



To What Extent Does Diplomacy Reflect National Character? A Case Study of Analyzing the Extent of the post-1990 North Korea's Diplomacy Reflection on its National Character

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Abstract

Diplomacy has evolved ever since the ancient times and it has taken longer period of time to reach where it is today with the steady human political, economic and social progress at different times. Diplomacy reflects the national character of a state based on the state's distinct diplomatic characteristics and setting according to the political system and current position it has at the world politics. Because diplomacy is one of the major and main channels of conducting international relations among states and other important global actors through representation by assigning a diplomat to the host country and using other means too. It is based on these major concepts that this study analyzes the extent of the post-1990 North Korea's diplomacy and its reflection on its national character. This study is mainly based on qualitative data and the researcher's observation to point out the national character of North Korea by focusing on the key policies of the state which affects both its domestic and external aspects of relations and the major policy setting on its foreign relation which reflects its national character in the global politics and international relations of states and other major actors.

Keywords: Diplomacy, National character, North Korea, Juche, Songun and the post-1990 North Korea's Diplomacy.

Introduction

This essay aims to express the extent of diplomacy's reflection on national character of a state, because states are the most powerful sovereign actors having prominence in the international relations by possessing a permanent population, a well-defined territory, and a government capable of managing public affairs¹. It includes an account of the discussion between scholars who provide their distinct perspectives about the issue; it asserts the different aspects of national character and the extent of its effect over various settings of diplomacy. It analyzes the research question on the different approaches and makes comparisons with the help of a case study. The essay ends with some conclusion to the extent where diplomacy reflects the national character of a state in the contemporary international relations and global politics. The final inference of the study is that diplomacy reflects the national character of a state based on the state's distinct diplomatic characteristics and setting according to its national character, political system and current position, because Diplomacy is one of the major and main channels of conducting international relations among states and other important global actors through representation by assigning a diplomat to the host country. In order to fully substantiate this argument it is important to discuss core issues of the research question such as: What diplomacy is? And, types of diplomatic settings. Furthermore, it is very vital to explain: what national character is? And, the relationship between national character and diplomacy. After the brief analysis of these concepts and their interrelation, it will be very logical to

explain and conclude the extent of diplomacy's reflection on national character of the state based on the analysis of contemporary international relations.

What is Diplomacy?

The modern diplomacy is a process, an activity, a practice and an instrument used by states to conduct their foreign relations and achieve their foreign policy objectives in which it gives advice about the formulation and management of whatever foreign policy governments have decided to pursue², i.e. their national interests.

Diplomacy has evolved ever since the ancient times and it has taken longer period of time to reach where it is today with the human political, economic and social progress. Concerning the international relations of states, it is an ancient institution and international legal provisions governing its manifestation are the result of centuries of state practice³. The modern diplomacy which is conducted among nations today is not more than 100 years old because the World War I (1914-1918) era serves as a benchmark in the transition of the modern diplomacy⁴. This transition of diplomacy is accompanied by the advancement of modern technology in transport and communication with subsequent changes on the global political, economic and social set-up. The modern time, specifically in the post-World War II period, diplomacy which is used as an instrument of state's foreign policy is conducted through representation by diplomats that perform the following four basic functions: i.

Representation: the diplomat represents or serves as an agent of his state to which he is accredited. Diplomatic representation has three kinds; Symbolic, Legal and Political (The Legal and Political representation is called Substantive representation). ii. Negotiation: diplomats are negotiators. Negotiation is the pursuit of agreement by compromise and direct personal contact. Diplomats draft a wide variety of bilateral agreements (between two states), and multilateral agreements (between more than two states). iii. Reporting: diplomats are required to keep their government posted with development in the accredited states because their reports are inputs of foreign policy. iv. Protection of national Interest and Nationals abroad as interpreted by policy makers and according to treaties and principles of international law is another important of duty of diplomats⁵.

In performing these major functions representatives of states have rights and duties which are incorporated in the national law, and are derived from the international law that is codified and Contained in the Vienna Convention of Diplomatic Relations of 1961 which entered into force on 24th April 1964, ratified by 134 states⁶.

The modern diplomacy or the so called “New Diplomacy” has the following seven characteristics: expanded geographic scope, multilateral diplomacy, parliamentary diplomacy, democratized diplomacy, open diplomacy, leader –to – leader diplomacy, and public diplomacy⁴. These are major characteristics of diplomacy conducted and used by the states in the international relations and global politics contemporarily to achieve and fulfill their national and foreign policy objectives. The type of diplomacy the state conducts has a direct impact on reflecting its national character within the international community based on the type of government (regime) it has and the political system it follows. Regime type is defined as a State’s basic form of government, whether democratic or authoritarian, liberal or communist⁴ and this has an impact on the diplomatic setting of the state with its neighbors and the international community at large.

