

Bulgarian Cultural Diplomacy before and after the 1990s: The case of Japan

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Abstract

The previous article in this series explored Japanese public diplomacy and soft power in Bulgaria. This article focuses on Bulgarian cultural diplomacy in Japan.

The paper examines the Bulgarian cultural diplomacy strategy in Japan before and after the 1990s. It puts emphasis on Bulgarian cultural diplomacy dimensions both autonomously and as a representative of the European Union. The article demonstrates how through various cultural diplomacy initiatives in Japan, Bulgaria increased its cultural presence in the country. It also observes the contribution of the Bulgarian cultural diplomacy to the strengthening of Bulgarian-Japanese cultural, political, and economic relations during the periods. The reason for dividing the analysis of the relations into two major periods is that the 1990s had a big impact on the Bulgarian international relations and internal policy. Bulgaria started a long transition from state socialism and a one-party political system to a multi-party democracy and liberal market economy, which led to certain transformations in Bulgarian foreign policy. The major focus of the country on the emerging social changes provided a totally different context for Bulgarian-Japanese relations.

Keywords: Bulgarian cultural diplomacy, cultural promotion, cultural presence, Bulgarian-Japanese relations

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1. Introduction

The basic mechanism for implementing a country's foreign politics is diplomacy. In the past, the most prevalent type of diplomacy was the traditional or classical diplomacy. It has been characterized as a direct and official communication between government officials of particular countries. In the 21st century, another type of diplomacy - public diplomacy has been also drawing much attention. Differently from the traditional diplomacy, public diplomacy is an unofficial, indirect and dialogic diplomacy, practiced by mixed coalitions of governmental, intergovernmental and nongovernmental actors. As Cull (2009, p.12)¹⁾ highlights, traditional diplomacy is an "international actor's attempt to manage the international environment through engagement with another international actor", while public diplomacy is "an international actor's attempts to manage the international environment through engagement with a foreign public".

In the international society, the nature of power has changed and the role of public diplomacy exercised through its subsets has been growing. Such subset, considered as an essential tool for wielding soft power, is cultural diplomacy. When applied at all levels, it could influence the "ideology of individuals, communities, cultures or nations", which would contribute to the realization of the following principles: respect and recognition of cultural diversity and heritage; global intercultural dialogue; justice, equality and interdependence; the protection of international human rights; and global peace and stability (Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, 2019)²⁾.

Cultural diplomacy has been practiced by either the public sector, private sector or civil society for building long-term relationships among countries and mutual trust that establish an enabling environment for government policies. In the international society, an increasing number of diplomats and political leaders consider cultural diplomacy as means for enhancing the positive image and prestige of their state as well as for attracting the foreign audiences' attitude to that state's values. It has also become an important instrument for increasing a country's cultural presence abroad and for establishing a basis for prosperous and peaceful relations between states. Such is the case of Bulgaria, where cultural diplomacy has been a significant component of the country's foreign policies and international relations.

The aim of this study is to observe the Bulgarian cultural diplomacy in Japan and its role for the increase of the Bulgarian cultural presence in the country. The article also examines the contribution of Bulgarian cultural diplomacy to the strengthening of Bulgarian-Japanese relations.

Starting with an introduction, this paper is divided into five sections. To effectively construct and present its arguments, the paper begins with a general and brief overview of the basic concepts. It examines the notion of cultural diplomacy as a subset of public diplomacy,

highlighting the differences between the two terms. The article also provides definitions for the concept of cultural diplomacy and observes its core elements and characteristics. The paper continues with a focus on the past and current dimensions of the Bulgarian cultural diplomacy from the 1970s to present. The next section investigates the case of Bulgarian cultural diplomacy in Japan before and after the 1990s. The reason for dividing the analysis into two major periods is that the 1990s had a big impact on the Bulgarian internal policy.

Starting from 1943, the article introduces the initial cultural promotion steps, as well as various Bulgarian cultural diplomacy initiatives in Japan and their role for the increase of the Bulgarian cultural presence in the country. The contribution of the cultural diplomacy to the maintenance of the cultural, political and economic relations between the two countries is also emphasized.

The research method applied in this study is qualitative. To observe the concept of cultural diplomacy, Bulgaria's past and current cultural diplomacy dimensions as well as cultural diplomacy initiatives in Japan, various academic sources such as books, scholarly articles, journals, and media publications were reviewed. Ms. Vera Vutova-Stefanova, former Bulgarian diplomat in Japan and Japanese language translator and Ms. Miwako Tokumitsu-Kibayashi, former cultural attaché of Japan to Bulgaria, were also interviewed.

2. The Concept of “Cultural Diplomacy”

2.1 Cultural Diplomacy as a Subset of Public Diplomacy

Apart from the popular in the past direct type of communication (classical diplomacy), governments found an indirect route, which gave them the opportunity to communicate with the publics of other states in an effort to influence other governments. This indirect form of diplomacy was recognized as public diplomacy (Nye, 2011, pp.101-102)³⁾.

The term “public diplomacy” was coined for the first time in 1965 by Edmund Gullion, Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University and founder of the Edward R. Murrow Center of Public Diplomacy. One of the early brochures of the Murrow Center published a summary of Gullion's definition of the concept of public diplomacy stating that:

“Public diplomacy... deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications” (Cull, 2006, p.1)⁴⁾.

Apart from Gullion's definition, there are various other descriptions of public diplomacy provided by practitioners, academics, research institutes, or governments and not a single agreed-upon definition. For instance, according to the USC Center on Public Diplomacy (n.d.)⁵⁾, public diplomacy can be considered as “the public, interactive dimension of diplomacy which is not only global in nature, but also involves a multitude of actors and networks” and it is “a key mechanism through which nations foster mutual trust and productive

relationships and has become crucial to building a secure global environment". In other words, a wide range of actors and networks are involved in the public diplomacy and their role for the establishment of prosperous and peaceful relationships between states is of utmost importance.

