

Rethinking Diplomacy: New Approaches and Domestic Challenges

(Summary)

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Opening Remarks



Mr. Tsuyoshi Takahashi, Special Advisor to the President, The Japan Foundation, and **Dr. Colin Dürkop**, Regional Representative Northeast Asia, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, opened the session by welcoming the participants and explaining the background of the symposium, which was that the scope of diplomacy has become diverse. The panelists would explain the roles played in diplomacy by non-state actors, as well as the tools and media.

Session I

Dr. Lam Peng Er, Senior Research Fellow, East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, began by bringing up the question of whether Japan had adopted a “new thinking” in its diplomacy with the change of government from the LDP to the DPJ. He said that while Prime Minister Hatoyama tried to adopt a “new thinking,” in Japan’s traditional security by seeking a more equal relationship with the United States as well as with the East Asian Community initiative, he ultimately did not succeed.

Dr. Lam argued that the DPJ took a more ambitious approach in non-traditional policy, such as global warming and peacebuilding efforts, compared to the LDP. However, Japan’s peacebuilding efforts were first emphasized by the Koizumi government, therefore it can be said that there was no actual “new thinking” in that respect.



Dr. Lam brought up various examples of Japan’s peacebuilding efforts and pointed out that Japanese citizens and the world knew little about them. He stated that the new DPJ government may be undermining Japanese diplomacy and its image by cutting down on so-called wasteful projects, leading to the discontinuation of publications to promote Japan’s diplomacy and image. This cost-cutting may eventually impact on pillars of Japanese public diplomacy and soft power such as the Japan Institute of International Affairs and the Japan Foundation as well.

Dr. Lam observed that the malaise in Japan's diplomacy may come from a lack of national confidence and concluded by raising the question of whether Japan could regain its confidence and creativity to pursue effective traditional and non-traditional diplomacy.



Dr. Frank Umbach, Senior Associate, Centre for European Security Strategies (CESS), Germany said that in the 1990s Europe had expectations of soft power, etc. Within the short time following, however, those hopes were shattered by the Yugoslav wars when people were reminded that wars still existed. They taught people lessons still relevant today.

He explained that long term stabilization can only be realized if there is significant investment in civilian sectors to build democratic regimes and stable governments. However, the September 11 terrorist attacks and the past few years have proved that we have relied too much on military power, and overlooked civilian instruments.

The evolution of the European foreign security was triggered by events such as the Kosovo crisis, September 11 terrorist attacks, the Madrid terrorist attack, etc., in terms of homeland and overseas security. At the same time, countries also recognized that national solutions would not be enough for global challenges such as climate change.

The 2003 European Security Doctrine identified five areas of security challenges. However, at least another five or six security challenges needed to be included. These challenges demand the participation of EU member states. He explained that as in Japan, that checkbook diplomacy of Germany would not be tolerated by other nations.

He concluded that the rise of China raised many questions, and there was increasing concern of the direction China was taking. Considering that 90 percent of German export goes to Asia, these issues will become even more important.

Dr. Yoko Iwama, Professor, National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, talked about how the alliances of Japan and Germany had determined past diplomacy and how things changed post-Cold War. Dr. Iwama explained that during the



Cold War Japan had the Japan- US alliance and thanks to the US open market, Japan developed as much as it did. Similarly, Germany had its European allies.

Comparing post-Cold War Japan and Germany, Dr. Iwama explained that the expansion of NATO and the EU, for example, had allowed Germany to retain its values, diplomatic criteria, etc. She pointed out that the European Act to integrate markets gave free movement to people, goods, information. In Japan, on the other hand, while it was as simple as looking to the United States in the post-Cold War period, the situation changed rapidly, causing discrepancies between its alliances, economy and society, as China replaced the United States as Japan's biggest trading partner and China became increasingly recognized as Japan's main military threat.

Dr. Iwama commented that the question was how Japan would cope with the rise of China and said that as Japan's economy was gradually integrated with those of China and the rest of Asia, how Japan handled these changes would become significant.

Dr. Iwama concluded by posing three questions: first, how the world would redefine its central values, with the rise of China; second, what Japan wants to do, as it is currently caught between Asia and the Western world; and third, how Japan would identify itself in a globalized world, a challenge for diplomacy in the coming years.



Dr. Li Mingjiang, Assistant Professor, Nanyang Technological University, explained four themes: first, China's seriousness about soft power; second, its strategies; third, the results of China's soft power; and lastly, the constraints of China's soft power approach.