Diplomatic setting of a state is determined by its relationship among the various actors at sub-regional, regional and international level which is sub divided in to four diplomatic environments: hostile, adversarial, coalition, and mediation diplomacy⁴. This environment is the outcome of the foreign policy of the state which is formulated by the government of the state that is composed of its three branches: the executive, legislative and judiciary which one way or the other reflects the national character of the state because the members of these organs of the state are drawn from the various groups of the society within it. Since diplomacy is an instrument of foreign policy in achieving the national interest of the state in international relations, then it is shaped, conducted and monitored by the government of a state in which the state recruits sections of domestic society for its international activities⁴ that includes diplomats and foreign service personnel

who when assigned on duty reflects the national character of a state. Diplomacy also reflects national character because the State is the primary actor in international relations in which the type of regime governing a state can exert a powerful influence on the nature of that state’s foreign policy⁷. Then the next core concept of the research question is “National Character”, and it will be defined and discussed by posing the following question.

What is National Character?

The concept national character is which is made up of two independent concepts of “National” and “Character” is a recent entity in the political identity and psychological make-up of the people of sovereign and independent states, and historically it is related with the emergence of modern nation - states in Europe in 1648 and the subsequent development of international relations. It is euro-centric concept because the rapid economic, political and social development that emerged during the renaissance period in Europe played crucial role on identity search based on shared values, norms and other elements. National character was first formulated in Europe during the second half of the eighteenth century, but its scientific legitimacy has roots in the 1940s and 1950s in the so-called North America Anthropological School of Culture and Personality⁸.

In order to have the clear understanding and adequate knowledge of the relationship between National character and diplomacy, plus the impact one has on the other, it is very vital to define the concept national character. National character is defined as an expression which describes forms of collective self-perception, sensibility, and conduct which are shared by the individuals who inhabit a modern nation-state⁸. National character when in- depth analyzed includes sub-cultures such as; family culture, religious culture, gender culture, corporate culture, organisational culture⁸ of a given state which also influence the diplomatic relation of the state. It is also defined very briefly as certain qualities of intellect and character occur more frequently and are more highly valued in one nation than the other⁹. From the above definitions, it is very visible to understand that the public psychological make-up of a state differs one from the other based on the national character which is shared by its citizens living in its defined territory. Therefore such a difference in national character of the state which is manifested through culture, norms, values, attitudes and socio-political identity of people highly affects both the domestic and international political, economic and social interaction of a government which represents the state through its officials and public servants. Then, what is the relationship between national character and diplomacy?

The relationship between National Character and Diplomacy

The relationship between national character and diplomacy can be investigated from the following stand point which hugely

recognizes the major aspects of national character in social theory. National character is viewed as an object, a practical category used in the discourse and action of the social agents and groups which one seeks to understand⁸.

Based on this view, it is very rational to understand diplomacy's major elements which also incorporate discourse and action in due course of its achievement and practicality in attaining its goal which have its roots from the national character of a state drawn from the foreign policy of the government that is administered by the ministry of foreign affairs and conducted by diplomats and foreign service personnel who are social agents playing significant role among the group of states which seek to understand each other within the international relations. This paper argues that diplomacy highly reflects national character of a state because it influences those who act for the nation in peace and war, formulate, execute, and support its policies, elect and are elected, mold public opinion, produce and consume- all bears to a greater or lesser degree the imprint of those intellectual and moral qualities which make up the national character⁹. Based on the above clarification, it is possible to explain the relationship between national character and diplomacy of the state since both are the result of human interaction politically, economically and socially in a geographically defined territory sharing collective self-perception, sensibility, and conduct among the individuals who inhabit a modern nation-state that the power of the state and its government relies. Another important justification for the relationship between national character and diplomacy is the Vienna Convention of Diplomatic Relations of 1961 that emphasizes the functional necessity of diplomatic privileges and immunities for the efficient conduct of international relations as well as pointing to the character of diplomatic mission as representing its state³. Since diplomacy is done by human agency then it reflects the national character of a state, because it provides a framework for diplomatic activity and shapes the representative's perception and behaviour in the diplomatic process of the state and its political system. In short, diplomats are human beings who are the products of their societies and their beliefs, values, perceptions and so their behaviours are oriented by their national culture in representing a state. Lastly, the relationship between national character and diplomacy of a state can be summarized as: with the current position of a nation; its relative power, prestige, the reliability and self-confidence determine the approach and manner of its diplomats and diplomacy.

