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SOUTH KOREA'S SOFT POWER PROJECTION AND ITS LIMITATIONS: THE
CASE OF THAAD

Master's Thesis

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Introduction

The concept of soft power refers to a country's capacity to exert influence over other countries through the means of attraction and persuasion rather than through coercive means. In the contemporary globalized era, soft power has become increasingly important for countries to achieve their objectives in foreign policy. South Korea's soft power has been gradually increasing and has gained recognition owing to its remarkable utilization of soft power, exemplified by its cultural exports popularly referred to as the "Korean Wave", which has gained international momentum. This phenomenon has garnered significant attention and serves as a testament to the country's ability to project its cultural influence beyond its borders. However, South Korea's soft power has certain limitations that hinder its capacity to exert influence, particularly when it comes to security issues in the region. This is most prominently exemplified by the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) deployment dispute that emerged between South Korea and China. The deployment of THAAD was intended to be a defensive measure for its national security. However, the THAAD conflict had a notable impact on South Korea's soft power as well. This is primarily due to China penalising the "Korean Wave" as well as other areas of soft power exchanges. China seemingly perceived the deployment as a threat to its national security interest.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the factors related to the THAAD dispute that contributed to the decline in South Korea's soft power in China. This will include a qualitative analysis of causal mechanisms, empirical evidence, and other effects that highlight the limitations of soft power in the face of complex security challenges. Furthermore, additional analytical methods will be employed in order to support and validate the evidence garnered from the primary analysis.

This case study can offer insights into how geopolitical tensions and security concerns can affect a country's soft power dynamics, as well as contribute to the understanding of the complexities and limitations of soft power in relation to international conflicts.

This thesis is structured into four chapters. The first chapter discusses the literature concerned with soft power. In the first subchapter, the focus is on the conceptualization of soft power and its distinction from hard power. The second subchapter delves into the role of soft power in the context of international relations, with subsections focusing on the three main sources of soft power, which are foreign policy, culture, and political values. The third subchapter focuses on soft power and the security context of East Asia. The chapter aims to

provide an account of the intricate regional conflicts. The second chapter of the thesis outlines the research questions and methodology employed in the thesis. There will be one main research question along with two sub questions. The main question will focus on the questions of how the THAAD dispute impacted South Korea's soft power and what are the limitations of soft power in the context of complex security challenges. The two sub questions will provide more additional detail to the main question. The third chapter examines the global spread of South Korea pop culture, with subsections delving into the factors contributing its global spread, its emergence as a soft power tool, and the limitations of the "Korean Wave" as a sustainable tool. The fourth chapter focuses on the THAAD dispute case and delves into the analysis and empirical evidence of the case. The first subchapter focuses on the intended purpose of THAAD and the second subchapter outlines the timeline of events to provide a chronological account of key events related to the decision to deploy the THAAD system and subsequent sequence of events. The third subchapter is further divided into four subsections that focus on the limits of soft power in international conflicts. The subsections discuss the limitations of soft power within national security interest and economic leverage, with further subsections examine South Korea's soft power efforts in the context on China's economic retaliation and how the imposition of "Korean Wave" sanctions affected the reach and influence of South Korea in China.

Keywords: Soft Power, "Korean Wave", THAAD conflict, International Relations, Security

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1: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter begins with an overview of the concepts of hard and soft power, examining their distinctions and the increasing recognition of soft power's significance in contemporary international relations. The significance of soft power in various aspects of international relations, including foreign policy, cultural diplomacy, and political values, is then discussed. The chapter concludes by focusing on the application of soft power in East Asia and its implications for regional security.

1.1. Hard and Soft Power

The concept of soft power was first introduced by Joseph Nye in his book entitled *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* to explain and predict the continuation of United States' (U.S.) hegemony in the 1980s during a period of American national decline. Joseph Nye defines soft power as "the ability to influence the behaviour of others to get the outcomes one wants" (Nye, 1990, p. 32), by attracting or seducing rather than achieving influence through hard power methods such as coercion or payments. He elaborated on this concept later in his book, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, where he argues for the relevance of soft power in post-September 11 U.S foreign policy when the U.S had become increasingly unpopular on the world stage for its actions against Iraq in 2003. Nye (2004) also noted that while hard power and soft power show a strong correlation, the two may not have an effect on one another. Hard power is achieved through military threat and economic coercion, while soft power is achieved through co-optive behavioural means, such as culture, values, and ideals. Nye (2004) has argued that hard power is not always the most effective kind of power for pursuing international objectives, as it may be expensive and have unexpected consequences. Instead, he has advocated for soft power, which he describes as the ability to attract and convince others to accept one's ideals and values without using force.

However, hard power also has clear benefits. Historically, nations with significant economic and military power frequently disregarded soft power in favour of coercive methods to produce desired results. In addition to being swift and efficient, it also produces results that are visible straight away. In certain situations, hard power can be an effective strategy when dealing with extremist and militant groups who are embroiling the general

populace and causing them to suffer as a result. Notable examples of this includes the invasion of South Korea by North Korea in 1950.

Arguments have been made that nations are not quick to use military action, and instead rely on diplomatic solutions. After World War II, with the establishment of international organisations and the rise of diplomatic practices, the geopolitical environment is stable. For instance, International institutions like the United Nations (UN) have functioned as impartial platforms for diplomatic dialogue and negotiation between nations. The United Nations has mediated peace talks between warring groups in the Middle East, the Balkans, and Korea. (Berdal & Malone, 2000) However, many nations have neglected the use of soft power in favour of hard power since World War II. Notable examples would include the invasion of South Korea by North Korea in 1950, South Vietnam by North Vietnam in 1972, Iraq by the U.S. in 2003, and most recently, the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2014 and 2022.

Some critics have even argued the definition of soft power to the likeness of propaganda (Michell, 2021). They assert that the purpose of having soft power for governments is being able to utilise culture to enhance one's political and economic agendas. In this view, soft power can be seen as a sort of weapon as well. Nye has argued against this notion by pointing out that soft power is about attracting rather than influencing. While propaganda and soft power have certain similarities, they also differ significantly. For instance, both propaganda and soft power employ media platforms to reach the people they want to influence. Furthermore, strategic language and narratives are used by both soft power and propaganda to sway public opinion. However, there are also some key distinctions between propaganda and soft power. Propaganda is based on manipulation and coercion, whereas soft power is based on appeal, legitimacy, and cultural impact (Nye, 2004). This is also why the concept of "sharp power", which was coined by the National Endowment for Democracy to describe a form of influence that involves the use of coercive and manipulative strategies by authoritarian governments to control public opinion cannot be compared to soft power. The goal of propaganda and "sharp power" is to indoctrinate people by perpetuating negative stereotypes, manipulating, and sowing fear. The goal of soft power is to win over target audiences by promoting positive ideals and encouraging cultural interaction.

1.2. The Role of Soft Power in International Relations

According to Nye (2004), soft power is based on three main sources: culture, political values, and foreign policy. The first subchapter examines soft power and foreign policy. It shows how utilizing soft power in foreign policy can form alliances and increase cooperation with other countries which may help a country achieve its objectives without using economic or military power. Soft power in foreign policy explores how governments employ soft power to achieve strategic aims internationally. The second subchapter discusses cultural diplomacy - using cultural events and exchanges to promote international cooperation and understanding. This diplomacy emphasizes the role of non-governmental actors including artists, curators, journalists, and students. Cultural exchange programs, art exhibits, and educational projects employ soft power and cultural diplomacy to foster favourable connections between countries. This subchapter highlights avoiding the imposition of a single dominant cultural paradigm and employing cultural diplomacy in conjunction with other foreign policy tools to achieve successful and inclusive international relations. The third subchapter discusses how soft power and its connection with political values such as democracy, human rights, and freedom of expression may increase a nation's soft power, making it more attractive to other countries and people. It also examines how governments might utilize soft power to reflect their political principles on the international scene.

1.2.1 Soft Power and Foreign Policy

Joseph Nye (2004) contends that the ultimate goal of soft power is to achieve its foreign policy objectives. A country's ability to project its influence onto the international scene is achieved by its foreign policy, which is comprised of its diplomatic and strategic connections with other nations. A nation may enhance its influence and accomplish its goals without resorting to the use of either economic or military force if it cultivates cooperative ties with other nations and forms alliances with other nations. For example, this can be seen in the role that the United Nations plays by offering a platform for nations to participate in diplomatic discourse and cooperate in solving global concerns.

Some scholars have criticised the concept of soft power and its effectiveness by arguing that the concept of soft power is somewhat flawed and that it ignores the significance of hard power in the process of accomplishing foreign policy goals. Critics suggest that, while the employment of soft power might be beneficial in some circumstances, it ultimately has a limited potential to influence the governments of other nations. One of the main arguments is that nations need to be ready to employ hard power in order to accomplish the

goals that they have set for their foreign policy. (Ferguson, 2004) Hard power may be an effective technique for deterring potential adversaries. It can be an essential instrument for preserving peace and order on a global scale. However, while soft power may not have the same immediate physical impact as hard power does, it nevertheless has the potential to be a significant factor in international affairs. Some scholars have proposed that the use of soft power may be used as a prelude to the application of hard power (Ohnesorge, 2019). Establishing a conducive environment and avoiding conflicts are two of the most important aspects of soft power, which may allow it to have a greater effect than hard force coercion.

Governments may establish coalitions and achieve strategic objectives via soft power, including cultural interactions, development assistance, and diplomacy. For example, the US has used soft power to create alliances with Japan, South Korea, and Australia to improve security in the Asia-Pacific region. Governments may also further their economic aims and expand their global influence by using soft power. This might mean backing trade treaties, funding infrastructure projects, or providing development assistance. For instance, China has promoted its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to increase infrastructure and economic development throughout Asia, Africa, and Europe.

Governments may utilize soft power to achieve certain foreign policy objectives, including conflict resolution, counterterrorism efforts, and support for democracy. For instance, the United States has supported democratic transitions in nations like Tunisia, Burma, and Ukraine and encouraged peace talks between Israel and Palestine. (Nye, 2004 pp.143-150) It has also assisted peace talks in Colombia (Melissen, 2005). Furthermore, Germany has been a staunch ally of Tunisia's democratic transition during the Arab Spring. Germany has promised financial and technical aid to Tunisia so that it may help the nation establish democratic institutions and advance human rights. To illustrate how soft power may be utilized to advance principles and interests, Germany's refugee policies in recent years must be taken into consideration. Germany has been at the forefront of providing help to refugees and lobbying for laws that address the root causes of their exodus. Consequently, Germany has been able to improve its ties with nations in the Middle East and Africa due to the refugee program it has implemented. (Ducatenzeiler, 2019) Soft power measures like economic aid and development assistance have also helped Japan achieve its regional and international objectives. The Japanese government's efforts to promote regional cooperation and stability, like Japan's Official Development Aid (ODA), strengthen the country's soft power. The ODA provided by Japan helps neighbouring countries develop infrastructure, such as airports and highways and helps Japan to promote itself in the region to offset China's

expanding influence in the area (Nisi, 2017). Japan's ODA shows how soft power can promote collaboration, stability, and peace and advance a nation's objectives.

Soft power is becoming more influential in determining international affairs. Nye proposes that nations can utilize soft power to solve global issues such as climate change and nuclear proliferation and that cultural diplomacy can be a useful tool for building relations with other countries (Nye, 2011). Soft power will continue to play an essential role in influencing international relations, resolving crises, and addressing global challenges as the world becomes more interlinked and globalized.

1.2.2 Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), aims to promote the “exchange of ideas, information, art, language and other aspects of culture among nations and peoples in order to foster mutual understanding” (Kumar, 2022). It is often used with traditional diplomatic approaches such as negotiation and conflict resolution. The practice of using cultural events and exchanges as a means to develop international cooperation and mutual understanding is an example of a kind of soft power known as cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy may include cultural exchange programs, cultural centres and institutes, and cultural festivals and events. It incorporates things like cultural exhibits and performances, as well as language teaching, and educational exchanges for young people.

In contrast to other areas of diplomacy, cultural diplomacy incorporates a wide variety of non-governmental players. These non-governmental players, who assist or enhance state-driven policy processes, include artists, curators, journalists, teachers, lecturers, and students. For instance, international art biennials are dependent on the participation of artists and curators. On the other hand, student exchange programs like the Fulbright Foreign Student Program in the United States of America and the ERASMUS program in the European Union encourage cultural exchange and the development of shared ideals. This can lead to the development of shared ideals and values, which can promote international cooperation. The Japanese government has established the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme to promote Japan's cultural heritage and values. Participants in JET act as cultural ambassadors by bringing foreign cultures and values to Japan (MFA of Japan). The program is useful for helping people from Japan and other countries understand each other and share their cultures, and it is useful for Japan's soft power, as the participants in the program can enhance the country's reputation and attractiveness.

