

## A New Trend in Local Government Relations: The Case of Fukuoka and Bangkok<sup>\*</sup>

### แนวโน้มใหม่ในความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างรัฐบาลท้องถิ่น: กรณีศึกษาจังหวัดฟุกุโอกะและกรุงเทพมหานคร

Nirinthorn Mesupnikom (นิรินธร มีทรัพย์นิคม)<sup>\*\*</sup>

#### Abstract

Local governments in Japan have been actively promoting sister-city relations and international activities with foreign cities especially in the post-war period. However, the motivations and goals of local-level exchanges have apparently shifted from sister-city projects for promoting friendship and mutual understanding in the early phase of the post-war period toward interest-oriented relations in the current era. This paper explores whether the case of Fukuoka Prefecture and Bangkok which signed a friendship agreement in 2006 represents a shift in local relations. Specifically, what are the motives and goals of Fukuoka? Two conceptual frameworks of “paradiplomacy” as put forth by Alexander Kuznetsov (2014) and “sub-national governments (SNGs)” by Purnendra Jain (2005) are employed as the theoretical basis for this research. This research finds that the Fukuoka-Bangkok ties can be characterized somewhere between friendship and interest-oriented relations. Fukuoka’s motivations are diverse, ranging from for friendship and mutual understanding, sharing knowledge with a spirit of giving, while pursuing economic interests in terms of outgoing investment and business opportunities. Interestingly, Fukuoka is also engaging with Bangkok as a launching pad to connect with other countries in ASEAN and India. In this sense, Fukuoka reflects a new type of local government role in international affairs, which is also the case in many other prefectural governments.

**Keywords:** 1. Fukuoka Prefecture 2. Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) 3. Local Government Relations 4. Motivations and Goals 5. Interests-Oriented

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<sup>\*</sup> This article is part of the research project entitled “Thailand-Japan Relations at the Local Level: Status and Future Possibility” supported by the Thailand Research Fund. It was first presented at the Japanese Studies Association in Southeast Asia International Conference 2016, 15 and 16 December 2016 at Cebu in the Philippines.

<sup>\*\*</sup> A researcher, Institute of East Asian Studies, Thammasat University, Rangsit Campus, Pathumthani 12121, Thailand, Email: [nirinthorn@asia.tu.ac.th](mailto:nirinthorn@asia.tu.ac.th), +66 2564 5000 ext. 411.

## Introduction

Local governments in Japan have played active roles in international activities in the post-war period. In the 1950s and 1960s, Japanese local governments wanted to organize activities to enhance understanding and friendship with other cultures to promote communication and exchange at the level of average people. Therefore, international activities at the local level focused on international exchanges through the establishment of sister-city relations. These activities highlighted symbolic goodwill. For example, high-level executives from each country visiting each other, shaking hands and taking pictures. (Purnendra Jain, 2005)

In the 1970s, the number of sister-city affiliation significantly increased. Intense industrialization spurred Japanese economic growth. Japanese local governments were trying to cope with the socio-environmental consequences of economic growth. Their initial moves towards international cooperation were therefore motivated by their need to address local problems that they observed their counterparts in other countries also trying to address. Therefore, they decided to create international programs to help their counterparts in other foreign cities. Thus, international activities of local governments in Japan are in the form of exchanging experiences for solving problems in foreign cities that face similar problems. (Jain, 2005)

In the 1980s, bolstered by their economic strength, Japanese local governments began to think strategically. They extended international programs far beyond diplomatic symbolism to actions that signified ‘cooperative,’ ‘supportive,’ and ‘more strategic engagement’ with foreign cities. They not only conducted international cultural and educational exchange activities through sister-city relations, but also cooperated to help solving problems of cities in foreign countries. In the late 1980s, Japanese local governments began to provide the Official Development Assistance (local ODA). (Jain, 2005) In 1988, the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR), a Japanese governmental agency, was established to support the international activities of local governments. Its aim was to strengthen international collaboration, particularly around local development and revitalization. In this decade, the impact of the 1985 Plaza Accord caused Japanese companies to relocate their production bases to other countries, especially in Asia.

