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South Korea’s public diplomacy towards Uzbekistan with reference to the “Knowledge sharing program (KSP)”

Abstract. Korea and Uzbekistan have maintained friendly relations in all areas of interest in Uzbekistan's independence. Relations are being strengthened in all fields of economy and society. In recent years, the horizon of cooperation is expanding to high value-added industries, health and medical care, science and technology, and public administration. Particularly, in the public diplomacy of Korea, it is evaluated that public diplomacy between Korea and Uzbekistan has been developed in quantity and should evolve into mutually beneficial public diplomacy with more focusing on strengthening knowledge sharing between two states. Korea’s KSP can be evaluated as excellent examples of public diplomacy that develops along with the development of Korea's national power. Above all, it is important to create a complementary cooperation model that combines the strengths of Korea and Uzbekistan in the future. In addition, cooperation in the fields of traditional as well as new industries will make bilateral relations closer and will help create an ecosystem for related industries as well as help private companies enter overseas markets.

Keywords: Public diplomacy, ODA, South Korea, Knowledge Sharing Program, Uzbekistan, Special Strategic Partnership

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1. Korea-Uzbekistan Relations: Elevated to “Special Strategic Partnership”

Uzbekistan is a central country in Central Asia. Korea and Uzbekistan have maintained friendly relations in all areas of interest in Uzbekistan's independence. Relations are being strengthened in all fields of economy and society. In recent years, the horizon of cooperation is expanding to high value-added industries, health and medical care, science and technology, and public administration. Such cooperation will have a positive effect on the revitalization of the “New Northern Policy,” which is an extension of the Northern Policy that has been promoted since the late 1980s by the Korean government. It is also expected to have a positive impact on the ongoing Korea’s FTA discussions with the EAEU.

The public diplomacy of middle power countries like Korea can play a key role in creating public goods of cooperation and harmony in the international community. Currently, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea budget for public diplomacy exceeds KRW 30 billion, and the interest and importance of public diplomacy are increasing day by day. In this regard, it is evaluated that public

diplomacy between Korea and Uzbekistan should evolve into mutually beneficial public diplomacy with more focusing on strengthening knowledge sharing between two states.

Thus, it is a time for Korean government when a more sophisticated design and strategic approach is required so that knowledge based public diplomacy is more likely to serve as a bridge in pursuing cooperation and the common good of the entire Central Asian region. Through this, it is possible to develop from knowledge-sharing and contribution diplomacy towards ‘cooperative’ public diplomacy. In-depth research and policy implementation based on this is necessary because public diplomacy can create a public good called a cooperative public order based on communication.

2. KSP as the ‘Knowledge-sharing based’ Public Diplomacy of the Korean government

Since the launch of the Knowledge-Sharing Project (KSP) from Economic Development Experience in 2004, Korea's development experience and knowledge have been provided to recipient countries more than 70 countries around the world through KSP. As a result, it can be said that the Korean-style KSP project has established itself as a knowledge-sharing project that is evaluated quite successful model worldwide.

KSP, a knowledge-based development cooperation project that provides customized policy recommendations to partner countries based on Korea’s economic development experience and knowledge, supports the sustainable economic and social development of partner countries, and seeks opportunities for economic cooperation between the two countries to help the international community. Its main goal is to contribute to common prosperity. For this purpose, Uzbekistan has also been supported as a key partner in the KSP project almost every year since 2010.

The KSP project has been operated under the supervision of the Ministry of Economy and Finance by designating an organization with expertise in each sector as the project management/execution organization. The Korea Development Institute (KDI) for economic and social policies, the Export-Import Bank of Korea for the construction/infrastructure sector, and the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) for the industrial trade and investment sector. The KSP project is largely divided into policy advisory projects (policy advisory, capacity building training, dispatch of policy advisors), joint consulting projects, and case studies.

