On Promotional Effect of Thailand on ASEAN Political Stand

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Abstract. Thailand, one of founders of ASEAN, is the center of Southeast Asia in geography. From the foundation of ASEAN to 21st century, Thailand is always devoting to promoting peace and neutralization of ASEAN. Thailand, based on its own experience from two world wars, provides ASEAN a conductive strategy to foreign policy. The historical line to study Thailand’s influence on ASEAN will clearly reveal the relationship between Thailand and ASEAN members. The peace and stable political environment guarantees the solid base for the development of Thailand, which play a positive role model for ASEAN development. The findings will be helpful for China’s “The Belt and Road Initiative” conducted in the Southeast Asia area. Maintaining a good cooperation with Thailand will also benefit Sino-ASEAN. Therefore, the study on the promotional effect of Thailand on ASEAN political stand is meaningful.

Introduction

In August 1967, the foreign ministers of Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines and Singapore, as well as the deputy prime ministers of Malaysia, held their first ministerial meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, and issued the Declaration on the establishment of the association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), marking the formal establishment of the association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). [1] ASEAN claims to be open to all Southeast Asian countries. Its purpose is to work together to promote economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region and to follow the principles of justice, state relations and the Charter of the United Nations to promote peace and stability in the region. As the founder of ASEAN, Thailand tried to promote the neutral development of ASEAN politically from the beginning of its establishment to the 21st century because of its geographical advantages. Although Thailand has a great influence on ASEAN, there are few studies on this kind of system in China. Since the first decade of the 21st century, the situation in Thailand has been relatively turbulent, and Thailand's political trend has also greatly affected the political situation of other ASEAN member countries. Therefore, this study provides a new perspective for the study of Thailand and ASEAN.

The Origin of Thailand's Promotional Effect on ASEAN's Political Position

In the first World War, Thailand issued a declaration of neutrality in order to prevent itself from becoming a colony, and then joined the group of allies due to consideration of multiple interests. After the war, Thailand benefited as a sovereign state, neither being sanctioned nor sharing the fruits of the war. This made the Thai government realize that neutrality is of great benefit to the Thai government and people; shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War, Thailand announced its independence. Because of Japan's forced entry into Thailand, it took advantage of the situation to attack Indonesia and Cambodia. At that time, the government was forced to take a cooperative attitude with Japan, but the "Free Thai Movement" prompted Thailand to support the Anglo American Alliance Army. Such a two-sided foreign policy not only frees Thailand from domestic wars, but also avoids post-war sanctions against Thailand. Both wars reached the mainland of Thailand, but they all thought that Thailand pursued the "neutral" foreign policy and avoided the war disaster. Based on the benefits of "neutrality" brought to Thailand by the two world wars, the Thai government actively promoted the "neutrality" policy.
In July 1961, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand established the ASEAN. However, due to the territorial disputes between Malaysia and the Philippines, the diplomatic relations between the two countries were once interrupted. The ASEAN actually exists in name, but of course, the important position of the ASEAN in the Southeast Asia region has not been reflected, but the idea of establishing the ASEAN has been brewing in many countries. After that, Thailand stepped up the establishment of ASEAN. Six years later, he held the first ministerial meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, with the foreign ministers of Indonesia, the Philippines and Singapore, as well as the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, and officially issued the Declaration on the establishment of the association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), marking the formal establishment of the association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

After the establishment of ASEAN, the Thai government continuously influenced the political position of ASEAN in the process of more than half a century, and finally established the political position of "friendship and mutual assistance" and "neutrality" of ASEAN.

Thailand's Influence on the Political Position of ASEAN in Different Periods

As one of the first Southeast Asian countries to join ASEAN, Thailand tries to promote the political alliance of ASEAN countries politically, and at the same time, it also accelerates the "neutral" position of ASEAN, so as to provide strong political guarantee and good economic order for the economic activities of ASEAN countries.