Together with the listening, advocacy, international broadcasting, and exchange, cultural diplomacy is one of the components of public diplomacy (Cull, 2009, p.10). According to Leonard (Mark, 2009, p.6)⁶⁾, cultural diplomacy is "that part of public diplomacy that is concerned with the building of long-term relationships". As the U.S. Department of State (2005, p.4)⁷⁾ highlights, cultural diplomacy is "the linchpin of public diplomacy; for it is in cultural activities that a nation's idea of itself is best represented". Although the terms public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy might look similar, they should not be equated. Public diplomacy consists of a wider set of activities than cultural diplomacy, "primarily those government media and public relations activities aimed at a foreign public in order to explain a course of action, or present a case" (Mark, 2009, p.15). According to Ogoura (2009, p.45)⁸⁾, the difference between public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy is that "the former is always closely associated with a well-defined political objective and aimed at certain pre-determined targets while the latter is not necessarily linked to a specific political objective".

Public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy can also be distinguished in terms of the type of the audience that each aims to reach, but in this case the distinction depends on the definition used for public diplomacy (Mark, 2009, p.13). In certain definitions of public diplomacy, the target audience consists of both officials of another government and the public, while in other definitions - the target audience excludes the usual official audiences of the traditional diplomacy such as politicians, diplomats and other government officials. For instance, "Tuch's definition of public diplomacy as 'a government's process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and current policies', sees the practice as entailing a government communicating with foreign publics, and therefore possibly by implication not with officials of another government" (Mark, 2009, p.14). On the other hand, cultural diplomacy considers government officials as highly essential target audiences for the management of relations between states (Mark, 2009, p.14).

2.2 Definitions

Before defining the concept "cultural diplomacy" it is essential to provide some definitions of the terms "culture" and "diplomacy" from which the concept is formulated. There are various descriptions of the term "culture". As Pajtinka (2014, p.99)⁹⁾ emphasizes, in practice, the term is usually linked to art, literature and other "visible" components of culture. However, in the context of cultural diplomacy, culture should be defined in a broader sense as "the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group" that "it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs" (UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001)¹⁰⁾. The term "diplomacy" might possess different meanings in the theory of international relations. It can be either linked to diplomatic or foreign service (as

institution) or considered as a synonym for foreign policy. In the context of cultural diplomacy, the term should be regarded as “an instrument for the implementation of foreign policy by peaceful means” (Pajtinka, 2014, p.99).

While the practice of cultural diplomacy has existed from centuries, the term has been recently created and consists of a variety of definitions (Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, 2019). For instance, according to the Institute of Cultural Diplomacy (2019), “*Cultural Diplomacy may best be described as a course of actions, which are based on and utilize the exchange of ideas, values, traditions and other aspects of culture or identity, whether to strengthen relationships, enhance socio-cultural cooperation, promote national interests and beyond*”. Another definition is provided by Ogoura (2009, p.44) who considers cultural diplomacy as “the use of cultural means to enhance a nation’s political influence”. Ogoura (2009, p.45) also points out that the main purpose of cultural diplomacy is “to improve a nation’s image and prestige through such aspects of culture as fine and performing arts, language education, and intellectual traditions”. Similarly, the Czech scholar Václav Hubinger (2006, p.85)¹¹⁾ defines cultural diplomacy as “an important instrument of state foreign policy, associated with the presentation, promotion and positive image building of a state, by means of cultural activities”.

The American scholar Milton Cummings also provides a definition of the term cultural diplomacy by highlighting another aspect of it - to promote mutual understanding among the nations. He considers cultural diplomacy as “the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding”, which “can also be more of a one-way street than a two-way exchange, as when one nation concentrates its efforts on promoting the national language, explaining its policies and point of view, or ‘telling its story’ to the rest of the world” (Cummings, 2003, p.1)¹²⁾.

As it can be observed by the examples above, there could be various descriptions of the term cultural diplomacy and not a single agreed-upon one. The rich palette of definitions demonstrates the efforts of many scholars and practitioners to emphasize particular aspects of the phenomenon and provides the opportunity to examine the concept from different perspectives.

2.3 Core Elements of Cultural Diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy has particular core elements which include: actors and government involvement, objectives, activities, and audiences.

Regarding its actors, cultural diplomacy is a diplomatic practice of governments which could be either single governments or groups of governments like the European Union, as well as sub-national governments. The actors of cultural diplomacy, due to its relation to foreign policy or diplomacy, usually involve “directly or indirectly the government’s foreign ministry, or at sub-national level, the ministry of international relations” (Mark, 2009, p.8).

In terms of its objectives, cultural diplomacy could be applied for a wide variety of purposes. For example, traditionally, governments have claimed to conduct it in order to achieve idealistic goals - “to develop mutual understanding, combat ethnocentrism and stereotyping, and prevent conflicts” (Mark, 2009, p.9). As the U.S. Department of State (2005, pp.1-2) highlights, cultural diplomacy “helps create ‘a foundation of trust’ with other peoples, which

policy makers can build on to reach political, economic, and military agreements; creates relationships with people, which endure beyond changes in government; provides a positive agenda for cooperation in spite of policy differences; creates a neutral platform for people-to-people contact; serves as a flexible, universally acceptable vehicle for rapprochement with countries where diplomatic relations have been strained or are absent; fosters the growth of civil society; counterbalances misunderstandings, hatred, and terrorism; can leaven foreign internal cultural debates on the side of openness and tolerance". Cultural diplomacy's another purpose is also to improve a country's image and prestige. Other functional objectives of cultural diplomacy might include "advancing trade, political, diplomatic, and economic interests, developing bilateral relationships across the board, including economic, trade, political, cultural and diplomatic elements, connecting with groups abroad that are important to the cultural diplomacy practitioner (such as diasporas), and helping to maintain bilateral relationships in times of tension" (Mark, 2009, p.9). In addition, cultural diplomacy may not only advance the interests of the country undertaking cultural diplomacy, but also the interests of other countries at the same time. For instance, the cultural diplomacy initiatives of a particular country, which provide scholarships to students from neighboring countries, contributes to advance that country's interests and those of its neighbors, as well as the interests of the students themselves.