Museums and cultural centres are particularly useful tools for engaging in cultural diplomacy because of the way in which they foster intercultural understanding by bringing together a variety of experiences from all over the world. For instance, the Louvre Abu Dhabi Museum was the first museum in the world to be the result of a diplomatic agreement between two countries (in this case, France and the United Arab Emirates) with the intention of fostering conversation between people of different cultural backgrounds when it opened in 2017 (Kumar, 2022). The South Korean government has also been promoting Korean culture as a method of strengthening the country's image and soft power abroad. For example, the Korean Cultural Center (KCC), has been built in several nations to spread information about Korean culture and to give Korean language tuition. For example, in China, the KCC offers K-pop dancing and Korean cooking workshops, which have proven to be popular among Chinese youth (Kim, 2019). Cultural diplomacy has the ability to promote mutual understanding and cooperation between peoples and governments, but it is also subject to several challenges and limitations.

One of the criticisms raised about cultural diplomacy is the possibility that it could be used to forward the political agenda of a state, rather than fostering genuine cultural exchange and comprehension. (Melissen, 2005) In this view, cultural diplomacy may be seen as a kind of soft power that is used to promote the interests of the powerful over those of the weak. The promotion of a powerful nation's cultural values and customs via the use of cultural diplomacy may lead to the marginalization of other cultural perspectives and the imposition of a dominant cultural viewpoint. This may be seen as a kind of cultural imperialism. (Pamment, 2013) This is the practice of the dominant culture attempting to impose its own values and beliefs on those of other cultures. A common example of this can be the spread of American popular culture, which has arguably led to the homogenisation of global culture. The widespread appeal of Hollywood films, American music, fast food businesses such as McDonald's and KFC, and American television programs demonstrates the impact of American popular culture on global culture. In addition, the dominance of the English language in worldwide commerce and communication is a further example of American cultural influence.

As a result, the practice of cultural diplomacy has to recognize and value the diversity of cultural ideas while also avoiding the imposition of a single dominant cultural perspective. The goal of cultural diplomacy should be to promote an understanding and respect between different cultures rather than the imposition of one culture's values and beliefs on one another. The promotion of cultural interchange, as opposed to the unrelenting propagation of

a single culture, should be the primary focus of cultural diplomacy to prevent the imposition of a dominant cultural paradigm. Thus, it is essential to make use of cultural diplomacy in combination with other aspects of foreign policy to carry out an effective and comprehensive approach to international relations. Cultural diplomacy's use may be useful in overcoming unfavourable perceptions and promoting a more positive image of a nation or region (Melissen, 2005). As a result, cultural diplomacy has the potential to contribute to the elimination of prejudices and stereotypes. Similarly, cultural diplomacy has the potential to be used in the promotion of human rights, democracy, and social equality, in addition to the resolution of global issues such as climate change.

1.2.3 Soft Power and Political Values

A country's soft power and political values have a significant link. Political values may have an impact on a country's soft power, and soft power can be utilized to promote political values. There are a number of reasons why nations should use soft power to promote their political values. This may include promoting political ideals like democracy and human rights. There are potentially many benefits that might accrue to countries via the use of soft power in the area of political values, with scholars pointing out that “when a country’s policies and values are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, its soft power is enhanced” (Nye, 2004, pp. 51). Firstly, it may be used to successfully influence others without resorting to force or other forms of coercion. Second, it has the potential to boost the status and legitimacy of a country, which may result in more cooperation and alliances with other nations. Third, it is a tool for fostering diplomatic relations, establishing new connections, and increasing mutual comprehension. It is possible that this may result in economic benefits, such as more tourism and an increase in exports.

Conversely, if a country’s policies and values are considered illegitimate, its soft power is diminished (Nye, 2004). If a nation wants to increase its soft power, it has to adopt policies and ideals that are consistent with those of the international community. Human rights abuses and aggressive military activities are only two examples of how a country's soft power may be damaged by violating international norms and ideals. Instead, a nation's soft power may grow if its citizens work to advance democratic principles, human rights, and other universally admired ideals.

For example, China has been effective in marketing its cultural exports and growing its impact in global media, but the country's one-party system and poor human rights record have made it less appealing to certain audiences. In certain instances, territorial conflicts with

China's neighbours have also led to backlash against China's soft power initiatives. Meanwhile, due to the popularity of K-pop music and television dramas, South Korea has been a major player in the field of soft power in recent years. However, South Korea's soft power initiatives have been hindered by tensions with North Korea and a lack of support from neighbouring countries in the region.

Thus, some scholars have questioned the effectiveness of soft power in political values. Some individuals have the opinion that soft power is an abstract concept, and the effects cannot be adequately described. It is additionally believed that governments should invest in military strength and maintain strong strategic ties rather than relying on the vaguer concept of soft power. This is because soft power is more difficult to define. (Walt, 2011)

It is important to remember that the efficacy of soft power might vary based on the exact context and variables that are present. While soft power is not guaranteed to solve all problems, it has the potential to be an effective strategy in some contexts. Although soft power is more difficult to evaluate than hard power, it is nevertheless possible to assess its impact level. Soft power may be measured using a variety of metrics, including public opinion surveys, media coverage, and cultural exports.

Soft power increases countries' chances of avoiding adverse consequences such as backlash and resentment by enabling them to achieve their foreign policy objectives in non-coercive methods. A country with a high degree of soft power may benefit from increased trade, investment, and security cooperation because it is better able to attract allies and establish relationships with other nations. One of the numerous benefits of employing soft power in foreign policy is that it promotes political values and increases a country's attractiveness to outsiders. Governments that embrace policies and values that are aligned with those of the international community may boost their soft power and achieve their foreign policy objectives without resorting to force.

1.3. Soft Power and Security in East Asia

One of the key reasons power is attractive is because it provides security. When it comes to soft power, an appealing image can garner support and security on both domestic and international stages. However, accumulating soft power takes a lot of energy and resources, especially in East Asia, where conflicts have raged for a long time between China, the Koreans, and Japan.

Historical and political tensions between China, Japan, and South Korea over issues such as Japan's wartime crimes in the 20th century, including the issue of comfort women,

have strained bilateral relations and impacted regional security dynamics. Many of Japan's violent expansion and war crimes remain unresolved and unforgiven by China and South Korea and continue to influence conflicts in the region. For instance, Japanese war crimes, such as the Nanking Massacre, the human experimentations in Unit 731, and the exploitation of comfort women and forced labourers have been used by politicians in South Korea and China as political leverage when criticising the country. Japan has made numerous efforts to apologise. However, the apologies have been criticised for being too vague and that further action, such as reparations to affected people should be undertaken (Suzuki, 2015).

Addressing the historical issues in a fair and transparent manner could help foster better relations among the countries and contribute to regional stability in East Asia. Some ways soft power could contribute to resolving these conflicts could include cultural diplomacy. For example, Japan, China, and South Korea can showcase their cultural heritage, arts, and traditions, promoting mutual understanding and appreciation of each other's cultures and contributing to the development of better relations.

However, in spite of the potential of soft power to encourage understanding and reconciliation, some Asian nations have frequently prioritized hard power. Tensions have escalated particularly after China claimed historical ownership over the South China Sea and built many artificial islands that house military bases (Weatherley, 2022). The South China Sea is an area with a lot of natural resources and a key sea trade route. Many countries, including Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan, have territorial claims in the area. China's assertion of sovereignty over the disputed waters on the basis of historical claims (the 'nine-dash line') has alarmed other claimant countries, as well as countries outside the area and the international community. These actions have resulted in heightened tensions and territorial conflicts. Some efforts by the international community to intervene include the arbitration panel of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea which declared that China lacked historical rights to the majority of the sea (UN, 2017 Law of the Sea. Bulletin No.91). But China quickly disputed this verdict and built military installations on a man-made island in the aforementioned waters. This display of military intimidation alarmed several nations, and it is cited as one of the primary evidence points of China's disregard for international law and international institutions. The rising military presence of China around the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, which are located between Taiwan and Okinawa and over which Japan retains total sovereignty, is another point of contention between China and Japan. The Chinese also assert their claim to the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands since they consider Taiwan to be a part of their territory. (Weatherley, 2022) South Korea has a

territorial dispute with Japan over the Dokdo/Takeshima islets resting between South Korea and Japan. Political disagreements also exist over the name of the sea that separates South Korea from Japan; South Korea prefers to refer to it as the East Sea, whereas Japan (and most world maps) calls it the Sea of Japan. (Huang, 2016) All of this demonstrates the region's strong territorial and nationalistic sentiments.

The aforementioned issues have the potential to incite the region into deeper conflict. In order to prevent this, diplomatic initiatives involving soft power would be a good strategy to ensure peaceful relations. This can be seen by the initiative Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF), which promotes discussion and cooperation among Asia-Pacific nations. The ARF has reduced tensions and prevented conflicts by building trust and confidence between nations. The ARF created the Inter-sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief (ISM-DR) in 2007 to strengthen regional disaster management and humanitarian cooperation. The conference has helped nations share expertise and develop the capacity to respond to natural catastrophes like the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the 2011 Fukushima nuclear tragedy. (Simm, 2018) The ARF mediated US-North Korea nuclear negotiations in 2018. The meeting encouraged trust and dialogue between the nations. The ARF also discussed the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. This allowed participating nations to exchange pandemic response knowledge and coordinate pandemic containment efforts, thus further securing cooperation in the region.

Hostilities between North and South Korea continue and tensions on the Korean Peninsula have persisted for years. The Korean War concluded in 1953 without a peace treaty, hence the two countries are technically still officially at war. For the past years, North Korea's nuclear and missile tests and US and South Korea's military drills have heightened tensions. Despite several high-profile diplomatic engagements, including the 2018 encounter between President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, no durable peace accord has been reached. (Shin, 2022) The US-South Korean military drills have also alarmed North Korea and raised tensions. President Yoon's new South Korean government has sought again to de-escalate tensions, although progress is hindered by North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. South Korean officials worry about North Korea's increasing arsenal causing difficulties. China has remained neutral out of national interest. However, China has also been subjected to increasing international pressure to suppress North Korea's nuclear development and lessen tensions with South Korea. (Liu, 2017) The approach that China has taken toward the tensions between North Korea and South Korea has been multi-faceted. China's goal in the area has been to preserve its strategic interests, which include

maintaining peacefulness, fostering economic cooperation, and creating a buffer zone against the presence of U.S. military forces (Jina, 2020). For now, China has used negotiations and diplomacy in order to maintain the stability of regional security. For example, The Six-Party Talks, established to end North Korea's nuclear program, have been significantly aided by China's efforts to persuade North Korea to participate in the talks. However, since 2008, there has been minimal progress, and the conversations have become stagnant. (Chung, 2013) Furthermore, the Chinese authorities have criticized the U.S. and South Korea's intensified military exercises. China views these exercises as a provocation and has argued that they increase destabilisation in the region (Tiezzi, 2023). However, the subject of military exercises in the region is complex, with several points of view and considerations to address. China has condemned the U.S. and South Korea's heightened military drills, while the US and South Korea argue that these drills are defensive in nature and required to preserve deterrence against North Korean provocations.

2: METHODOLOGY

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the factors related to the THAAD dispute that contributed to the decline in South Korea's soft power in China.

For this thesis, there will be one main question and two sub questions. The main question is the central guiding focus of the thesis, whilst the sub questions provide more detail that are connected to the main question. This serves the purpose of ensuring coherence and avoiding the risk of the thesis becoming overly extensive or lacking in focus.

Q1: How has the THAAD dispute impacted South Korea's soft power, particularly in terms of diplomatic and cultural exchanges with China and what are the limitations of soft power in the context of complex security challenges?

This research question serves the purpose of investigating the central theme of the thesis, which is the projection and limitation of a nation's soft power in the context of international conflicts.

Q1.2: What are the reasons behind China's opposition to the deployment of THAAD in South Korea, despite its stated defensive purpose, and are they valid?

This sub question aims to investigate the rationale behind China's objection to the installation of THAAD in South Korea, despite the defensive justification presented by South Korea and the United States. This thesis explores the elements that are involved in China's objections and discusses their validity.

Q1.3: What motivated China to target the "Korean Wave" as a tactic of coercing South Korea to abandon the THAAD deployment plans?

This sub question explores the motivations behind China's decision to penalise the "Korean Wave" as a means of pressuring South Korea to abandon its intended plan of deploying THAAD.

The present thesis aims to address the main research question by employing the explaining outcome process-tracing method. In academic literature, it is generally acknowledged that there are three different variants of process-tracing: theory-testing process-tracing, theory-building process-tracing, and explaining outcome process-tracing (Beach & Pedersen, 2016). Theory-testing and theory-building are centred around the development and refinement of theoretical frameworks. Conversely, explaining outcomes is a case-centric approach that focuses on the analysis and interpretation of specific cases. Thus, theory-testing and theory-building are theory-centric methods, whilst explaining outcome is a case-centric method. (Beach & Pedersen, 2016)

The explaining-outcome process-tracing is a distinct form of process-tracing that serves a different purpose than the other two variants. This approach aims to provide a minimally sufficient explanation for the occurrence of a specific outcome in a given case. Rather than generalizing the findings to more extensive theories, this method focuses on understanding the mechanisms and causal pathways that led to an observed outcome. When examining explaining outcome process-tracing, the term "causal mechanism" is used more broadly than in the two theory-focused variations. The definition of "causal mechanism" refers to a system that is comprised of multiple components that interact with each other to produce a particular outcome. Theory-testing and theory-building seek to develop or verify mechanisms that can be utilized in various instances, whereas explaining outcomes typically entails combining mechanisms into an eclectic conglomerate mechanism that may explain a particular historical outcome. (Beach & Pedersen, 2016; Glennan, 1996) Therefore, theory-testing and theory-building process tracing methods would not be suitable because the objective of the thesis is not to test existing theories or develop theoretical frameworks.