The Political Influence of Thailand on ASEAN in 1970s

In the 1970s, Thailand mainly promoted ASEAN's "neutral" position through a series of efforts. In fact, the idea of neutrality in Southeast Asia was first put forward by the Malaysian MP, Don Ismail. "It's time for regional countries to collectively announce the neutrality of Southeast Asia," he said. In order to ensure its effectiveness, such neutrality must be guaranteed by the major powers, including China." In December 1970, Razak, who succeeded Rahman as Prime Minister of Malaysia, visited Thailand and declared that "Malaysia calls for real neutrality guaranteed by big powers, so that Southeast Asian countries can freely explore their rich resources and use their national wisdom to create peace and stability in Southeast Asian countries, and strive to achieve the common goals and ideals of Southeast Asian countries". The idea of regional neutrality has aroused great repercussions within ASEAN. [2]

Malaysia's initiative for neutrality immediately resonated with Thailand. In 1970, Thailand's foreign minister and other ASEAN foreign ministers reached an agreement on Cambodia in Jakarta, calling for an end to the Indo Chinese conflict. The following year, foreign minister Koman of Thailand delivered a speech, saying that Malaysia's plan for the neutralization of Southeast Asia is to promote the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of countries in the region. Therefore, he called on ASEAN countries to support this initiative. And hope to "end the current unstable international balance in Southeast Asia" through the neutrality of ASEAN.

But the peace atmosphere in the ASEAN region in the 1970s was broken by Indonesia's invasion of Cambodia. In order to maintain the peace, stability and neutrality of ASEAN, the foreign minister of Thailand and the foreign ministers of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines held active consultations in 1971, which promoted the convening of the ASEAN special session. The five heads of state jointly adopted the Declaration on the zone of peace, freedom and neutrality in Southeast Asia. The declaration shows that the five ASEAN countries should work together to make southeast Asia a neutral, peaceful and free region free from any interference by external powers in any form or in any way. [3]

In addition, Thailand supports the idea of neutrality, and also hopes to prevent the Soviet Union and China from expanding their influence in Southeast Asia when the United States cuts its defense obligations in Southeast Asia. From 1972 to 1974, Thailand, together with other ASEAN foreign ministers, discussed the issue of the Southeast Asia peace zone and the issue of Southeast Asia's neutrality plan and rejected the collective security system of Asia proposed by the Soviet Union.
This series of actions show that Thailand has gradually promoted ASEAN to become a neutral regional organization according to its own national conditions.

In response to the further implementation of the ASEAN peace zone issue, the ninth ASEAN foreign ministers' meeting was held in the Philippines in June 1976. The meeting focused on ASEAN's organizational structure reform and other issues. The foreign ministers of the five participating countries decided to take measures in order to gain wider support for the idea of establishing a neutral zone in Southeast Asia. At the second ASEAN summit the following year, the final communiqué was issued, which jointly expressed the intention to build Southeast Asia into a peaceful, free and neutral region. So far, the "neutral" political position has gradually formed within ASEAN.

However Thailand's pursuit of a neutral area established by ASEAN was disrupted by Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia. Cambodia immediately became a hot issue in the world, especially in ASEAN. The ASEAN foreign ministers' special meeting in January 1979 discussed the situation in Cambodia and issued a joint statement calling for the immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops from Cambodia. But Cambodia's problem is not simply solved according to ASEAN's requirements.

In the 1970s, Thailand continued to promote the "peace" process of ASEAN in line with the idea of "neutrality". Although Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in the late 1970s interfered with the progress of the "peace" process in Southeast Asia, Thailand's idea of establishing an ASEAN neutral region has been widely recognized.

**Thailand's Political Influence on ASEAN in 1980s**

In the 1980s, Thailand tried to contact ASEAN countries to condemn and urge Vietnam's withdrawal from Cambodia, mainly considering that Vietnam might invade through Cambodia. Even submit the proposal to the United Nations, and win the support of the United Nations to force Vietnam to withdraw from Cambodia unconditionally.

The ASEAN Conference on security, development and stability in Southeast Asia was held in Singapore in 1980. At that time, in view of the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, the meeting stressed the reexamination of foreign policy in Southeast Asia. At the third ASEAN conference held in the same year, the General Assembly publicly said: "the main cause of the current conflicts and tensions in Southeast Asia is the continued military occupation of Cambodia, which poses a constant threat to the security of Thailand." ASEAN unanimously decided to use one voice for Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia.