Cultural diplomacy consists of a rich palette of activities carried out by various participants including artists, singers and other professionals, as well as the manifestations of their artistry (such as songs, movies), the promotion of features of the culture of a country (like the language), and the exchange of people (such as academics). As Mark (2009, p.10) points out, "activities undertaken within cultural diplomacy's scope manifest an aspect of the culture of the polity the government represents". The variety of cultural diplomacy activities may include: "educational scholarships, visits of scholars, intellectuals, academics and artists both domestically and abroad, cultural group performances, artist performances and exhibitions, seminars and conferences, the operation of libraries, festivals abroad and support for festivals of other countries held domestically, establishing and maintaining professorships and chairs in universities abroad, the commissioning of busts, statues and portraits of national leaders, the presentation of books and musical instruments to visiting dignitaries and diplomatic missions abroad, an essay award and an annual lecture and sports" (Mark, 2009, p.10). Another essential activity is the "assisting cultural subjects in the dissemination of national culture and cultural identity of the sending state in the receiving state" (Pajtinka, 2014, p.103). The assistance might include the provision of various types of support to artists, cultural institutions and other cultural subjects of the sending country during its diplomatic mission in the particular state. The cultural-diplomatic work also includes the "promotion of cooperation among cultural subjects from the sending state and the receiving state" carried out mostly by "providing information to cultural subjects in one (sending) state on the possibilities of establishing contacts and cooperation with 'parallel' cultural subjects in the second (receiving) state and vice versa" (Pajtinka, 2014, p.105). Another cultural diplomacy activity is the negotiation of international treaties on cultural cooperation between states. Such treaties might include agreements regarding the rules of the implementation of academic exchange programs, conditions for granting scholarships to

students, and treaties regulating the conditions for mutual recognition of degrees among countries (Pajtinka, 2014, p.105).

Cultural diplomacy is undertaken to reach various audiences abroad when conducting its activities. As Mark (2009, p.11) highlights “in addition to targeting audiences in other countries with manifestations of the culture of the ‘sending’ state, cultural diplomacy also incorporates supporting manifestations of another country’s cultural activity at home, as this may help advance the national interests of the sending state”.

2.4 Differences between Cultural Diplomacy and Cultural Exchange

The notions “cultural diplomacy” and “cultural exchange” might look similar as they overlap in practice in some features. However, it is essential not to confuse cultural diplomacy with cultural exchange, since the latter does not necessarily include a country’s political intentions or strategies, but rather it aims to achieve “mutual inspiration” (Ogoura, 2009, p.44). According to Fisher (2009, p.253)¹³, “the key difference between exchange and diplomacy is power dynamic; reciprocity and a symmetrical relationship characterize exchange, presentation and one-way communication are a greater part of cultural diplomacy”.

3. Bulgaria’s Cultural Diplomacy: Past and Current Dimensions

During the late 19th and early 20th century, Bulgarian cultural climate was characterized by values and goals towards “self-affirmation, harmonisation with European culture, openness to foreign cultural influences, enlightenment and, to some extent, emulation” (Tomova & Andreeva, 2012, p.2).¹⁴ Cultural institutions were working to enhance the self-confidence of the country as well as to assert the values of European culture (Tomova & Andreeva, 2012, p.2). However, this atmosphere changed in 1948, when the Communist regime in Bulgaria started. In the following 42 years, cultural politics was characterized by “total centralisation of cultural processes within the state administration”, “ideological monopoly over the promotion of cultural values”, and “the extensive development of totalitarian cultural institutions” (Tomova & Andreeva, 2012, p.2). Consequently, from the Communist regime until the country’s transition to a multi-party democracy in the 1990s, it was quite challenging for the exercise of Bulgarian cultural diplomacy abroad.

Despite the variety of limitations throughout the regime, in the 1970s, when Lyudmila Zhivkova became in charge of the cultural politics in Bulgaria, cultural diplomacy achieved much development. At the time, there were two major dimensions of Bulgarian cultural diplomacy. On the one hand, its objective was to promote Bulgaria abroad and to create a positive and non-ideological image of the country through a variety of activities. Such activities included exhibitions and concerts, translation and publication of specialized and classical Bulgarian or related to Bulgaria literature, distribution of movies and TV shows, and others (Kandilarov, 2012, p.1)¹⁵. With their great diversity, the initiatives aimed to attract as wide an audience as possible. The second dimension of the Bulgarian cultural diplomacy, which has had big contribution to the expansion of the Bulgarian cultural, economic and political influence in the world, was the government’s policy to stimulate, support, and promote the

development of Bulgarian language in all its forms - from language learning to in-depth research in various areas of the social science (Kandilarov, 2012, p.1). In this way, Bulgarian cultural diplomacy had long-term dimensions with great benefits such as international support for the country expressed not only by the favorable attitude of one or another government or state institution, but by a real human relationship strongly committed to Bulgaria and hence to Bulgarian politics, economic interests, culture, and science (Kandilarov, 2012, pp.1-2).

In the 1990s, the ongoing reforms in society during the Bulgaria's transition to a multi-party democracy and a market economy have had a particularly positive effect on culture (Tomova & Andreeva, 2012, p.3). Starting from the transition period, in ten years various cultural reforms were undertaken, with the following objectives: "decentralisation of the administration and financing of culture", "freedom of action and formation of market-oriented attitudes of cultural institutions and artists", "amendments to cultural legislation designated to meet the new socio-economic challenges", "harmonisation with European Union legislation", "establishment of an administrative environment facilitating cultural development and European integration", "guarantees of the equality of state, municipal and private cultural institutions", and "strengthening the role of the non-governmental sector" (Tomova & Andreeva, 2012, p.4). At the same time, Bulgarian cultural diplomacy was also developing in various dimensions, manifested through a variety of cultural promotion initiatives abroad.

Today, Bulgarian international cultural politics is characterized with openness and dialogue as well as with its aspiration to integrate with the international cultural structures and organizations. Bulgaria is open to the European and world culture, and at the same time it stimulates in a variety of forms the promotion of the greatest achievements of the Bulgarian culture abroad (Tomova & Andreeva, 2012, pp.10-11). The main priorities of the Bulgarian international cultural politics include: strengthening the presence and the active position of the Bulgarian culture and establishing a positive image of the country as a reliable partner in the international cultural politics arena through continuously implemented policy for expansion of its bilateral and multilateral intercultural relations; recognition and adherence to the universal values of the cultural diversity; promotion of the Bulgarian cultural achievements abroad as well as foreign culture in Bulgaria; participation of Bulgarian artists in the international cultural exchange and supporting the free movement of artists, cultural values, and cultural products; strengthening the role of culture in conflict prevention and crisis resolution (Tomova & Andreeva, 2012, p.11).