In order to answer the main question, explaining outcome process-tracing will be used to analyse the significant events, decisions, and actions related to the THAAD dispute. These would include the decision to deploy THAAD in South Korea, China's objections and retaliatory actions, South Korea's response, and the subsequent decline in South Korea's soft power. The implementation of the explaining outcome process-tracing approach can effectively address the research question by examining the causal mechanisms and intermediary steps that connect the THAAD dispute to the outcome involving South Korea's soft power.

However, relying solely on process-tracing may not offer a complete and precise comprehension of the causal mechanisms in action. Additional methods, such as document and content analysis, can be beneficial in this context. Document analysis will employ

primary sources, such as foreign policy papers, like diplomatic white papers, from both Chinese and South Korean Foreign Ministries. Document analysis is a method that systematically investigates and interprets written or textual documents to extract information, insights, and meaning. Document analysis can be applied to various documents, including written texts, historical records, legal documents, and policy papers. (Bowen, 2009) For this study, both the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of Korea's (ROK) Diplomatic White Papers will be analysed. Then, a coding system will be developed to analyse the documents in a structured manner. This required identifying specific variables or themes to extract pertinent information from the documents relevant to the research question.

Content analysis will also employ primary sources, such as official statements from Chinese foreign ministers, and other high officials who have directly commented on the dispute.

The combined use of process-tracing and document and content analysis can improve the reliability and validity of the results and yield a more comprehensive understanding of the causal mechanisms that resulted in the particular outcome of this specific case. Furthermore, content analysis on speeches made by Chinese officials will be helpful in answering the sub question of the thesis.

Furthermore, this research paper will look for patterns in the bilateral meetings during the years beginning from President Park Geun-hye's administration (2013-2017) to President Moon Jae-in's administration (2017-2022). Since specific companies in South Korea had experienced the consequences of economic coercion, investment, trade, and tourism will also be examined in order to gain the full perspective on China's economic coercion tactics. The findings will further our understanding of soft power's limitations in conflicts.

It is also important to acknowledge the limitations of this research design. The first limitation is the choice of the data gathering method. The research heavily depends on a variety of opinions expressed by several authors, some of whom may have contrasting perspectives on the topics in discussion. Secondly, the literature on these subjects is quite extensive, and consequently, there may be some crucial details that may be left overlooked. A way to alleviate some of these concerns, would be to apply triangulation (Bowen, 2009). Triangulation can help in comprehending the context and intricacy of the examined case. By utilizing multiple sources, researchers may acquire a more comprehensive knowledge of the social, cultural, and historical variables that form the event and can more effectively represent the viewpoints of many actors (Denzin, 1978). Thirdly, since the author is not a native speaker of Chinese or Korean, it is inevitable that some of the analysed texts will have been

translated to English by native speakers who may have their own contextual biases, which may impact the accuracy and reliability of the texts. Whilst analysing texts as a non-native speaker may prove to give valuable insights, it is nonetheless important to be aware of potential limitations.

3: SOUTH KOREA'S SOFT POWER AND THE "KOREAN WAVE"

Several studies have indicated that South Korea's international image has significantly improved as its popular culture has grown in popularity. Other academic critiques have questioned South Korea's dependency on its popular culture as a resource for soft power. This chapter will focus on South Korea's soft power and its historical and current usage in international relations.

3.1 The Rise of the "Korean Wave"

Throughout the 20th century, Korea was subjected to numerous occasions of cultural disruption. After the occupation of Korea by the Japanese (1910-1945), the Japanese government forcefully established its own culture as the superior culture in the area. Under Japanese colonial rule, the Japanification of Korea's culture was palpable. Koreans were gradually forced to conform to an imperial assimilation program that intended to eradicate Korean culture. The use of the Korean language in publications and educational establishments was banned, as part of the *nissei-ittai* program. (Pak & Hwang, 2011) Education, in particular, was regarded as a critical instrument through which subjects could develop an entirely distinct and subjugated ethnic identity as assimilated Japanese.

In the aftermath of the Korean War, South Korea's infrastructure and economy were devastated. In 1961, a military coup placed General Park Chung-hee as president (1961-1979). Under the rule of General Park, South Korea was just recovering from the aftereffects of its war with North Korea. The difficulty of the recovery period was extensive since, for a short while, North Korea was wealthier than South Korea and posed a military threat. Thus, South Korea prioritised strengthening its hard power and reviving its economy by implementing export-oriented, heavy industries-focused policies designed to pull the country out of post-war poverty. Park's regime cultural policy focused more on reviving pre-Japanese colonialism Korea's traditional culture, such as folk art and songs. (Yim, 2002) Although, they were heavily censored to promote the regime's interests.

It was only after the 1980s, when it had achieved economic growth, adopted a democratic model and had partial reconciliation with North Korea that South Korea was able to focus on international relations with other countries, and consequently focus on developing its soft power. Due to Park's regime, South Korea's soft power had been neglected, and thus was weaker than its hard power. Therefore, in order for South Korea to increase its regional and international presence, South Korean policymakers began to emphasise the importance of

soft power. "We must pour our energies into globalizing Korean culture," said Korean President Kim Dae-Jung in his inaugural speech in 1998, shortly after the 1997 financial crisis that sparked a significant backlash against international financial aid, "We must embrace and develop the high values that are contained in traditional culture. The culture industry is one of the basic industries of the 21st century." (Ministry of Unification, Inaugural address by Kim-Dae-Jung the 15th-term president of the Republic of Korea, February 1998) As *Hallyu* gained traction, the Korean government aided its growth by offering funds and benefits to large businesses in order to encourage the entertainment industry and fuel economic growth.

In 1999, Chinese media coined the term "Hallyu" ("Korean Wave") to describe the influx of South Korean popular culture figures in mainstream Chinese media (Solomon, 2014). The "Korean Wave", or *Hallyu*, can be defined as the increasing popularity of South Korea's culture and entertainment. Since Korean TV dramas had higher ratings, the Chinese broadcasting stations began to import an increasing amount of popular Korean shows. The broadcast of the Korean drama "What is Love" by China Central Television (CCTV), a state-run Chinese television network, is specifically credited as the beginning of the "Korean Wave". Japan also became a key market for Korean TV dramas and films after the "Korean Wave" gained popularity in China. (Kozhakhmetova, 2012) Another Korean drama titled "Winter Sonata" had also amassed into a cultural phenomenon due to its plotline as well as soundtrack. K-drama soundtracks had paved the way for demand for Korean pop music, also known as K-pop. The most prominent Korean pop artists that had gained massive influence include Seo Taeji and The Boys, H.O.T, and many more. In the following decades, the wave spread beyond Asia, with Western audiences also embracing Korean TV dramas and music. Since then, everything Korean has undergone a surge in popularity, from Korean food to e-sports to cosmetics.

The phenomenon of the "Korean Wave" can be argued to have arisen through a natural and unforced progression. The appeal of popular Korean products was not imposed upon other cultures. Instead, it is contingent upon the willingness of international audiences to embrace it. (Lim, 2007) The Korean National Tourism Organization (KNTO) has astutely observed that the Chinese media's coining of the term "Korean Wave" highlights the issue with the language used to describe and acknowledge Korean culture in various settings. This observation underscores the need for more nuanced and accurate terminology to represent Korea's cultural significance beyond its borders. As a result, it can be argued that Hallyu has

transformed into a government-backed promotional strategy that bears minimal resemblance to authentic Korean culture.

3.2 The “Korean Wave” and Soft Power

The “Korean Wave”, also known as Hallyu, is a term used to describe the global appeal of South Korean popular culture, particularly K-pop music, Korean dramas, films, fashion, and beauty products. Many studies have indicated that South Korea's international image has improved as its culture has grown in popularity. When before people would associate South Korea with the Korean War (1950-1953) and brands like Samsung and Hyundai, nowadays, the emergence of Hallyu has significantly altered the country's image and reputation across the world. (Hwang, 2019) Hallyu has come to represent South Korea's soft power. South Korea's cultural exports have received prominence, recognition, and have captivated audiences throughout the world, challenging and broadening perceptions of South Korea beyond its historical and economic associations. The Korean government, for example, supports a number of cultural centres and initiatives abroad, such as the Korean Cultural Centres in New York and London, to spread awareness of Korean culture and language and promote cross-cultural communication. (Nye & Kim, 2013)

South Korea has benefited greatly from this cultural phenomenon in terms of the economy and its international recognition. For instance, cultural diplomacy and diplomatic ties between South Korea and other countries have strengthened through the promotion of Hallyu. The “Korean Wave” has increased demand for South Korean cultural items such as K-pop music, K-dramas, and Korean films, resulting in significant economic advantages for the country. The revenue generated by cultural exports, tourism, and other industries related to those two sectors has assisted South Korea's economic growth and development, as well as its expansion in soft power. For example, the increased popularity of Korean pop music throughout the world has resulted in an increase in album sales, concert tours, and merchandise sales. (Dal, 2020) This has resulted in the creation of jobs and stimulated economic expansion in the entertainment industry and related disciplines.

South Korea has been able to present its traditional cultural features such as language, music, dance, and fashion to a worldwide audience through Hallyu (Hallyu White Paper, 2019). This has boosted not just worldwide awareness and understanding of South Korean culture, but also prospects for cultural interchange and collaboration with other nations. South Korea has arranged cultural events such as K-pop concerts and film festivals in many nations to promote its culture and strengthen ties (Dal, 2020) For instance, South Korea has

held international Expos in its cities of Daejeon and Yeosu. South Korea recently filed a World EXPO proposal for the Busan World Expo 2030 (Ahn, 2022). Such cultural diplomacy activities have aided in the enhancement of South Korea's soft power and the development of a good international image.

The South Korean government recognizes Hallyu's importance in fostering the country's soft power and has actively backed it through legislation and programs. For example, the Kim Dae Jung government (1998-2003) contributed 148.5 million USD in financial support to the cultural industry in 1999. With a focus on the so-called three Cs – Content, Creativity, and Culture – the government pushed institutions to develop cultural industry departments by giving equipment and scholarships. (Nye & Kim, 2013) They have accomplished this on a global scale through the King Sejong Institute (KSI).

The King Sejong Institute, aimed at promoting Korean language education and cultural exchange, has a worldwide presence. Currently, there are around 244 institutions in 82 countries, with a majority being in Vietnam (22), China (19), Japan (16), Russia (11), United States (13), but also in UK (5), Australia (3), South Africa (1), Finland (1), Estonia (1), Latvia (1) etc. (King Sejong Institute Foundation "KSI's Worldwide") As language is central to culture, the KSI's efforts to extend Korean language instruction abroad have undoubtedly aided in international understanding and friendships. As a result, more people have a favourable impression of Korean culture and are curious to learn more about South Korea, all of which contribute to the country's cultural attractiveness and soft power.

South Korean films and dramas have also excelled in increasing South Korea's attractiveness and awareness. *Parasite* (2019), a dark comedy thriller, became the first South Korean film to win the Palme d'Or at Cannes and four Oscars, including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Original Screenplay, and Best International Feature Film. (Seo, 2019) *Squid Game* (2021), a South Korean TV show debuted in September 2021, was Netflix's most-watched show, with 1.65 billion hours of viewing in the first four weeks. It topped the charts in at least 90 nations. (Tassi, 2021) Therefore, it is plausible to assume that interest in South Korean culture has increased, thereby enhancing its cultural attractiveness.

Additionally, South Korean celebrities with considerable global presence have also been an effective tool for strengthening South Korea's soft power and international image. For instance, K-pop group BTS (from Korean, *Bangtan Sonyeondan*), a seven-member band with unprecedented global success in the music industry, has been used as cultural diplomats by the South Korean government to boost the country's international reputation. BTS, being the most successful Korean pop culture producer, has made strong contributions to the South

Korean economy through a variety of measures, including increased tourism. (Heo, 2021) The music, performances, and philanthropic endeavours of BTS have been utilized to promote South Korean culture and values. Most recently, BTS has also been involved in South Korea's bid for 2030 Expo. BTS held a free concert at Busan to increase its chances of being selected as the host city for the World Expo 2030. In exchange, the K-pop artists were officially appointed as ambassadors of the Expo. (Ahn, 2022) In addition, the band has been given the title of Honorary Tourism Ambassadors for the city of Seoul, and as a result of their immense popularity, initiatives have been created in their honour, such as "Live Seoul Like I Do," which invites tourists to visit the places in the city that are band members' favourite locations (Suntikul, 2019). This acknowledgement of their role as worldwide influencers draws attention to the effect that BTS has had on a global scale as well as their participation in many international activities.

