

Abstract

Japanese Cultural Diplomacy Toward Thailand: An Analysis in Agent-Structural Relations

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What explains Japanese cultural diplomacy toward Thailand? This topic is under-researched. While most scholarship also evaluates on the success of non-state cultural practitioners, de-emphasising the importance of structural contexts can influence cultural practice over time. The dissertation seeks to fill in both theoretical and empirical gaps on dominantly agent-focus approach. This dissertation specifically asks “(1) how Japan-Thailand bilateral relations shift toward soft power and (2) under what structural features permit the changes from government-to-private practices in its diplomatic styles”. In answering these questions, this dissertation applies constructivism’s agent-structural framework in tandem with the New Public Diplomacy (NPD). The study engages the constructivist framework into holistic standpoints of how different ideational structures coincide with the adjustment of Japanese cultural policy in line with its national interests toward Thailand. The study followingly analyses how these structural conditions affect the Japan Foundation Bangkok and its cultural programmes from state-to-private orchestrated diplomacy. In addition, the study utilises the NPD’s definition of cultural diplomacy in conceptualising a pluralistic term of agents involved in a conduct of public diplomacy and a transformation of diplomatic styles.

The study presents four types of agent-structural relations over the studied periods: militaristic-based structure, economic-based structure, social-based structure and, value-based structure. The paradigm shift occurs when the Japan-Thailand relations started to develop to value-based structure from the 1990s. Correspondingly, the role of Japan Foundation Bangkok develops from an introducer of state-centric culture to a transmitter of Japanese value-based culture, utilising private-orchestrated diplomacy as a true form of soft power toward Thailand. The dissertation contributes to academic literature as a foundation study on periodical analysis of Japan-Thailand bilateral relationship in cultural practices, as a scholar contribution to the theoretical framework in bridging constructivism and the NPD’s definition into the existing study, and as the first empirical study on the periodical development of the Japan Foundation Bangkok.