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The International Criminal Court’s Disproportionate Focus on Africa
Jon Merrill
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Letter from the Editor

Tara Sun Vanacore

Dear Reader,

My first semester as Editor-in-Chief has been an exercise in collaboration. From previous Editors-in-Chief offering guidance, most notably Maanasa Reddy, who taught me how to design the covers after a long day at work during finals week; to our proofreader, David Cottingham, who provided insightful commentary as well as grammatical expertise; to our scrupulous Copy Editor, Aurora Nou, who formatted every article and oversaw the blind peer review process with humility and humor—the issue you hold in your hands is the work of many.

The articles in this issue, as diverse as the schools within SIS, point to the importance of collaboration in resolving the conundrums each of us will face once we have earned our degrees. We have much to learn from one another. As Carter elucidates, development fails if corruption is not addressed. JadHAV and Steinberg illustrate the peril that befalls natural resources when leaders blindly pursue political and economic agendas. And as Simon reminds us, reconciliation must seek to address structural inequality, not merely alter state services.

As a student in the Ethics, Peace, and Global Affairs program, I have had the good fortune of taking classes both in SIS and in the College of Arts and Science’s Philosophy program. As a result, the ethical dimensions of development and peacebuilding are never far from my mind. Listening to the JIS staff—hailing from SIS and the Washington College of Law—debate the merits of these articles reminded me of how vital it is to create space for dialogue across disciplines.

Finally, I would like to recognize our outgoing Editor-in-Chief, Maanasa Reddy, who just completed her J.D. and M.A. Maanasa served JIS tirelessly, working on five issues over three years. Her grace and fairness inspire me. The staff and I wish her every success.

Sincerely,

Tara Sun Vanacore
Editor-in-Chief
americanujis@gmail.com
Abstracts

FOOD AS COMMUNICATION: A CASE STUDY OF SOUTH KOREA’S GASTRODIPLOMACY
Mary Jo A. Pham

Throughout history, food has had a significant role in shaping the world, carving ancient trade routes and awarding economic and political power to those who handled cardamom, sugar, and coffee. Trade routes such as the incense and spice route through India into the Levant and the triangular trade route spanning from Africa to the Caribbean and Europe laid the foundations for commerce and trade for modern nation-states, wove the cultural fabric of contemporary societies, and tempered countless palates, making way for the globalization of taste and food culture. This paper seeks to explore the following questions: What role does food have in communication? More specifically, what role does food have in the conduct of diplomacy, given the rising popularity of “gastrodiplomacy,” a subset of public diplomacy?

In investigating these questions, I outline how food is capable of communicating national identity, make note of its historical role in foreign policy, and finally, define gastrodiplomacy; I evoke South Korea as one particular example of a middle power using food as a central component of its public diplomacy campaign. I conclude that gastrodiplomacy, the practice of exporting a country’s culinary heritage in an effort to raise national brand awareness, encourage economic investment and trade, and engage on a cultural and personal level with everyday diners, is a potentially lucrative communication tool for nations seeking to distinguish their cultural and culinary assets for future boosts in exports, tourism, and nation brand awareness.

WATER DEVELOPMENT TRAJECTORIES IN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE
Nik C. Steinberg

This paper examines three potential, and nonexclusive, pathways for water development in the Lower Jordan Valley. The discourse surrounding water development between Israel and Palestine has been rooted in a mélange of ideological and rights-based beliefs that have failed to fully consider the opportunity costs associated with groundwater extraction, and even desalination in some cases. This complex relationship between rights and needs has polluted the watershed with distrust, misuse, and disagreement over rights of ownership. Dimensions of risk and opportunity will be explored within the confines of three scenarios: business as usual, desalination technology, and virtual water markets. With the help of a user
cost analysis and a needs-based assessment, an argument will be made for rainfed agriculture and small-scale virtual water markets. Despite continued support for desalination development and groundwater extraction there exist serious concerns regarding skewed water costs between Jewish and Palestinian settlements, desperate drinking water shortages in Palestine, and the overall longevity of the region’s remaining aquifers.

**OFFICIAL APOLOGIES TO INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES: COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY OF AUSTRALIA AND CANADA**

*Elisheva Simon*

While official apologies have become a popular way to address reconciliation and past injustices, debate persists around the impact of their outcomes and whether they truly lead to transformation in intergroup relations. In 2008, Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper independently offered public apologies to the indigenous people of their countries for abusive, discriminatory policies practiced against them in the past. Although final outcomes will not be clear for several decades, four years provides enough time to speculate on whether these countries have started on a path towards reconciliation, and where they might be headed in the future in dealing with the challenges they face. This case study attempts to identify similarities and differences between the Canadian and Australian apologies, evaluate the reconciliation efforts each government has made since the apologies were offered, and analyze what changes have occurred in each country as a result of these efforts. Conclusions are drawn about contextual and political elements surrounding an apology that seem necessary to ensure its intended impact and outcomes, and how best to use government apologies as a tool to achieve intergroup reconciliation.

**CUBAN TOURISM: IS THE SUGAR AS SWEET AS IT SEEMS?**

*Jon Brandt*

The Caribbean is a popular destination for North American and European tourists looking to relax, and Cuba fits in as a perfect combination of beach, nightlife, and cultural appeal. However, even as restrictions on travel to the island have eased up during the Obama administration, it is unlikely that the Socialist country would ever become a top Caribbean vacation spot as it was before the revolution. This is in part because the Cuban government does not want to overdevelop the industry and rob the citizens of the gains of the revolution, in addition to the fact that the country lacks the basic infrastructure that makes islands appealing.
Tourism is currently the main stimulator of the Cuban economy, yet experts assert that major foreign investments are not being considered and any plans of improving or expanding hotels and services are limited. This is to make sure that Cuba doesn’t fall into the grasp of outside influence again, but it does not take into account the need to accommodate larger waves of tourists. If travel restrictions were lifted, there would be large swells of interested foreigners visiting, yet a lack of service and facilities that travelers expect from Caribbean countries would eventually tarnish the appeal of a vacation in Cuba. This paper will explore how the Cuban economy has come to depend on tourism, what that means for the society in terms of work equality, sex tourism, and wage distribution, and analyze any potential growth in the Cuban economy based on expanded tourism operations.