From the 1990s to the present, Japan has encountered economic stagnation, demographic change, declining birth rate, and increasing number of old people. At the same time, the country seriously suffered the impact of the 1997-1998 Asian Financial Crisis. The national government had to spend a lot of money on health care and increased the welfare for the elderly people. As a result, budgets for local affairs were reduced. However, the

number of sister-city relations continued to increase. In November 2018, CLAIR announced that Japanese local governments have established sister-city relations with cities in 67 countries around the world for a total of 1,734 affiliations. In the 2000s, many local governments in Japan have set up branch offices abroad. Their mission is to facilitate local companies investing in that area. The offices function as the center of relations within these countries. The sister-city relations have become a ‘launching pad’ for economic opportunities and other grassroots activities. (Jain, 2005)

Fukuoka Prefectural Government and Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) entered into friendship relations in 2006. Fukuoka proactively initiated a broad range of exchanges in many fields such as youth development, environment, aging-society management, culture, and tourism. Their activities include visiting sites, training sessions, meetings, workshops, discussions, hosting events, and the acceptance of trainee groups. Fukuoka has been actively contacting and creating relations with Bangkok. In addition, the Bangkok Metropolitan Council and the Fukuoka Prefecture Council established the friendship relations in 2007.

### **Objectives**

This article has two objectives.

- 1) To explore the motives and goals of Fukuoka Prefecture in the establishment of relations with BMA.
- 2) To reflect the relations between Fukuoka Prefecture and BMA as a new trend in local relations.

### **Materials and Methods**

Data collection: This research used a qualitative method by researching documents of government agencies, information from websites, books and other related documents. In addition, this research conducted two in-depth interviews with a representative of Fukuoka Prefectural Government, Bangkok Office and a Foreign Relations Officer (Experienced Level) of International Affairs Office, Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) as well as collecting data from related seminars and conferences.

Data analysis: To answer above objectives, this paper employs two frameworks for analysis.

First, it is the framework which is frequently cited in the study of Japan's local governments and international relations is Purnendra Jain (2005). He argues that the motivation of Japanese subnational governments (SNGs) in pursuing sister-city relationships has been diversified, as the broader purpose and geographic reach of these relationships suggest. The first is economic motivation. Owing to their limited budgets from the national government, Japanese local governments began to explore how they could develop economic opportunities for their own localities, including through sources abroad. In this sense, economic interest to increase trade opportunities independently of the national government is the most important motivation. Jain also mentions other factors that motivated the formalizing of local-level linkages in sister-city relationships such as geographic features, geographic proximity, historical and cultural linkage, industry compatibility (e.g. fishing, wine or pearling) plus private visits for leisure, business and education.

The second is "paradiplomacy" which is a framework explored by Alexander Kuznetsov (2015). He explains that most researchers in the field of paradiplomacy identify economic motive for regions to generate activity beyond their national borders.

*Economic motivations* lie in the desire of regional authorities to reap maximum benefits from the world liberal market environment by interacting with foreign actors. Usually the choice of a foreign economic partner and the general design of an economically motivated cooperation are determined by two major principles: geographical and functional. The geographical determinant for economically motivated constituent diplomacy can be simply defined as the presence of a common frontier between two subnational entities. The functional factor consists in the presence of the congeniality of peculiarities in the functioning of the regional economies.

It is clear that Jain's SNGs and Kuznetsov's paradiplomacy can be used as a guideline for analyzing the motivations and goals of Fukuoka Prefecture to play an active role in creating relations with the BMA. Both frameworks help analyzing the features of international projects of both cities where incentives or benefits affect project design. This is relevant to the content of this study as well.

## Literature Review

This article divides related literature into two main groups. First literature related to Japanese local governments will be examined, followed by a similar section concerning local governments in Thailand.

### 1) Literature related to international activities of Japanese local governments

Yirang Im and Tomoyuki Furutani (2015) have examined tourism cooperation between Fukuoka City in Japan, and Busan City in Korea. They have analyzed a policy network of local governments and other actors, focusing on interaction among them. They found in the pre-project phase that local governments both in Fukuoka and Busan took the central role. In the project planning phase, the importance of the role of private entrepreneurs increased as their expertise was considered necessary to implement the project. In the project implementation phase, all actors executed the project enthusiastically and equally. For sustainable development of cooperative projects, the administration should create channels in which the private sector is able to interact with various actors and can discuss the direction of the project.