This can be seen by BTS being granted diplomatic passports and being the-then President Moon Jae-In's special envoys to the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, where they gave a speech about climate change during the Sustainable Development Goals Moment. Afterwards, the group made an appearance at the White House in Washington D.C., where they drew attention to the increase of anti-Asian hate as a result of the pandemic. (Yang, 2022) BTS's participation in events of national importance highlight the power of celebrity influence in shaping perceptions and promoting positive change on a global scale. Thus, Hallyu has helped South Korea's diplomatic efforts by spreading a favourable image of the country and its pop culture.

3.3 Limitations of “Korean Wave” Soft Power

While Hallyu has grown in popularity across the world, notably in Asia and other areas of the world, the emphasis on commercial aspects, such as K-pop music, may often eclipse the underlying values, customs, and historical aspects of Korean culture. Because South Korea is predominantly viewed through the perspective of commerce and entertainment, this might lead to a shallow or restricted knowledge of the country. It is this business-orientated and state-supported culture industry that has led to some scholars to remain sceptical of its survival long-term. Scholars have identified significant challenges with relying on *Hallyu* as a soft power. One major problem is the commercialisation of South Korean culture, as this would only result in short-term faddish response and would not have any significant weight in political relations (Lim, 2007) Nye and Kim (2013) have

acknowledged this problem and has warned using culture as a means of achieving soft power “can create a very partial and distorted picture of South Korea”.

While the imperative to promote South Korean culture could be a use of soft power, it also brings the danger of disproportionately represent only a wealthy segment of the population while eschewing representation of those who are marginalised by society. Furthermore, there is also concern over South Korea promoting cultural imperialism, and the government's overly zealous celebration of culture has often taken on nationalistic tones and may even be considered a form of hegemony masked in soft power. (Nye & Kim, 2013) Commercialization of Hallyu may also lead to concerns like cultural appropriation, exploitation of artists and performers, and over-commercialization of cultural elements, all of which can degrade the authenticity and uniqueness of Korean culture. While investments have allowed it to flourish, the manufacturing of culture, as seen in the K-pop idol industry, means that the branding strategy of the nation has been built on exploitative practises. (Jung, 2011) Moreover, the Korean cultural industry's profit-driven orientation can sometimes emphasize market demands above cultural integrity, resulting in the development of content that is more economically viable rather than representational of the actual core of Korean culture.

It is worth considering what this commercialisation of culture means for cultural identity. The sense of belonging, values, and traditions that are connected with a specific group or community are what are referred to as aspects of a person's cultural identity. When culture is excessively marketed, it may lead to the commercialization of cultural components as well as the economic exploitation of cultural elements, which may have an effect on the authenticity and integrity of cultural identity.

As Hallyu products become more adapted to global market needs, there is a risk of Westernization or homogeneity of Korean culture in order to make it more acceptable or recognizable to overseas audiences. As a result, unique Korean cultural aspects may be diluted or lost, thus undermining the validity and variety of Korean cultural identity in the global setting. Furthermore, whilst the South Korean government has been instrumental in promoting and advancing Hallyu as a type of soft power diplomacy, government intervention and control over cultural production and distribution may raise concerns about censorship, artistic freedom, and the potential manipulation or instrumentalization of Korean cultural products for political purposes, all of which can have an impact on the authenticity and diversity of Korean cultural identity.

4: THAAD DEPLOYMENT AND DISPUTE

This chapter focuses on the timeline of events focusing on a case whereupon the U.S and South Korea had agreed to deploy Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) missile system in South Korea in order to increase domestic protection against North Korea. Consequently, tension arose in South Korea-China diplomatic relations. However, China is under the impression that the deployment was intended to target China and is concerned about the effect it would have on regional security. Consequently, China has publicly disavowed this decision.

4.1 Terminal High Altitude Area Defence System

THAAD is a missile defence system that was developed and manufactured in the United States to intercept and destroy short, medium, and intermediate-range ballistic missiles as they enter their terminal phase of flight. The system is capable of eliminating tactical and theatre ballistic missiles at altitudes of up to 150 kilometres, and it engages missiles at high altitude in order to destroy them long before they can reach their intended target. (Costa, 2016) The system has been implemented in an array of nations and territories, most frequently as a strategic move to improve defence systems for the United States or its allies.

4.2 Timeline of Events

2013

This is the year that North Korea increased its missile testing (McCurry & Branigan, February, 2013)

2014

The Wall Street Journal first reported in 2014 that the United States was considering deploying the THAAD in South Korea to provide coverage for a US military facility, which is when the THAAD debate first gained traction. (Barnes, May 2014) It was reported that the commander of U.S troops stationed in South Korea, General Curtis Scaparrotti, had proposed the instalment of THAAD to counteract North Korea's rising threat. (Reuters, June 2014) This threat perception was prompted by various threatening behaviours instigated by North Korea, such as the testing of missiles, by North Korea. Reportedly, the South Korean

Ministry of National Defence had a positive attitude regarding the idea of THAAD instalment. (Kim, July 2014) According to the then-incumbent President Park Geun-hye, the THAAD system would improve South Korea's defence capabilities against North Korean missile threats. (Kim, 2016)

2016

The increased security threat from North Korea had convinced South Korea, and subsequently formal talk began after North Korea had tested a satellite launch ballistic missile technology in February of 2016. (Fifield, 2016) In March 2017, the U.S began delivering the first major components. The process was then sped up, upon the request of South Korea's defence officials, as North Korea had suddenly increased its missile launch testing and additional nuclear tests. (Choon, 2017) In July 2016, the U.S Department of Defence and South Korean Ministry of National Defence officially announced in a joint statement announced the deployment of THAAD on South Korean soil (U.S. Forces Korea, ROK & U.S. Joint Statement: ROK-U.S. Alliance Agrees to Deploy THAAD, July 7, 2016.) The process leading up to the joint statement had been slow going, mostly due to concerns over the reactions from neighbouring countries, wishing to not antagonise China due to their close economic ties. China is South Korea's leading economic partner, but the same cannot be said of China, whose largest trading partner is the United States. (*Trade Summary for China*, 2022) However, the day after the announcement, the Chinese Foreign Minister held a press conference whereupon he stated that the deployment of THAAD in South Korea "will gravely sabotage the strategic security interests of regional countries" (Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hong Lei's Regular Press Conference on July 8, 2016).

2017

The U.S begins to deploy THAAD components to South Korea, angering China. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi urges South Korea to halt the deployment of THAAD, warning that the move would have consequences for the bilateral relationship. (Cheng, March 2017) Protests erupt in South Korea over the deployment of THAAD, with local residents and activists voicing worries about the effect on the local economy and ties with China. (Hincks, April 2017) Subsequently, China imposes economic sanctions on South Korea in response to THAAD deployment. (McGuire, May 2017) One of the most significant receptors of this is South Korean conglomerate, Lotte Group (Lee, March 2017). This had

several immediate effects on both the diplomatic as well as economic level as China restricted tourism and imposed restrictions on South Korean companies in China, which caused a lot of diplomatic strain between the nations. In May of the same year, South Korea elects a new president, Moon Jae-in. President Moon Jae-in, who had expressed concern over the THAAD dispute in his election campaign, puts a temporary halt to THAAD deployment until an environmental effect assessment has been conducted. China commends the move but urges on South Korea to abandon the deployment permanently. ("South Korea Calls For Halt to THAAD Missile Deployment", July 2017) Time While four THAAD components had been suspended in lieu of the environmental assessment, the Defence Ministry of South Korea completes its environmental impact assessment of the THAAD system and concludes that its deployment in Seongju has had no significant environmental impact. (Jin, September 2017) In October of 2017, South Korea and China release a statement whereupon both sides have agreed to resume bilateral relations. South Korea agreed not to not deploy more THAAD launchers or join the US missile defence network and China had agreed to end its bans and restrictions. (Taylor, October 2017) However, the THAAD system remains in South Korea.

2018

South Korea and the U.S postpone joint military exercises due to the 2018 Winter Olympics being held in PyeongChang in 2018. This was done with the intention of promoting dialogue and reduce tensions with North Korea. (Kim & Shin, February 2018) South Korean President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un hold a historic summit in Panmunjom, where they pledge to work toward total denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, by dismantling North Korean nuclear testing facilities, and to pursue a peace treaty to officially end the Korean War. (Lee & Chung & Kim, April 2018) The joint statement lacks any mention of the THAAD system.

2019

South Korea and China held their first high-level security and cooperation discussions in three years, with the THAAD dispute at the forefront of the discussion. South Korea and China are cooperating diplomatically and are engaging in bilateral relations, including high-level visits and meetings. However, China continues to voice its worries over THAAD, and some economic restrictions imposed by China in 2017 remain in effect for the most part despite the pledges to remove them. In April 2019, China ends sanctions against Lotte Group. (Lee, May 2019) In November of 2019, South Korea's Defence Minister, Jeong Kyeong-doo,

visits China, whereupon he reiterated South Korea's stance that THAAD deployment is strictly for defensive objectives and is not intended against China. (Oh, November 2019) Subsequently, in December of 2019 Beijing would truly ease up on its ban on Korean pop culture exports. (Myo-Ja, December 2019) Thus begins the tentative ease of the economic sanctions against Hallyu.

2020

This year the COVID-19 pandemic took place, and many diplomatic meetings were suspended. However, China makes an announcement that it would suspend a high-level economic engagement with South Korea, citing persistent concerns about THAAD as the reason. Yet, at a conference between their respective foreign ministers, China and South Korea came to an agreement that they would work toward repairing their bilateral ties and addressing the THAAD problem. (Tian, May 2020)

2022

North Korea launched three missile tests within two weeks of January 2022. North Korea's "hypersonic missile" tests have raised fears of pre-emptive attacks, arms races, and the vulnerability of U.S. soldiers and partners in Asia. These missiles have regional range and are not a direct danger to the mainland US, but they may significantly boost North Korea's striking capacity against its neighbours. Hypersonic missiles may fly underneath defences and alter direction quickly, making them difficult to shoot down. Analysts say the U.S. and its Asian allies may not be able to counter this new capacity. South Korea's military ministry claims it can detect and intercept the new missiles, but several of South Korea's presidential candidates have concerns and recommended pre-emptive attacks to thwart a launch. (Smith, January 2022) A month later, South Korea test-fired a long-range surface-to-air missile, further escalating tensions on the Korean peninsula. The main conservative candidate in the 2022 South Korean presidential election, Yoon Seok-yeol, has pledged to buy a THAAD interceptor battery to be deployed closer to Seoul, even if it means risking retaliation from China again. (Smith & Shin, February 2022) Yoon Seok-yeol has also stated that he aims to scrap previous promises made by the outgoing President Moon Jae-in's administration regarding THAAD deployments and create a stronger stance on security issues. (Shin, February 2022) In May, South Korean presidential elections results saw newly-incumbent President Yoon Seok-yeol. In June, China tested a land-based missile interceptor. The

Ministry of Defence commented that its purpose was purely defensive and not aimed at any one country. (“China says it tested missile-interception system” June 2022) In August of 2022, Park Jin, the foreign minister of South Korea, visited China as part of President Yoon Seok-yeol's administration efforts to reassure Beijing about their relationship despite greater ties with the United States and tensions over Taiwan. The Chinese and South Korean Ministers of Foreign Affairs explored ways to denuclearize the Korean peninsula and relaunch cultural exports to China, including the export of K-pop music and movies. (Shin, August 2022) In November China had officially started to restream South Korean content after six years. (“China resumes streaming South Korean content after six-year suspension” November 2022)

4.3 Analysing Limits of Soft Power in International Conflicts: THAAD case study

In constructing a chronological timeline, it is possible to trace the causal links that contributed to the decline in South Korea's soft power in China. Table 1 presents the causal mechanism that led to the sequence of events under examination in order to gain a clearer understanding of factors contributing to the timeline.

Table 1

The Causal Mechanism and Empirical Factors Leading to the Decline in South Korea's Soft Power in China.

| | Causal mechanism | Empirical | | | Outcome |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| Security dilemma and Soft power | North Korean Missile Testing | 1. Perceived threat to South Korea and U. S | 2. Deployment of THAAD in South Korea | 3. China views THAAD as a threat to its security and regional influence. | Decline in South Korea's soft power in China |
| | | 4. Diplomatic tensions rise between China and South Korea. | 5. Decreased trust and cooperation between China and South Korea. | 6. Economic retaliation and public boycott of cultural exports by China against South Korea. | |

Source: Compiled by author

North Korea's increased missile and nuclear threats are the causal change that drives the progression of the timeline as it sets in motion a series of events. The increased missile tests were perceived as a threat to the security of South Korea and the U.S., as concern was

raised over the possibility of missile attacks and destabilisation in the region. Subsequently, the U.S. and South Korea decided to deploy the THAAD system to South Korea to provide a layer of protection by enhancing its military capabilities against potential missile attacks by North Korea. However, China perceived the THAAD deployment as a threat to its security and responded by publicly condemning the decision and urging South Korea to abandon the deployment. Diplomatic tensions rose and the deterioration of diplomatic relations between the two nations resulted in decreased trust and cooperation. As a result, bilateral relations were strained as China initiated economic retaliation and public boycott of South Korean businesses and cultural exports. The resulting unfavourable perception and reduced attractiveness of South Korean cultural products led to a decrease in South Korea's soft power in China.