Through the Ministry of Culture and other public and private institutions, Bulgaria exercises various cultural diplomacy initiatives abroad. For instance, the country has established 11 cultural institutes in various cities such as Berlin, Budapest, Bratislava, Warsaw, Vienna, Prague, Moscow, Paris, Rome, Skopje, and London (The Ministry of Culture of Bulgaria, 2006)¹⁶. In addition, the Ministry of Culture organizes a rich palette of cultural diplomacy activities for Bulgarian cultural promotion abroad such as festivals, contests, and exhibitions. There has been also an annual support provided for international cultural cooperation by the Ministry of Culture's budget as well as other instruments for funding such as the *Communication strategy for the accession of Bulgaria to the European Union* operating

since 2002, whose main objective is promotion of the new European image of Bulgaria (Tomova & Andreeva, 2012, p.12). The grants are being provided to public and private cultural organizations for the conduct of various projects aiming to promote Bulgarian culture abroad and European values in Bulgaria (Tomova & Andreeva, 2012, p.12). In addition, in its cultural diplomacy initiatives, the Ministry of Culture also cooperates with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Commission for UNESCO, and foreign missions such as embassies, consulates, and cultural institutes (Tomova & Andreeva, 2012, p.11).

Apart from the Bulgarian cultural institutes abroad, there have been various foreign institutes established in the country, which from many years demonstrate successful cooperation with the Bulgarian public and private cultural sector. The projects implemented together with the foreign institutes range from traditional culture activities to research in the field of cultural politics¹⁷⁾. The active collaboration on different levels draws Bulgarian cultural sector more closely to the European values and thus it acts not only as bilateral, but also as multilateral instrument for cultural diplomacy (Tomova & Andreeva, 2012, p.11).

Since 2006, as instrument of Bulgarian cultural diplomacy is considered the Institute for Culture of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The mission of the Institute is “to be an integrated part of international cultural relations and to support the successful implementation of the priorities of Bulgaria’s foreign affairs through cultural diplomacy” (Institute for Culture, 2018)¹⁸⁾. Its activities include formulation of the policy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the spheres of international scientific, cultural and educational cooperation - one of the main foreign policy priorities of the country. In addition, one of the major aims of the Institute is to participate in the establishment of the positive image of Bulgaria as a country with rich ancient and dynamic contemporary culture (Tomova & Andreeva, 2012, p.12). The Institute also works towards and contributes to “promoting the significance and role of Bulgaria as an active partner in international cultural cooperation”, assists “the implementation of regional foreign policy priorities”, and supports “the efficient use of resources deriving from Bulgaria’s increased international reputation towards expanding the country’s cultural presence abroad” (Institute for Culture, 2018).

4. Bulgarian Cultural Diplomacy in Practice: The Case of Japan

In general, Bulgarian-Japanese relations have a history of more than 90 years. The first official partnership was created in 1939, when both countries established their diplomatic missions on each other’s territories.¹⁹⁾ However, the diplomatic relations have been once interrupted in September, 1944, as a result of the impact of the Second World War, and restored again in 1959.²⁰⁾ In addition, during the two World Wars Bulgaria and Japan were allies and thus maintained good and prosperous friendship. Since the 1970s, Bulgaria’s rich cultural diplomacy initiatives have been highly contributory to the strengthening of the Bulgarian cultural presence in Japan, as well as to the development of the bilateral cultural, political and economic relations.

4.1 Division of the Analysis into Two Periods

The reason for dividing the analysis into two major periods is that the 1990s had a big

impact on the Bulgarian international relations and internal policy. The subsequent crisis in East-West relations in the 1980s, the growing economic crisis in the Communist bloc, and the changes in the political leadership in Moscow played a great role (Kandilarov, 2009)²¹. Bulgaria started a long transition from state socialism to multi-party democracy and market economy, which led to certain transformations in the Bulgarian foreign policy. The governing parties during this period aimed to incorporate Bulgaria into the Euro-Atlantic military and economic structures, namely, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union. This required many efforts to alter the political and economic systems. The major focus of the country on these social changes provided a totally different environment for the Bulgarian-Japanese relations.

4.2 Cultural Diplomacy Initiatives before the 1990s

In the Cold War one of the major objectives of the Bulgarian international cultural politics was the promotion of the achievements in science, art, and literature resulting from the socialistic regime in the country. In addition, Bulgaria aimed to achieve certain economic interests. However, the formulation of positive image of Bulgaria among the capitalistic countries was considered a challenging diplomatic task (Kandilarov, 2009, pp.91-92). It was essential for Bulgaria to be well acquainted with the culture and mindset of these countries. In this regard, the cultural relations between Japan and Bulgaria were subject to their own logic, independent of the general framework of ideological confrontation between socialism and capitalism (Kandilarov, 2009, p.92).

In 1943, the first official document regarding the bilateral cultural relations between Bulgaria and Japan - Agreement on Friendship and Cultural Cooperation, was signed in Tokyo by the Bulgarian Plenipotentiary Minister Yanko Peev and the Japanese Foreign Minister Masayuki Tani (Vutova-Stefanova, 2012).²² Later, although the diplomatic relations were interrupted from 1944 to 1959, the Bulgarian cultural promotion in Japan was maintained. At the time, Bulgaria's strategy for cultural promotion in Japan was strongly focused on the increase of the interest in Bulgarian language and studies from the Japanese side. The country provided opportunities for annual training of Japanese students learning Bulgarian language, literature, history, music, and folklore. In addition, links with departments of Slavic Studies in Japanese universities were also established (Kandilarov, 2009, p.95).

