



EXPLORING THE RELEVANCE OF CULINARY DIPLOMACY: A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS ON ASIAN TIGERS

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Abstract:

Diplomacy can be defined as the art or practice of conducting negotiations between the representatives of states. Negotiations can happen through various means and modes but the most innovative addition now being used popularly is culinary diplomacy. Culinary diplomacy is the use of food and cuisine as instruments to create a cross cultural understanding in hopes of improving interactions and cooperation among the nations. It is considered to be an open diplomacy tool which is being used by the modern economies. Various projects have been undertaken across the world by the governments of different nations or by independent parties to increase the reach of a certain country's cuisine or for private gain. The modern economies are increasing the reach as a means of acquiring a soft power status for themselves by establishing economic capacities and moving away from hard powers as they can captivate into strategies of smart power and gain economic stability by using culinary diplomacy. The Asian tiger's economies have been taken as a case study for the present research. They are considered to be tiger economies because they realize the importance of high investment for the economic growth but alongside that they also focus on developing their human capital which is done through their levels of investment in education. The aim of this paper is to understand how culinary diplomacy has been used by Asian tigers to brand their national image. Objective is to understand the popular perception and application of culinary diplomacy by these economies across the globe to explore the relevance of culinary diplomacy.

Keywords- Culinary Diplomacy, Asian Tigers, Popular Perception, Soft Power

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4.1: INTRODUCTION:

Power is the capacity of an individual to influence the conduct of the others. Power is categorized into hard power, soft power and smart power in the discipline of International Relations (IR). Power of all kinds depends upon context for its value, but especially so for the soft variety. For power to be influential, those who are to be influenced have a decisive vote.(Grey, 2011:31)

Power has been the most contested concept and it has been popularly defined as “the ability to effect the outcomes you want and, if necessary, to change the behavior of others to make this happen.” (Joseph S. Nye, Jr.) (Grey, 2011:V) Any epistemological discourse in political science takes the concept of Power into consideration to understand the political dimension of the phenomena.

In the discipline of International Relations, power has been mostly understood as a categorization of power into hard power and soft power. Hard power can be ensured by the means of military strength, economic instruments such as rewards, sanctions etc. On the other hand, Soft power is about the strength of a state to influence the behaviour of the other state by means of persuasion and diplomacy. Soft power deals with the strategy to achieve the desired agenda by influencing the other state to do what state would desire for its national interest. “Where as hard power obliges its addressees to consider their interests in terms mainly of calculable costs and benefits, principally the former, soft power works through the persuasive potency of ideas that foreigners find attractive”.(Grey, 2011:28)

Power has been categorized into hard and soft power International Relations scholarship. We can distinguish them through the following means:

Table – 1: Distinguishing Hard and Soft Power

Basis	Hard Power	Soft Power
Definition	The ability to purposefully to inflict pain or to reward in the pursuit of influence, it is convenient and plausible to identify it with military and economic instruments of policy (Grey, 2011:28)	The ability to influence others by means of culture, value appeal and reputation



Mode	Use of military power or economic menace	Use of persuasion and ability to influence to help a country make a decision it wouldn't have otherwise
Role	Addresses its needs through calculable labour power	Conveys persuasive ideas that are attractive to the foreigners
Cost	Expensive	Cheaper in comparison to hard power

Ernest Wilson's viewed hard power as the capacity to coerce "another to act in ways in which that entity would not have acted otherwise."(Wilson.2008).

Soft Power believes that men will do as their as their mind suggest and command, because of this belief Clause with identified that the enemy's will would be the target of influence. (Grey, 2011:30) This had led to Hard Power receiving a lot of criticism for its regulation, adjustments and calibration. Although hard power has received criticism it helps us in shaping and modulating the relevant narrative which in turn makes history interactive after the engagement has joined. In reality we can't turn on and turn off our discretion and we need to take into consideration the intervention of the enemy, the contingency and friction of the decision as a whole.