INDIA AND THE FREE TRADE ECONOMY: CALCULATED, SUSTAINABLE ENGAGEMENT?
Adam Jadhav

This paper analyzes India’s integration with global trade systems in the period of liberalization from 1991 to mid-2012. It finds that India’s engagement with the global economy has been calculated—at times enthusiastically, at times warily. This has both positives and negatives for sustainable development. Trade has clearly provided some benefits, and India has also worked to protect its people and business from some of trade’s most negative impacts. Yet there have been downsides. This paper attempts to lay out some basic history and context to set the stage for India’s free trade regime. The paper then examines the broad trends in India’s trade policy since liberalization with some specific details of note. From this, the paper lays out a holistic accounting of sustainable development and examines the implications of India’s trade policy. This analysis ultimately gives rise to arguments for policies and leadership that might improve the prospects for sustainable development in India.

A LIFE FOR A LIFE: THE EMERGING GLOBAL EPIDEMIC OF TRANSPLANT TOURISM
Daniel MacDuff

While globalization has created unprecedented opportunities for people worldwide to access goods and information that drive the economy and raise the global standard of living, it has also brought negative effects such as the commoditization of human organs. Recently the global trade in human organs has risen at an alarming rate as an aging wealthy population gains access to these valuable goods. This rise has led to the exploitation of the world’s poor on a massive scale as nonessential organs such as kidneys have in many cases become a means of collateral against crippling debt. Such
exploitation poses threats to global health, development, and economy. Unless the public is better educated and global organ donation policy is reexamined, governments will continue to foster exploitation, allow preventable deaths, and provide job security for the world’s most dangerous transnational criminal and terrorist organizations.

**AIDING AFGHANISTAN: HOW CORRUPTION AND WESTERN AID HINDER AFGHANISTAN’S DEVELOPMENT**

*Joseph Carter*

Corruption now poses the single greatest threat to the international aid mission in Afghanistan. Failure to deliver government services and mismanagement in the development program allow corruption to intensify, undermine public support, and strengthen the insurgency. Crime and violence are on the rise, fueled by rampant corruption. In response to this threat, the West undertook a massive escalation in troops and development assistance, further exacerbating the problem. The success of the aid effort depends upon rapidly reforming the assistance framework while also building government capacity. Afghanistan and its international partners need to manage a smaller and more focused aid program effectively if they are to have any hope of overcoming the growing corruption problem.

**THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT’S DISPROPORTIONATE FOCUS ON AFRICA**

*Jon Merrill*

The International Criminal Court (ICC) faces legitimacy challenges that threaten the Court’s relationship with African states. These challenges often come from political leaders in Africa and will help to determine their countries’ continued engagement with the Court. To successfully fulfill its stated mandate, the Court must address the complaints coming from African leaders. This paper will categorize these complaints into common themes and examine their merit and the threat that they pose to the Court’s work in and with Africa.
Food as Communication: A Case Study of South Korea’s Gastrodiplomacy

Mary Jo A. Pham

Throughout history, food has played a significant role in shaping the world, carving ancient trade routes and awarding economic and political power to those who handled cardamom, sugar, and coffee. Trade corridors such as the incense and spice route through India into the Levant and the triangular trade route spanning from Africa to the Caribbean and Europe laid the foundations for commerce and trade between modern nation-states. Indeed, these pathways encouraged discovery—weaving the cultural fabric of contemporary societies, tempering countless palates, and ultimately making way for the globalization of taste and food culture. Facing such a rich history of food’s role in global politics and economics, this paper seeks to explore how food facilitates international communication by asking: What role does food have in the conduct of diplomacy? This inquiry is relevant given the rising popularity of “gastrodiplomacy,” a subset of public diplomacy.

In investigating these questions, I outline how food is capable of communicating national identity, make note of its historical role in foreign policy, define gastrodiplomacy, and finally, evoke South Korea as one particular example of a middle power using food as a central component of its public diplomacy campaign. I conclude that gastrodiplomacy, the practice of exporting a country’s culinary heritage in an effort to raise national brand awareness, encourage economic investment through tourism and trade, and engage on a cultural and personal level with everyday diners, is a potentially lucrative communication tool for nations seeking to distinguish their cultural and culinary assets for future boosts in exports, tourism, and nation brand awareness.

Mary Jo A. Pham graduated from Tufts University in 2011 with a BA in international relations, minoring in Chinese. She is pursuing an MA degree in international communication at the School of International Service at American University. She is a recipient of the 2010 Thomas R. Pickering Undergraduate Foreign Affairs Fellowship and will join the US Foreign Service following her graduation in May 2013. Her research interests include statecraft, popular communication, and social change.
How Food Is a Form of Communication

Since biblical times, food has offered people the opportunity for communion and exchange. As one journalist remarks, “the history of a country is written in its food.”¹ Thus, a country’s food and eating habits can be considered as intrinsic to national identity, touching all aspects of history, culture, society, and economy:

Every human being has to eat several times a day, everyday, as long as he (she) lives, and every human society has its own food preferences and way of eating. Furthermore, food is potentially related to all the principal features of national identity: It is often produced on the soil of [a] homeland; Culinary tradition is full of myths and memories; Eating is an important part of mass public culture; Food for survival forms an implicit element of modern citizenship; Food production and consumption constitutes the basis of national economy.²

Food is a nonverbal means of communication; it is anchored in how we perceive the world (and what we make of it). It conveys our understanding of it through our identities—are we vegan, Indian, or German? As Carlita Greene, associate professor and director of the communication and rhetoric program at Nazareth College, and Janet Cramer, associate professor of journalism and communication at University of New Mexico, highlight, “Food is much more than just a means of survival. It permeates all other aspects of our lives . . . [and] is a key factor in how we view ourselves and others.”³ Thus, in addition to forming a nexus for nationalism, food can also embody political statements. As Monica Smith states, “the act of consuming food may represent the basic locus of identity, conformity and resistance.”⁴ It is no wonder, then, how foods perceived as national dishes belonging to a certain country may ignite conflict.

Consider the example of South Korea and kimchi. Kimchi is Korea’s most internationally renowned side dish, often made with fermented

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cabbage and spices. There are reportedly a few hundred varieties of kimchi, each anchored in a regional tradition or family recipe. Yet kimchi is not made exclusively in Korea, which begs the question: Is kimchi uniquely South Korean, or can it belong to Japan and China as well? In 2005, a trade dispute between China and South Korea brought Seoul’s $830-million kimchi industry to a temporary halt—all because of the question as to which nation’s name could be adjectival to the cabbage. The dispute was only recently resolved when South Korea successfully lobbied the UN Codex Alimentarius Commission to change the English name for “Chinese cabbage” to “kimchi cabbage” in May 2012. As one news article notes, the leafy green was previously “registered on the international food category as Chinese cabbage . . . the name kimchi cabbage reaffirms that Korea is the country where kimchi originated.” While food anchors and connects some members of different communities, it can also distance others. This is evident when we attempt to give hummus a geographical home. Does it belong only to Lebanon, or to neighboring countries as well? And what about all the delectable stuffed grape leaves and the falafel? Aren’t they just as Turkish as they are Armenian and Jordanian? Or as Israeli as they are Egyptian?