Case Study: Analysing the Extent of the post-1990 North Korea's Diplomacy Reflection on its National Character

Diplomacy reflects the national character of a state, because Diplomacy is the brains of national power, as national morale is its soul⁹. Therefore to make a plausible argument on the research question based on the selected case study, explaining the following key concepts has been given priority. What are the

major elements of North Korea's national character? The post-1990 North Korea's diplomacy, its diplomatic setting on its relation with other states, and its reflection on North Korea's national character.

North Korea and its National Character

Known with its official name of The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)⁴, North Korea emerged after the end of the World War II in 1948, when the Korean Peninsula came to be divided along the thirty-eighth parallel and the border between North Korea and South Korea formed the line of distinction between the two regions of Korea. North Korea is guided by the personal philosophy of its founding father and eternal president Kim Il-sung which is known as "Juche" or self-reliance with the totalitarian political system and communist rule that is characterized by one of the most secretive societies in the world¹¹. North Korea is an authoritarian country dependent on China's economic aid and diplomatic support for its survival, having about 25 million people with rogue government adopting the policy called 'Songun' or 'Military First'¹⁰ and this policy highly militarized North Korea through building its military muscle in the world including its ability to acquire nuclear weapons in the contemporary global politics and international relations.

The North Korea's political system and the ideology it follows are based on Juche or self-reliance which highly emphasizes on communist rule and relies on "the people-centered socialism which has made the popular masses the masters of everything and made everything serve them. It is the socialism of independence, self-sufficiency and self-reliant defense. This shaped up the new post World War II national character of North Korea which is described by the regime very briefly as socialism dedicated to love for the country and the nation with faith in independence and a noble patriotic spirit, threading a thorny revolutionary path. Since North Korea is the most secretive society in the world with closed political system and extraordinarily opaque regime¹⁰, it is impossible to draw the clear picture of its national character except through describing its political system and its main features as discussed above. Then what is the impact of this national character on the diplomatic character and setting of North Korea? Since the case study focuses on the contemporary period, it assesses the post-1990's diplomacy, diplomatic character and settings of North Korea and the core issues which contributed on shaping up its foreign policy that reflects its national character.

The post-1990's North Korea's Diplomacy

Diplomacy is severely affected by multiple factors. As discussed in the previous section, geographic location, type of regime and the political ideology the state follows have an impact on the diplomatic characteristics and setting of the state with its neighbors and the international community at large. Geographically, North Korea shares its border with three states,

with Russia along the Tyumen River, China along the Yalu River, South Korea along the Korean Demilitarized Zone. On the West Coast is the Yellow Sea and the Korea Bay and the Sea of Japan is off the east coast. North Korea shares a border with two major global superpowers China and Russia whose military and economic power are both a threat and reward for its national survival and security on its geo-political confrontation with its arch rival South Korea and its former colonial master Japan which are the strong allies of its number one enemy the United States of America. This has a huge impact on its foreign policy objectives, diplomacy and national interest. Concerning the type of regime and the political ideology, the North Korea's government which is categorized as authoritarian or communist regime has its own foreign policy which has been marked by several distinct stages since its establishment and it is based on the state's ideology of Juche that emphasizes self-reliance and independence in foreign affairs¹⁰. This designated the North Korea's regime as a rogue government by other nations which are adopting the liberal democratic system where its root is the West which is dubbed by North Korea as imperialism. Taking in to account North Korea's political system to ensure its self-reliance and independence in foreign affairs, it adopted the policy called 'Songun' or 'Military First' as the state's major policy where its foreign policy objectives and diplomatic relation with other states are depending on. This paved the way to highly militarize the Korean peninsula in general and North Korea through building its military muscle in the world including its ability to acquire nuclear weapons in particular. The North Korea's government early effort and later acquisition of nuclear weapons introduced a new form of diplomacy which is known as Nuclear Diplomacy, and it is mainly related with North Korea's nuclear weapons program that began in the early 1990's¹⁰. What makes North Korea's Nuclear Diplomacy different is, it is characterized by multilateral diplomacy which involves multiple states including three major super powers those have different geo-political interest in the Korean peninsula. North Korea's nuclear weapons program is aimed at ensuring the continuity of regime's life and defending its security from perceived threats both at regional and global level thereby shaping its foreign policy in new direction. As a result of this, the post-1990's North Korea's diplomacy has the following major characteristics or features in the global politics and international relations, such as: it is i. closed and dictatorial because of its political nature where 25 countries have embassies in North Korea, ii. while it has diplomatic relations with 164 countries currently very limited in representation in other states due to economic and political reasons, iii. Interventionist in the internal politics of states in support of revolutionary groups¹², and iv. used in the proliferation of missile technology and expertise, and finally, v. Serving and involving as an important source of foreign currency in the production and trafficking of illicit drugs, as well as of counterfeit currency, cigarettes and pharmaceuticals which are also called crime-for-profit¹⁰.