A country's soft power is determined by how attractive foreigners find its culture, values, and policies. Soft power works when it influence show these foreigners and their governments behave. In theory, foreigners can be persuaded to act favorably toward a given country, without recourse to threats or payments, if that country is sufficiently appealing. Nye admits that "soft power resources are slower, more diffuse, and more cumbersome to wield than hard power resources," but he and others insist that soft power is increasingly important in Asia and elsewhere (Ian Hall & Frank Smith, 2013:2)

Soft power and Food - "Food is frequently used as a marker of ethnicity and metaphor for a polyglot society whose members retain and respect ethnic loyalties while also united by a shared destiny". (J.C.Henderson, 2004:71) Food is a popular domain where perception and emotions can be analysed and studied. It carries a sense of cultural affiliation in terms of its preparation, content and serving etc. Food is a subset of cultural soft power which is



proliferated by the means of non-military, economic and cultural dimension of influence. It is a type of influence which works without the use of force.

“Individual and collective choices/selection of food are by themselves cognitive and emotional decisions driven by nationalistic impulses, ideas of identity and constructed notions of historical traditions mixed with individual preferences. At the national level, food cultures determine the health standards, cultural identities and productivity of a person. Ideas related to nationalism (e.g. self-reliance on food products) can also be used to mobilize people for achieving state goals”. (Lim, Tai Wei, Merlion And Mt.Fuji, 2017: 74)

Since historical times, food culture and narratives associated with it has served the purpose of unifying and dividing the society both. Food culture has unified the society with the idea of authenticity. Cultural norms dictating food consumption pattern have been impressed upon the community. “The idea of ganso (pioneer, originator, authentic, source) applied in Japanese culinary culture to distinguish the original from the imitator is one example of reinforcing authenticity”.(Lim, Tai Wei, Merlion And Mt. Fuji, 2017: 74)

Culinary diplomacy is a diplomatic tool used in International Relations to exercise soft power in International Relations. Cuisine not only focuses on the spices and the techniques used to cook a dish but also on the culture, traditions and beliefs of the country. The chefs are the diplomats for this tool as they make food that brands the popular imagination in relation to the country and it also aims at easing the negotiation process between the nations. Chefs have mastered the skill of hypnotizing their audience through their creativity and their magical application of their gastronomical skills. This usually makes the negotiation process easier as the nations tend to be more cooperative over a table of food rather than documents.

Paul Rockower first coined the term gastro diplomacy, romantically defining it as “a method of reaching hearts and minds through people’s stomachs” (Wallin,2013). Later Sam Chapple-Sokol gave a more precise definition: “The use of food and cuisine as an instrument to create a cross-cultural understanding in the hopes of improving interactions and cooperation” (Chapple-Sokol, 2012). The term gastro diplomacy has come into existence in the last decade and has been utilized by a variety of countries as a soft-power instrument for boosting their public image. (conflux centre, 2015).

When we trace the epistemology and ontology of culinary diplomacy, we interpret that



it started in the biblical times when Jesus had stated that food is the best way to bring people together. Although it was not considered as a diplomatic tool at that time, it was still considered to be a technique used by everyone to interact with others. In the past it may have been an unconscious thing and on a smaller scale but now it is a conscious thing used by diplomats on a larger scale to solve problems between nations.

As we trace back to a time period after Jesus, a great example would be of Cardinal Richelieu who was a French Minister at the time of Louis the VIII. He was an excellent diplomat because he always felt that an ambassador's table should be served neatly and with taste. He stated that "A good table is the best and the easiest way of keeping himself well informed "The natural effect of good eating is friendship and creation of familiarity. "Most importantly a bottle of wine is usually the key player to the disclosure of important secrets." (Cardinal Ricelieu cited in Ashwati Menon, 2018).

Culinary diplomacy has been categorized into two types: Public Culinary Diplomacy and Private Culinary Diplomacy. Ian Hall and Frank Smith, 2013 defined "public diplomacy as an instrument of statecraft that aims to shape foreign public opinion and, through it, influence the policy decisions made by other states". (Ian Hall & Frank Smith, 2013: 2).

