

Transnational Communication of National Soft Power

Taking Peng Liyuan's Diplomatic Activities as Example

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Abstract—As our State President's wife, Peng Liyuan first entered into the international view in 2013. For a time, praise to her could be heard everywhere. As the spokesman of the national image, the first lady has an indelible role in strengthening the country's soft power. The lady diplomacy is not only able to spread our traditional culture but also can shape the national image. The most important is that it is an effective complement to the official diplomacy, and it has refreshed the new connotation of public diplomacy. Taking Peng Liyuan's diplomatic activities as example, this article has analyzed the functions and characteristics of lady diplomacy from its origin and the development in our country and assumed the situation of lady diplomacy in the future.

Keywords—*lady diplomacy; public diplomacy; "first lady"; soft power*

I. INTRODUCTION

The rise of China is a major event in the world today. As early as 2011, China has surpassed Japan as the world's second largest economy. In additions to economic aspect, China has gradually revealed the manner of a big country in political and cultural aspects. With the development of China's national power and the international environment, China is playing an increasingly important role in the international arena. In this context, the Chinese government has realized the importance of actively integrating into the international community, creating a good image, and maintaining a good relationship with other countries. In recent years, public diplomacy has become an effective supplement to official diplomacy, and is evolving to the mainstream mode of diplomacy. Among them, the lady diplomacy as one of the manifestations is a useful attempt in this aspect, for this "flexible diplomacy" not only can enhance the national image and show the social customs of our country, but also improve the soft power of our country.

II. THE DEFINITION OF LADY DIPLOMACY

The lady diplomacy is a manifestation of public diplomacy. If we want to define the lady diplomacy, we can start from public diplomacy. The concept of "public diplomacy" was first appeared in 1965 in the United States, which was designed to influence the formulation and implementation of the government's foreign policy through

guiding attitudes of the public. Its core is the transnational communication of information and ideas.[1] Public diplomacy is one of the ways to enhance a country's "soft power", and it has an important role in the construction of diplomacy in all countries. For our country, it is an urgent realistic task and a major long-term strategy to strengthen public diplomacy. The objects of public diplomacy must be the central government of the country, its leadership or relevant authorities. But in foreign countries, the object of official diplomacy is the government, and the object of public diplomacy is the public. The content of public diplomacy, seen from a short term, is the dissemination of information to the other countries. Seen from a long term, it is the international education and culture exchange. Compared with official diplomacy among governments, the form of public diplomacy is open. And the final purpose is to realize, maintain and expand the own interests of the country. As to what extent can we achieve this goal, it depends on sponsor country's politics, economy, culture, diplomacy and a series of internal factors, and the balance of power between the two countries and relationships.

"Lady Diplomacy", as a part of public diplomacy, has added the connotation of public diplomacy. First of all, we will think of "first lady" when we mention lady diplomacy. This term was originated in Europe at the earliest. It was used to describe a woman with a dominant power. After the independence of the United States of America, people began to use "first lady" to address the president wife and started lady diplomacy. Lady diplomacy refers to the role of first lady of a country in foreign communication. In other words, it is the independent role of the president wife of a country as an independent individual rather than an appendage in diplomatic field. That the first lady has been able to play such an important role in the field of diplomacy is determined by their daily activities in national politics.[2]

III. THE ORIGIN AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF LADY DIPLOMACY IN OUR COUNTRY

A. Origin

Lady diplomacy originated from the west. Generally speaking, lady diplomacy is usually carried out during the visit of state leaders. But during the Second World War, the First Lady of United States Eleanor opened a separate

foreign visit precedent. In addition to the United States, the lady diplomacy is also an important part of public diplomacy in many other countries. South Korean's Former President's Wife Kim Yoon-ok is known as "the first lady of care-for-the-people". In 2009, Japan's former prime minister, Yukio Hatoyama, and his wife, Miyuki Hatoyama, visited South Korea. When Kim Yoon-ok learned that Mrs. Hatoyama Yuki has a strong interest in cooking, she brought her to the traditional cooking show area. It narrowed the relationship distance between them. In the process of experiencing kimchi, Mrs. Miyuki Hatoyama took kimchi with her hands. With sincere actions, she was close to traditional culture of South Korean and won a good reputation among South Korean people.

In addition, France's former president Nicolas Sarkozy's, supermodel wife Carla Bruni is known as "the first lady of fashion". She not only is particular about dressing up but also is active in charity. She has even raised money for AIDS patients and repeatedly visited Africa. In one visit to the United Kingdom, all her clothes were designed by British designers to show her active affinity, and it has won the British people's good impression and narrowed the relationship distance between the British and France. It has played a good role in promoting the international political image of France. In general, lady diplomacy tends to avoid the political topics. In China, Mrs. Michel's visit to China and Peng Liyuan's follow-up visit bring "lady diplomacy" to public topic. Compared with the United States, China's "lady diplomacy" has experienced the process of "start - stop - start again - become normal". At present, it is at the normal state.