These major diplomatic characteristics or features which are the result of the government's ideology, its political system and nuclear program since the 1990's contributed for further isolation and marginalization of the North Korea's government from the international community both politically and economically.

The analysis of North Korea's diplomatic characteristics is very essential to explain the post- 1990's diplomatic setting of the country. Diplomatic setting of the country which is determined by its national character and relationship among the various actors at sub-regional, regional, and international level is subdivided in to four diplomatic environments: hostile, adversarial, coalition and mediation diplomacy. Then the next part of this essay explains the post- 1990's diplomatic setting of North Korea at sub-regional, regional, and international level which is hugely attached with its nuclear program.

The post- 1990's diplomatic setting of North Korea

The post- 1990 North Korea's diplomatic setting has shifted to its new environment of hostility and adversarial outlook because of the incompatibility of its national interest with the existing reality on the global politics where both are in collision course. The concurrences of multiple geo-political factors which have unprecedented impact on North Korea's political and economic relation at the global level have contributed for the change on its post- 1990's diplomatic setting. The following are the major ones: i. the winds of political, economic and social changes which have blown at the global level since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of Soviet Union and the socialist system of Eastern Europe, ii. North Korea's nuclear weapons program that began in the early 1990's, and iii. The rapid integration of China in to the global economy prioritizing its national interest leaving no room for political ideology, iv. The Soviet and Chinese recognition of South Korea which is known as Republic of Korea (RoK), and v. North Korea's diplomatic recognition of the successor states of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia resulted in major cuts in economic aid having severe impact on its economy and has made North Korea vulnerable by the West¹².

In addition to these factors, the domestic political ideology, policy and the leadership set-up has also hugely contributed for the shift on the post- 1990's diplomatic setting of North Korea. The political ideology followed by North Korea is Socialism which is in sharp contrast with the contemporary global political ideology of liberalism which by itself is the cause of hostility and adversary in the diplomatic environment of the international relation of states.

The major policy doctrine of North Korea: "Juche" which is the basis for its foreign relation adopted the policy called Songun or Military First to continue with the regime's aspiration of the socialism of independence, self-sufficiency and self-reliant defense, and the contradiction of this policy with the contemporary global political ideology of liberalism which is

characterized by globalization is the basis of North Korea's post-1990's diplomatic setting which is marked by hostility and adversary using the threat of nuclear armament and war at sub-regional (with South Korea), regional (with Japan), and international level.

The leadership set-up and style of North Korea is another factor which contributes for the country's post-1990's diplomatic setting that has shifted to its new environment of hostility and adversary. This is because it is a rigid state-controlled system [which] has led to stagnation and leadership dependent on the cult of personality¹¹, which typically is a dynasty. North Korea's leadership has reached its third generation with the presidency of Kim Jong-un who inherited the leadership from his father Kim Jong Il who is the son of the founding father and eternal president Kim Il-sung, with no significant change and reform of the country's political and economic policy. Rather, the new president's regime has been promoting a two track policy of economic development and nuclear weapons development, explicitly rejecting the efforts of external forces¹⁰.

In general, the domestic political ideology, policy and the leadership set-up of North Korea hugely contributed for its post-1990's diplomatic setting with the environment of hostility and adversary at sub-regional, regional, and international level involving in multiple provocations with South Korea, Japan and the United States of America. This ultimately paved the way for the diplomatic isolation of the regime internationally severely affecting its politics and economics today.

The Extent of the post-1990 North Korea's Diplomacy Reflection on its National Character

In the previous section of the essay the major elements of North Korea's national character, its post-1990's diplomacy and diplomatic setting on its relation with other states have been discussed. Then what is the impact of these factors on reflecting North Korea's national character.