In contrast, dishes that represent a country’s national cuisine may also serve the function of reinforcing equality, intimacy and solidarity-based relations among members of a national community, Arjun Appadurai notes. It is argued that such dishes can also build intimate and solidarity-based relations among members from different national communities. In other words, the communion of food presents diners with the opportunity to construct warm and friendly social relations with other diners, be they familiar or foreign. As this case study of South Korea’s gastrodipomacy campaign will highlight, the most fascinating aspect about food is that it is not limited to national boundaries. Food transcends lines on a map, spilling over borders, finding its way into “national” recipes passed down across generations. It is capable of connecting small-town palates to the ethnic, exotic, and thrillingly unfamiliar. When dining on foreign cuisine, the food offers a transformative experience: a potentially small, newfound connection to an often far-flung culinary landscape, culture, and people.

At the Dinner Table: The Role of Food in Diplomacy

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In foreign policy, the role of food is often overlooked. Food does permeate all aspects of our private and professional lives. Whether at a dinner table with fine bone china or at Ray’s Hell Burger, food is seemingly indispensable to diplomatic dialogue. Entire political schedules and events, such as campaign dinners and multilateral meetings, are planned around mealtimes. It is by no coincidence that Oscar Wilde once observed, “A man who can dominate a London dinner table can dominate the world.”

Indeed, “tabletop diplomacy”—the practice of pursuing policy over dinner—was popularized by Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who understood how “food in diplomacy can be a lubricant” for power and persuasion. The practice of tabletop diplomacy continued throughout the Cold War and later led to a milestone in US-Chinese relations when President Richard Nixon dined with Prime Minister Zhou Enlai in China. The practice continues today whenever nations host state dinners and banquets for visiting dignitaries, arranging elaborate meals and following strict protocol for meals that are reserved for elites.

The importance of modern tabletop diplomacy is not lost on the minds of high-ranking US diplomats. The US Department of State recently partnered with the James Beard Foundation and launched its new “Diplomatic Culinary Partnership” in September 2012, which has two primary aims. According to Paul Rockower, the initiative seeks to “foster cross-cultural exchange . . . and bring people of varied backgrounds and cultural identities together” over food. The initiative also places an emphasis on “formal diplomacy by collaborating with renowned chefs and other culinary leaders” to facilitate meaningful dining experiences for foreign dignitaries visiting the Department. Given the program’s focus on formal diplomacy, the new US program is just “culinary diplomacy” at work, an updated version of Churchill’s tabletop diplomacy. However, as the following section will detail, gastrodiplomacy is focused on appealing to

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10 Oscar Wilde, A Woman of No Importance (London: Methuen & Company, 1908).
13 Ibid.
the curiosities of the masses. This aspect distinguishes it from Churchill’s tabletop diplomacy and the State Department’s modern “culinary diplomacy” program.

**Defining Gastrodiplomacy**

Rockower draws a clear distinction between culinary diplomacy and gastrodiplomacy by noting that the former “is characterized by the use of food for diplomatic pursuits,” often in the name of protocol, while the latter’s aim is “more diffuse.” In other words, “gastrodiplomacy seeks to communicate culture through food to the broader foreign public” over the communal “act of breaking bread.” Expanding on Rockower’s conception of the term, I define gastrodiplomacy as a government’s practice of exporting its national culinary heritage as part of a public diplomacy effort to raise national brand awareness, encourage economic investment and trade, and engage on a cultural and personal level with everyday diners. Gastrodiplomacy campaigns present governments with an ideal way to introduce everyday diners around the world to the gastronomic delights of their country’s national cuisine—while subtly communicating flavors, history, culture, and values.

In Rockower’s words, gastrodiplomacy “is the act of winning hearts and minds through stomachs.” What sets gastrodiplomacy apart from tabletop or culinary diplomacy is its emphasis on communicating to the masses—the middle-class consumer. The term “gastrodiplomacy” made its first appearance in 2002, when the government of Thailand sought to use Thai restaurants around the world as informal centers for public diplomacy. In its article about the government’s gastrodiplomacy program aimed at increasing the number of Thai restaurants around the world from 5,000 to 8,000, The Economist noted that the effort to “introduce deliciously spicy Thai food to thousands of new tummies and persuade more people to visit Thailand” could eventually and “subtly help to deepen relations with other countries.” Although delivered with cheek, The Economist’s observation proved to be astute. In addition to surpassing the initially targeted number of Thai restaurants—there are now close to 20,000 restaurants—the “Thai Kitchen to the World” campaign “helped to improve the competitiveness of the Thai food industry and drive exports. Shipments of raw and processed

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14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
food [from Thailand] are forecast to grow by 5.3 percent” this year to the
tune of $31 billion. \(^{18}\) Moreover, the campaign brought bits of knowledge
about Thai cuisine and culture to the average diner’s table.

Gastrodiplomacy is a pivotal and persuasive vehicle for middle
powers seeking to distinguish themselves by setting forth a positive image
and palatable national brand for middle-class consumers. Public diplomacy
is the course of action a government undertakes to inform and engage a
broader foreign audience. Thus, gastrodiplomacy falls under the umbrella of
public diplomacy. As a case in point, South Korean President Lee Myung-
bak entered office with the promise he would establish the Presidential
Council on Nation Branding to promote “Brand Korea.” Today, the council
has 47 members, and takes “the lead in creating an image of Korea
commensurate with the country’s status as the world’s thirteenth largest
economy.” \(^{19}\) The council’s mission is “to build a brand for the country as a
‘respected and beloved’ member of the international community.” \(^{20}\)

Simply put, the Lee administration is aware that Seoul will not
outshine the regional power of Beijing and Tokyo. However, as one South
Korean public diplomacy scholar has noted, South Korea has two
advantages over China and Japan: “an exceptionally high level of
determination to self-improve, and a comprehensive and centralized nation
branding project” led by the presidential council. \(^{21}\) The Lee government aims
to increase South Korea’s soft power capital, adding to the country’s
attractiveness for foreign economic investment and tourism, building global
recognition of the South Korean nation brand, and distinguishing South
Korea from its neighbors through gastrodiplomacy engagement with a
broader foreign audience.

