

A Thesis of Japanese Public Diplomacy toward Thailand in the 21st Century

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Abstract: Japan pushes public diplomacy to a high level of national strategy, and continuously explores the path of its own public diplomacy in theory and practice, contributing to the service of national interests. Japan's public diplomacy is a relatively successful model, which is a reference object for our country to learn from. Because of its geographic location and political value, Thailand has become a partner of great powers that cannot be ignored. Japan has been actively developing relations with Thailand since World War II, and has emphasized the implementation of public diplomacy in its relations with Thailand after the setback of its "economic diplomacy" route. Therefore, the study of Japan's public diplomacy with Thailand not only helps to grasp the policy and practice of Japanese public diplomacy and promote the development of public diplomacy in China, but also helps to understand the reasons for the close relationship between Japan and Thailand and serves to deepen the relationship between China and Thailand.

1. Introduction

Entering the 21st century, Japan's public diplomacy towards Thailand has entered a new stage of development due to a combination of domestic and foreign factors. Through public diplomacy with Thailand, Japan hopes to promote the implementation of its national strategy, improve its national image and enhance its right to speak. With the policy orientation of strengthening publicity for Thailand, promoting cultural exchanges and cooperation with Thailand, facilitating personnel exchanges and interaction between the two countries, and implementing assistance to Thailand, Japan has taken the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the main body to integrate resources from all parties at home and abroad, and constructed a system of public diplomacy implementation that covers the whole territory of Thailand. Formally, Japan commissions non-governmental organizations to carry out public relations through high-level political exchanges between the two countries and implement assistance to gain the goodwill of the public [1]. Humanistic diplomacy with cultural and artistic exchanges, Japanese educational and academic exchanges, and personnel exchanges as specific mechanisms to build interpersonal networks; in media diplomacy, communication with Thailand is strengthened through traditional media, new media, and media cooperation. Japan's public diplomacy toward Thailand has been effective despite problems and shortcomings. On the basis of deepening the relationship between the two countries, it has helped implement national strategies, shaped a positive national image and enhanced Japan's international discourse [2].

2. An Account of Japan's Public Diplomatic Policy toward Thailand in the 21st Century

2.1 Strengthening advocacy for Thailand

The staff of the Japanese Embassy and Consulates in Thailand deliver speeches, publish articles and give interviews to the media in Thailand, and carry out a wide variety of Japanese publicity activities, as well as inviting Thai public opinion leaders and officials to visit Japan, and recognizing Japan's foreign policy and Japan's political, economic, social, and cultural spheres. In addition, news information will be provided to the media in Thailand and to international media outlets that have an influence in Thailand, and negative or biased reports on Japan will be rebutted, and media opinion will be shaped in such a way as to promote the understanding of the Thai public about Japan, and to cultivate a sense of closeness to, and goodwill towards, Japan among the Thai public [3].

2.2 Promoting cultural exchange with Thailand

The Government of Japan believes that culture is an important field alongside politics and economics and plays an increasingly important role in Japanese diplomacy. The Nippon Foundation mainly organizes various cultural exchange activities with Thailand, sends Japanese experts to Thailand to introduce Japanese traditional and popular culture, and supports cultural exchange activities between private groups and Thailand.

2.3 Promotion of Japan-Thailand people-to-people exchanges

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan is mainly responsible for carrying out various personnel interaction programs to establish communication relations between the Japanese and Thai publics, cultivate the Japanese Know-Nippon faction and pro-Japanese faction, and build an interpersonal communication network for Japan's public diplomacy with Thailand through exchanges with central and local government officials, foreign student exchanges, youth exchanges, and sports exchanges.

2.4 Implementation of aid cooperation to Thailand

Japan's ODA to Thailand falls into two main categories. The first is security assistance. This aid program is an embodiment of Japan's principle of "human security" and aims to provide assistance for projects to improve the security of people at the grass-roots level in the fields of education, health, infrastructure and various other areas. Japan's grass-roots security assistance to Thailand will enhance friendship and understanding between the two countries by providing financial assistance to Thai non-profit organizations working to promote sustainable social development and to projects that improve the lives of people at the grass-roots level. Second, infrastructure support. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan helps the Thai Government to invest in and build public infrastructure that is close to the people and to establish a "heart-to-heart relationship of trust" with Thai nationals through the provision of non-reimbursable aid funds or reimbursable aid financing to Thailand.