Dr. Li said that China was very serious about soft power and this could be seen in government documents, policies, etc. He described China's soft power approach as being two-pronged, with China utilizing media and spending a reported six billion dollars, as well as trying to build a better diplomatic image, especially in Southeast Asia.

The results have been mixed. China's image since the Beijing Olympics did not improve; rather, Dr. Li stated, it had declined. However, its strategic influence has increased as can be seen in the issue of the ASEAN and the East China Sea.

Dr. Li noted that cultural diplomacy had not brought about significant results in soft power despite China's efforts in utilizing the media. His opinion was that China had reached a stalemate. He also observed that China had become more assertive, which is not good for soft power in the long run. While the international community is trying to make China take more responsibility in the global issues, China has been avoiding this.

Dr. Lee Jang-Hie, Professor, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, said that economically, this century is the Asian century. However, there are many unsolved regional-level issues in Asia, such as the historical conflict of school textbooks, the military hegemony of Japan, China, and the United States, and military tension stemming from the division of the Korean Peninsula. He argued they would be no peaceful Asia without resolving these issues.



Dr. Lee suggested the goal of traditional diplomacy should be changed, not by national sovereign states, but by non-state actors. He stated that Korean, Chinese, and Japanese governments cannot sufficiently resolve these historical disputes and NGOs, which are free of national egoism, should play an essential role to raise international public opinion to pressure governments through international solidarity and building an NGO peace network

Dr. Lee proposed that an action program be executed to turn the Six-Party Talks into a multilateral arena to manage comprehensive issues of regional peace and security. To achieve said goal, the North Korea issue must be resolved. NGOs must raise public opinion for the realization of the Joint Declaration of September 19, 2005 in order to put pressure on the concerned governments. Dr. Lee stated that that peace diplomacy at the civilian level needed to be initiated and that the NGOs of Asian countries needed to cooperate to overcome the division.

In conclusion, he said that he hoped a peace campaign would be launched for the integration and organization of a peaceful Asian community. He also recommended that Japan keep its peace constitution, namely, Article 9, and that all countries adopt such a peace constitution. A bilateral approach should be a thing of the past, and a multilateral approach should be taken. To this end, non-state actors such as NGOs should play an essential role.

Session II



Dr. Pavin Chachavalpongpun, Lead Researcher, the ISEAS, talked about digital diplomacy with a focus on ASEAN. He posed four questions: what the nature of traditional diplomacy is, what the reasons behind the shift are, what the new mode of diplomacy is, and in what way it is effective.

Dr. Pavin brought up ASEAN's policy of non-interference and consensus as part of its traditional diplomacy and questioned whether it was effective to not discuss sensitive issues publicly.

As for the reason for shifting, he stated that ASEAN realized the need to readjust to the changing international community. Political, economical, social communities, the need to open itself up made ASEAN more willing to discuss sensitive issues. The business community wanted ASEAN to respond to the real needs of business to be incorporated into foreign policy.

ASEAN is now harnessing the power of ITC to achieve its goals to manage knowledge, implement social networking societies, and reduce the workload. ASEAN uses Twitter to reach out to its members. A cross between SNS culture and a means to address diplomacy, development, and other issues, Facebook has also become a widely used tool and a good channel for ASEAN leaders to communicate with the public.

Lastly, in regard to the evaluation of such approaches, Dr. Pavin admitted there were still problems. The difficulty is how to change the traditionalists. Digital diplomacy is necessary if ASEAN wants to become a main player in the region as it forces ASEAN to look at non-traditional issues.

Mr. Masashi Iiyama, Senior Research Fellow, Yomiuri Research Institute, The Yomiuri Shimbun, said that while media cannot create diplomacy, it can influence it. However, the view that the media influences public opinion is far weaker than it used to be.



He stated that most media in democratic countries are commercial, which is better than state-run media because commercial media is run by market competition and therefore it is difficult to hide facts and inconvenient truths. However, market competition is influenced by the interest of the people and it is the people, rather than the media, that is setting the agenda. He said that unless the people's values change, news selection will not change even if the international environment does.

The biggest challenge for the media in terms of diplomacy and public opinion is how to ease rising nationalism. Anti-Japanese sentiment still prevails in China and Korea. However, the media has not been helpful in this area; rather, it has stirred it up. The media's reaction to certain topics is automatic and predictable. Therefore, Mr. Iiyama argued, the leaders of nations, who have the most influence on the media, have huge responsibility and they must learn how media works.