In simpler terms Public Culinary Diplomacy is the outreach being done by the government on a large scale and it has been exhibited in many ways such as public relations, information campaigns, media management and academic exchanges that include, among others, a subset of activities associated with culinary diplomacy. (Ian Hall & Frank Smith, 2013: 2). When this is compared with the traditional means of diplomacy, we can see that this deals with communicating and negotiating with foreign public rather than the foreign governments. (Ian Hall & Frank Smith, 2013: 2). There are some arguments that state that public diplomacy is largely aimed for the elites rather than the public as a whole because it is the elites who can influence the policies made by the government and this has led to public diplomacy being observed as an indication of a dominant domestic politics that shapes foreign policy of a country. (Ian Hall & Frank Smith, 2013: 9). Examples of the countries that used Public Culinary Diplomacy would be Thailand, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Japan, Malaysia, Peru, South Korea, Taiwan and many other countries.

Thailand used it by launching the Global Thai Campaign where their aim was to increase the number of Thai restaurants around the world while making their cuisine internationally



recognizable. This gave Thailand the opportunity to build a profile as a culinary destination and cultivate economic benefits that came along with it.(Centre for Public Diplomacy.2015) The Nomadic Food movement was held to promote the locally sourced ingredients, traditional dishes and modern culinary techniques from the region. This movement was created by the combined efforts of Denmark, Sweden and Norway. This helped improve their economic stability through the tourism, trade and development. (Centre for Public Diplomacy, 2015)

Japan used a different approach; they set up an initiative called Japan Brand Working Group which was a fusion of the Japanese culinary history and a state tactic. They also used Non-Profit Organizations which invest in restaurants overseas because they showcase the techniques and cultural aesthetics. Their biggest step was setting up a Japanese Cooking School in the UK. (Centre for Public Diplomacy, 2015).

Malaysia started in a smaller scale by targeting the Muslim world first and then moving to target the larger markets through the Malaysian External Trade Development Corporation. The Persian government promoted its cuisine through a tourist campaign which resulted in them funding cookbooks and hosting food festivals for famous chefs and helping them establish Peruvian restaurants all over the world. (Centre for Public Diplomacy.2015).

Indian cuisine can be found in all nooks and corners of London and that is due to the effort of the Samosa Diplomacy. The country's culture and tradition is not only represented through its restaurants but also through programs conducted by other countries for the Indian Students, to state an example, in Australia, the United Church hosted a monthly dinner for the Indian students where they can express their concerns and fears about being the targets of street violence, as a form of comfort they are offered Indian food.(Yudhvir, 2011). Although locally there is a lot of work that needs to be done to promote gastronomy within the country, there are government initiatives that are promoting India on a global forum. “In Delhi, the Indian Ministry of Tourism -- in collaboration with a variety of other ministries and tourist boards, helps host the popular tourist destination *Dilli Haat*, a rural market-style center to showcase Indian crafts and cuisine from all across India's varied 28 states”. (Rockower, 2011) (IGCAT.2015) New centres of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) is being opened in many countries of Asia and Middle East etc. India has already established a dedicated Overseas Indian affairs Ministry in 2004 to ensure its outreach to Indian diaspora around the world. The country is making efforts to be known for its nation branding around the world by using means of soft power and one of the important diplomatic tools has been the *Samosa Diplomacy*. It has



been observed with the help of continuous research and findings that public diplomacy helps the state to construct its soft power which in turn adds to its influence in International Relations.

Public Diplomacy may not always work as it is supposed to and that could lead to a waste of the resources that have been invested in it. It is even harder to understand the general effect of soft power on the general public's opinion in a crowded global marketplace of ideas. In Asia, it may create more problems than it may solve and a failed public diplomacy program will lead to an increased level of hostility which can be considered as the ongoing struggle for soft power which is puzzling as well as problematic.