**Hansik: “Korean Cuisine to the World” Campaign Goals**

To the government of South Korea, gastrodiplomacy is the practice of
globalizing *hansik*, or Korean food, by tempering traditional forms of spicy
and sour flavors to appeal to foreign palates. According to Chung Woon-
chun, the former head of the Ministry of Food, Agriculture, Forestry and
Fisheries (MFAFF), *hansik* “is not just food; it is the root of the country’s
philosophy and traditional culture that bears our culture, spirit, and a 5,000-

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\(^{18}\) *Bangkok Post*, “‘Thai Select’ Seal Goes Local,” *Thai Trade Center*, USA, June 18, 2012,

\(^{19}\) USC, “South Korea’s Presidential Council on Nation Branding,” *USC Public Diplomacy
Magazine*, Summer 2009.

\(^{20}\) Ibid.

\(^{21}\) Regina Kim, “South Korean Cultural Diplomacy and Efforts to Promote the ROK’s Brand
Image in the United States and Around the World,” *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs* 11, no. 1
(Summer 2011): 132.

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year history.”22 According to the Korean Tourism Organization’s Tourism Quality Improvement Director, Jeong Yong-chan:

In May 2009, the government-funded Hansik Foundation Act was enacted, and the Hansik Globalization Development Agency inaugurated, comprising 36 members from relevant government departments, academic institutions and CEOs from the food industry.23

The MFAFF has spent over $77 million for its “Korean Cuisine to the World” campaign, which is set to run until 2017.24 The gastrodipomacy campaign has already made impressions in the field of public diplomacy, gaining the nickname “Kimchi diplomacy.” According to a 2006 Gallup poll, kimchi is the primary element that distinguishes Korea from other cultures and nations—more so than the South Korean flag, national anthem, national colors, and indigenous Hangul writing system.25 As another survey points out, South Koreans enjoy “more than 1.5 million tons of kimchi a year,” totaling “12 percent of each adult’s daily food intake.”26 Indeed, kimchi “is to Korean food what fries are to steak, or mash to bangers.”27 In other words, kimchi serves as a globally recognizable marker of Korean national identity. Although most foreigners’ association with Korean food is through a vague knowledge of kimchi, the current government wants the global public to know that South Korea offers much more than just kimchi.

The South Korean government is acutely aware of how ethnic restaurants are often the only connection diners will have to foreign countries and cultures. Foreign menus and restaurants are portals of discovery because they provide diners with the opportunity to “linger” and connect to the culinary and cultural landscape of a country, if only by sampling some of its dishes. As the New York Times points out, just “as sushi has served as a kind of cultural crowbar, opening doors for Japanese tourism, culture and exports,” South Korea “has high hopes [that] bibimbap

27 Ibid.
and bulgogi” will do the same.\textsuperscript{28} Highlighting US food trends in the past two decades, Min Mon-hong, the director of tourism in South Korea says, “First [it] was Chinese food in the U.S., then Japanese and Thai. Korean is the next big boom.”\textsuperscript{29}

Under the \textit{Hansik} campaign banner, the South Korean government has decreed its mission to accomplish the following by 2017:

- Quadruple the number of Korean restaurants around the world to 40,000 and recognize qualified restaurants through a government-ordained certification process.
- Elevate the popularity of Korean cuisine so it is included in the world’s top five favorite ethnic cuisines.
- Enlist famous South Koreans and foreign celebrities to advertise the campaign.
- Increase investment in the worldwide expansion of the Korean food industry.
- Establish Korean culinary courses at internationally renowned culinary schools, such as Le Cordon Bleu and the Culinary Institute of America.\textsuperscript{30}
- Establish a new kimchi institute to “develop various kinds of the pickled vegetable and other fermented Korean food items to attract more foreign develop various kinds” of kimchi and other fermented Korean food items to attract more foreign tastes.”\textsuperscript{31}
- Implement the use of social media platforms and public engagement efforts “to build up a global word of mouth network to better promote hansik [Korean food].”\textsuperscript{32}

In addition to the goals of imparting knowledge about South Korea’s culinary heritage, history, traditions, and the healthful benefits of eating Korean foods, the \textit{Hansik} Campaign is strategic in its long-term goals. As Kim Hong-Wu, Director of the KFF, noted about the \textit{Hansik} campaign in March 2012, the campaign’s goals are not only public diplomacy-focused. The goals include generating more employment opportunities in the food industry, “fostering Korean culinary experts, increasing exports of Korean

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
food and agricultural products, and enhancing Korea’s national brand.”

Thus, foreign diners are certainly not the only targets in South Korea’s
gastrodiplomacy campaign. The government ultimately aims to increase jobs
and exports, raise Korea’s national brand profile, and catapult its food to one
of the world’s top five ethnic cuisines.

Korean food has the power to significantly boost the country’s
international profile—abroad and at home. But why is this boost necessary?
How does it matter? It appears the South Korean government is worried
about promoting its brand and protecting its reputation as a middle power.
As Rockower spotlights, “there was consternation [in the South Korean
government] on the fact that Korean brands had better awareness
recognition than the country, or when recognized, that often Korean brands
were mistaken as Japanese models.” Samsung is one example of a Korean
brand that is sometimes misidentified as Japanese. As some experts have
pointed out, research shows that consumers’ knowledge of a product’s
country of origin significantly affects purchasing decisions.

In adopting gastrodiplomacy as a public diplomacy tool for communication and nationbranding, South Korea has the capability to triple its international exposure
and endear itself in the eyes of foreign publics. The government recognizes
the importance of securing its visibility and upholding Malcolm Gladwell’s
“Stickiness Factor.” Therefore, the Hansik campaign seeks to ensure that
South Korea is—and tastes—unforgettable.

Gastrodiplomacy: Two-Way Communication

Using food to facilitate two-way engagement under the umbrella of public
diplomacy provides an avenue to Ali Fisher’s concept of “non-centralized
discourse.” As Fisher points out, “non-centralized approaches place
emphasis on the way individuals connect and the way groups function.”

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33 Korean Food Foundation, “Korean Food Globalization with the People’s Support,” News and
art_id=2187.

34 Kim 2008.

35 Rockower 2010.

36 Peter Magnusson, Stanford A. Westjohn, and Srdan Zdravkovic, “‘What? I Thought Samsung
Was Japanese’: Accurate or Not, Perceived Country of Origin Matters,” International Marketing
Review 28, no. 5 (September 13, 2011): 454-472.