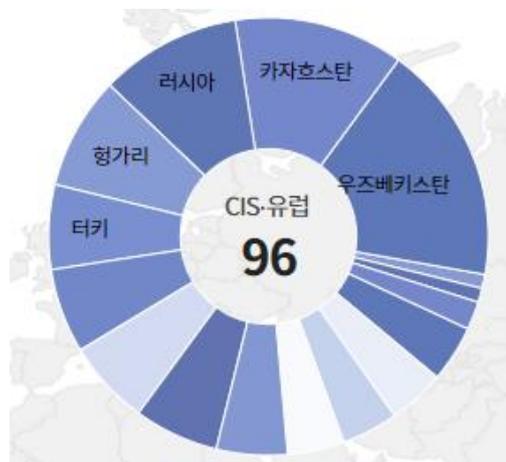
3. Korea-Uzbekistan KSP Project Status and Evaluation

The Korea Development Institute and the Export-Import Bank of Korea have been conducting policy advisory projects with Uzbekistan almost every year since 2010. In the case of the project updated on the current site, the fourth stage, the final

report meeting and high-level policy dialogue, has been completed.¹ KSP for Uzbekistan provided by KSP site are as follows.

pic.1

Regional beneficiary statistics of the KSP, 2021



Source: KSP, <https://www.ksp.go.kr/pageView/ksp-statistics> (2021-12-12)

Among them, Uzbekistan accounted for 17.7% (17 cases), and it appears that the most beneficiary of the projects in the whole CIS/Europe region.

tab.1.

Program of Uzbekistan supported by KSP (2009-2021)

2009	Establishment of Navoiy Free Industrial Economic Zone (FIEZ) in Uzbekistan /KDI
2010	Mid-to-long-term plan for Uzbekistan's innovation foundation and sustainable economic development / KDI
2011	Strategies for strengthening the national innovation system of Uzbekistan / KDI
2012	Industrial innovation strategy of Uzbekistan /KDI
2013	Uzbekistan Agricultural and Industrial Technology Innovation Strategy /KDI
2014	Analysis of major policy issues for Uzbekistan's economic development /KDI
2015	Analysis of major policy issues for economic development in Uzbekistan: Focusing on special economic zones, health, textile and education fields / KDI
2016	Policy advice for strengthening public policy capacity in Uzbekistan / KDI
2018	Uzbekistan Angren Special Economic Zone Operation Support Plan /KDI
2018	Support for the establishment of a public transportation development strategy in Tashkent, Uzbekistan / Export-Import Bank of Korea

¹ It is judged that the data has not been disclosed because the projects currently in stages 1-3 have not been updated yet.

Recently, the Export-Import Bank of Korea is also promoting the 2020/2021 EIPP (Economic Innovation Partnership Program, EIPP) as an ODA project related to economic cooperation between Korea and Uzbekistan (Angren City) by the Ministry of Economy and Finance. Looking at the topics of the most recent cooperation projects, 1) establishment of national big data promotion strategy, 2) establishment of master plan for construction and agricultural machinery industry cluster fostering policy, 3) establishment of master plan for water and resource circulation smart city based on advanced technology, 4) Smart logistics master plan establishment, 5) National strategy establishment project for supplying solar energy in Uzbekistan and nurturing related industries. As a project in line with the economic innovation strategy of the Uzbekistan government, a project feasibility study for the innovative project mentioned centered on Angren city, a special economic zone, a step-by-step roadmap, and discovery of follow-up related projects are being discussed.

As we have seen, the KSP and EIPP projects can be evaluated as excellent examples of public diplomacy that develops along with the development of Korea's national power. In that they analyze the situation in Uzbekistan and seek alternatives, these cooperative projects are meaningful in terms of not only strengthening cooperation between the two countries but also joint construction of an economic value chain.

Above all, it is important to create a complementary cooperation model that combines the strengths of Korea and Uzbekistan in the future. In addition, cooperation in the fields of traditional as well as new industries will make bilateral relations closer and will help create an ecosystem for related industries as well as help private companies enter overseas markets.