Further steps in introducing Bulgarian culture were implemented in 1967, with the assistance of the former President of Tokai University Prof. Shigeyoshi Matsumae, when the Children's Choir of Bulgarian National Radio of Academician Hristo Nedyalkov went for the first time to a concert tour in Japan (Takeda, 2009, p.8).²³ The event was considered crucial for the future cultural relations between the two countries. According to Kandilarov (2009, pp.104-105), the reason was the impact of the children's performance on Professor Shigeoshi Matsumae, who from that time became one of the greatest friends of Bulgaria and by the end of his life contributed much to the increase of the Bulgarian-Japanese relations.

Later, a highly successful period in the development of the Bulgarian-Japanese relations were the 1970s, the period when Lyudmila Zhivkova was in charge of the cultural politics in Bulgaria. According to Kandilarov (2009), the 1970s were considered as a "golden decade" in

the evolution of the relations between the two countries. At that time, Zhivkova applied the deep and productive strategy - cultural diplomacy, in order to promote Bulgarian culture, achieve long-term cultural presence and thus to contribute to the future cultural, economic, and political relations with Japan.

A major event for introducing Bulgaria's culture in Japan was the biggest cultural event at the time - Japan World Exposition Expo'70. It was the first time, when Zhivkova visited Japan. The Bulgarian ruling elite considered the occasion as great opportunity for increasing its relations with Asian countries, especially with Japan. In addition, Expo'70 was a chance to demonstrate the Bulgarian achievements during the 25 years of socialist reign. Considering the Japanese improvements in the sphere of engineering and technology, Bulgarian government also thought that with the establishment of more active and closer relations with Japanese economic and scientific bodies as well as with particular economic corporations, Bulgaria would be able to draw advanced technologies, both through license purchases and drawing on foreign achievements as well as through the purchase of certain types of high-performance equipment (Kandilarov, 2009, p.114).

In the next three years the Governmental Committee in charge of the preparation of Bulgaria for Expo'70 together with the Embassy in Tokyo began big informational and organizational promotion activities to ensure the country's successful participation in the event. For instance, there were various initiatives which aimed to introduce Bulgaria to Japan and to enhance the interest in its participation in the exposition. In addition, to create a favorable atmosphere for the implementation of the planned activities, the Bulgarian Ambassador in Japan - Nacho Papazov and his collaborators conducted various meetings, conversations with Japanese politicians, businessmen and cultural figures (Kandilarov, 2009, p.115). The relations with some big Japanese corporations such as Mitsubishi, Komatsu, Honda, Shimizu, Itochu, Kajima, Mitsui, Marubeni, and universities like Tokai and Waseda were also expanded (Kandilarov, 2009, pp.115-116).

During the Expo'70, the Bulgarian pavilion consisted of three glass and aluminum pyramids which symbolized the high tops of the Balkan. Exhibited were the achievements in industry, agriculture, tourism, social security, education, and sports (Kandilarov, 2009, p. 117). Japan had the opportunity to become familiar with Bulgarian roses, ancient Thracian civilization, healthy yogurt, and the mystical Bulgarian voices (Vutova-Stefanova, 2012, p. 5). According to the both Bulgarian and Japanese assessments, Bulgarian pavilion was one of the most visited at the exposition. More than 9.3 million people attended it. Among them a great number were officials from Japan and other countries. Guests to the pavilion were also Emperor Hirohito, who had visited only 18 out of the 115 pavilions, Crown Prince Akihito and the entire royal family, 4 ministers, more than 100 members of the parliament, mayors and prefectural governors of almost all districts of the country as well as many public and cultural figures (Kandilarov, 2009, p.118).

At Expo'70 each country celebrated a so called "national day". To this event the Japanese government invited the heads of the states who participated in the exposition. For Bulgarian representatives at the "national day", the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party dispatched an official governmental delegation consisting of 9 people, headed by the Prime Minister Todor Zhivkov. In addition, three delegations,

comprised by party and state leaders also attended the event. Other delegations of cultural figures and researchers were guests to the “national day” as well (Kandilarov, 2009, pp.118-119). The aim of the visits was to establish closer relations with the Japanese governmental and business circles “in order to encourage and strengthen the development of the Bulgarian-Japanese economic, cultural and scientific ties” (Qhiel, 1997)²⁴.

The scientific and technical policies of the Bulgarian government in the 1970s put an emphasis on the acceleration of the processes of modernization, mechanization and complex automation of the production and management based on the use of computing machines and microelectronic technology in all sectors of the national economy (Kandilarov, 2009, p.121). Therefore, the goals of the delegations which visited Japan at Expo’70 were to explore objects of great scientific and technical achievement, enterprises with highly advanced production processes and automation in order to observe the forms and ways of organization of the Japanese economy and scientific and technical progress²⁵. In addition, various meetings with Japanese ministers, politicians, businessmen, and intellectuals were held at the time. Thanks to these interactions, a variety of opportunities for development of the Bulgarian-Japanese relations in the spheres of economy, trade, science and technology were created (Kandilarov, 2009, p.122).

During the exposition, significant for the Bulgarian-Japanese relations was the visit of the Bulgarian Prime Minister Todor Zhivkov in May, 1970. Zhivkov’s impressions of the “Japanese economic miracle” had an impact not only on the strengthening of the Bulgarian-Japanese friendship, but also on Zhivkov’s ideas for the future economic progress of Bulgaria.

Zhivkov’s memoirs of 1970 were considered as essential documents which provided critical analysis of the Bulgarian economic system from the perspective of the “Japanese economic miracle” (Kandilarov, 2009, p.125). On the basis of the analysis, measures for the modernization of the Bulgarian economy had been outlined. In addition, a new initiative called “Program for development of Bulgaria’s relations with Japan until 1990” that focused on the major priorities and directions which Bulgaria should follow in its collaboration with Japan, was also constructed. The Prime Minister declared five important steps which Bulgaria should implement in its diplomacy in order to increase its relations with Japan. First, to collect information regarding the advanced technologies and achievements; second, to purchase licenses and documentation for the introduction of new technologies in the country; third, to purchase equipment of highest technical level; fourth, to attract Japanese professionals and companies to assist in the design and the introduction of modern technologies, advanced systems for management and organization of the production, construction and transport in Bulgaria; and fifth, to send Bulgarian staff to Japan to master the manufacturing and technical experience (Kandilarov, 2009, p.130). On the basis of these policies, in the following years there had been a considerable progress in the economic, scientific and technical collaboration between Bulgaria and Japan.