37 According to Gladwell, the Stickiness Factor asserts “there are specific ways of making a
contagious message memorable; there are relatively simple changes in the presentation and
structuring of information that can make a big difference in how much of an impact it makes.”

38 Ali Fisher, Mapping the Great Beyond: Identifying Meaningful Networks in Public Diplomacy (Los
Angeles: Figueroa Press, 2010).
As a result, gastrodiplomacy not only has the power to facilitate connections between groups of individuals, it also has the power to shed light on how different national groups elect to dine. Such information is sure to reflect some of foreign audiences’ tastes, behaviors, and motives while underscoring the realities of the context(s) in which they live.

Although two-way engagement is difficult to quantify, the Korean government has partnered with private businesses and institutions to promote two-way engagement with its foreign audience of everyday diners. One two-way engagement effort took place during the spring of 2011 when the Korean Food Foundation (KFF) drove its own food truck on the streets of New York City as a part of its hands-on gastrodiplomacy campaign in the United States. The month-long showcase of Korean fusion cuisine beckoned New Yorkers with an opportunity to “discover Korea’s delicious secret.”

The recent growing number of Korean fusion food trucks in the United States and Food Network shows such as “The Great Food Truck Race” likely inspired KFF officials with the idea for the tour. The KFF collaborated with a number of Korean and American chefs from local restaurants specializing in Korean cuisine, designing a food truck menu that touted bulgogi (grilled meat) burgers and other fusion items at no cost to the public. The food truck tour was publicized on Facebook and discussed on New York magazine’s foodie webpage, “Grub Street,” which announced the KFF food truck event by providing the following details:

The kimchee-taco-truck phenomenon that’s swept America hasn’t escaped the notice of a South Korean-government-sponsored group called the Korean Food Foundation. In a promotional push geared toward truck-crazed New Yorkers, the foundation is collaborating with nine local restaurants to operate a mobile kitchen, dispensing free Korean lunches in 25 Manhattan locations weekdays from April 18 through May 20.

The “Grub Street” announcement received some 636 recommendations from Facebook users. The KFF’s use of Facebook illustrates how South Korea is adapting its communication strategy to suit local information-sharing contexts in the United States.


39 Lee, “‘Hansik’ Globalization Efforts in Full Swing.”

At home, South Korea doesn’t boast food trucks but instead hosts nearly a dozen annual regional food festivals through local government for tourists and locals alike—inviting all to participate in the culture of making, eating, and celebrating Korean dishes and ingredients ranging from rice cakes to ginseng and soybeans. In the past two years, the KFF created a program called “K-Food Supporters Alliance.” The group seeks to recruit “any foreign university student living in Korea who loves K-food” and involve them in educational and cultural events such as food tastings and tours. The creation of the K-Food Supporters Alliance is indicative of how the government is keen on engaging with open-minded, millennial-generation consumers with the notion that once these millennial cosmopolitans return to their home countries, they will share their demand for and knowledge of Korean trends, food, and culture. Finally, as the above examples illustrate, gastrodiplomacy’s “non-centralized approach has the advantage of emphasizing interaction rather than message dissemination.” Thus, by “hosting” diners in ethnic Korean restaurants, bars, and grocery stores around the world, the South Korean government can benefit greatly—boosting its soft power, commercial exports, and global brand recognition.

Meeting Campaign Goals: South Korea’s Five Strategies

To meet its campaign goals, the South Korean government has flagged five core strategies, namely: (1) Building the foundation for the globalization of its food; (2) Expanding food-related research and development on Korean cuisine; (3) Developing culinary professionals and industry experts; (4) Revitalizing investments and providing corporate support through grants and loans; and (5) Marketing a global Korean food culture. In preparation for the globalization of Korean cuisine, the MFAFF recognized the importance of building a recognizable brand identity for Korean food that complements South Korea’s desired image as an attractive middle power and global economic powerhouse.

The first step in the Ministry’s strategy was to establish the aforementioned Korean Food Foundation (KFF) in March 2010. The foundation, which directly oversees the “Korean Cuisine to the World” campaign, derives its funding from the Ministry of Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. In its first months of the campaign, the MFAFF

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43 Ibid., 9.
44 Korean Food Foundation, “Primary Role of the Korean Food Foundation.”
established travel and culinary school scholarships to fund aspiring South Korean chefs. In its first year, the foundation introduced its “global recommended Korean restaurant scheme,” which includes “the introduction of a national qualification system for overseas Korean restaurants, more investment in research and development for the food industry,” and a long-term interest in “fostering quality cooks specialized in Korean dishes.” As one newspaper article highlights:

As a first step to globalize “hansik,” or Korean cuisine, campaigns both at the government and private level will look to increase the number of Korean restaurants overseas to 40,000 by 2017, and promote the uniqueness and healthy nature of the food. Quality goes with quantity and a stamp of approval will be given only to those that meet a strict set of standards.

In establishing the KFF, the South Korean government recognized the immediate need for industry experts, seeking to train and build a cadre of professional chefs and restaurateurs. In the long term, the KFF will be a pivotal institution through which the government can implement programs and changes, and can also measure progress. In their joint efforts to set a standardized menu design for Korean restaurants overseas, the KFF and MFAFF published the “International Korean Menu Guide” in April 2012. The free, 209-page guidebook provides representative food photos, names, and descriptions of some 154 Korean dishes in Korean, English, Japanese, Chinese, French, Italian, Spanish, German, Arabic, and Vietnamese.

Second, in addition to building its human resource capacity, the foundation sought to expand scientific research on traditional Korean foods, certify South Korean ingredients, and fund the development of Korean cuisine variations suitable for foreign palates. According to the KFF, in 2010 Paik Hospital in Seoul and Concord Hospital of the University of Sydney published joint research on the effectiveness of Korean food items in dieting. More recently in 2012, the journal of Obesity Research and Clinical Practice published research about the role of traditional Korean foods in

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45 Kim, “Campaign Starts to Globalize Korean Food.”
46 Ibid.
aiding weight loss for people previously on Western diets.\(^49\) Given the popularity of health-conscious eating trends in many countries, the healthful benefits of Korean food provide an incentive to many foreigners to consume and regularly purchase Korean cuisine and ingredients. The KFF and the Korea Food & Drug Administration (KFDA) also worked toward registering traditional Korean ingredients with the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex). In 2009, they registered gochujang (Korean chili paste), doenjang (Korean soybean paste), ginseng, and kimchi.\(^50\) As noted earlier, registering ingredients with Codex and classifying them as Korean confirms the important role of food in representing a nation’s brand and image.