B. The Development of Lady Diplomacy in China

As for which is the first "lady diplomacy" activity in our country, different scholars have different opinions. Most scholars believe that China's first "lady diplomacy" is Song Meiling's visit to India with Jiang Jieshi. In her visit, she has made speech with fluent English as well as in the United States, which has aroused social concern.[3] But British Scholar Zhang Rong and Jon Halliday considered Song Qingling to be the first to perform the duties of "first lady", for she repeatedly went abroad to promote the Anti-Japanese activities, and has made a contribution to China's liberation. Her diplomatic activities were earlier than Eleanor Roosevelt, and her political influence is far more than the latter.[4]

After the founding of new China, Chen Yi paid more attention to the lady diplomatic activities. He believes that it is not good that we only serve male leaders and ignore their wives.[5] Thus, Chen Yi's wife Jess Zhang began to engage in lady diplomacy. Since the founding of new China, Mrs. Jess Zhang has went abroad 21 times. She has left her name in international exchanges. Since then the central government attaches more importance to the lady diplomacy. On December 20, 1960, China held the first "lady diplomacy conference", and decided to send President Liu Shaoqi and his wife, Wang Guangmei, to visit foreign countries. It was the first time that a Chinese leader brought his wife to visit foreign country, which had produced a huge impact in the world. Graceful and noble Wang Guangmei dressed a white cheongsam has deepened the understanding of the

international on China. As our lady diplomacy has just begun to move toward the right track, it was criticized and suspended during the "Cultural Revolution" period. After the reform and opening up, China's lady diplomacy came on stage again. From the end of January to early February in 1979, Deng Xiaoping and his wife Zhuo Lin visited America. This was the first time for Chinese leader to visit America. Subsequently, China's lady diplomacy began to develop steadily. It can be said it is historically inevitable for our First Lady Peng Liyuan to come on international stage.

C. New Breakthrough of Peng Liyuan's Diplomacy

In contrast to the past, Peng Liyuan pays more attention to public exchange and communication, so that people of other countries may know more about China and our national image can be enhanced. Peng Liyuan's diplomacy is deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. Besides the historical inevitability, it also has the following reasons: on one hand her dignified and generous appearance is in line with Chinese expectations on traditional women. The confidence of Chinese people also needs such a first lady to achieve. She comes from showbiz circle, but has no scandal. She shows great enthusiasm in public welfare, so she has accumulated a good reputation for a long term. She is an excellent public image. In addition, compared with people of other countries, Chinese people are more introverted, especially Chinese women in the traditional concept are poor in expression. Peng Liyuan's long-term stage performing experience has developed her abilities to face media, the public and a variety of occasions.

IV. ANALYSIS OF PENG LIYUAN'S DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITIES

After Mr. Xi Jinping has served as State President, Peng Liyuan followed him to attend the national leader summits for many times. She came on international stage with the identity of national president's wife more than once. Her every twinkle and smile, and daily travel arrangements are subject to media attention. She has become a scenery line for foreign countries to know China. Her good performance has not only increased the functions of public diplomacy in China, but also promoted the national image and "soft power" of China.

A. Spreading Traditional Culture

After the reform and opening up with the development of economy and society, China has gradually stepped onto the international stage. In this context, China began to realize the importance of the local culture. Our national culture gradually returns back, and the protection and excavation of the traditional culture are gradually getting attention. Especially in the current trend of global integration, the native traditional culture is the identification of a country to be distinctive, and is the direct driving force of the national image. In the global public opinion cycle, first lady is often the presenter and disseminator of native culture. She has no administrative duties. But when she follows President Xi Jinping to participate in the international and domestic affairs, she is a presentation window of our "soft power", and plays

an important effect in public diplomacy and cultural fields. Therefore, she is the driving force in the dissemination of local culture, directly docking with the dissemination of Chinese traditional culture. In this regard, South Korean's Former President Lee Myung-bak's wife Kim Yoon-ok is a successful representative. During the 2010 G20 Summit in Seoul, Mrs. Kim Yoon-ok accompanied wives of heads of all countries to experience Korean food culture. She not only personally arranged banquet dishes, she also presented Stories of Korean Food to these wives. During her visit in the United States in 2011, Mrs. Kim Yoon-ok had lunch with a promoter of Korean cuisine in New York, which became the focus of media. She has not only promoted the national image of South Korean and traditional catering culture through her own efforts, but also helped her husband's career.

In this regard, Peng Liyuan has played the function of a communicator well in her lady diplomacy. She has fully demonstrated the unique charm of Chinese culture, and deepened the understanding of the international community in China's traditional culture. In the many activities she wore traditional Chinese costume with *pankou*, silk fabrics, cloud pattern and other Chinese elements. And the colors of her dress match with President Xi Jinping's tie and clothes, and mainly are gentle and soft blue grey and pale pinkish grey. On the one hand, it reflects the harmony image of the couple. On the other hand, it reveals the Chinese traditional culture silently and makes foreign countries know the essence of Chinese culture directly. Her performance has become the focus of international and domestic media. In a number of media reports, the Chinese style clothing has been greatly discussed and praised. Even some media praised her frugal character because she ever wore same scarf in two activities.[6]