The deployment of THAAD in South Korea was meant to enhance South Korea's national security, but it had resulted in negative consequences for its soft power relations with China. The observation implies that there may be a clash between a country's efforts to maintain its national security and its attempts to exert influence through non-military means. It also suggests that a country's military tactics could have unforeseen repercussions for its soft power pursuits and its reputation and relations with other states. In this case, national security refers to a nation's ability to defend its territory, citizens, and interests against external threats. This often involves the implementation of military capabilities, such as missile defence systems. Soft power, by contrast, is a term that describes a nation's ability to influence others through non-coercive means such as attraction and persuasion. It relies on the cultural, political, and economic attractiveness of a country to influence the choices and behaviours of other nations. This case demonstrates the fundamental conflict between maintaining national security and enhancing soft power. The U.S. forces stationed in South Korea proposed the deployment of THAAD in response to North Korea's provocative actions. The subsequent deployment of THAAD caused significant tension with China, South Korea's leading economic partner. The South Korean conglomerate Lotte Group was among those affected by these economic sanctions. In response to public concerns regarding the impact of THAAD on the local economy and environment, the South Korean government halted its deployment, causing a temporary pause in the timeline. However, after concluding an environmental impact assessment, South Korea resumed THAAD deployment and eventually the THAAD system deployment was finalised.

The table provides compelling evidence that the decision to deploy THAAD in South Korea as a countermeasure to North Korean missile testing has had a harmful impact on

South Korea's soft power in China. Numerous negative outcomes, including diplomatic tensions, decreased trust and cooperation, and economic retaliation serve as confirmation of this. The popularity of Korean pop culture, often known as the “Korean Wave” or Hallyu, had a significant presence in China. However, the decline in trust and cooperation between China and South Korea as a result of the THAAD dispute caused significant backlash. This influenced a harmful perception of South Korea within China, thereby negatively impacting its soft power in the region.

The THAAD dispute has demonstrated the significant impact that geopolitical tensions can have on soft power dynamics between nations. This showcases the limitation of soft power dynamics in specific regional contexts. While South Korea's cultural goods had been trendy in China, geopolitical tensions have declined their popularity. This serves to illustrate another aspect in which the dynamics of soft power are not immutable. This analysis highlights how deploying a missile defence system in South Korea, intended to enhance its national security, had consequences on South Korea's soft power in China. The economic backlash and public boycotts against South Korean cultural products, which were instigated by the Chinese government in response to the deployment of THAAD, serve as a compelling example of the susceptibility of soft power to geopolitical tensions and nationalistic sentiments. South Korea's economy, which is primarily focused on exports, is dependent on China as its primary trade partner. This has resulted in increased susceptibility to China's economic coercive methods. This analysis highlights the importance of preserving soft power connections, in addition to national security, particularly in situations where there are risks in economic reliance on a single nation, as is observed in the case of South Korea's economic dependence on China. When a country is economically reliant on another nation, there may be a tendency to prioritize economic interests over soft power relationships. This could result in strained diplomatic relations and a reduction in soft power. Thus, economic overdependence may result in weaknesses in soft power influence. The economic relationship between China and South Korea exemplifies a situation of trading asymmetry, which means that there is an unequal distribution of economic power and influence between two nations. This highlights the significance of broadening a nation's economic ties to mitigate susceptibilities and dependence on specific trade partners. The utilization of soft power is an important tool for nations to attain their foreign policy goals, and the present analysis accentuates the intricate balance between safeguarding national security and fostering constructive soft power relations.

This demonstrates the limitations of soft power in the context of complex security challenges, where hard power factors such as national security can take precedent over soft power factors such as diplomatic and cultural relations with other nations. However, it is important to note that, in the end, South Korea did not submit to the economic coercion tactics of China and the THAAD system was and still is deployed in South Korea. It may have had short-term negative effects on South Korea's soft power relations with China, but it also demonstrates South Korea's independence and resiliency, which could improve its soft power standing in the long run.

Alternative explanations

There is compelling evidence that the causal mechanism can extend even further from North Korea's missile testing. Namely, it can be argued that the reason North Korea had increased its missile testing was in response to United Nations Security Council's Resolution 2094, adopted in 2013 (Security Council Resolution 2094). The resolution was adopted in response to North Korea's third nuclear test, which was in violation of international laws, and was meant to condemn the action by enforcing sanctions. North Korea in turn had increased its missile testing as a response. However, as the UNSC resolution had been adopted as a result of North Korean missile testing, this would not have deterred South Korea from deploying THAAD, because South Korea's decision to deploy THAAD was driven mainly by its own national security concerns.

This thesis has argued that the underlying reason for China's objection to the deployment of THAAD in South Korea stems from the fact that China believes this to be a strategic step to undermine its national security. However, there is one other alternative explanation that could plausibly explain China's objection to THAAD. The plausible counter-explanation is that China may oppose THAAD to support North Korea and interfere with South Korea's developing alliance with the US. Yet this argument fails to comprehensively acknowledge the economic consequences that South Korea has faced due to China's opposition and the persistent nature of China's objections towards the deployment of THAAD despite diplomatic attempts to alleviate tensions. Furthermore, China has raised concerns regarding THAAD's potential ability to monitor Chinese missile launches, suggesting that the matter is not exclusively about supporting North Korea but also about safeguarding China's security interests. Furthermore, this explanation assumes that South Korea wants U.S presence in its country. While South Korea has been a close ally of the

United States and has enjoyed security protection from the U.S. military presence, recent developments have raised concerns among the South Korean populace regarding this partnership's potential drawbacks and expenses. Certain South Korean politicians and activists had advocated for reducing or completely eliminating the U.S. military presence within the nation (Onchi, May 2018). This had sparked a debate on the necessity and benefits of the continued presence of American military forces in South Korea. Additionally, as was evidenced by the timeline, the South Korean people themselves had protested extensively against the deployment of THAAD. Thus, there would have been no reason for China to believe that South Korea was going to strengthen its alliance with the U.S. at the time. Thus, although the alternative explanation does present a plausible explanation for China's opposition to the deployment of THAAD being motivated by an intent to disrupt South Korea's alliance with the U.S., it still fails to explain the persistence of China's objections or the economic repercussions South Korea had to endure.

4.3.1 Limitations within national security interests

When it comes to matters of national security, soft power as a means of persuasion and attraction has its limitations. This is because issues about national security frequently involve fundamental considerations concerning sovereignty, territorial integrity, and survival, which are challenging to compromise or negotiate using soft power alone. The THAAD dispute between South Korea and China is a prominent example of these restrictions.

The decision to install the THAAD missile defence system was primarily motivated by concerns about South Korea's national security after growing concern over nuclear and missile threats from North Korea. From the South Korean standpoint, THAAD was for its national defence against the prospects of danger and to protect its citizens. However, China perceived the deployment of THAAD from the U.S. to South Korea as a threat to its national security, believing that the system would undermine its strategic deterrence.

In February of 2016, Wang Yi, the former foreign minister of China, expressed his initial objections to the deployment of THAAD on the Korean peninsula during a public event hosted by the Centre for International and Strategic Studies in New York. Wang expressed concern regarding the deployment of the US Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) system and its accompanying X-band radar. The concern is centred around the fact that the range of the radar extends beyond the Korean peninsula and into the interior of China, which Wang asserts thereby endangers "China's legitimate national security interests". (China cites concerns on U.S. missile defense system in South Korea" 2016)

The necessity of the THAAD deployment for South Korea's defence against North Korea's missile threats has been argued by several experts. On the one hand, the deployment of THAAD has been deemed a crucial measure to enhance its defence capabilities against the potential threat North Korea poses. According to U.S. Assistant Secretary Russel, it is important to recognize that North Korea possesses a significant inventory of conventional ballistic missiles and has expressed acute interest in equipping certain missiles with nuclear warheads.

The weapons in question possess several characteristics that may render them particularly attractive to North Korea. Specifically, they are relatively cost-effective, possess the ability to target distant locations, and are challenging to counteract. (Roberts, 2015) Furthermore, arguments have been made that China is protesting the deployment of THAAD due to its intention to prevent the U.S. from increasing its military presence in the region, as this would slow China's rise as a global power.

However, some have proposed an alternative view as to why China is objecting to a country installing a defensive system. It has been pointed out that a defensive deployment, that neutralizes the offensive capability of a neighbouring state, alters the precarious balance of threat between two or more states. If China is unable to conduct assaults against South Korea and, more importantly, against its ally, the United States, because South Korea has THAAD, then China's position in the area has been fundamentally altered, and its ability to defend against a hypothetical threat from the United States is significantly reduced. Regarding any potential conflict between the United States and China, one of the most essential considerations for either side is the other's capacity to inflict significant damage. The more potential damage one side can inflict on the other, the higher the hurdle must be cleared before either side even considers the possibility of starting an altercation. Thus, concern among Chinese authorities on the deployment of THAAD on the Korean peninsula is centred on the fact that it reduces China's ability to launch an assault against the United States, hence lowering the threshold at which the United States could be willing to launch an attack. (Griffith, 2021)

This research also proposes an alternative view of why China objects to South Korea's THAAD deployment. Namely, there is a possibility that China is opposed to the deployment of THAAD due to the potential of this case to set a precedent for other nations to follow suit. The deployment of THAAD in South Korea could set an example for other U.S. allies in the region to do the same. In the event of a conflict, this could potentially neutralize China's offensive capabilities, limiting their military power and making them more

susceptible to attacks in the region. This could potentially lead to an arms race – a competition between nations for superiority, especially concerning the accumulation of high-tech weapons, which could trigger something akin to the Cold War. However, it must also be noted that since many countries in the Asian region are dependent on China's economy and trade, and are thus susceptible to economic coercion, the likelihood of these countries aligning themselves with the U.S. and deploying THAAD or other missile defence systems on their soil is uncertain as the political and economic fallout could lead to devastating consequences for some of the lesser developed nations in the region. However, it must also be noted that since many countries in the ASEAN region are dependent on China's economy and trade, and are thus susceptible to economic coercion, the likelihood of these countries aligning themselves with the U.S. and deploying THAAD or other missile defence systems on their soil is uncertain.

The deployment of THAAD to South Korea was the culmination of extensive negotiations between Washington and Seoul, over a period of several years. Throughout this, China consistently expressed opposition to the weapon system, and eventually resorted to economic coercion in an attempt to dissuade South Korea from deploying THAAD.

4.3.2 Limitations within economic leverage

Despite, China's objections, South Korea went ahead with the deployment of THAAD in 2017. Consequently, the THAAD dispute between China and South Korea has had significant economic consequences for South Korea. China implemented economic sanctions on South Korea following the deployment of THAAD, including a prohibition on Chinese tour groups entering South Korea and a boycott of South Korean goods and services (Bremmer, 2018). The restrictions had a substantial effect on the economy of South Korea, notably the tourist and retail industries. Major retail companies from South Korea, such as Lotte, saw their sales in China drop drastically.

Lotte Group is a South Korean multinational company with operations in retail, hospitality, and entertainment, among others. Lotte Group has contributed to the spread of *Hallyu* in part by producing and distributing Korean films and television dramas. Many Korean films and dramas, such as "The Handmaiden" and "Hotel Del Luna," have received international fame and appeal due to their production and distribution by Lotte Entertainment. These productions have contributed to the *Hallyu* phenomenon by showcasing Korean culture and language to a worldwide audience. (Choi, 2018)

Lotte Group became a target of Chinese boycotts as a result of its decision to donate land for the THAAD deployment (“South Korea's Lotte approves land swap for missile defence – ministry” 2017). Chinese authorities banned the building of Lotte's duty-free stores in China as a measure of retaliation, resulting in considerable financial losses for the corporation (Bremmer, 2018). In addition, Chinese authorities opposed Lotte Group's theme park in China, Lotte World Beijing, and ordered the company to suspend development. Lotte Group eventually sold the site where the theme park was being constructed, resulting in a \$1.4 billion loss. (Sang-Hun, 2018) Furthermore, the Korea-based motor company, Hyundai Motors Beijing, had also faced a significant crisis, with a sharp decline in its market share from 2017. This decline can be attributed to the imposition of “Korean Wave” sanctions, as well as the dwindling market share of Samsung Electronics' mobile phones in China. In fact, Samsung's market share, which had once reached nearly 30% in the late 2000s, had then plummeted to less than 1% (Hyunjoo, April 2017). These developments had had a profound impact on the performance of Hyundai Motors Beijing and Samsung Electronics, two of the most prominent conglomerates in South Korea.