A third strategy employed in the Hansik campaign is the KFF’s efforts to continually develop culinary professionals and industry experts. In 2009, the New York Times reported that the campaign “had about $10 million to spend” on “grants and scholarships for South Koreans to travel and attend culinary school.”\(^51\) The foundation has implemented specialized culinary courses at major Korean universities and tourism schools. It has also taken initiative to involve culinary professionals and hospitality industry insiders in addition to its foreign audience of everyday diners. In pursuit of its Hansik campaign, the Korean government has begun to institute Korean culinary courses at foreign culinary institutions, including Drexel University in Philadelphia, the first US institution of its kind to offer a specialized Korean culinary course. First held in the fall of 2011, the course was implemented by famous Korean TV chef Jong Im Lee, who is also the director of the Korea Food and Culture Research Center and president of the Soodo Cooking Institute in Seoul, with the intention to introduce the rich context of Korean cuisine and impart unique cooking techniques that could also be useful to professionals working with other cuisines.\(^52\) Finally, the foundation has been active in hosting educational trainings for overseas Korean restaurants—setting up trainings in at least ten cities across five countries for over 2,600 participants since 2010.\(^53\) The campaign’s work in training culinary professionals and restaurateurs assists in constructing a powerful global network of informal cultural institutes that take shape in the form of restaurants, kitchens, and the teams that staff them.


\(^{50}\) Korean Food Foundation, “Primary Role of the Korean Food Foundation.”

\(^{51}\) Moskin, “Culinary Diplomacy With a Side of Kimchi.”


\(^{53}\) Ibid.
The KFF’s fourth strategy focuses on providing support to overseas Korean restaurants and culinary businesses. In other words, the foundation has a strong focus on revitalizing investments in the Korean food industry abroad. One facet of its efforts resulted in a published expansion guidebook for Korean restaurateurs in the United States, China, Japan, and Vietnam. A significant component of the “Korean Cuisine to the World” campaign includes providing government grants for consultations on the expansion of Korean restaurants overseas.

One beneficiary and avid participant in the Hansik campaign is the Korean bibimbap restaurant chain, Bibigo. Owned and managed by CJ Foodville, one of South Korea’s top-grossing food service corporations, Bibigo recently expanded its locations outside of South Korea, setting up shop in Beijing, Los Angeles, and Singapore. According to its website, Bibigo features “assemble-to-order bibimbap,” a traditional Korean mixed-rice dish made in a hot stone bowl. The restaurant is organized with an upscale design and a layout similar to that of Chipotle, the Colorado-based burrito chain. As one recipient of the South Korean government’s loans for restaurant expansion, Bibigo envisions itself as a “trailblazing pioneer” in the global Korean Cuisine to the World campaign and “an informal culinary ambassador” for fresh and affordable Korean food, stating:

In tandem with the full-fledged efforts by the Korean government to promote Korean food as part of public diplomacy outreach. . . . We are at the forefront of promoting Korean culture abroad, winning hearts, minds, and stomachs of food enthusiasts all over the world, one person at a time.55

The chain aimed to open 17 storefronts abroad in 2012, “including one in London in July timed to coincide with the opening of the Summer Olympics there.”56 Bibigo’s own public diplomacy mission mirrors the mission of the Hansik campaign. The Bibigo success story is just one example of the government’s progress in educating, motivating, and collaborating with private business to collectively promote Korean cuisine as well as the South Korean image and brand abroad.

The KFF’s fifth and final strategy focuses on the mammoth task of marketing an attractive global Korean food culture. Since the foundation’s inception, it has been its mission to market Korean food culture through its

54 CJ Foodville, Bibigo in the World (Bibigo, 2010), http://www.bibigo.com/.
55 Ibid.
presence at international exhibitions and press junkets, such as the G-20 meetings, for which it prepared a published storybook on Korean cuisine. In its effort to promote Korean food as a tasty global trend, the foundation has recognized the need for a personal and magnetic narrative, a story capable of tempting taste buds. Who better than celebrities to glamorize and highlight Korean cuisine, making it all the more delectable? The campaign has enlisted celebrities to showcase the beauty, glamour, and fine taste of authentic Korean dining experiences.

The honorary chairwoman of the campaign’s Globalization of the Korean Cuisine Committee is First Lady of Korea, Kim Yoon-ok. She is also the high-profile face of the Hansik campaign. In the same way US First Lady Michelle Obama is passionate about promoting healthy eating and fitness in the United States, First Lady Kim is passionate about sharing the thrilling flavors of Korean cuisine and culture abroad. Most recently, she published a personal cookbook, Hansik: Stories of Korean Food, for public purchase. In her work for the gastrodipomacy campaign, she travels abroad to introduce Korean flavors to foreign palates, making stops around the world, ranging from high schools to veterans’ meetings. As the New York Times reported in an article about her September 2009 trip to the United States, after cooking a traditional Korean dish, “the first lady plunged into the rows of guests to hand-feed bites of her pajeon [a Korean savory pancake with seafood, scallions, and slivered peppers] to some silver-haired veterans and their wives” at a US veterans’ group event in Great Neck, New York. It is difficult to imagine South Korea’s public image suffering when its first lady dons an apron to cook and hand-feed war vets.

First Lady Kim is not alone in her efforts. “Kimchi Chronicles” is a public television show hosted by acclaimed chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten and his Korean-born wife, Marja Vongerichten. The pair—along with celebrity friends such as Hugh Jackman and Heather Graham—explore Marja’s Korean roots and culinary heritage, documenting their travels through South Korea and their home-cooked meals, reproductions of dishes from around the peninsula. In addition, the MFAFF is wisely taking advantage of the intense interest in hallyu, or the “Korean wave” of pop culture fanning out across Asia. It has even named a few celebrities “Ambassadors of Korean Food,” including the increasingly popular singing groups Wonder Girls and Super Junior, who are charged with the responsibility of highlighting the positive features of their national cuisine.

58 Moskin 2009. Speaking through an interpreter, First Lady Kim explained: “I wanted to give them a new taste of Korea as something positive and delicious. From the war, they do not have many pleasant food memories.”
during interviews and TV appearances filmed abroad on tour. Since
gastrodiplomacy places an emphasis on connections between everyday
diners and a national cuisine, celebrities are not the only ambassadors of the
Hansik campaign.