Thanks to the Bulgarian cultural promotion and participation in Expo’70, not only the Japanese interest and knowledge in terms of Bulgarian culture, but also the economic and political relations between the countries increased.

In the following years, the cultural interactions between the countries continued to

develop and in 1975, for the first time in the history of the relations between the two countries, the ministers of the foreign affairs exchanged letters serving as an intergovernmental agreement on cooperation in science, art and culture. Under the contract, both governments agreed to collaborate on the exchange of experts, scientists, students, athletes and others engaged in cultural activities, on the provision of scholarship for education and research at the respective universities and educational institutions, as well as on sharing informational materials, books, magazines, and others (Kandilarov, 2012, p.2).

In the second half of the 1970s, cultural relations between Bulgaria and Japan continued to deepen. Great contribution had Lyudmila Zhivkova's cultural diplomacy. She visited Japan in 1975 for another cultural event - Expo'75 World Exhibition in Okinawa, in which Bulgaria took part. During her visit, Zhivkova created various contacts with Japanese public institutions as well as with private associations and scientific and cultural representatives. In addition, Zhivkova successfully negotiated the organization of the major exhibition of "Bulgarian Thracian Treasure" in Japan and received great support from the Japanese side (Kandilarov, 2012, pp.2-3).

Bulgarian cultural diplomacy continued to be exercised in Japan during the next official visit of Zhivkova in Japan. The reason for the visit was the big exhibition called "Thracian Art and Culture on Bulgarian Territory". The event had been marked as the strongest Bulgarian cultural presence in Japan (Kandilarov, 2012, p.5). It was held in 1979 in Tokyo, Nagoya, and Okayama and attended by more than 220,000 visitors, including Emperor Hirohito and his wife, Crown Prince Akihito, Crown Princess Michiko, other members of the imperial family, as well as representatives from the government, and Japanese political, economic and cultural officials. Together with the organization of the cultural events, Zhivkova maintained active political dialogue with Japanese officials such as the Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira, the Foreign Minister Sunao Sonoda, the presidents of the parliament's both chambers - Ken Yasui and Hirokichi Nadao and others (Kandilarov, 2012, pp.5-6). In this way, both cultural and political relations were developing hand in hand.

In the following years, a variety of Bulgarian cultural activities and events were held in Japan. At the same time, the economic cooperation was growing. The official opening of the Nyu Otani Hotel in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria on the 23rd of May, 1979 was a case in point. According to Kandilarov (2012, p.6), Japan considered this project as very essential and as it was the first example of successful industrial and technological cooperation between the countries. In addition, the legislative base was broadened, and many new Japanese partners were established.

In 1979, the Japanese Crown Prince Akihito and his wife Crown Princess Michiko visited Bulgaria as official representatives of Emperor Hirohito. This symbolic gesture was seen as warm and friendly, an evidence for the respectful relationship between the countries.

A big commemorative event for Bulgarian cultural promotion in Japan was the 1300th anniversary since the creation of Bulgaria. The event was considered as a "triumph of the Bulgarian cultural diplomacy all around the world" (Kandilarov, 2012, p.8). A special program dedicated to it was created in Japan and conducted from 1980 to 1985. It included various cultural activities which aimed to increase the Bulgarian cultural presence in Japan and the two sides' partnership. Such example was the event "Days of Bulgarian Literature

and Culture”. It began with an exhibition called “Old Bulgarian Manuscripts” in the Japan Calligraphy Museum in Tokyo. More than 72,000 people attended the event. In addition, Japanese Prince Akihito with his wife, Prince Hitachi with his wife, Prince Mikasa, and the Foreign Minister Yoshio Sakurauchi also visited the exhibition. Together with the “Old Bulgarian Manuscripts” exposition, the Japanese universities Tokai and Soka held three symposiums on the topic “Bulgarian Literature and Culture”. The symposiums are thought to have marked a new step in the development of the scientific and cultural exchange between Bulgaria and Japan (Kandilarov, 2012, p.11). During the promotion of cultural activities, various meetings between associations for friendship of the Japanese Parliament and the Bulgarian side devoted to the celebrations were also organized.

Together with the cultural initiatives conducted during the 1300th anniversary celebration program, many political meetings were held. The visit of the delegation led by the Deputy Prime Minister of Bulgaria - Georgi Yordanov in September, 1981 was a case in point. In addition, there were various meetings and negotiations with presidents of major Japanese corporations, industrial and commercial companies. An example for strengthening the economic cooperation through cultural diplomacy between the two countries during the celebration program was also the Bulgarian trade exhibition presented under the motto “Bulgaria 1300”. With the cultural promotion activities for the 1300th anniversary celebration program, Bulgaria’s aim was to increase the future cultural, political and economic relations with Japan. The country’s goal was also to create a favorable atmosphere for the realization of the “Program for development of Bulgaria’s relations with Japan until 1990” which was constructed by Zhivkov after his visit at Expo’70 (Kandilarov, 2012, p.8).

In the 1970s and the 1980s, together with the rich variety of Bulgarian cultural activities, the interest in the Bulgarian language studies in Japan increased. As a result, new ties between Bulgarian and Japanese universities were established (Vutova-Stefanova, 2012, p. 6). The exchange program between the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” and the Soka University is a case in point. In addition, a Bulgarian language course became offered in the department of Slavonic Studies at the Soka University in Japan. Bulgarian language and history courses were also introduced at the Tokai University, the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, and the Chiba University.

Due to the increased interest in Bulgarian studies, various related activities have been held. The international symposium on cultural exchange issues in 1981, organized by the association for research of the intercultural relations between Japan and East and Central Europe, is a case in point. Part of the symposium was dedicated to the Bulgarian-Japanese cultural relations of the late 19th and the 20th century (Kandilarov, 2012, pp.13-14).

As it was demonstrated above, the 1970s and the 1980s were significant for the increase of the Bulgarian cultural presence in Japan and the interest in Bulgarian culture and language from the Japanese side. The mutual understanding between the two countries developed in the period as well. Together with the promotion of rich cultural diplomacy activities, not only the bilateral cultural relations, but also the political and economic cooperation succeeded to grow.