Aside from conglomerate businesses, China also imposed restrictions to Korean entertainment services and goods. It is evident that China remains the main customer base for the “Korean Wave”, as it continues to be the major consumer of Korean cultural products. However, it is imperative to acknowledge the growing prevalence of antipathy towards the “Korean Wave”, commonly referred to as anti-”Korean Wave” or anti-Korean sentiment. The imposition of a ban by China on South Korean entertainment content, encompassing TV dramas and K-pop music, had a profound impact on the “Korean Wave” in China. It had been mandated that Chinese broadcasters and streaming platforms cease the airing of South Korean TV dramas, and South Korean celebrities were prohibited from appearing on Chinese TV shows. This measure had been implemented with the intention of promoting and safeguarding the interests of the Chinese entertainment industry. This significantly decreased popularity towards South Korean entertainment productions among the Chinese audience. (Park & Lee & Seo, 2019). The abrupt cancellation of the fan meeting of Korean actors in Beijing serves as the initial evidence of the impact of the “Korean Wave” sanction (“Actors' fan meeting in China canceled amid political rumors” 2016). Merely 72 hours prior to the occasion, an 'irresistible force' was cited as the cause for their inability to attend. Since then, there was a significant increase of cancellations or postponements of multiple K-pop concerts and events in China, which had significantly impacted the South Korean music industry's ability to showcase and market their music to Chinese audiences. The cancellation

of concerts by highly acclaimed K-pop groups had been observed (Qin,2016). This had raised concerns about the potential negative consequences for the growth and expansion of the K-pop industry in China.

Additionally, China had placed travel restrictions on South Korean tourists, as well as group tours to South Korea. The imposition of travel restrictions on Chinese tourists had a profound economic impact on South Korea's tourism industry, which had heavily relied on this demographic as a primary source of revenue. By March 2017, tourism from China to South Korea had fallen 40%. (Gibson, 2017)

South Korea's economic dependence on China -its major trading partner- has led to its soft power becoming severely limited. However, although China had tried to pressure South Korea economically, they had not been successful in swaying South Korea's decision to deploy the THAAD system. Regardless of the economic impact that China's boycott had on the country, South Korea has stuck to its commitments. This shows that economic leverage alone is insufficient in political sway when complex security challenges are involved. Hence, South Korea and China must prioritize establishing a stable and flexible diplomatic relationship to guarantee unrestricted cultural and artistic expression flow. The utilization of cultural diplomacy is of crucial significance in fostering positive relationships between nations and facilitating the development of mutual understanding and respect. Both nations must prioritize cultural exchanges and foster an environment that enables artists to freely express themselves and share their talents, unhindered by political tensions. This approach can facilitate mutual understanding and appreciation and promote cross-cultural dialogue and cooperation.

4.3.3 South Korea's Soft Power Efforts in the face of China's Economic Retaliation

South Korea has endeavoured to minimize the impact of China's economic retaliation by implementing a range of soft power initiatives. Several initiatives were undertaken, which comprised mostly of diplomatic outreach, economic incentives, and public relations campaigns.

Diplomatic outreach was initiated by the newly incumbent President Moon Jae-in, who due to public demand halted the process of deploying THAAD and made several diplomatic efforts to restore good relations. The summit meeting between President Moon Jae-in and Chinese President Xi Jinping was a crucial diplomatic outreach. The summit represented a significant milestone as it marked the first in-person encounter between the heads of state of both nations since the THAAD controversy emerged. At the meeting, Moon

and Xi reached a mutually beneficial agreement to set aside any existing differences and collaborate to enhance their bilateral relations while effectively addressing the THAAD issue.

On China's side, Foreign Minister Wang had presented a five-point proposal for both nations, which encompassed the following: independence from external intervention, addressing each other's significant concerns, sustaining stable supply chains, refraining from meddling in each other's internal affairs and adhering to the purpose and principle of the UN Charter ("China's unprecedented "five requests" won't improve S. Korea-China relations" 2022). President Moon's administration had thus accepted a 'Three No's' policy in an effort to mitigate China's concerns over the THAAD issue. According to the policy, there should be no further deployment of THAAD, no involvement in a missile defence network led by the US, and no formation of a trilateral military alliance with the US and Japan. (Kim, 2022) In retrospect, this policy has been criticised by many about the policy's level of conciliation towards China and its perceived lack of emphasis on safeguarding South Korea's national security interests. Nonetheless, those in favour of the policy contend that it was an essential measure in upholding stability in the area and averting increased tensions between the United States, South Korea, and China. It should also be noted that the 'Three No's' policy is to be considered a theoretical concept and lacks the legally binding status of an official commitment or ratified accord among the involved parties.

The diplomatic initiatives South Korea undertook were geared towards mitigating tensions with China and enhancing the quality of bilateral relations. The measures were strategically designed to assuage China's apprehensions regarding the THAAD missile defence system and to persuade China that it did not pose a risk to its national security objectives. Although they did not always yield the desired outcome of persuading China to revoke its economic sanctions, they were crucial in advancing its overarching soft power strategy to enhance its global standing and promote peaceful conflict resolution.

South Korea has implemented various strategic economic incentives to lessen the effect of China's sanctions. To cultivate an economic connection between the two countries that benefit both, these procedures include signing a free trade agreement (FTA) between China and South Korea and forming a joint committee to monitor economic cooperation. The importance of normalization for South Korean business is evidenced by the entourage that accompanied President Moon during his December summit in China. The president was accompanied by a group of top executives from major South Korean conglomerates, such as Samsung, Hyundai Motor, LG, and others. This underscores the significance of the president's visit and highlights the importance of fostering strong relationships between

government and businesses. The meeting between President Xi and President Moon was fortified by a series of meetings among diverse business and economic leaders who endeavoured to reinvigorate bilateral trade. The Commerce Minister of the Republic of Korea, Paik Un-gyu, and his Chinese counterpart, Zhong Shan, had expressed interest in broadening the scope of the bilateral FTA to include other sectors, such as services and investment. In today's interconnected world, trade and business leaders must prioritize re-establishing broken lines of communication and lost modes of cooperation. This is particularly crucial in various industries where collaboration and coordination are essential for achieving success and sustaining growth. Therefore, leaders must take proactive measures to foster open communication and collaboration, leading to improved productivity, innovation, and overall success.

4.3.4 “Korean Wave” Sanctions

It should be acknowledged that, beyond its impact as a cultural phenomenon, the “Korean Wave” holds significant political dimension. China's sanctions on the “Korean Wave” directly resulted from the conflict around the THAAD system. It is undoubtedly one of the more significant shifts in the bilateral relations between China and South Korea. Since China is one of the leading markets for Korean cultural goods, the situation was highly critical because Chinese broadcasters and streaming platforms had stopped distributing Korean dramas and K-pop music. This had a tremendous effect on the Korean entertainment business, the effects of which have only recently begun to alleviate.

Due to its representation of Korean achievement and its crucial role in the South Korean economy, the “Korean Wave” has significant political scope. The most significant challenge that Hallyu has faced thus far is the prohibitions imposed by China on South Korean popular culture. In response to the deployment of THAAD on South Korea soil, China had resorted to banning Korean popular culture. K-pop stars who had previously arranged events in China were compelled to cancel their engagements due to the denial of visas. The implementation of the ban has resulted in a significant impact on the K-pop industry, as no prominent K-pop group had been able to conduct public performances or engage in other public appearances, such as fanmeets, within the country. This has raised concerns about the potential negative consequences of the ban on the cultural and economic aspects of the industry. Fanmeets in particular have garnered significant attention and widespread appeal within the Hallyu cultural sphere. The aforementioned events offer a chance for fans to actively participate with their preferred group, artist, actor, or actress via

autograph signings, live performances, Q&A sessions, and various other engaging activities. Thus, it can be argued that fanmeets play a crucial role in the spread of Hallyu and the general attraction of South Korea. (Kim, 2019)

The South Korean drama industry had also been negatively impacted by the ban on South Korean content on Chinese television and online streaming platforms. Certain Chinese-Korean co-productions have been suspended, while completed productions have been barred from distribution. South Korean dramas have emerged as a crucial component of the nation's soft power, having garnered critical acclaim throughout Asia and internationally as well. The prohibition of South Korean dramas in China has resulted in a noteworthy decrease in the spread of South Korean culture and entertainment among Chinese consumers, thereby exerting a tangible impact on South Korea's soft power in China. (Chandran, 2016)

It should be noted, however, that China's bans on the "Korean Wave" had also taken place before the THAAD dispute as well. For instance, such was the case with the Korean drama series *Descendants of the Sun*, which prompted China's Ministry of Public Security to issue a warning against the dangers of watching Korean dramas, alleging that Korean dramas may cause "legal troubles" ("Chinese government warns of dangers of Korean dramas as *Descendants Of The Sun* hits 440m views in China" 2016).

The remarkable success of Korean television dramas in Asia has persistently presented the Chinese government with a significant challenge as the influence of Korean dramas on Chinese culture has been a source of concern due to their alleged detrimental effect on moral and value systems. Thus, it can be argued that the prevalence of Korean dramas in China has raised concerns about the potential damage to China's national image of cultural superiority in the region. Thus, this is a compelling reason as to why China specifically targeted the "Korean Wave" as an economic tactic to coerce South Korea to abandon its THAAD deployment plans.

4.4 Analysis on the impact of ROK-China bilateral relations during THAAD conflict

Nye defines soft power as a state's ability to influence people by attraction, persuasion, and legitimacy, rather than coercion or force. It entails influencing others' preferences and perceptions to coincide with one's own goals and ideals, which is frequently accomplished through diplomatic engagement, discussion, and relationship-building. Bilateral meetings, as a kind of diplomatic engagement, may be used to project soft power by allowing stakeholders to connect, create relationships, and seek common ground. Thus, the

frequency of high-level meetings between South Korea and China prior to and after the THAAD deployment might serve as an indicator of the deployment's significant influence on bilateral diplomacy and soft power dynamics in the THAAD case.

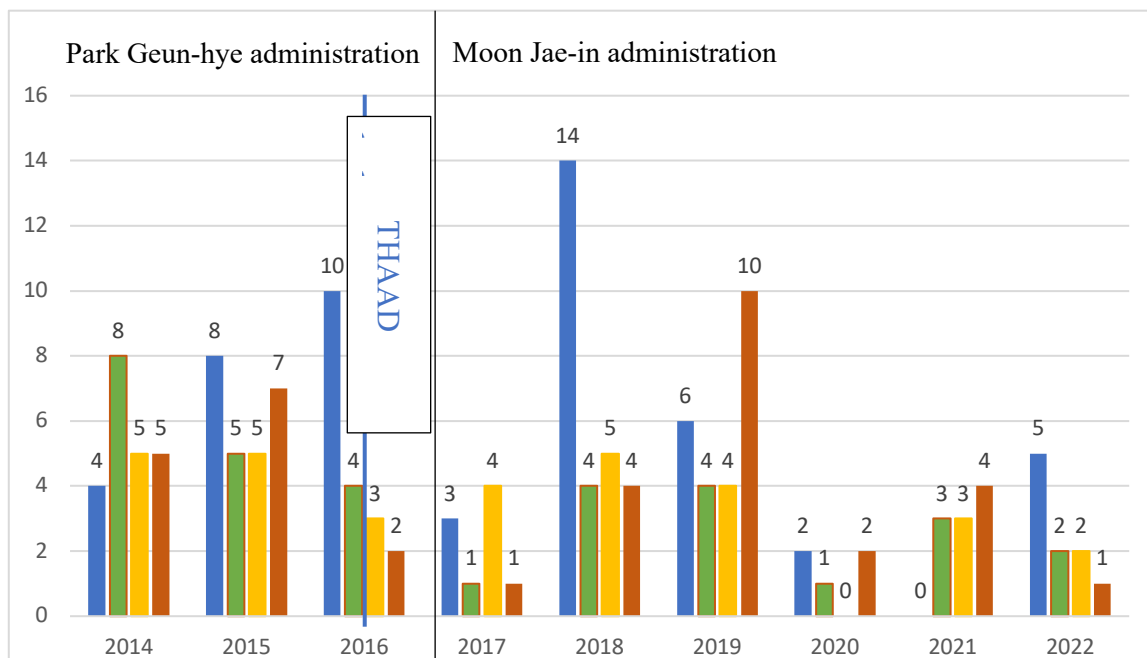


Figure 1. Bilateral meetings between South Korea-China from 2014-2022

Sources: Sources include various news articles as well as official press releases

Figure 1 shows the numbers of times bilateral meeting occurred between South Korea and China between the years 2014-2022. Each year is divided into four quarters of a year. As can be evidenced, meeting between South Korea and China had significantly lessened after the deployment of THAAD. There may have been constraints or difficulties in applying soft power, which may explain the drop in the number of bilateral meetings. This suggests that South Korea had challenges or problems in the process of holding bilateral discussions, such as political constraints. In addition to this, it represents strained relationships, restricted conversation, or changed goals, all of which have the potential to impair the efficacy of soft power projection throughout the conflict.