B. Showing the Manner of a Great Nation

Different from the "solo" lady diplomacy in the United States, our lady diplomacy is often carried out in the leader diplomacy process, but it does not mean that our lady diplomacy is completely attached to the leader. As the country's leaders tend to represent the strong and rigid side, they are often the core in official diplomacy. But in the field of public diplomacy with culture and emotion as the theme, state leaders are not suitable because of their rigid character. The first lady with tender and female imagery is more suitable for this field. They can use stories to transmit culture and emotions and other public diplomatic content. With the recognition of this situation, lady diplomacy develops gradually, and the first lady has begun to play the diplomatic function in culture and emotion exchange, such as global issues, women and children issues, issues of vulnerable/marginalized groups, humanitarian and disease issues. As previously stated, France's Former President Sarkozy's wife Bruni has ever served as the image ambassador of United Nations in Global AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Fighting Fund. Mrs. Bruni helped Sarkozy's political career and showed the manner of a great nation.

Peng Liyuan is enthusiastic in charity causes, and she had been working in AIDS prevention causes. She was appraised as "Goodwill Ambassador Fighting against TB and HIV" by

the World Health Organization in 2011 and has participated in the performance of a public service ad fighting against AIDS. Every time she visits a country, she will go to see local children, disabled people and patients to understand the sufferings of local people and to bring greetings of China. In 2013, she accompanied President Xi Jinping to visit the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. She performed "Hope of Field" with local music instruments and local people which enhanced the relationship with local people and promote local people's understanding of China. In fact, with the gradual rise of China, some interested parties began to spread the theory of China as a threat in the international community. They worried that China's development will pose a threat to their own development. This is mainly due to their misunderstanding of China. At this point, the development of lady diplomacy is conducive to showing the manner of our great nation on the international stage and showing our initiative in diplomacy, and it helps the international community know more about China.

C. Shaping the National Image

A good national image is built on the basis of friendly mutual interaction among countries. For a country, the construction of the image of the country is not only an internal affair but also a diplomatic issue. The first lady is often a face and voice of a country, like the brand of a product. Enterprises need to exhaust their life to maintain and protect it and then show to consumers. As mentioned above, there are various kinds of bad voices on China in the world. They have seriously damaged the image of our country, but public diplomacy can reverse the international community's attitude towards China and the existing cognition. Therefore, it is a major issue in China's diplomacy to create a good national image. The image of the national leader is an important part of national image and they are complementary to each other. The first lady often accompanies the leader of country to attend the international and domestic affairs, so the image of first lady is closely linked with the national image. Especially for the public around the world, their perception and expression on a country are generally from the leader and first lady of a country.[7] However, the leader of a country is often in international affairs and official diplomatic occasions. Their images are often too rigid. The public can not know a country in depth only through the leaders. The gentle and kind image of first lady can communicate a country's image vividly. The first lady is often a spokesman for a country. She represents the image of a country, a state leader and the people of a country. The lady diplomacy is a direct channel to promote the image of a country. Song Qingling, Song Meiling and Wang Guangmei first appeared in the international view after the founding of new China have attracted the world's focus and caused a sensation in the home and abroad through their elegant and noble characteristics.[8]

In 2013, President Xi Jinping accompanied by Peng Liyuan visited Russia. They visited the specialized boarding school for orphans. After watching the performances of students, she said "on behalf of thousands of Chinese

mothers, I come to see you. You are the future of mankind. Wish you a healthy body and happy life. Wish you to be useful to the community after you grow up." [9] These words not only show the good image of Chinese women in Peng Liyuan, but also show the image of a big country with responsible character. She won praise of the mainstream media of the world.

V. CONCLUSION

In summary, the lady diplomacy has the following functions. First, it is an effective supplement to the official diplomacy of national leaders; second, first lady is the spokesman of the national image; third, first lady is a window of the social features of a country in the international community. Compared with official diplomacy, the lady diplomacy is more flexible and convenient. It is non-utilitarian and close to people. On the one hand, it is not limited to the official form. Going sightseeing and having dinner are conventional forms. For example, when Mrs. Michelle Obama visited China by herself, Peng Liyuan accompanied her to have dinner and visit schools. It was a flexible diplomatic attempt. Mrs. Michelle jump roped with middle school students, and she put a picture in her blog to show her impression on China to the world. In addition, national leaders stress national interests and government relationship. The lady diplomacy tends to avoid the political and economic issues, and pays more attention to the public benefit, charity, medical treatment, education and other fields. It can not only show the universal love of the female, but also shape an image of a big and responsible country. In these fields, the first lady is often able to directly contact with the people of the country, and interact with them. When Peng Liyuan accompanied Mrs. Michelle to visit the Imperial Palace, they contacted with tourists closely. The government didn't cordon off the area, which reflects the friendly and amiable qualities of the two first ladies.

The lady diplomacy is not a form rising in the moment. From the view of public diplomacy, the lady diplomacy is not an accident, or a speculation to attract public focus. It reflects the new needs of our country's diplomacy and the diplomatic adjustment of our country in the face of opportunities and challenges in the transition time. Here, the author has assumed that with the gradual development of the public diplomacy, the future first lady in diplomacy may not only serve as a supplement, and it will be institutionalized and given with official diplomatic power serving for the implementation of foreign policy.

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