In the face of strong pressure from Vietnam, Thailand takes a tough stance on Cambodia. We strongly oppose the "Kuantan principle" proposed by Indonesia, China and Malaysia Prime Ministers. The main contents of the "Guandan principle" are: to recognize the legitimacy of Vietnam's security interests in the Indochina region, to support an independent Vietnam not affected by the Soviet Union and China, and to require Vietnam to withdraw its troops from the Thai border; to support a broad-based Phnom Penh government of Cambodia, and to end ASEAN's support for the Khmer Rouge government. Judging from the surface of the "Kuantan principles", it seems to support the cease-fire in Kampuchea and Vietnam, but its purpose is to recognize Vietnam's security interests in Indochina through ASEAN and to end Vietnam's dependence on the Soviet Union. In essence, it connives Vietnam's aggression and expansion, recognizing Vietnam's hegemony in the Indochina Peninsula and sacrificing the interests of Kampuchea.

This plan has aroused great repercussions within ASEAN, and the Thai government is extremely opposed to the so-called "Kantan principle" because Thailand and Cambodia share a border of 798 kilometers. Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia will directly pose a huge threat to Thailand's security. At the insistence of Thailand, ASEAN adheres to the consensus on Cambodia and submits the report on Cambodia to the United Nations. The United Nations also held three international conferences on Cambodia in 1979, 1982 and 1987. Finally, according to the proposal of ASEAN countries, the general assembly of the United Nations discussed the protection measures such as the complete withdrawal of foreign troops from Cambodia under the supervision of the United Nations within a specified period of time, the holding of free elections under the supervision of the United Nations.
Nations and respect for Cambodia's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. The resolution eventually became an international norm for a political solution to the Cambodian problem. The dominant position of Thai government in ASEAN member countries is reflected.

In July 1989, the 22nd ASEAN foreign ministers' meeting was held in Brunei. The meeting issued a joint communique on ASEAN's common position in response to major international issues. It also calls for the establishment of an effective international monitoring body as soon as possible to monitor and verify Vietnam's withdrawal from Cambodia. At the same time, it calls for the establishment of an effective international peacekeeping force under the auspices of the United Nations to enter Cambodia. In August of the same year, the 10th ASEAN conference was held in Manila, Philippines. The theme of the conference is "ASEAN in the 21st century". The foreign ministers of all countries jointly discussed - topics: armed rebellion, Cambodia, Indochinese refugees, military measures and security arrangements, extradition treaties among ASEAN countries and other details. We hope that through ASEAN's efforts, we can maintain the stability of ASEAN countries and the whole Asia Pacific region.

In the 1980s, ASEAN unanimously focused on Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia. Thailand successfully resolved its internal differences based on its own security considerations, so that ASEAN took a common action plan for Vietnam's invasion and finally won. It seems that Thailand, based on its own geographical and political needs, has played a primary role in promoting the neutrality and peace of ASEAN.

**Thailand's Political Influence on ASEAN in the 1990s**

The fourth ASEAN summit was held in Singapore in 1992. At the meeting, Thailand actively promoted security issues in the ASEAN region. The conference announced that it will promote the establishment of a nuclear free zone in Southeast Asia. The ASEAN heads of state jointly signed the 1992 Singapore declaration, the framework agreement on strengthening ASEAN economic cooperation and the common effective tariff agreement. At the 26th ASEAN foreign ministers' expanded meeting, they made resolutions to establish the East Asia economic core Forum (EAEC) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), The two forums mainly discuss issues related to the maintenance of regional security and the promotion of political cooperation. At the same time, it is hoped that the forum can promote the multilateral dialogue mechanism of regional security. The establishment of the ARF also marks the transition of the Asia Pacific multilateral security dialogue mechanism from the tentative stage to the implementation stage.

In 1994, the first ASEAN Regional Forum was held in Bangkok, Thailand. The meeting mainly discussed the world and regional political situation, world economy and regional economic development, and economic cooperation between ASEAN and the dialogue countries. At the forum, Thailand actively promoted the further extension of ASEAN's neutral thinking. This session hopes that the forum will not only promote peaceful development within ASEAN, but also accelerate dialogue between ASEAN and developed countries as well as neighboring countries.