3. 21An Assessment of the Effectiveness of Japan's Public Diplomacy toward Thailand since the turn of the century

3.1 Contributing to national strategies

3.1.1 Regional level

The Government of Japan has formulated its own "Indo-Pacific Strategy" in accordance with the

changes in the international order in the Indo-Pacific region, in order to safeguard its strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific region and to consolidate the Japan-United States alliance. The ASEAN region is located in the hub of the Indo-Pacific region, and is an indispensable force for the formation of regional order and the realization of regional connectivity in Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" concept of "legal dominance, free trade, and freedom of navigation". Japan attaches importance to ASEAN's position on the "Indo-Pacific Strategy" for the sake of economic, trade, and security cooperation. Public diplomacy is a complementary factor in promoting Japan's implementation of the Indo-Pacific vision. The prosperity of official and civil relations between Japan and Thailand has prompted Thailand to emphasize Japan's strategic position in the Indo-Pacific region. According to the 2019 survey, 37 percent of Thai respondents believe that Japan plays an important role in the Indo-Pacific region, compared to 23 percent for the United States and 18 percent for both Australia and India.

3.1.2 Global level

Since the end of the Cold War, the Japanese Government has been trying to build a "strong Japan". Japan has achieved its strategic goal of "great powerization" by strengthening the US-Japan alliance, breaking through the limitations of the Peace Constitution, lifting the ban on the right to collective self-defence, and moving towards a "normal country". The Japanese government's "UN diplomacy" after the Cold War was aimed at becoming a permanent member of the Security Council by paying high dues to the UN, actively participating in UN peacekeeping operations, and using diplomatic means such as environmental diplomacy, disarmament diplomacy, and human rights diplomacy.

In a survey conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2008 among the six ASEAN countries, namely Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia, only 28 percent of Thai respondents knew about the UN Security Council, which is lower than the average of the six countries. Among them, 73% of Thai respondents supported Japan's becoming a permanent member of the UNSC and 13% disagreed, which is among the highest in ASEAN, and the percentage of disagreement is lower than the average of the six countries. It can be seen that Japan's public diplomacy towards Thailand has achieved certain results, and in the process of Japan's strategic goal of "great power", Thailand's position is to a certain extent in line with Japan's interests, and provides public opinion support and political power for Japan to further build a "strong Japan". Political power. On July 1, 2014, the Abe Cabinet announced the lifting of the ban on collective self-defense, which was met with mixed reviews from various countries, and the Japanese government was caught in the vortex of international public opinion, and the Southeast Asian countries were regarded as indispensable for the Abe Cabinet to gain an advantage in public opinion. At that time, the attitude of Southeast Asian countries was mixed, with the Philippines welcoming it, Singapore opposing it, Myanmar and Thailand expressing understanding of Japan's lifting of the ban on the right to self-defense, and other countries being more ambiguous.

3.2 Improving the country's image

3.2.1 Japan is the most reliable partner

China, the United States and Japan have close ties with Thailand, but when it comes to the question of "the most reliable country", Thai people tend to consider Japan as the most reliable partner, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' public opinion survey. China, the U.S. and Japan are the top three countries that Thais consider to be the most reliable, but the U.S., in third place, accounts for far less than 20% of the total. On the other hand, the share of those who consider

China to be a trustworthy country was slightly higher than Japan in 2015, then lower than Japan, and considerably ahead of Japan in the 2016 survey. Overall, Japan's credibility is high, and Thai people are more likely to recognize Japan as the most reliable country.

3.2.2 Japan is a responsible power

While a sovereign State should bear the internal responsibility for maintaining domestic order, ensuring the survival and development of its people and realizing the sustainable development of its domestic society, the State needs to assume the external responsibility necessary for the sustainable development of all humankind and provide public goods to the international community. The image of a responsible great power is a necessary path for Japan to realize its goal of becoming a "political great power" in the twenty-first century. In public opinion surveys conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2015, 2016, and 2019, "stability of the international order," "international security," and "stability and growth of the world economy" were ranked. The roles played in the five areas of "stability of the international order," "international security," "stability and growth of the world economy," "development cooperation of the international community," and "resolution of global issues," and the difference between those who said they "play an important role" and those who said they "play a small role" in the above five areas in 2015. In 2015, the average percentage of respondents who thought they played a "significant role" and "a small role" in these five areas was over 90%, in 2016 it was close to 90%, and in 2019 it will be over 80%. It can be seen that the vast majority of Thai respondents continue to highly approve of Japan's contribution to the international community.