Jain (2004) has analyzed three major types of linkages that Japanese SNGs have developed in China: 1) formalized sister relationships; 2) trade promotion; 3) technical and economic cooperation. He found that China is an attractive destination for Japanese SNGs in many ways. While China's abundance of cheap labor complements Japanese industrial needs, Japan is relatively rich in the capital and technological capacity that Chinese enterprises need. Therefore, when mutual benefits from trade and investment are strong, numerous offices representing Japanese SNGs in China were established to support their local businesses in China as well as other countries in Asia. Jain believes that the establishment of overseas offices by Japanese local governments in China is a constructive way to promote their economic interests in China. In addition, Japan's SNGs also aim to provide expert assistance to Chinese local governments to address local problems such as environmental pollution caused by industrial development, waste disposal and urban development. Japan's SNGs are proud to help and prevent problems from spreading to Japan's local communities.

Yasuo Takao (2010) has examined the sister-city relations between Hyogo Prefecture and the Government of Western Australia. Takao found that Hyōgo Prefecture had been enthusiastic to establish relations with the Government of Western Australia. Criteria for selecting partner cities do not include the geographical factor because of the distance between the two cities. The more important factor is the need to depend on each other. Activities from both sides have focused on mutual learning and common problem-solving in

many issues namely, student exchange, visiting of executives and staff, and creating epistemic communities. These activities aim to share knowledge and experience, get to know each other's cultures, and to build trust and relationships.

Clarisse Pham (2014, 2015) has assessed the potential for cooperation between Tokyo and the European Union in smart city development and business cooperation. Pham argues that opportunities for cooperation between Tokyo and the European Union are possible in terms of business, joint research, sharing knowledge and experience. EU companies have the ability to invest in Japan and develop partnerships with Japanese companies to run businesses in smart city development. In addition, cities around the world are developing more smart cities. If Japan and the EU cooperate, it will enhance their international competitiveness.

## **2) Literature concerning international activities at the local level in Thailand**

An important piece of literature concerning the international activities of local governments in Thailand is by Rossucone Chartprasert (2014). She examines the international relation strategies of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA). She has identified the key factors that have driven the BMA to implement international relation strategies. First is the trend of globalization and linkage with foreign countries. Specifically, these trends have resulted in linkage with foreign cities. This has contributed to increased activities from foreign governments and the foreign private sector to interact with the BMA. She explains that the BMA needs to adapt itself to interact with external stimulus. The second major factor concerns the policy of elected officials such as the Governors and members of the Bangkok Metropolitan Council because these people are policy makers.

Based on the review of the above literature, it is evident that most of the literature examines the international activities of Japanese local governments with foreign cities in China, Korea, Australia, and the European Union. Most analysis includes international cooperation and exchange under the framework of sister-city relations and issue-based cooperation. Other types of relations include trade, investment, tourism, and technology. Although literature related to Fukuoka and Busan exists, no research has analyzed relations between Fukuoka Prefectural Government and BMA. This article serves to address the needs of academic and practitioners in related organizations.

## Results

### 1) Factors that drive Japanese local governments to pursue their interests outside the country

Fukuoka Prefecture has been a trade center since ancient times. It is an open city boasting a rich diversity of cultures. Its geographical location in Japan is the closest point to mainland Asia, particularly China and Korea. It has positioned itself to be a gateway of Asia. In the 1980s, with the trend towards internationalization and globalization, Japanese local governments including Fukuoka Prefectural Government recognized that establishing friendships with other countries was necessary.

In 1985, the Plaza Accord was signed by the G5 nations. This agreement resulted in a rapid appreciation of the yen. Japanese companies were financially forced to relocate their production bases to other countries, especially within Asia. Local governments in Japan recognized the necessity to support and facilitate Japanese businesses to invest and get established abroad in order to bring prosperity back to their local communities. Meanwhile, appreciation of the yen became an incentive for foreign workers to go to work in Japan. Fukuoka Prefectural Government perceived the need for friendly coexistence between Japanese and foreign workers. This led to the establishment of the Fukuoka International Exchange Foundation (FIEF) in 1989 to promote the relationship between Fukuoka people and foreigners in communities. The aim is to create mutual understanding, live together peacefully, and encourage people to have an international perspective.

Since the 1990s, the economic downturn of Japan has made local governments in Japan unable to organize international exchanges as much as in the past because of budget limitations. In addition, domestic problems such as the aging-society and the low birth rate have caused the shrinking of the Japanese market. The central government cannot solve these problems. These domestic factors have been the driving forces that propel Japanese companies to seek interests abroad through investment and by becoming business partners with foreign companies.