4.2: THE DISCUSSION:

In the last 40 years the Four Asian Tigers, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan have showcased their success in the competitive world markets with sustainable high single to double digit economic growth for several decades. (H.B. Chia et al., 2007: 306). This success was mainly due to the economic policies that they pursued such as the shift from import substitution to export orientation. This change led to a relatively free trade which enhanced each country's comparative advantage which remained in the export of labour intensive manufacturing.

These policies not only enabled the countries competitive advantages but also brought about full employment, rising wages and a more equal distribution of income. As the real wages in the countries increased each country identified that their comparative advantage could be used in moving up the market and exporting increasing capital and technology intensive goods. (George Hicks, 13).

Cultural Divergence theorists believe that the cultural values systems is a comparatively stable reflections of the socio-historical heritage of a society. (H. B. Chia et al, 2007:306). In the following section we will deal with country specific and its usage of



Culinary diplomacy as branding strategy.

4.2.1 Hong Kong:

Hong Kong, a multicultural metropolitan, has found its position in the global tourism market through providing a diverse range of cuisines starting from the Chinese cuisine, other Asian cuisines to Western cuisine and cuisines area driving force of culture. At the same time to give the tourists a taste of tradition they bring out the traditional Chinese cuisines which make the tourists feel closer to the locals and an authentic feeling about their visit. (Okumus et al., 2007).

Hong Kong has exotic and diversified food from all over the world and the menus and snack bars are translated from English to Chinese which is evidence of the influence of foreign cultures but also a distinguishing characteristic of Hong Kong's Culture In Hong Kong you can also find food districts such as Causeway Bay and Kowloon City which contain many culinary resources and provide various food routes. There are also museums which highlight the tea culture (HKTB, 2008). The “yum cha” or “tea restaurant” culture are representative cuisines, although they are not traditional cuisines they are definitely associated with Hong Kong. (H-45).

Hong Kong has earned the name Asian Gourmet Paradise because of its geographic position which has led to its culinary culture. Its original Cantonese and Chui chow cuisine and Hong Kong's integrated creations of new cuisines that emerged during the years it was under colonization by the UK and with immigrants of different countries have brought about its culinary culture. (Okumus et al., 2007).

4.2.2 Singapore:

Singapore began its culinary diplomacy program through SPICE (Singapore International Culinary Exchange) program. “It is an international gastronomic initiative collaboratively fronted by International Enterprise (IE) Singapore, Singapore Tourism Board



(STB) and SPRING Singapore. Its mission is to establish Singapore as a global innovative culinary capital and a must- visit food destination, raise international awareness of our most celebrated and exciting culinary names, and make Singapore food an integral part of the global food scene”. (STB. 2002). SPICE has two initiatives, the first being the Singapore Takeout and Culinary Immersion program which is also known as the Global Chef Exchange Program. It is an innovation pop kitchen concept where the Singapore Take outs have travelled across the world showcasing the Singapore food products, chefs and their creations to the industry players and the media. While Singapore did send out chefs it also has are verse by gathering 23 prominent international chefs from across the world to be immersed in the Singapore Cuisine, culture and inspiring them to create Singapore Inspired dishes at home which would increase the reach of Singaporean Cuisine to new customers and further enhance the interest of the world in Singapore to be more than just the second largest finance hub in the world.

As a result of SPICE’s effort modern singaporean dishes are available in restaurants across the world and to state a few examples they are present in four international establishments, namely The Leela Kempinski Gurgaon, ITC Hotels, Taj Mahal Palace and The Park Hotels. There have also been indications from other foreign setups such as the Dubai World Trade Center and catering services for China Southern Airlines to incorporate Singaporean dishes and this has led to SPICE having a vision of more home grown products being retailed in international stores in the near future.