3.3 Enhancing international discourse

3.3.1 "Presence" aspect

Since the new century, Japan's communication radiation power to Thailand has increased significantly. In the last century, Japan's communication to Thailand was mainly based on radio and television media, which had a weak radiation capacity, narrow coverage, out of touch with the times, and a dwindling audience. For this reason, the Japanese government continues to actively explore new media platforms and strengthen the synergistic voice of the media on the basis of deepening the operation of traditional media, radio, television and paper publications. In terms of communication teams, Japan will broaden communication channels, integrate and develop traditional and new media, and strengthen external communication teams. In terms of release content, figuring out the right release, the layout of content is required based on the characteristics of participants and releases. There are both reports on objective facts and columns for releasing policy positions through opinion leaders, as well as areas such as culture, language, and education. Japan emphasizes the setting of contents that tell facts, stories, and feelings, and two-way communication when distributing information to Thailand. Japan's communication power to Thailand has been strengthened over the last century.

3.3.2 In terms of "convening power"

The concepts and international contributions advocated by Japan were recognized by the Thai public, and in 1971, Japan's Blue Book on Foreign Affairs stated that "as our national power grows significantly, the international community's expectations of and concern for our country have risen, and we need to be aware of this and act on our own initiative." The Japanese government began to pursue its responsibility for world stability and development, and in 1975, Japan joined the Group of Seven (G7) and began to seek solutions that would contribute to the common problems facing

humanity. In terms of world economic stability and growth, Japan attempted to play the role of economic locomotive responsibility. At the 1978 G7 summit, Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda pledged to achieve a 7% economic growth target in the face of domestic economic contraction. At the 1979 G7 summit, the meeting focused on coordinating the oil imports of member countries in order to resolve the second oil crisis, and Japan, although overly dependent on oil imports, agreed to limit its own oil imports in order to reach a consensus. Japan is actively seeking programs to improve its position in global governance and contribute to the resolution of global issues.

Japan joined the United Nations in 1956, making it the country with the highest number of non-permanent members elected. Japan has also made diplomatic efforts to increase its voting power in the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, where Japan has consistently contributed a high share of 6.47 per cent and 6.83 per cent, respectively, both of which are the second highest voting power. In terms of development in the international community, at the 1978 Bonn Summit, Japan launched the Three-Year ODA Doubling Plan and began to provide development assistance to developing countries. By the 1980s, Japan successively introduced the Five-Year Doubling Plan and the Seven-Year Doubling Plan for development assistance, advocating greater assistance, designing assistance programs in accordance with the situation of the recipient country, and respecting the effective role of the recipient country's government in the country's economic development, an idea that was written into the 1993 G7 Tokyo Declaration. With regard to the concept of development, Japan actively advocates the concept of "human security". In 1998, Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi made human security an important part of Japan's diplomatic agenda and contributed to the establishment of the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security. In 2000, Prime Minister Mori considered human security as a pillar of Japan's diplomacy and proposed that the United Nations establish a specialized world commission to explore the concept. In 2001, the Government of Japan established the Commission on Human Security to disseminate the Japanese concept of human security to the world and to actively participate in international cooperation.

Japan has been endeavoring to enhance its position in global governance mechanisms by continuously advocating new development concepts, contributing new programs, and providing more international public goods to demonstrate to the international community Japan's ability to contribute internationally. According to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, as shown in Table 3.8, the Thai public has a highly positive attitude towards Japan's efforts and contributions to the stabilization of the international order, international security, the growth and stability of the world economy, the development and cooperation of the international community, and global issues. This survey not only shows that Thai society recognizes Japan as a responsible great power, but also confirms that the concepts, mechanisms and contributions that Japan has put forward in the international community have been recognized by Thai society and have gained appeal.

4. An Assessment of Issues in Japanese Public Diplomacy toward Thailand in the 21st Century

4.1 Insufficient media dissemination

First, Japan still uses traditional media as the main media to publicize Japan's actions and disseminate its policies and cultural values through radio, television and paper publications. However, in recent years, due to the development and popularization of Internet technology, the development of Thai broadcasting has been in a critical situation, with a continuous decline in listener ship. Meanwhile, Japanese broadcasts to Thailand, although set with rich program content, have fewer airtime and some of the airtime slots are late-night broadcasts. Although television media is the mainstream media in Thailand, there are no TV stations or TV programs in Japan

specifically designed for Thais. Although WakuwakuJapan is on Thai TV channels, it has limited airtime. Second, new media communication is insufficient. The development of information technology has facilitated a change in the mode of media communication, with the public relying more and more on social media platforms for their media choices. Traditional media have inevitably declined, and emerging social media have become the main media for interpersonal and governmental communication, and a powerful tool for achieving the widest possible dissemination. In response to this trend, Japan has hosted traditional media on the Internet, which to some extent extends the life of traditional media and expands the reach of traditional media such as radio and television, but its nature remains that of traditional media with a growing loss of audience. Japanese officials are also setting up social media accounts, but with few followers, they fall far short of the goal of instantly and widely disseminating Japanese information to Thai audiences. Third, media cooperation between Japan and Thailand lacks a regularized mechanism. Another important path of media communication is media cooperation, through which one can integrate into the local media environment and coordinate media positions, but Japan and Thailand have not established a regularized mechanism for media exchange and cooperation.