The important point is that in order to double the synergy and execution power of cooperation between the two countries, it is necessary for the two governments to jointly build a control tower that will be responsible for the comprehensive implementation strategy and project promotion such as KSP. Cooperation with Uzbekistan might face difficulties to succeed unless the government takes the initiatives and builds an infrastructure for cooperation.

4. Conclusions and Suggestions on future Knowledge Sharing Public Diplomacy

The knowledge sharing project, which is an important part of public diplomacy, can be developed into a mutually beneficial practical cooperation if it is designed to relate to the actual follow-up project. It is important to always consider how the knowledge sharing project can be linked to future economic cooperation between the two countries. To this end, it is necessary to proceed with the manual “Knowledge sharing project progress -> implementation as a follow-up project through economic cooperation between the two countries - check the progress and create a success model” in the control tower jointly formed by the two governments.

Unfortunately, however, there have been some cases where the knowledge

sharing project did not have such a system and ended as a one-time event. Considering that most of the KSP projects requested by Uzbekistan are linked to the country's major national development strategies, there is a high possibility that they can be linked to practical economic cooperation. Therefore, it is necessary to check to what extent the KSP policy advisory project is being reflected in the actual policy of the country concerned and to make an effort to link it with the follow-up project.

In addition, it is necessary to induce active efforts of the recipient countries, such as the expansion of support from the Uzbekistan government for the creation of practical business effects, sustainable cooperation, and the development of the two countries. For example, it is necessary to request Uzbekistan to engage in pan-government cooperation projects, to form a control tower by strengthening the cooperative system between the Korean and Uzbekistan governments, and to expand the so-called triangle of ‘industry-academic-research cooperation’ between the two countries.

Last but not least, it is important for the two governments to establish the institutional, policy, and financial infrastructure that can open the door for private sector advancement and cooperation. A support system is also needed to resolve obstacles arising from differences in local policies, systems, cultures, and practices while integrating and managing bilateral cooperation projects. To enhance the execution power, it is necessary to first investigate the policy, system, and financial support demand in the field necessary for the promotion of the project, and then to implement the project by reflecting it. To sum up the suggestions, firstly, establishment of institutional and policy infrastructure – for example, the two governments should lead the establishment of the institutional and policy support system necessary for cooperative projects. In other words, the two governments should take responsibility for solving problems related to investment, customs, customs, local joint ventures, licensing, support from government agencies of the respective countries, and cultural, corruption, and customary restrictions related to the insufficiency of local systems and business fields. Since the Uzbek government is also committed to fostering related businesses, cooperation with Korea is urgently needed. Detailed policy coordination and implementation of the two governments is required. Secondly, building financial infrastructure is highly recommended since private companies, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), often give up on the project itself because it is difficult to raise the necessary capital to advance into the local market. For this reason, the project can be promoted only when the two governments create a fund and provide financial support. In addition, it will be difficult for companies to invest or enter the local market without collateral, guarantee issues, and a financial procurement support system. Thirdly, inefficiency and trials/errors could be reduced when fulfilled projects which are organically integrated and related to each other and managed rather than carried out individually in the framework of the KSP. Let say, in the concept of developing Angren as a smart city in Uzbekistan, mentioned above ‘water and resource’ circulation, ‘data control

system’, ‘smart logistics’, ‘waste disposal’, ‘energy supply’ and others should be taken into one consideration to be connected organically. Thus, KSP should coordinate various projects according to the KSP concept and could recommend that related projects to be collaborated and co-worked. Today, at the moment to celebrate the 30th anniversary of establishment of the diplomatic relation of Korea-Uzbekistan, well-planned and elaborately reviewed public diplomacy projects such as KSP can be an effective driver to reinforce two countries’ cooperation in various fields and in the long term contribute to two countries’ mutual beneficial relationship and prosperities.

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