The KFF also appointed five Koreans to be culinary ambassadors as
a part of a jointly funded effort between the MFAFF and C.J. Foodville. The
team of five, known as the Bibimbap Backpackers, embarked on an eight-
month international tour in 2011 to introduce Korean food to foreign publics
all around the world. Their stops included the Great Wall in China, a train
station in New Delhi, and the Roman Colosseum. Equipped with simple rice
cookers and traditional Korean ingredients such as gochujang, a spicy red
pepper paste, and sesame oil, the team dished out free tastings featuring
bowls of bibimbap, all while explaining the attraction of Korean cuisine. The
backpackers’ tour cost their sponsors only $100,000.59 Through their work,
the backpackers focused on providing an engaging educational and
interactive experience for passersby and foodies alike, facilitating
gastrodiplomacy to over 8,000 people across 30 countries.60

Challenges and Criticism of South Korea’s Gastrodipomacy

With nearly $1 billion spent on celebrity headliners and advanced culinary
courses tailored at dozens of international institutions, just to single out a
few accomplishments, the breadth of the Hansik campaign is evident.
However, some observers argue that there is a lack of depth to the
campaign’s mission. Of the government’s set of gastrodipomacy objectives,
Financial Times correspondent Christian Oliver comments:

It is a very Korean goal. Koreans love league tables and
outstripping performance targets. It is why they do so well.
But the desire to produce one of the world’s top five cuisines
also illustrates Korea’s peculiar tendency of seeking to
quantify the unquantifiable.61

While Oliver acknowledges that the Ministry “does have a more quantifiable
target of increasing Korean restaurants worldwide,” he pointedly wonders,
“even if that works, is Korea then in the world’s top five? Who will measure

60 Jong Haeng Lee, “Korean Food Crew Dishes It Out in NY,” Korea JoongAng Daily, November
19, 2011, http://korea.joongangdaily.co.kr/JoongAngIdol/NewsArticleId/TheNewsArticle/ArticleView
?aid=2944354.
61 Christian Oliver, “Outside Edge: Seoul Food Aims for Top Table,” Financial Times, May 15,
such a subjective notion?” Indeed, South Korea’s goal of elevating Korean
cuisine to the world’s top five popular ethnic foods belies the fact that there
is currently no official ranking system in place to confirm its success.62 While
Michelin stars single out restaurants that are worth special journeys, in no
way is it the only authority empowered to rank ethnic cuisines. Furthermore,
Oliver muses, “there is the prickly issue of food from a region, not a country.
Korea might claim victory over Morocco, Tunisia or Algeria on restaurant
count but, in the real food wars, has fermented cabbage really defeated tajine
and couscous?”63 Point taken, though the leaders of the Hansik campaign
could quickly point out that once upon a time, tajine and couscous were
considered odd and foreign, too, regarded with wonder, caution, and even
disgust.

The growing popularity of Korean food—exemplified, for example,
by the proliferation of Korean fusion food trucks in the United States or the
uptick in Korean restaurants in Vietnam—is more than just a gradual
international embrace of kimchi. By supporting Korean restaurants overseas
and promoting Korean cuisine, the government in Seoul is focused on the
interaction between diners and its traditional food, seeking to nurture a
long-term relationship that will lead to sustained affirmation of its high-
valued brand, identity, and role as a middle power.

While South Korea’s gastrodiplomacy program has impressive
breadth, we may hark back to Oliver’s comments about its lack of depth.
Rachel Yang, acclaimed Korean-American chef and owner of the French-
Korean restaurant Joule, based in Seattle, knowingly observes:

To force a culture or food on other countries, it’s not
something you can do. It has to happen naturally. The
government support is great, but people need to tackle this
is [at] all different levels, bring the food to the people.64

Yang is not alone in her appraisal of the campaign. Others share the
sentiment that “efforts to promote Korean cuisine and push for more Korean
restaurants abroad may seem a little bit heavy handed.”65 As the Wall Street
Journal reported, the Bibimbap Backpackers thought that the celebrity-led

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62 FutureBrands Country Brands Index does complete rankings based on a country’s food, but
this has yet to gain widespread acceptance as the standard evaluation process for national
and/or ethnic cuisines.
63 Oliver 2009.
64 Cathy Rose A. Garcia, “Chef Rachel Yang Blends Korean Flavors in French Dishes,” Korea
65 Ibid.
gastrodiplomacy campaign was “too upscale with its effort.”66 On the road, they learned flexibility is key in attracting new diners to Korean cuisine, noting that adapting Korean food to non-Koreans’ liking can “be crucial” in gaining devoted fans.67 In addition, as some other industry observers have commented, efforts from the South Korean Presidential Council on Nation Branding to catapult its nation-brand to 15th place in the world by 2013 seem unrealistic, given Simon Anholt’s criticism of the council’s original action plan unveiled in 2009.

In an interview with the Korea Times, Anholt, who coined the term “nation-branding” and is the founder of the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index (NBI), described the plan as too ambitious.68 He dismissed the South Korean government’s belief that the nation-branding plan would shift the country from 33rd place in 2008 (out of 50 countries) to 15th place in the NBI over the course of just a few years, saying: “No country has ever moved by more than one or two places in the national brand index.”69 Moreover, in a poll about how South Korea is perceived, the presidential council solicited the opinion of some 1,000 foreigners living in Seoul and found that, of the respondents,

48.4 percent answered security tension between South and North Korea was a major stumbling block prompting the country to be placed in a relatively poor standing in national brand, followed by Korea’s limited contribution to the international community (44.1 percent) and socio-political instability (41.5 percent).70

Indeed, such political tensions form concrete roadblocks to South Korea’s nation-branding success. To better tackle its ranking, Anholt advised the South Korean government to focus on its specialization and “performance in certain individual sectors of the Nation Brands index such as people, culture or governance” instead.71 South Korea’s intense focus on its gastrodiplomacy campaign is a specialized focus on one aspect of public diplomacy and cultural engagement. It also counters Anholt’s criticisms of the weaknesses in the country’s overall nation-branding strategy.

South Korea’s Measures of Success

66 Woo, “Lessons of The Bibimbap Backpackers.”
67 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
Despite criticism of its gastrodiploamy program and overall nation-branding efforts, the South Korean government has experienced some measures of success after the launch of the Hansik campaign. As outlined at the beginning of this case study, the South Korean government aims to elevate South Korea’s attractiveness to improve global recognition of the South Korean nation brand, sustain economic investment, foster tourism, and cultivate a positive image abroad through gastrodiploamy for the masses. This case study concludes that South Korea has witnessed some measure of success in these key areas. The following is by no means comprehensive, but will provide an outline of some areas of success.