It is also evident from Figure 1 that after some time, bilateral meetings quickly resumed to normal levels. The sudden rise can be explained by the agreement the then-newly incumbent President Moon Jae-in had made with China to improve relations. President Moon Jae-in's main policy pledges during the 2017 elections was to resolve the THAAD dispute with China ("South Korea president Moon Jae In's main policy pledges" 2017) Subsequently,

on October 21, 2017, Seoul and Beijing released an official announcement whereupon they came to an agreement and issued joint statements recognizing the importance of their relations. (Work, 2017) This can be interpreted as South Korea's strategic attempt to rebuild bilateral relations with China and resolve the THAAD disagreement diplomatically, thereby adopting soft power methods. After the agreement, bilateral meetings resumed, indicating diplomatic involvement and the possible effectiveness of soft power projection in resolving the THAAD problem. It implies that diplomatic initiatives including discussions, joint declarations, and acknowledging the importance of relations might improve South Korea-China soft power dynamics. This shows how diplomatic actions and policy decisions may shape perceptions, create trust, and repair bilateral ties.

However, THAAD conflict may have long-term implications on the bilateral relations between South Korea and China, which may not be fully captured by short-term changes in bilateral meetings. This is especially evident when considering the current President Yoon Seok-yeol's approach to the THAAD issue. Yoon's attitude appears to be in accordance with the Moon Jae-in administration's "Three Nos" policy, which states that South Korea would not deploy more THAAD, engage in an American missile defence network, or form a U.S.-Korea-Japan military alliance. Yoon's government has repeatedly stated that the Three Nos policy, instituted by the former president, is not an official pledge or agreement. (Kim, 2022) This noncommittal attitude could potentially impact South Korea's reputation as a reliable and cooperative international partner, and thus negatively impact its soft power.

4.5 Document Analysis

Document analysis is a research method that systematically investigates and interprets written or textual documents to extract information, insights, and meaning. Document analysis can be applied to various documents, including written texts, historical records, legal documents, and policy papers. For this study, both the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of Korea's (ROK) Diplomatic White Papers were analysed. Then, a coding or categorisation system was developed to analyse the documents in a structured manner. This required identifying specific variables or themes to extract pertinent information from the documents relevant to the research question.

Since Diplomatic White Papers are a source for foreign policy objectives, and as previously stated, the objective of soft power is to achieve foreign policy objectives, Diplomatic white papers can illuminate how both nations' foreign policy narratives address the THAAD dispute. By analysing China and South Korea's diplomatic white papers in the

context of the THAAD dispute, it is possible to gain insight into how both nations structure their arguments, seek to influence global perceptions, and employ soft power strategies in their diplomatic efforts. By analysing their narratives, strategies, and initiatives in their respective white papers, we can better understand how they project soft power in the context of the THAAD dispute and how this impacts their bilateral relations and regional dynamics.

4.5.1 PRC 2017 Diplomatic White Paper

For this analysis, the Diplomatic White Paper, issued in January 2017 on China's policies on Asia-Pacific security cooperation was taken since this white paper directly addresses the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula and the THAAD concerns PRC has. From the statements regarding the THAAD dispute, several key points were made by the PRC white paper regarding the two issues.

Nuclear Issue on the Korean Peninsula - China's diplomatic white paper from 2017 underlines its consistent position on the Korean Peninsula's denuclearization, its commitment to regional peace and stability, and the settlement of the nuclear issue through negotiation and dialogue,

“China is committed to the denuclearization of the peninsula, its peace and stability, and settlement of the issue through dialogue and consultation.” (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, January 2017)

This illustrates China's diplomatic efforts to promote peace and stability by peaceful methods, creating an image of a cooperative international actor. Additionally, China criticizes the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) nuclear tests and missile launches whilst also admitting that the DPRK had violated UN Security Council resolutions.

“China has made clear its opposition to such actions and supported the relevant Security Council resolutions to prevent the DPRK's further pursuit of nuclear weapons.” (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, January 2017)

In this, China underlined its commitment to working with other countries to achieve denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and long-term peace and stability in Northeast Asia. This demonstrates China's adherence to international rules and commitment to avoiding future nuclear weapon proliferation, thus creating an image of a responsible global power.

Anti-ballistic Missiles Issue - Regarding anti-ballistic missiles, China takes a reserved stance and emphasizes the need for discretion. China underlines that creating military alliances and constructing global and regional anti-ballistic missile systems might be damaging to strategic stability and mutual confidence. China claims the military alliances to be reminiscent of the Cold War and condemned the construction of global and regional anti-ballistic missile systems, as it considers these actions harmful to global strategic stability and international trust.

“Forming Cold War style military alliances and building global and regional anti-ballistic missile systems will be detrimental to strategic stability and mutual trust, as well as to the development of an inclusive global and regional security framework.” (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, January 2017)

China advocates for countries to respect one another's security concerns while pursuing their own interests and preserving global strategic peace without compromising the security of any sovereign nation. China also opposes South Korea's intention to install the THAAD anti-ballistic missile system, arguing that it would harm regional security and strategic balance. It would also hurt efforts to keep peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. China urges the United States and South Korea to halt the deployment process. This shows China's concerns about the harmful effects of anti-ballistic missile systems on global security and stability, while also conveying the image of a country pushing for strategic stability and cooperation.

The Chinese viewpoint on the THAAD conflict and the anti-ballistic missile issue, as described in the paper, may be seen as an instance of China's soft power. China is utilizing diplomatic tools, like declarations and appeals for collaboration, to convey its opposition to the THAAD deployment and promote its vision of a regional security policy that is inclusive and cooperative. China may have intended to gather support for its stand on the problem by pushing for concepts such as discretion, mutual trust, and mutually beneficial collaboration.

However, China's soft power tactics have limits in this circumstance. One constraint is that China's objection to THAAD deployment may not be generally accepted by other nations in the area, especially the United States and South Korea, who have their own strategic interests. This may hinder China's capacity to convince these nations to reconsider their position on the issue. Moreover, the document reflects a firm stance against THAAD deployment, which other nations might consider hostile, thus harming China's attempts to

develop trust and cooperation. The use of strong language, such as "firmly opposes" and "strongly urges," could also have a significant impact on perceptions of China's soft power strategy, since it may be viewed as coercive rather than persuasive. Additionally, China's response to the THAAD controversy includes other aspects, such as economic coercion, which influenced on the success of its soft power efforts.

The tone and language used in diplomatic communications may shape impressions of a country's soft power strategy. Using excessively strong or forceful language may harm creating a favourable image and influencing others. Additionally, China's reaction to the THAAD debate included elements other than the white paper, such as economic pressure, which may have an influence on the success of its soft power initiatives. Economic sanctions, such as trade restrictions, tourism bans, or other types of economic coercion, can impact a country's soft power projection in both good and negative ways. While these actions may achieve short-term policy goals, such as pressuring other nations to change their behaviour, they may also harm a country's reputation and weaken soft power eventually

4.5.2 ROK Diplomatic White paper 2018

Comparatively, South Korea's 2018 Diplomatic White Paper also addressed the issues between the THAAD dispute, nuclear issue and ROK-China relations. The diplomatic white paper, demonstrates that the South Korean government followed a principled stance, making several attempts to improve communication and collaboration with China at all levels. Some key moments from the diplomatic white papers include:

Bilateral Relations and Communication - For instance, high-level diplomatic engagements, including phone discussions and summit meetings between President Moon Jae-in and President Xi Jinping, were held, which aided in the development of mutual trust and cooperation. Furthermore, government delegations were deployed to international forums such as the Belt and Road Conference for International Cooperation, and Special Envoys were sent to China, stressing the importance of bilateral relations and commitment to improving cooperation from South Korea's perspective.

“The ROK government also continued to communicate with neighbouring countries, making it clear that the deployment of THAAD was not aimed at any third country and it would only be used in defense against North Korean nuclear or missile threats” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018 Foreign Affairs White Paper English)

South Korea intended to demonstrate a non-threatening purpose by emphasizing that the THAAD deployment was purely for protection against North Korean nuclear or missile threats. This statement was intended to avoid misperceptions or misinterpretations from escalating tensions or eliciting hostile responses from neighbouring countries. It exemplifies the use of soft power to change views and communicate a cooperative, non-confrontational position. Furthermore, by specifically emphasizing that THAAD will only be deployed to defend against North Korean threats, South Korea projected a defensive rather than an attacking stance. This is consistent with soft power ideas prioritising appeal and persuasion over force or aggression. It sends a message of collaboration, self-defence, and responsible behaviour, potentially improving South Korea's image and influence in the area.

High-level exchanges and dialogue - Active interactions between South Korean and Chinese foreign ministries occurred, including visits, bilateral meetings on the margins of international conferences, and strategic discussions between vice foreign ministers. These encounters allowed for in-depth conversations about common concerns, such as pending issues and the Korean Peninsula situation. Additionally, efforts were made to re-establish people-to-people interactions and collaboration, such as the restoration of Chinese tourism travel to South Korea, cultural exchange events hosted by local governments and private organizations, and private-sector people-to-people exchange programs. These events encouraged people-to-people interaction and collaboration between the two nations, which aided in the normalization of bilateral relations.

“In November 2017, President Moon Jae-in and President Xi Jinping held a telephone conversation and agreed to put bilateral relations back on track” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018 Foreign Affairs White Paper English)

That South Korea and China have agreed to put their relations "back on track" shows that in the past, there may have been difficulties or conflicts between the two countries. South Korea's goal in its relationship with China was to cultivate an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation. Therefore, the country worked to strengthen and repair its bilateral ties. This demonstrates the application of soft power concepts, emphasising connection development, mutual understanding, and working together to accomplish desired results.

Economic and Cultural Cooperation - The THAAD deployment issue resulted in economic consequences, such as a decline in trade volume and a decrease in the number of tourists between South Korea and China. Because economic factors frequently play a critical part in diplomatic relations, this economic influence might have hindered the effectiveness of soft power operations. Notwithstanding South Korea's use of soft power, the economic consequences may have influenced China's desire to fully engage in mending bilateral relations.

“The THAAD issue had a negative impact on trade and visitors between Korea and China, but efforts were made to restore economic and trade relations through various measures” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018 Foreign Affairs White Paper English)

The cooperation between South Korea and China had been damaged due to the THAAD issue's negative impact on commerce and tourism between the two nations. On the other hand, the efforts made to re-establish commercial and trade links might be considered an attempt to rebuild trust, an essential component of soft power. Restoring broken trust may provide better bilateral ties and an atmosphere more conducive to economic collaboration.

Denuclearization of North Korea- The THAAD deployment issue was primarily related to national security, and South Korea took a principled approach towards the issue. This posed limitations on the use of soft power as it required delicate balancing between national security interests and diplomatic efforts. South Korea had to carefully navigate the issue to avoid any perception of compromising its national security, which could have limited the extent to which soft power was utilized in the diplomatic efforts.

“President Moon declared that the ROK government would pursue the establishment of a permanent peace regime and denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula which would guarantee the security of the North Korean regime.” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018 Foreign Affairs White Paper English)

The efforts that South Korea is making toward denuclearising the Korean Peninsula may also be interpreted as a statement of the country's dedication to upholding international norms and promoting non-proliferation measures. To present itself as a responsible actor that preserves international standards and contributes to global peace and security, South Korea

may do so by advocating for eliminating all nuclear weapons. This normative influence can help increase the country's soft power and attract support from other nations.

In terms of soft power limitations, the change in government in South Korea during the period under analysis may have influenced the effectiveness of soft power. President Moon Jae-in's administration, which came into power during this period, had a different approach towards China compared to the previous administration. While the efforts made by the new administration, including President Moon's state visit to China, were aimed at restoring bilateral relations, political considerations and differences in policy priorities may have impacted the effectiveness of soft power in this context. The issue of the Korean Peninsula's situation, including North Korea's nuclear program, adds another layer of complexity to the bilateral relations between South Korea and China. While efforts were made to enhance strategic communication on the Korean Peninsula issue, the geopolitical challenges and divergent interests of various actors in the region could have limited the effectiveness of soft power initiatives.

Both China and South Korea have stated their support for denuclearization, peace, and stability on the Korean Peninsula; however, their emphasis and positions on specific issues, such as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) actions and the deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-ballistic missile system, differ. These disagreements reflect China and South Korea's diplomatic challenges when attempting to resolve the complicated security dynamics on the Korean Peninsula.

4.6 Content Analysis on Speeches by Foreign Ministry Representatives from 2016-2017

From statement made by the Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Regular Press Conference on THAAD, several reasons can be brought up as to why China opposes the THAAD developments in South Korea.

China claims installing THAAD in South Korea threatens the balance of regional strategic forces. China has often voiced worry that the US's deployment of THAAD in South Korea may upset the regional strategic balance. China thinks THAAD's sophisticated radar system can penetrate its borders and perhaps jeopardize its interests in national security. China opposes any acts that can threaten the balance of power in the area and regards the THAAD deployment as a threat to its strategic security interests.