The SPICE program has not only helped the country become visible in terms of the dynamic dining scene but it has also provided the chefs the opportunity to interact with the brightest minds of the culinary industry and collaborate while creating business opportunities for the industry. This second initiative being the Singapore take out program which targets nine strategic markets, namely London, Paris, Moscow, New York, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Delhi, Dubai and Sydney. It has become a success because the Top chefs of these markets are the



ones who reinvent new dishes using the Singaporean flavours and ingredients.

Other than these two initiatives there is an annual programme of events which is organised by the board called the Singapore food festival which is a month long program that demonstrates how food is interwoven into the Singaporean lifestyle and the World Gourmet Summit in which the talents of the international chefs are displayed. (STB, 2002). These festivals are advertised on a domestic and international forum where everyone is reassured about the quality of food due to its strict rules governing public hygiene and food preparations. Along with these strict rules there are also a list of outlets that are certified by the Islamic Religious Council which monitors the halal food regulations as per the guide to Muslim Dining (STB, 2003a) (J.C.Henderson,2004: 72).

The board has also started food drives under the name “Let’s Makan” in 2004 to celebrate the country's cuisine in Singapore and abroad. Let’s Makan had symbolised the must try dishes in Singapore and this played an important role in improving the tourist experience of the food. They had created cooperations with the National Environment Agency which had helped them set up storyboards which conveyed information about their history and their food culture.(STB, 2004e) (J.C.Henderson, 2005:72).

While the board has taken efforts to bring about multiple initiatives and programs to develop the culinary diplomacy of the nation, certain other sectors such as the officials of the internal enterprise agency have taken a step forward to create the campaign “ Tasty Singapore” which stimulated the foreign sales and investment in domestic food manufacturing. While the Singapore Premium Food Gift Programme is another joint effort by the tourism board, the Productivity and Standards Board and sixteen leading manufacturers, in this program they have decided to package and market 40 products of Singapore as gifts which will be distributed among eight elected retail stores and through the branches present at the airport. This program mainly came into existence to satisfy the demand for food souvenirs and facilitate the cultivation of new markets overseas by Singaporean Food Companies. (STB, 2003b). (J.C.



Henderson, 2005:72).

In 2011 the Embassy of the Republic of Singapore played host for a vibrant display of culinary tradition and music called “A Dash of Singapore Culinary Diplomacy”. This program consisted of a performance on Ehru and a presentation. Singapore Cuisine is famous due to its assortment of races which lead to a greater selection of food which not only speaks about the countries culinary techniques but also about the country’s socio – cultural composition and dynamics. (J.C.Henderson, 2004:71).

Singapore’s Cuisine helps us understand its history about how the British colony drew immigrants from China, India, the Malay Archipelago, the Middle East and beyond. It shows how there has been a hybridization through ethnic cuisines borrowing from each other, an example would be the islamisation of Chinese food where its made to accommodate the Muslim sensitive. (Chua and Rajah, 2001)While this highlights one aspect of the Singaporean cuisine another aspect that we should look into would be the appetite for customary dishes and some specifically sought out Singaporean foods have resulted from a coalescence of radial influences even after the evolution of practices derived from the ancestral cooking techniques.

With Food being an important theme Singapore came up with “Uniquely Singapore Shop and Eat Tours” which takes visitors through the Singaporean Way of life through local shopping and food (STB, 2004e). They even have an Ethnic Trail which takes them through the various ethnicities present in the country starting from China town to Little India and Arab Street. There is also a trail called the Heartland trail which highlights the estates of the Public Housing Development Board where most of the individuals live. For those tourists who are interested in learning about Singapore through cooking Singaporean dishes there are classes which take place in the individuals home while others are in ethnic eateries and traditional marketplaces. Learning in the individuals house also gives the tourists a sense of the daily life of a Singaporean (The Straits Times 2004).(J.C.Henderson, 2005:72).



