외교정책과 한국의 신남방정책에 있어서 5개의

항목 중 하나의 항목만이 공통의 국익을 공유하지 않는 것으로 나타났음에도 불구하고 이 항목에 대해서도 양국은 여전히 어느 정도 협력이 이루어졌음을 알 수 있었다. 또한, '사람', '번영', '평화'라는 3대 축에 따른 양국의 협력 진도를 살펴보면, 태국과 한국은 '번영'의 축에서 경제 영역의 협력을 강화하기 위한 "투입" 측면에서 더 많은 진전을 보인 반면, "사람"의 축에서 사회문화적 협력과 인적교류는 협력의 "성과"에서 더 많은 진전을 이루었음을 알 수 있었다. 본 연구를 통해서 태국은 신남방정책의 전반적인 측면에 대해 긍정적인 인식을 가지고 있음을 확인할 수 있었다.

키워드: 아세안, 외교정책, 신남방정책, 동남아시아, 대한민국, 태국

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Kanticha Bunvanit