Regarding the responsibility of the media, Mr. Iiyama emphasized that while the ability of the media to influence diplomacy is constrained, it must make more effort in this area. Issues that are non-traditional have much less coverage than traditional ones, but they must be covered more in order for the media to remain relevant to the current world.

Dr. Yuichi Hosoya, Associate Professor, Keio University, explained how Japan's diplomacy changed rapidly during the past twenty years. He gave three reasons for the change of diplomacy in Japan: globalization, normalization as opposed to militarization, and democratization.



Japan's diplomacy had to change due to internal and external influences. The so-called Yoshida Doctrine used to be the Japanese identity. However, in the new age Japan needs a new identity, and it is still in the process of finding it.

He explained the three basic principles of diplomacy described in the first Japanese blue book, the United Nations, the Western Alliance, and Asia. With the end of the Cold War, Japanese diplomacy turned gradually to more global issues. However, Japan was criticized as being as merely an economic giant that ignored important international agendas and the international community demanded that Japan play a greater role. Japan's diplomacy began to expand more toward Europe, Asia, and Africa and in areas such as human security, the war against terror, etc.

Japan's diplomacy seems to be going in various different directions, such as the resolution of historical issues of textbooks and Yasukuni Shrine, and the promotion of J-pop culture. However, Dr. Hosoya argued, the frequent change of government has made it difficult to maintain a stable policy.

In conclusion, he reiterated that Japan's diplomacy has become globalised since the end of the Cold War. He also pointed out the need for a more comprehensive diplomacy encompassing historical, cultural, and other aspects. And, despite fiscal constraints, Japan must not lose sight of the important issues. Continuity, financial backing, and prioritization need to be debated, perhaps with the participation of the public.

Q&A



Regarding security, a question was raised from the audience about what the relationship between traditional and non-traditional security was. Dr. Umbach responded that the two types of security influence each other, citing NATO and its relationship with Japan as an example. Today they must deal more and more with non-traditional issues such as climate change. However, given global issues, these relationships need to be further developed. Dr. Umbach argued that Japan is too inward-focused and needs to be more proactive and outward looking.

Dr. Iwama stated that the problem of values will become a problem. Looking at post conflict states and developing states, the subject of capacity building emerges. She posed the question of whether Japan has the right to impose its systems on those countries. In non-traditional areas, people have different expectations and values, and these will affect Japan. She wondered if Japan wanted to stick to the US-oriented approach or take an approach which will serve Asia.

A question from the audience brought up the references to cultural diplomacy in the presentations. The importance of the identity of a state was mentioned. However, historical recognition, etc., could hamper the establishment of an identity. A question was posed on how to overcome these issues. Dr. Lam addressed this question by giving

Japan as an example. Japan could be seen as a member of the West or a junior partner of the United States. Countries such as Singapore with national conscription systems have responsibility for its own security. He asked why Japan does not do more for its own security. From an outsider's view, Japan can be seen as a pacifist country and at one other extreme it can be seen as one-country pacifism, due to the country's size. This identity is no longer current. His vision for Japan is to be more autonomous, a country that is more confident about addressing issues of war and peace.

Dr. Li commented on cultural identity, saying that searching for an identity is not unique to Japan. It is an issue for all countries. He argued that it was probably a futile effort to come up with a definite identity. However, he agreed that if all countries strived for an identity as a peacemaker, it would be useful. It would also be useful if Japan worked more for integration in Asia.

Dr. Lee said that they needed to take into consideration the values of different countries. Japan values loyalty, China, tolerance, and Korea, family. The question was how to harmonize the state and civilian interests, the family and state interests, etc.

There were many questions regarding the media. The media should have more proactive power to promote their agenda. Dr. Iiyama said that the media has responsibility. However, the media must report the reality of war, and people should make their opinions based on it.



Dr. Pavin agreed with the moderator that digital diplomacy was important. It can be used at the regional and national level. At the national level, it brings about transparency as it promotes accountability. However, it can also be exploited. It comes down to the consciousness of the people and how the government utilizes digital media.

Regarding prioritization, a question was raised on what is the most prioritized element. Mr. Hosoya said that within the political role of security and economic power, diplomacy must be considered in a package, and based on that, cultural diplomacy must be considered. Japan must consider which elements of culture it wants to cherish, at the political or citizen level. However, with the factions within the LDP and the DPJ bringing about internal divide, prioritization of cultural diplomacy has not been discussed. This is something that should be debated on a national level, rather than based on a politician's personal hobbies or tastes.