While Singapore Cuisine has a large historical influence because of many ethnicities it has proved to be adept in hybridizing non local foods, especially Japanese food items. As every country has its own unique tastes and spending habits so does Singapore, because of these two aspects are similar between Singapore and Japan they have easily absorbed both Japanese food and the culinary lifestyle associated to it, although not in its purest form but making the slightest changes to it to suit the taste preferences of the Singaporeans. (Lim, Tai Wei, Merlion And Mt. Fuji, 2017: 80). Japanese cuisine is a part of the Singaporean's dietary habits that it can be seen through their fast food scenes, to state a few examples would be the deep-fried, taro - stuffed turnovers at Burger King, the Teppan - yaki Chicken McGrill at McDonald's. Although they are international fast food brands they still cater to the Singaporean dietary needs by inculcating the Japanese cuisine while infusing their cuisine into it as well. The Teppan Yaki Chicken is a Japanese dish which has been grilled and placed between burger bread laced with suitable sauces which highlights a fusion between a Japanese and American dish (Lim, Tai Wei, Merlion And Mt. Fuji, 2017:75).

Local Chefs showcase their innovation by taking traditional Japanese Ingredients such as Soba Noodles and Mir into create fusion dishes with ingredients that can only be found in Western Style Cuisines. (Lim, Tai Wei, Merlion and Mt. Fuji, 2017:85). Elements of the Singaporean food cultures have been incorporated into the dishes without hampering the positive elements of the original taste and this inculcation has led to a hybridized culinary cuisine. This cuisine is a proliferation of Japanese Food Culture to the masses in Singapore itself which is a highlight of Japan's soft power but at the same time it also helps in promoting Singapore's understanding of Japanese food, its preparation and cooking techniques which in turn highlight the lifestyle habits and philosophies behind a branch of Japanese Popular Culture. (Lim, Tai Wei, Merlion And Mt. Fuji, 2017: 80)

Ayataka green tea, Pokka green tea and canned Pokka oolong tea are some of the common non alcoholic drinks that have won the hearts of the Singapore consumers, this



audience has also taken the initiative to localize the Pokka green tea by creating a sweetened version of it which is not available in Japan. To bring this tea closer to the hearts of the Singaporean Consumers a Jasmine flavoring was added to enhance the fragrance and bring a source of familiarity for those who were used to drinking the traditional Chinese. The non sugared green tea is a suitable option for Singaporeans who are seeking a healthy lifestyle and responding to the national campaigns against diabetes. “This accent on healthy lifestyles has endeared Singaporean consumers to turn to non- sugared options like Ayataka and cannedoolong”. (Lim,Tai Wei, Merlion and Mt.Fuji, 2017:81).

Japanese entrepreneurs have taken innovative means to keep the Singapore an consumers attracted to Japanese cuisine by training halal licensed chef in making Japanese Cuisine while using the right halal ingredients for food preparations. This was mainly to be accommodative of Singapore’s Multi cultural society. (Lim, Tai Wei, Merlion and Mt.Fuji, 2017:81).

While Japan has influenced Singaporean’s cuisine, Korea is no less as Kimchi is a part of Singaporean’s daily lives and is available in Korean restaurants and beverage outlets as well as local supermarkets. (Lim, Tai Wei, Merlion and Mt. Fuji, 2017:92). Korean food was introduced to Singaporeans by hybridising the local features which acted as a cultural bridge during Singaporeans first sample of Korean food. Due to economic factors and the requirement to procure local ingredients as it became a daily necessity the cost of Korean food items have driven the cost down. (Lim, Tai Wei, Merlion and Mt. Fuji, 2017:93).

While nonalcoholic drinks were taken from the Japanese, Alcoholic drinks such as Makkoli and Soju were taken from Korea and they were wisely placed alongside Western Wines, Whiskey and French Hard Liquor. Korean entrepreneurs had decided to introduce Seaweed as a snack and to suit the taste preferences of the Singaporeans they decided to grill seaweed with salt and spicy chilli flavoring. (Lim, Tai Wei, Merlion And Mt.Fuji, 2017: 94).