The post-1990's North Korea's diplomacy that is also called nuclear diplomacy is having the features which weaves together different approaches vacillated between limited cooperation and overt provocations¹⁰ that has made its diplomatic setting to be characterized by hostility and adversary at sub-regional, regional, and international level. This is mainly attached with the North Korea's political system and ideology which is aimed at ensuring its self-reliance and independence in foreign affairs with the policy called 'Songun' or 'Military First' where its foreign policy objectives and diplomatic relation with other states are depending on. Diplomacy's importance in reflecting the national character and its crucial aspect on the foreign policy and national interest of the state is clearly explained as: If its vision is blurred, its judgment defective, and its determination feeble, all the advantages of geographical location, of self-sufficiency in food, raw materials, and industrial production, of military preparedness, of size and quality of population will in

the long run avail a nation little⁹. So, the post-1990's North Korea's diplomacy because of its features and settings has hugely contributed for its national character to be assumed as erratic, unpredictable and very secretive in which other states including its patron China are in dilemma in dealing with it.

Another important factor with regard to the post-1990 North Korea's diplomacy reflection on its national character is: due to its marginalization from the global economics because of its nuclear program by multiple sanctions imposed by the United Nations, the United States of America and other global powers North Korea's capacity to send its representatives and diplomats abroad has been curtailed which made North Korea's diplomatic engagement with other states and global actors very low. In addition to this, North Korea's diplomacy has been used for other illicit purposes against the Vienna Convention of Diplomatic Relations of 1961 which entered into force on 24th April 1964 in which Serving and involving as an important source of foreign currency in the production and trafficking of illicit drugs, as well as of counterfeit currency, cigarettes and pharmaceuticals which are also called crime-for-profit¹⁰. This has made the world community to view North Korea's national character negatively in which North Korea is recognized by most states as: i. the most secretive society in the world which often weaves together different approaches vacillated between limited cooperation and overt provocations, ii. It has outdated ideology and closed political system with extraordinarily opaque regime¹⁰.

Such highly confused and erratic diplomatic character of the totalitarian, socialist and isolated state of North Korea has made it to have a diplomacy in which its vision is blurred, its judgment defective, and its determination feeble thereby exposing the secretive and hermit nature of its national character which is the product of an outdated ideology and closed political system with extraordinarily opaque regime that is isolated from international political stage because of nuclear weapons program that began in the early 1990's.

Conclusion

Diplomacy which gives advice about the formulation and management of whatever foreign policy governments have decided to pursue is conducted by a given state to achieve its national interest highly reflects its national character. In today's highly globalized world, the foreign policy of the state which is formulated by the government of the state that is composed of its three branches: the executive, legislative and judiciary which one way or the other reflects the national character of the state because the members of these organs of the state are drawn from the various groups of the society within it. Then diplomacy conducted by a given state to achieve its national interest is the reflection of its national character because the diplomats and Foreign Service personnel assigned by the government abroad are the citizens of the state where they share the same national character which includes sub-cultures such as; family culture,

religious culture, gender culture, corporate culture, organisational culture.

There is a general view that there is a non-ignorable effect of national character over the process of diplomacy and diplomatic setting contributing on the success and failure of them. Diplomats are human beings who are products of their societies and their beliefs, values, perceptions and so the behaviour they exhibit on the diplomatic relation representing the sending state in the host state are oriented by their national culture. Nations develop distinct diplomatic styles according to their national character, political system and current position. These distinct styles of nations determine the approach to engage in diplomacy and certainly influence the process and the result. National character is not “epiphenomenal” but it has a real effect over the diplomacy of a state in the global politics and international relations. As such strong effect of globalisation did not remove the cultural differences between nations-even deepened those in some aspects; these differences will continue to influence the diplomatic process too. Ignoring the national character’s effect in diplomacy and diplomatic setting studies will be a mistake and deficiency however it is still a challenge to examine how much and in what ways do national characters affect the international relations and global politics.

The research question “To What Extent Does Diplomacy Reflect National Character?” has been analyzed by this essay taking the extent of the post-1990 North Korea’s diplomacy reflection on its national character as a case study. The final inference of the study is that diplomacy reflects the national character of a state based on the state’s distinct diplomatic characteristics and setting according to its national character, political system and current position, because Diplomacy is one of the major and main channels of conducting international relations among states and other important global actors through representation by assigning a diplomat to the host country. Therefore, the post-1990 North Korea’s diplomacy and diplomatic characteristics are analysed from the following important angles or features: the government’s ideology, its political system and nuclear program since the 1990’s, and concluded that: North Korea’s diplomacy and diplomatic characteristics highly reflects its national character which is described as- the most secretive society in the world which often

weaves together different approaches vacillated between limited cooperation and overt provocations, and it has outdated ideology and closed political system with extraordinarily opaque regime that is a mystery for outside observers and foreigners.

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