4.3 Cultural Diplomacy Initiatives after the 1990s

Despite the challenges which Bulgaria was facing during the transition period, thanks to the variety of cultural diplomacy initiatives exercised by Bulgarian cultural institutions, cultural figures as well as the active mediation of the Bulgarian Embassy in Tokyo, Bulgarian cultural presence continued to increase in Japan. For instance, the Bulgarian Embassy organized the “Days of Bulgarian Culture” event in 1994/95 with the assistance of Prince Takamado and Jelyu Jelev, and again in 1997/98 with the support of Princess Sayako - the daughter of the Emperor and the Bulgarian President Petur Stoyanov (Vutova-Stefanova, 2012, p.9). During his visit in Japan, Petur Stoyanov also conducted various meetings with Japanese officials. Similarly to the period before the 1990s, again, the bilateral political and cultural relations went hand in hand.

Both during the transition period and afterwards, each year Bulgarian cultural diplomacy initiatives have been held in Japan (Vutova-Stefanova, 2012). Such example is the initiated in 1994 Rose Festival in the city of Fukuyama, which continues to be organized at present. Other initiatives for Bulgarian cultural promotion included various Bulgarian exhibitions held in Japan such as the “Bulgarian Icons” in 1990, “The Treasures of the Thracian Rulers” in 1994/95, Bulgarian traditional costumes exposition “The World of the Bulgarian Woman” in 1996/97, “Contemporary Bulgarian and Japanese Graphics” in 2003, “Golden Civilization of the Ancient Thracians” in 2008/2009 and many others in the following years (Kandilarov, 2009, p.361). In addition, Bulgarian music as well as traditional dances demonstrated by dance ensembles like “Filip Kutev” and “Pirin” also gained popularity in Japan.

After the 1990s, Bulgarian language studies continued to be offered in Japan in the universities of Tokai, Soka as well as the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. In order to increase the promotion of Bulgarian studies and culture in Japan, The Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria began each year to offer a scholarship to one Japanese university student of Bulgarian studies. The scholarship provides the student with the opportunity to study for one year at a university in Bulgaria while experiencing various aspects of the country’s rich culture. The Ministry also started to organize international seminars of Bulgarian studies, attended by Japanese students every year.

In 2007, Bulgaria joined the European Union, which in certain way influenced the Bulgarian-Japanese relations. According to Kandilarov (2009), since Bulgaria became a member of the European Union both countries had to reestablish a new partnership framework on equal terms. The relations between Bulgaria and Japan became mostly dependent on “geopolitical, economic, and to some extent cultural interests of the respective countries in the region” (Kandilarov, 2009). At the same time, since the Bulgarian membership in the European Union, Bulgarian cultural presence and relations with Japan continued to increase in various new dimensions (V. Vutova-Stefanova, personal communication, March, 2017). For instance, in 2006, Bulgarian Sumo wrestler Kaloyan Mahlyanov (Kotoōshū) was made a Goodwill Ambassador to Japan by the European Union. This event demonstrated the recognition that Kotoōshū was present in the Japanese Sumo sport not only as Bulgarian, but also as European representative, and the cultural interaction between Bulgaria and Japan was commensurate with that between Europe and Japan (Vutova-Stefanova, 2012, p.15). In addition, as the Japanese Ambassador Takashi Koidzumi

in Bulgaria stated during his lecture at the annual meeting of the association “Nihon Tomonokai” in 2014, despite the impact on the partnership by the Bulgarian transition to democracy and the EU membership, the two countries managed to maintain good and friendly relations²⁶⁾. He pointed out as reasons for the mutual respect “the sense of closeness and goodwill between the nations”. As demonstrated in the analysis above, this success was to a great extent due to the rich palette of Bulgarian cultural diplomacy initiatives aimed at strengthening the Bulgarian cultural presence and relations with Japan.

In parallel with the cultural diplomacy activities held in the period, the interest from the Japanese side in Bulgarian culture has been considerably increasing. Such evidence is the growing number of Japanese tourists in the country. For example, the number of visitors from Japan between January and August, 2016 marked a 16.5% increase in comparison with that of the same period in 2015 (Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2016)²⁷⁾. In addition, to further deepen Bulgarian-Japanese relations in the field of tourism, in 2016, under an agreement between the Ministry of Tourism of Bulgaria and the Japan-Southeast Europe Business Association (JSEEBBA), a Bulgarian tourism information Centre was established in Tokyo. The Centre encourages tourism in Bulgaria through the provision of various up-to-date promotional materials. According to a statistics, since its creation the number of Japanese tourist in Bulgaria has been growing even further. For example, between January and September, 2017 the number of the visitors from Japan increased with almost 11% in comparison with that of the same period in 2016 (Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2017)²⁸⁾.

5. Bulgarian Cultural Diplomacy in Increasing Bulgaria’s Cultural Presence in Japan and Bilateral Relations: Conclusion

Following the transition of Bulgaria from state socialism to a multi-party democracy and market economy as well as its membership in the European Union since 2007, Bulgaria maintained its cultural promotion activities and friendship with Japan. The analysis above demonstrated that due to the rich palette of Bulgarian cultural diplomacy initiatives exercised before and after the 1990s, Bulgarian cultural presence in Japan succeeded to grow. In addition, the activities were much contributory to the strengthening of the cultural, political and economic relations between the two countries.

Lyudmila Zhivkova, who was in charge of the cultural politics of Bulgaria in the 1970s, applied cultural diplomacy as a productive strategy for increasing the Bulgarian cultural presence in Japan. She established various contacts with Japanese public institutions, private associations and scientific and cultural representatives and successfully negotiated the organization of Bulgarian exhibitions and cultural events in Japan. During the organization of various cultural initiatives, Zhivkova also maintained active political dialogue with Japanese officials. In this way, both cultural and political relations were developing hand in hand.