According to the Korean Tourism authorities bibimbap is considered to be one of the three most symbolic Korean cuisines along with bulgogi and kimchi which originated from the historical periods. All the Korean stalls have bibimbap which makes it appear to be the common uniting dish, it is a ubiquitous culinary item with many components mixed in a bowl with rice and hot pepper sauce. (Lim, Tai Wei, Merlion And Mt. Fuji, 2017:97).

Mackerel is another popular dish among the Singaporean Customers and it can be served in both the Korean style or the Japanese style. The Korean version is where grilled mackerel is served with local Singaporean chilies which can be cut or present in a sauce form. In the case of the Japanese version Mackerel is often marinated in Japanese Miso soup. (Lim,TaiWei, Merlion and Mt. Fuji, 2017:99).

Singaporean cuisine portrays the multicultural element which speaks the story of island state in the past. Present day multiethnic feature has been the culmination of the diverse history which island had encountered. “The diversity of Singapore cuisine comes from its ethnic diversity. The food reflects the influence of cultural backgrounds and the uniqueness of various ethnic groups, bringing the slogan” (Scarpato & Daniele, 2003).

4.2.3 South Korea:

In 2008, South Korea announced that they would be launching a Global Hansik campaign with the objective of promoting Korean food as a leading ethnic cuisine to the world by 2017. They began taking action by focusing on the health aspects of the national cuisine. South Korea branded their food based on ingredients, recipes, health and wellbeing through organic, fermented and environmentally friendly food such as kimchi and soy sauce. They had taken the initiative to host multiple overseas events to promote their cuisine.

The Hansik Campaign also created the K-Food Supporters Alliance which invites foreign university students in Korea to participate in food tastings, food tours and other cultural events in the hope that they would return to their home country and spread the knowledge of



Korean food and culture. Korean Gastro diplomacy rides on the growing popularity of the hallyu wave which is responsible for the mass spread of K-pop culture, music, films and enhanced South Korea's image as a cultural producer and exporter.

South Korea came up with the Kimchi Diplomacy which highlighted Koreans aim to increase the number of Korean restaurants around the world. This Kimchi Diplomacy led to sponsored culinary classes in Le Cordon Bleu and South Korean students getting scholarships if they were going to attend international culinary schools and food festivals. The positive response led South Korea to come up with the Bibimbap Backpackers where these backpackers gave bowls of spicy Korean beef with rice to more than 8000 people during their world tour. Another project similar to this would be the Kimchi Bus which was launched by Si-Hyeon Ryu who is a chef and writer. He travels with the support of the government and has travelled to 32 countries starting from the United States to Argentina to Italy while cooking traditional Korean food and spreading his love for kimchi. He states that most people on the street know just about north and south Korea and not much about the cuisine. He believes when he explains about kimchi, they understand Korea as a country. Although to the people around the world Kimchi may seem like cabbage salad, it is essential to the culture of the country. There are hundreds of varieties of kimchi in Korea and about 1.5 million tons are consumed every year.

In 2011 the Korean Food Institute collaborated with 9 Korean restaurants in New York City and asked them to drive food trucks around the city while distributing free Korean lunches. This event brought Korean food to Americans who would have never tried it otherwise. “South Korea is rapidly expanding the number of its King Sejong Institutes, which promote the Korean language and Korean culture, from around 35 in 2010 to a planned 150 by 2015. Though a small fraction of 1,000 Confucius Institutes are expected to be in operation by 2020, they nonetheless represent a significant move on the part of South Korea”.(Ian Hall & Frank Smith, 2013, 5).