First, since the launch of its Hansik campaign, South Korea has earned a higher ranking in the NBI. The government sought to foster global recognition of the South Korean nation brand, and it has begun to receive returns on its investment. Since it ranked in 33rd place in 2008, South Korea has moved up six places in the rankings, achieving a rank of 30th place in 2010 and 27th place in 2011. These gains are gradual, as Anholt predicted, and illustrate how South Korea’s gastrodiploamy efforts continue to positively contribute to its international brand value and ranking.

Second, regarding economic investment, South Korea has experienced success with the overseas expansion of Korean-based conglomerates such as CJ Foodville, a major player in the Hansik campaign. According to one news report, an increasing number of South Korean “restaurant franchises here have made inroads into foreign markets over the past few years, riding on the increasing popularity of Korean dishes overseas.” As such, 2011 saw 37 South Korean-franchise restaurants manage 210 restaurants around the world, reportedly up from 109 restaurants by 27 chains. In addition, in both the 2010 and 2011 FutureBrand Country Brand Index (CBI) reports, South Korea was ranked 21 out of 110 countries as being “good for business.” Given that CBI is another popular nation brand index measuring nation brands based on tourism, business, culture, and political dimensions, South Korea’s ranking as a top business hub showcases its agility to expand its food industries abroad and its ability to meet demands for more business at home.

Third, regarding tourism, a 2010 CBI report underscored how South Korea’s weakest area of success is heritage and culture, for which it ranks 99

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73 Lee, “‘Hansik’ Globalization Efforts in Full Swing.”
74 Ibid.
out of 110 countries. The report highlighted how South Korea can leverage assets such as national “cuisine and modern culture” to better “enhance its perception as a cultural destination.” 76 Through its gastrodiplomacy initiative and other programs, South Korea is actively trying to enhance public perception of destination Korea. Prior to the launch of its gastrodiplomacy program and nation-branding efforts, approximately 6.8 million tourists traveled to South Korea in 2008. Since then, South Korea has seen a surge in annual visitors, with 7.8 million tourists visiting in 2009 and 8.7 million visiting in 2010.77 In 2012, the Korean Tourism Organization projected that the number of foreign visitors would top 10 million.78 While the increase in tourists cannot be directly correlated with the country’s Hansik campaign, it is evident that South Korea’s gastrodiplomacy campaign has a strong role in relation to tourism.

Fourth, South Korea has begun to quantify the success of Korean flavors and food among the general foreign public. After conducting a survey, the South Korean government found that 41 percent of New Yorkers have either tried or are willing to eat Korean food in 2011. This figure is up from 31 percent in 2010 and 9 percent in 2009.79 While visiting the country’s Le Cordon Bleu-Sookmyung campus in 2011, André Cointreau, President and CEO of l’École de Cuisine et de Pâtisserie Le Cordon Bleu, declared that South Korea and its cuisine are “absolutely” ready for a Michelin Red Guide.80 He also expressed interest in developing a culinary program emphasizing Korean flavors and French technique at the school’s Korean campus.81 The nod of approval from Cointreau, a preeminent authority in the culinary arts, is proof that South Korea has successfully raised the profile of its national cuisine and is steps closer to realizing one of its Hansik campaign goals. Furthermore, Cointreau’s statement signals that the world must take Korean cuisine more seriously.

In the most recent landmark achievement for the Hansik campaign, the Parnas Hotel Corporation (which is the operator of the Grand InterContinental Seoul Parnas and InterContinental Seoul COEX hotels), signed a memorandum of understanding “with InterContinental Hotels

79 Lee, “‘Hansik’ Globalization Efforts in Full Swing.”
81 Ibid.
Group (IHG) and Korea Agro-Fisheries Trade Corporation in November 2012 to promote Korean cuisine across Asia.”82 This indicates that South Korea’s brand and cuisine may not only translate at the dinner table, but at world-class hotels as well. According to a Parnas Hotel spokeswoman, this latest achievement will send Korean chefs to InterContinental hotels in Asia for hamsik promotions or gala dinners.”83 If this initiative proves popular, the Korea Times points out, it will assist Korean culinary graduates gain employment at prestigious hotels in Asia. It will also yield domestic economic benefits as exports of agricultural products and ingredients increase. Ultimately, Parnas hopes to encourage InterContinental restaurants in Asia and around the world to adopt regular menus offering Korean cuisine in their restaurants.

South Korea’s move upwards in the NBI rankings; the expansion of investment in its food industry and storefronts abroad; the increasing number of tourists; and the quantification of success found in public opinion and the proliferation of public-private partnerships confirm that there is a direct correlation between South Korea’s gastrodipomacy and increased awareness and attention to the South Korean nation brand.

Conclusion

According to a survey with a sample of 600 respondents from the United States and four European countries, South Korea still lags behind despite all of its gastrodipomacy efforts. It ranks in seventh place out of 12 national cuisines, behind Italy, Japan, Spain, France, China, and Thailand.84 A government official involved in the Hamsik campaign concluded that the country will pursue “more concrete and realistic goals to make the world know more about hamsik. We will aim to overtake Chinese or Thai foods in global awareness, rather than take on Italian or Japanese.”85 Perhaps South Korea just needs a little more time. Luckily, its deadline for achieving rank in the world’s top five cuisines is in 2017.

While at first it is seemingly an unorthodox public diplomacy practice, gastrodipomacy is unique (just as no two national cuisines are exactly alike), effective (at least when organized strategically), and difficult to interrupt externally, especially when compared to other forms of public diplomacy engagement like broadcast media, social media, and other

83 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
centrally coordinated media. As the Korean government showcases its 
flexibility and earnestness in adapting to new markets, cultural contexts, and 
audiences with the aim of showcasing its dynamic cuisine and ensuring its 
nation brand success, it is rightfully wary of the nuanced challenges it faces 
as it seeks to raise its global profile and image.

Gastrodiplomacy has the power to pique the interest of diners and 
tourists and connect business networks, but it alone cannot suffice to support 
South Korea’s public diplomacy efforts. However, South Korea’s success in 
gradually raising national brand awareness, encouraging economic 
investment through tourism and trade, and promoting cultural and personal 
engagement with everyday diners proves that gastrodiplomacy, when 
organized and thoroughly coordinated, can be an effective communication 
tool for middle powers seeking to distinguish themselves from others while 
raising brand awareness and soft power. Korea is a well-resourced model 
and example of how to conduct gastrodiplomacy. The measures of success 
outlined in this case study underscore how gastrodiplomacy is a 
measureable, effective method of international communication. 
Gastrodiplomacy is also an innovative way to leverage and package a 
country’s unique national identity into a tangible form of soft power for 
mass consumption.