4.2 Japan's erroneous view of history

Japan was one of the "Axis Powers" in the Second World War. In December 1941, in order to tie in with the operations in the Pacific Theater, Japan launched a war of invasion in Southeast Asia and soon occupied Thailand and made it its ally in the form of an alliance treaty. In reality, it was a puppet regime of Thailand controlled by itself. Japan plundered resources, forcibly drafted laborers and massacred civilians in Southeast Asia, committing numerous crimes and bringing deep disasters to the peoples of Southeast Asia, including Thailand. Colonial invasions and war crimes are a heavy historical burden for Japan. On the other hand, the Thai people's historical memory influences the cognitive judgment of Japan's behavior, and it is easy to associate Japan's behavior with colonial invasion. For example, Japan's large-scale investment in Thailand and the flooding of the Thai market with Japanese products have raised fears of "economic colonization" and "cultural invasion" in Thai society. On the other hand, the Japanese government and its judgment and attitude towards domestic historical issues have also shaped the Thai people's definition of Japan's national image. The Asahi Shimbun commented, "The 'soft power' that Japan has cultivated over the years could easily be undermined by the insensitive statements and poor behavior of the new generation of nationalist leaders on politically sensitive issues related to Japan's militaristic past." Inappropriate statements and actions by right-wing forces in Japan to justify war crimes, both domestically and internationally, will seriously damage Japan's national image and international reputation, and diminish the goodwill of people overseas toward Japan. Thailand is no exception, in 2020, after stepping down as prime minister, Shinzo Abe once again visited the Yasukuni Shrine, Thailand's Bangkok Post commented that "visiting the Yasukuni Shrine is a profound denial of Japan's acts of war, and Japan will never be able to find peace from the act of visiting the shrine." Singaporean scholar LamPengEr noted that for Japan to be seen as a legitimate supporter of democracy and human rights in Southeast Asia, it must definitively sever its ties to its imperialist past.

4.3 Negative aspects of the culture

The Government of Japan attaches great importance to the value of culture in public diplomacy and is attempting to spread Japanese culture around the world in order to transform it into political influence and economic benefits. Japanese culture, especially pop culture, is popular in Thailand. Japanese culture has won the hearts of young Thais, so that Thai audiences have subconsciously accepted Japanese ideological values and lifestyles when they come into contact with Japanese

culture, which has laid the foundation of public opinion for the promotion of exchanges and cooperation between the two countries, and to a certain extent enhanced Japan's influence on Thailand and increased its economic benefits. However, the negative factors in Japanese culture still restrict the implementation of Japanese public diplomacy. On the one hand, it reduces the audience's favorable impression of Japanese culture. Culture represented by anime and manga is popular in Thailand, but Japanese anime and manga are often filled with vulgar and negative content such as pornography, violence, gore and horror. Vulgar content can easily mislead minors who have not yet formed a correct worldview, outlook on life and values. The spread of vulgar comics has to a certain extent affected the goodwill of people in other countries towards Japanese culture. On the other hand, the negative contents of Japanese anime and manga also limit their spread and development in Thailand. The censorship of movie and television works in Thailand is quite strict. Gore, violence, revealing clothing, nudity, even male bare chests, manga or cartoon characters showing the soles of their feet, pointing weapons at others, etc. All are prohibited and need to be blurred or deleted, and cannot even be shown or broadcast. The Thai public also opposes the entry of such cultural products into the Thai market.

4.4 Lack of public relations efforts by the Head of State

Japanese and Thai officials have frequent and close contacts, and the Japanese Prime Minister and members of the Imperial family visit Thailand frequently, but always "in a hurry". Frequent visits to Thailand, members of the Japanese royal family, the Japanese Prime Minister and other government officials mostly appear on television screens and newspapers and magazines, rarely walk in front of the stage, walk on the street, walk among the Thai people, and the Thai people to carry out cordial and friendly exchanges. Since the beginning of this century, the Japanese Prime Minister has also given only one interview to the Thai media, failing to convey Japan's values, foreign policy, and political stance well to the Thai people, and to establish the spirit of the Japanese leaders and the national image of Japan in the hearts of the Thai people.

5. Conclusion

By analyzing Japan's public diplomacy towards Thailand since the 21st century, this paper argues that Japan's public diplomacy has greatly contributed to the relationship between Japan and Thailand, and provides a good reference for the development of China's public diplomacy.

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