4.2.4 Taiwan

In 2013, Taiwan launched the Dim Sum campaign. As part of the campaign they began to host international gourmet festivals while helping local chefs to ply their culinary diplomacy skills at the local culinary competitions. Side by side to all of this they also created an initiative to support the Taiwanese restaurants abroad with a focus on the major overseas malls and department stores. They are also encouraging sampling stations for Taiwanese cuisines at international Airports. Within the country itself they plan on establishing new Taiwanese food foundations such as coffee shops and restaurant chains that will help in promoting Taiwanese food abroad. They established relationships with coffee shops to help brand Taiwan through marketing Taiwanese delicacies abroad via advertising promotions. The one opportunity that Taiwan had missed out on was attaching itself to the pearl tea also known as bubble tea or boba. It is pearl milk with black tapioca balls swimming around the bottom. It is super popular with the teenagers and Taiwan plans on reconnecting with the bubble tea creation by creating an International Boba day. Taiwan is trying to enhance and expand the islands reputation as a foodie hub which is a positive step to better promotion of Taiwanese culture.

Taiwan had named its gastro diplomacy campaign as *All in good taste: Savor the flavor of Taiwan* but this is more commonly known as the Dim Sum diplomacy. This campaign wanted to improve Taiwan's international brand and this campaign brought out the culinary, cultural and commercial offerings of the country. Taiwan Ministry of Economic Affairs has dedicated \$34.2 million to a 4 - year plan to systematically approach the promotion of Taiwan's cuisine 'at home and abroad. Taiwan has tried to distinguish itself from its giant, antagonistic neighbour by using stinky tofu and oyster omelettes as the stars of the diplomatic drive. They also invested in the Taiwan food foundation which seeks to develop and promote Taiwanese restaurants and coffee shops. Bubble tea or "Pearl Milk Tea" is considered to be a very refreshing drink and the fact that it comes in a dozen of flavours and has a giant straw for sucking up the tapioca balls inside makes it all the more interesting for the customers



(Chapple-Sokol, S., 2013).

“Taiwan’s Council for Cultural Affairs is creating its own Taiwan Academies to teach Chinese and promote local culture. The first will open in the United States, but more are planned in Asia, and Taiwan is preparing to spend more than US\$140 million on this initiative between 2011 and 2015.

Hong Kong and Singapore can be classified, at least in part, as culinary destinations, and both offer a rich diversity of foods, although their natural resources, agricultural development, culinary routes or trails, and production and processing plants, are limited” .(Jeou – Shyan Horng & Chen-Tsang (Simon) Tsai, 2011: 3). One of the important factors which contributes largely to establishment and sustenance of unique and multiethnic food culture of these two countries is their geographical location which has been a core resource for culinary tourism.

4.3: CONCLUSION:

Asian tigers are known to the world for their economic prosperity and inspiring growth trajectory. This paper has taken a non-traditional approach to analyse the national imagery of Asian tigers in the International Relations today. Considering their geography and diverse ethnic food has been taken as a source to understand the role of soft power in nation branding. Hence, the study has explored the use of culinary diplomacy by the Asian tiger states. As we explored this, we realized that Hong Kong and Singapore were very similar in terms of their lack of resources and their ability to attract tourists through their fusion cuisines which are highly influenced by the ethnic communities and the location of the country which had made these countries. South Korea and Taiwan are the countries that have the resources and the support of their governments to spread their culture across the world.

“Asian diplomacy is still influenced by strict interpretations of sovereignty,



punctilious adherence to secret negotiations, the monopolization of international relations by professional diplomats, and limited flows of information to domestic as well as foreign media". (Ian Hall & Frank Smith, 2013, 2013:11).

To the contrary, the increasing emphasis on public diplomacy in Asia may inadvertently create more problems than it solves, especially when it fails to work as intended. Using public diplomacy when it does not work may be more than merely wasteful – failed public diplomacy might have corrosive effects. But failed public diplomacy may not be benign, in which case the potential downside for increased hostility in Asia could be considerable. It is notoriously difficult to gauge the amount of a state or society's soft power, let alone its general effect on public opinion in the crowded global marketplace of ideas. In sum, public diplomacy appears to lack obvious benefits, at least in Asia, which makes the ongoing struggle for soft power puzzling and possibly problematic as well. (Ian Hall & Frank Smith, 2013: 10).

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