Before the 1990s, Bulgaria’s cultural diplomacy in Japan was strongly focused on both the increase of the interest in Bulgarian culture from the Japanese side, as well as on the deepening of the political and economic activity with the country. The Japan World

Exposition Expo'70 was a case in point. Thanks to the exhibition, the Japanese society had the opportunity to become acquainted with various aspects of the Bulgarian culture and achievements in the industry, agriculture, tourism, social security, education, and sports. At the same time, the economic and political ties were also enhanced. During the preparation for the Bulgarian participation in the Expo'70, many relations with Japanese corporations and universities were established. In addition, various meetings with Japanese politicians were also held. Such example is the visit to Japan of the Bulgarian official governmental delegation headed by the Prime Minister Todor Zhivkov, as well as other Bulgarian delegations, comprised by party and state leaders, cultural figures and researchers. Following the establishment of closer relations with Japanese ministers, politicians, businessmen, and intellectuals during the delegations' visit, a variety of opportunities for development of the Bulgarian-Japanese relations in the spheres of economy, trade, science and technology were created and continued to progress in the following years.

Expo'70 not only contributed to the establishment of a favorable atmosphere for the future collaborations with Japan, but also had a very positive effect on the Bulgarian economy. Influenced by the "Japanese economic miracle", particular measures for the modernization of the Bulgarian economy had been undertaken within the country.

The impetus given in the 1970s continued with rich Bulgarian cultural presence in Japan in the 1980s. Such example is the variety of cultural activities organized in Japan during the 1300th anniversary since the creation of Bulgaria. Considered as a "triumph of the Bulgarian cultural diplomacy all around the world", various aspects of the Bulgarian culture were introduced at the event. At the same time, many political meetings as well as negotiations with presidents of major Japanese corporations, industrial and commercial companies were conducted. Similarly to the 1970s, Bulgarian cultural diplomacy contributed to the promotion of broad political and economic activity between the two countries.

Before the 1990s, Bulgaria was strongly focused on the promotion of Bulgarian language and studies in Japan. As a result of the rich variety of cultural activities in the country, the interest in Bulgarian language studies in Japan increased and new ties between Bulgarian and Japanese universities were established.

In the 1990s and afterwards, despite the challenges which Bulgaria was facing during the transition period, Bulgarian cultural presence continued to grow in Japan. The tradition of cultural promotion set in the 1970s and the 1980s continued with a variety of new initiatives. This was due to the great contribution of the cultural diplomacy exercised by Bulgarian cultural institutions, cultural figures as well as the active mediation of the Bulgarian Embassy in Tokyo. The various cultural promotion activities contributed to the mutual understanding between the people of the two countries. In addition, together with the cultural initiatives, many political meetings were conducted and the bilateral political and cultural relations went hand in hand.

The Bulgarian membership in the European Union since 2007 provided many opportunities for Bulgarian cultural diplomacy initiatives in various new dimensions. As a result, Bulgarian cultural interactions with Japan continued to develop. Both countries now enjoy warm and friendly relations which have a fruitful basis for further cooperation.

As it was demonstrated in the analysis above, in both the periods before and after the

1990s, cultural diplomacy has been playing an important role in the Bulgarian-Japanese relations. According to V. Vutova-Stefanova (personal communication, March, 2017), cultural diplomacy has been highly contributory to the maintenance of Bulgarian-Japanese friendship and can be considered as fundamental factor for the mutual understanding between the two countries. M. Tokumitsu-Kibayashi (personal communication, March, 2017) also highlights the crucial role that cultural diplomacy plays in the development of the bilateral relations in various areas. For instance, as it was emphasized above, some major Bulgarian cultural initiatives and events in Japan have been accompanied by important political meetings and visits of government officials. In this way, the two countries demonstrated their mutual respect at a high political level and also provided support to various artists, performers and people engaged in cultural activities (V. Vutova-Stefanova, personal communication, March, 2017).

Bulgarian cultural diplomacy in Japan also contributed to the maintenance of the economic relations between the two countries. This tendency was manifested in both periods before and after the 1990s. In addition, it should be also mentioned that there is a two-way relationship between culture and business in the countries' bilateral relations. For instance, according to V. Vutova-Stefanova (personal communication, March, 2017), the presentation of Bulgarian rose products in Japan and the annual Rose Festival, provided opportunities for rose products business between Bulgarian and Japanese companies, as well as the manufacturing of such products in Japan. At the same time, Japanese companies which import Bulgarian rose products, wine and souvenirs participate as co-organizers in Bulgarian cultural events and support them (V. Vutova-Stefanova, personal communication, March, 2017). Another example is the Bulgarian yogurt in Japan, represented through the brand "Meiji Burugaria Yogurt". Bulgarian yogurt has become a symbol of Bulgaria as a country with favorable natural resources and a healthy lifestyle (V. Vutova-Stefanova, personal communication, March, 2017). At the same time, Meiji has become a sponsor of various Bulgarian cultural initiatives in Japan.

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1990年代以前と以後のブルガリアの文化外交： 日本への政策を事例に

これまで筆者は、ブルガリアにおける日本のパブリック・ディプロマシー（広報文化外交）とソフトパワーについて研究を続けてきた。本稿では、日本との関係強化のために、ブルガリア側が行ってきた文化外交（パブリック・ディプロマシーの一部としての）が果たした役割を明らかにすることを目的とする。

本稿では、自国およびEU加盟国の代表としてのブルガリアの様々な文化外交の側面に注目しながら、1990年代以前と以後のブルガリアの日本における文化外交戦略についての分析を行う。本稿は日本における様々な文化外交活動を通じて、いかにしてブルガリアが日本でその文化的魅力を高めていったかについて検証する。そして、上記の期間において、ブルガリアの文化外交がブルガリアと日本の文化的、政治的、経済的関係の強化にどのように貢献したかを分析する。

検証するにあたり、1990年代以前と以後で区分する理由は、その時期がブルガリアの国際関係および国内の政策において大きな影響を与える出来事があったためである。その時期ブルガリアは社会主義や一党独裁政治から複数政党制民主主義や自由市場主義経済への移行を始め、そのことがブルガリアの外交政策の確かな転換点となった。そのような社会的な変化への注目は、ブルガリアと日本の関係において、これまでとは全く異なる環境を生じさせた。

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