The following year, the fifth ASEAN summit was held in Bangkok. At the meeting, foreign ministers and prime ministers jointly signed the Treaty on the South East Asia Nuclear Free Zone, calling on the countries that use nuclear weapons to undertake the long-term obligations of nuclear non-proliferation. This session will play a constructive role in realizing the South East Asia nuclear free zone. At the same time, the signing of this treaty further guarantees the neutrality of ASEAN. There is no doubt about Thailand's role in promoting the establishment of a nuclear free zone.

The sixth ASEAN summit in 1998 continued the thrust of the fifth summit. It has adopted the Hanoi declaration and other programs to Promote ASEAN countries to strengthen political, economic and security cooperation, emphasizing that all countries will strengthen solidarity and cooperation to jointly build a peaceful, stable and equal development ASEAN. [4]

In the 1990s, facing the increasingly stable situation in the ASEAN region, Thailand actively expanded dialogue between ASEAN and developed countries, as well as neighboring countries, with a view to creating a peaceful environment for the development of ASEAN.
Political Problems between Thailand and ASEAN in the 21st Century

In terms of bilateral relations, Thailand has always regarded the political and economic relations with ASEAN countries as the cornerstone of its diplomacy, but in 2009, this policy was tested by the serious deterioration of Thailand Cambodia relations. In view of the tense situation in Thailand and Cambodia, some ASEAN member states are worried that the stalemate in Thailand and Cambodia will affect the ASEAN integration process in 2015, but Abhisit stressed that Thailand, as the rotating chairman of ASEAN, will not affect the relationship between Thailand and Cambodia, let alone the development process of ASEAN.

Generally speaking, Thailand is located in the center of the Indochina Peninsula. It is one of the founding members of ASEAN and a big country in the ASEAN region. For many years, the Thai government has actively promoted the integration process of ASEAN and made efforts to play a leading role in ASEAN. It is reported that the yingluck Latin American government has taken a series of measures to improve its relations with Thailand and other ASEAN countries and seek to play a greater role within the framework of ASEAN.

It should be said that Thailand's diplomatic efforts to seek to expand its role in ASEAN over the years have achieved certain results. Especially in the more than three years since the former Foreign Minister of Thailand Surin served as the Secretary General of ASEAN, Thailand's position and suggestions on the internal construction of ASEAN and some related issues have been fully valued. Together with Indonesia and other countries, Thailand has indeed played an irreplaceable role in the internal mechanism construction and integration process of ASEAN.

The Result of Thailand's Influence on ASEAN's Political Position

Thailand's influence on ASEAN is often disturbed by frequent military coups in Thailand. From 1932 to 2014, there were about 20 military coups in Thailand, and the multi-party rotating governance also caused considerable obstacles to the implementation of political ideas. However, ASEAN has gradually evolved from a loose and informal regional organization to a regional organization dedicated to regional security and peace, and further developed into a regional integration organization. The signing of the ASEAN Charter in 2007 indicates the establishment of the legal person status of ASEAN. As the Charter states, "give ASEAN legal personality status, establish institutional restraint system, and strengthen ASEAN's role as an important participant in the Asia Pacific region." [5] two years later, at the ASEAN summit, the blueprint of the ASEAN political security community was adopted to make a specific implementation plan and timetable for the contents of the ASEAN Charter. This blueprint specifies the central position of ASEAN in regional cooperation and community building, and at the same time strengthens the consultation capacity of ASEAN countries among the United Nations and other organizations. [6] Such organizations will play a more important role in the Asia Pacific region.

Conclusion

In short, Thailand's promotional effect on ASEAN political stand is mainly reflected in promoting peace among ASEAN countries and the neutral political pattern of ASEAN. In the future, with the further improvement of Thailand's economic level, its role in the ASEAN community will become increasingly important. At the same time, the further development of ASEAN's integration will further affect all aspects of Thailand's politics, economy, military and culture. The new leader of Thailand in the 21st century must consider how Thailand, as a major member of ASEAN, can achieve security, peace and development in the new situation.

References


