

JAPAN IN SOUTHEAST ASIA WINNING FRIENDS FROM CHINA?

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CO-OPERATION OR CONFRONTATION

- From PM Hatoyama's East Asia Community to an arc of freedom of prosperity, first mooted by PM Abe in 2007
- PM Abe made phone calls to Indian PM, Australian PM, Indonesian President after taking office in December 2012



DYNAMICS IN ASEAN

- Only the Philippines and Vietnam openly welcome PM Abe's stance
- Because of their interests in the South China Sea
- Otherwise, no Southeast Asian country wants to chose side



PM ABE'S UNDIPLOMATIC MOVES

- 1. Suggesting the Asian Arc of Democracy
- 2. the Washington Post interview Feb 2013:
- China's Communist Party had a "deeply ingrained" need to spar with Japan and other Asian neighbors over territory, because the government uses such conflicts to win strong support from citizens whose education system emphasizes patriotism and "anti-Japanese sentiment."

COMMON INTERESTS OUTWEIGH “COMMON VALUES”

- Undiplomatic because some truths are best left unsaid
- ASEAN in general does not want to take side, not even between the US and China
- China has become ASEAN's biggest trading partner for four years since 2008, trade volume average increase by more than 10% annually

Japan's Challenge: Waning Soft Power?

- Japan announced resumption of ODA to Myanmar in April 2012
- But the overall ODA budget has been cut for 14 years consecutively
- Domestic economic problems and the need to rebuild after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami
- Chinese language learning has overtaken Japanese language learning in ASEAN



A more direct approach?

- Instead of competing with China for the hearts and minds of Southeast Asia, Japan should consider using its soft power directly on China

Differentiating between the Party and the People

- Younger Chinese are more aware of Party propaganda
- Latest internet joke: Dying Eight Times a Day acting as a Japanese imperial soldier in Eight different TV drama
- Young Chinese do not necessarily hate Japan. They have begun to question their history books.



Differentiating between the Party and the People II

- There are more goodwill among Chinese, especially the educated, than it appeared
- But rightwing Japanese politicians public statements on WWII history help strengthen the hands of Party propaganda officials



Making an Impression

- IHT reported in November 2012 that there are ten times more Chinese residing in Japan than 1984: over 670,000
- People to People contact, civilian diplomacy, soft power
- One of the most memorable image in China during the Sichuan Earthquake in May 2008



Conclusion

- The odds of realising the Asian Arc of Democracy is almost none
- Confrontation with China is against Japan's interests
- Japan needs to find new ways to deal with China