“The deployment of the THAAD system will gravely sabotage the strategic security interests of regional countries including China and regional strategic balance.” (Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang's Remarks)

The THAAD system's deployment is seen as a threat to China's national security interests. The remark also mentions regional strategic balance, meaning that China believes the deployment of the THAAD system will disturb the region's present power balance. China may see the system as shifting the military balance in favour of the United States and its allies, which has the potential to harm China's strategic position and regional influence.

China has argued that the deployment of THAAD does not assist in resolving the security concerns of relevant parties or contribute to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Concerned that THAAD deployment may raise tensions and undermine efforts for disarmament and regional stability. According to China, the deployment of THAAD would only increase tensions on the Korean Peninsula and sabotage ongoing talks between all parties involved in the conflict.

“The deployment of the THAAD system by the US and the ROK will in no way help achieve the goal of denuclearization on the Peninsula and maintain peace and stability of the Peninsula.” (Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying's Remarks)

From this statement, China suggests that the deployment of THAAD system by the U.S and South Korea would not contribute to the goal of denuclearisation on the Korean peninsula. It would also not contribute to maintaining peace and stability. Instead, China seems to perceive THAAD to be a destabilising factor that would disrupt the strategic balance and undermine the regional security. From China's perspective, the deployment of THAAD is not seen as a defensive measure, as South Korea claims it is, but rather as a provocative gesture that has the potential to increase tensions in the region. China's main concern is that THAAD system's advanced radar could be used to gather intelligence on China's own military activities, which would hurt China's strategic security. Additionally, China may also think that the US is trying to increase its military presence in the area by encouraging the placement of THAAD system in South Korea. This could be seen as a threat to China's influence in the area.

Based on these remarks, it is suggested that China opposes THAAD developments in South Korea for strategic security, regional peace and stability, and the assumption that its

interests and concerns have not been fully addressed. China urges that the US and South Korea suspend the deployment process and address its concerns to prevent escalating regional tensions and harming its strategic security interests.

From the standpoint of soft power, China's objection to deploying the THAAD system is an effort to safeguard its image and reputation in the area. China may see the system's existence as a provocative step by the US and its allies, which would harm China's soft power attempts to establish friendly ties with neighbouring nations. Deploying the THAAD system jeopardizes its attempts to be viewed as a responsible regional power and supporter of peaceful coexistence. Additionally, China's leverage of soft power resources, including diplomatic channels, economic incentives, and cultural interactions, to counteract the perceived negative consequences of THAAD deployment could have also impacted its soft power initiatives. China uses these diplomatic channels to express its objections to the THAAD system by imposing economic pressure or penalties on South Korea and pushing its regional security efforts as an alternative to the THAAD system.

Summary

The present study had aimed to investigate the factors related to the THAAD dispute that contributed to the decline in South Korea's soft power in China. It has examined the impact of the THAAD dispute on South Korea's soft power, such as the phenomena known as the "Korean Wave". The research primarily employed qualitative methodology such as explaining outcome process-tracing, as well as document analysis and content analysis. This thesis had constructed a chronological sequence of events that led to the decline of South Korea's soft power in China. The empirical evidence suggests that although the "Korean Wave" has effectively advanced South Korea's cultural and economic objectives, the THAAD dispute has brought to light the constraints of soft power in effectively resolving conflicts that involve national security concerns. The findings of this thesis conclude that North Korean nuclear missile tests were the causal mechanism that led to increased threat perception by South Korea and the U.S., which in turn led to deployment of THAAD. The deployment of THAAD resulted in decreased trust and cooperation between China and South Korea, since China perceived the THAAD system to be a threat to its own national security interest and called for South Korea to abandon the deployment. Since South Korea, in the end, did not abandon the deployment, China resorted to using economic coercion by targeting

the “Korean Wave” in order to exert its economic leverage and this ultimately is what motivated China to target the “Korean Wave”. Thus, China boycotted South Korean cultural exports, which led to significant decline in South Korea’s soft power in China. Further document and content analyses support these findings.

The main research question was answered by the fact that the deployment of THAAD had a negative impact on the relationship between China and South Korea from a diplomatic standpoint as well as a cultural standpoint, since prior to the THAAD dispute the “Korean Wave” had a significant presence in China. But after China’s economic coercion tactics, this form of South Korea’s soft power had diminished. Thus, it is clear that in terms of soft power limitations, it can be susceptible to geopolitical tensions and nationalistic sentiments.

The research underscores the significance of geopolitical and strategic considerations that underlie China's opposition to the deployment of THAAD. The dispute between South Korea and China had a substantial impact on diplomatic and cultural exchanges between the two nations. Various sectors such as trade, tourism, cultural exchange and other crucial areas were significantly affected. Thus, this thesis highlighted how the THAAD dispute had significant implications for South Korea’s soft power. It also highlighted how asymmetrical economic relationships between South Korea and China made South Korea vulnerable to China’s economic coercion tactics.

This thesis contributed to existing understandings of soft power by pointing out its limitations when concerning complex security challenges and international conflicts. Furthermore, this research also gave insights into the dynamics of bilateral relations and how security disputes can strain bilateral ties and soft power dynamics. Future research on a similar topic could examine how security disputes affect public opinions and hateful sentiment in given areas.

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APPENDIX A

Coding frames for PRC Diplomatic White Paper 2017

| | Main codes | Subcategory codes | Description | Example quotes | Nr. of coded segments |
|----|------------------------------|--|--|--|-----------------------|
| 1. | Nuclear Issue | Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula | This category encompasses any mentions of China's stance on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula | "China is committed to the denuclearization of the peninsula, its peace and stability, and settlement of the issue through dialogue and consultation" | 8 |
| 2. | | Stability on the Korean Peninsula | This category encompasses China's stance on promoting stability on the Korean Peninsula | "China has made clear its opposition to such actions and supported the relevant Security Council resolutions to prevent the DPRK's further pursuit of nuclear weapons" | 3 |
| 3. | Anti-ballistic Missile Issue | Opposition to THAAD deployment | This category encompasses China's opposition to the THAAD deployment in South Korea | "China firmly opposes the US and ROK deployment of the THAAD anti-ballistic missile system in the ROK, and strongly urges the US and the ROK to stop this process." | 3 |
| 4. | | International Security Concerns | This category encompasses China's stances on the security environment in the region | "Forming Cold War style military alliances and building global and regional anti-ballistic missile systems will be detrimental to strategic stability and mutual trust, as well as to the development of an inclusive global and regional security framework." | 3 |

APPENDIX B

Coding frames for ROK Diplomatic White Paper 2018

| | Main codes | Subcategory codes | Description | Example quotes | Nr. Of coded segments |
|----|---------------------------------------|---|--|---|-----------------------|
| 1. | Bilateral Relations and Communication | THAAD position and communication | This subcategory refers to comments in the Diplomatic White Paper that encompasses South Korea's position on THAAD | "The ROK government also continued to communicate with neighboring countries, making it clear that the deployment of THAAD was not aimed at any third country and it would only be used in defense against North Korean nuclear or missile threats" | 6 |
| 2. | | High-level exchanges and dialogue | This subcategory encompasses South Korea's efforts for bilateral relations with China. | "In November 2017, President Moon Jae-in and President Xi Jinping held a telephone conversation and agreed to put bilateral relations back on track" | 11 |
| 3. | Economic and Cultural Cooperation | Restoration of People-to-people exchanges | This subcategory encompasses the efforts made to restore people-to-people exchanges | "People-to-people exchange programs in the private sector, such as business and academic exchanges, were actively promoted between Korea and China" | 3 |
| 4. | | Impact of THAAD on economy | This subcategory refers to comments made about South Korea's economy impacted by the THAAD dispute | "The THAAD issue had a negative impact on trade and visitors between Korea and China, but efforts were made to restore economic and trade relations through various measures" | 4 |
| 5. | Nuclear Issue | Denuclearization of North Korea | This category encompasses all comments made that refer to denuclearization efforts on the Korean peninsula | "President Moon declared that the ROK government would pursue the establishment of a permanent peace regime and denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula which would guarantee the security of the North Korean regime. | 28 |

APPENDIX C

Coding frames for speeches made by PRC on THAAD from 2016-2017

| | Main codes | Subcategory codes | Description | Example quotes | Nr. of coded segments |
|----|--------------------------------|--|--|---|-----------------------|
| 1. | China's Perspective on THAAD | China's opposition on THAAD | This subcategory refers to the opinions and official position of China regarding THAAD, particularly the oppositions | "China has expressed strong dissatisfaction with and firm opposition to the decision and has summoned the ambassadors of the US and the ROK to lodge our representations." | 12 |
| 2. | | Asserting China's Interests and Concerns | This subcategory encompasses the ways in which China expresses its interests and concerns in relation to THAAD | "We emphasize the need for the ROK and the United States to consider China's interests and concerns seriously." | 5 |
| 3. | China's Evaluation of THAAD | Negative impacts of THAAD on Regional Security | This subcategory encompasses China's perceived negative effects or consequences of THAAD on regional security | "The deployment of the THAAD system will gravely sabotage the strategic security interests of regional countries including China and regional strategic balance." | 8 |
| 4. | | Ineffectiveness of THAAD | This subcategory refers to China's perceived or assessed ineffectiveness of THAAD in achieving its intended goals. | "The deployment of the THAAD system by the US and the ROK will in no way help achieve the goal of denuclearization on the Peninsula and maintain peace and stability of the Peninsula." | 9 |
| 5. | Calls to Stop THAAD Deployment | Halt Deployment | This subcategory encompasses statements made by PRC for the U.S and ROK to stop deployment of THAAD | "China strongly urges the US and the ROK to halt the process of deploying the system." | 9 |

Resümee

LÕUNA-KOREA PEHME JÕU VÄLJUNDID JA PIIRANGUD: THAAD-I JUHTUM

Britta Junolainen

Käesoleva magistritöö eesmärk on uurida THAAD-i vaidlusega seotud tegureid, mis on aidanud kaasa Lõuna-Korea pehme võimu langusele Hiinas. Selle hulka kuulub kvalitatiivne analüüs põhjuslikkuse mehhanismidest, empiirilistest tõenditest ja laiematest mõjudest, mis rõhutavad pehme võimu piiranguid keeruliste julgeolekuväljakutsetega silmitsi seistes. Lõuna-Korea pehme jõud on järk-järgult kasvanud ja pälvinud tunnustust tänu oma märkimisväärsele pehme jõu kasutamisele, mida ilmestab rahvusvaheliselt hoogu saanud kultuurieksport, mida tuntakse ka kui "Korea laine". See nähtus on pälvinud märkimisväärset tähelepanu ja kinnitab riigi võimet kasutada oma kultuurilist mõju ka väljapool riigipiire. Siiski on Lõuna-Korea pehmel võimul teatud piirangud, mis takistavad selle mõjuvõimu avaldamist, eriti kui tegemist on keeruliste julgeolekuprobleemidega piirkonnas. Seda ilmestab kõige enam Lõuna-Korea ja Hiina vahel tekkinud raketitõrjevahendi (THAAD) paigutuse vaidlus. THAAD-i kasutuselevõtt oli mõeldud kaitsemeetmena Põhja-Korea kasvavate raketi- ja tuumaotude vastu. THAAD-i konflikt avaldas aga märkimisväärset mõju ka Lõuna-Korea pehmele jõule. See on peamiselt tingitud sellest, et Hiina karistas THAAD-i kasutuselevõtu tagajärjel "Korea lainet" ja muid pehme jõu valdkondi. Hiina tajus paigutust oma rahvusliku julgeoleku huvides ohuna. See viis Lõuna-Korea pehme võimu languseni Hiinas, mis mõjutas nende kultuurieksporti ja teiste diplomaatiliste vahetuste valdkondi. See lõputöö koostas sündmuste kronoloogilise jada, mis viis Lõuna-Korea pehme jõu vähenemiseni Hiinas. Empiirilised tõendid näitavad, et kuigi Korea laine on Lõuna-Korea kultuurilisi ja majanduslikke eesmarke tõhusalt edendanud, on THAAD-i vaidlus toonud päevavalgele pehme jõu piirangud rahvusliku julgeolekuga seotud konfliktide olemasolul. Lõuna-Korea ja Hiina vaheline vaidlus avaldas olulist mõju kahe riigi diplomaatilistele ja kultuurivahetustele. Erinevad sektorid nagu kaubandus, turism, kultuurivahetus ja teised olulised valdkonnad olid märkimisväärset mõjutatud. Seega oli THAAD-i konflikt oluliste tagajärgedega Lõuna-Korea pehmele võimule. Samuti oli rõhutatud, kuidas asümmeetrilised majandussuhted Lõuna-Korea ja Hiina vahel muutsid Lõuna-Korea haavatavaks Hiina majandusliku sunni taktika suhtes.

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18/05/2023