These problems motivated Japanese local governments including Fukuoka Prefecture to set up their branch offices abroad to support and facilitate their local companies. Most Japanese local governments have established relationships with foreign countries increasingly and made diverse changes in international activities under the sister-city program. Relations between cities changed from their initial focus on language and cultural exchange programs to interest-based activities particularly in economic cooperation. Other programs are also created as issue-based cooperation with organizations at both the local and state levels.

In the 2000s, the Fukuoka Prefectural Government set up offices abroad in six cities: Hong Kong, Shanghai, Bangkok, Frankfurt, San Francisco, and Seoul in order to provide consistent support and to facilitate the operations of companies based in Fukuoka Prefecture. The offices also strive to attract foreign investment in Fukuoka Prefecture. Moreover, Fukuoka Prefecture not only established friendship relations with Bangkok, Thailand; but also Delhi, India; and Hanoi, Vietnam.

## **2) Motivations and goals of Fukuoka Prefecture in relations with Bangkok**

### **Motivations**

Many factors motivated Fukuoka Prefectural Government in its relations with the BMA. First, a lot of Japanese local governments established sister-city relations with cities in China as well as Fukuoka Prefecture which established friendship relations with Jiangsu province of China in 1992. However, in the early 2000s, Chinese people protested against Japan. They expelled Japanese out of the country. At that time, Fukuoka Prefecture maintained sister-city relations only with Hawaii, and Jiangsu. The Governor of Fukuoka Prefecture, who supported a proactive policy in international affairs, recognized that having two sister-city relationship was not nearly sufficient for the needs of his prefecture. He sought to expand Fukuoka's foreign relationships and to pursue stronger cooperation with other countries. (Kochi Higachi, personal interview, November 28, 2016)

On a broader scale, Thailand and Japan have enjoyed a long standing historical relationship. They have maintained diplomatic relations for 131 years. Thailand is an important economic partner for Japan. Japanese investors invest a great deal in Thailand. The Thai government supports a policy of attracting trade and investment from Japan. Numerous Japanese companies such as Toyota, Honda have relocated their production bases to Thailand. According to the Ministry of Industry of Thailand, as of 2016, 45 companies from Fukuoka prefecture have invested and implemented their businesses in Thailand. To further support these business enterprises, the Japan – Thailand Economic Partnership Agreement (JTEPA) operates at the state level.

In terms of person-to-person contact, citizens of both countries enjoy mutually positive relations. According to the Royal Thai Consulate-General in Osaka, in 2002, there were 425 Thai people living in Fukuoka. Another important cultural indicator is that Japanese food is extremely popular in Thailand. Overall, Thai people are very impressed by Japanese people who visit Thailand. These are important motivations for many Japanese local governments including the Government of Fukuoka Prefecture to build relationships with Thailand.

Another important factor is that Bangkok is a capital city, a center of economics, politics, and transportation. Its geographic location accounts for convenient travel back to and from Fukuoka Prefecture. Bangkok also provides efficient access to other cities in ASEAN and India. Fukuoka Prefecture can effectively use Bangkok as a connecting point to expand its relationship from Thailand to other countries in ASEAN and India. This facilitates expansion of their companies to invest and implement businesses. In addition, Bangkok has the largest number of Japanese travelers compared to other ASEAN capitals. Culturally, Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) has a policy to welcome all countries that want to establish friendship relations (Rossucone Chartprasert, personal interview, December 9, 2015).

These are important motivations for the Fukuoka Prefectural Government to establish relations with the BMA.

### **Goals**

Fukuoka Prefecture has many goals in their quest to pursue a proactive relationship with the BMA. First, Fukuoka works to build friendships and mutual understanding through youth exchange programs, exchanges of executives and staff, and other cultural activities. This is consistent with the policy of Fukuoka Prefecture, which is aiming to be a cultural exchange hub of Asia. Every year, Fukuoka Prefecture implements student exchange programs with 30 countries in the Asia-Pacific region. (Fukuoka Prefectural Government website) In 2005, Fukuoka Prefecture created the Asianbeat website in six languages: Japanese, Korean, English, Thai, Vietnamese and Chinese. The website promotes the exchange of views of Japanese and Asian youth on popular culture such as pop music, animation and comics. (Asianbeat website, n.d.)

Second, Fukuoka Prefecture has also aim to demonstrate its spirit of giving. For example, in 2014 the Fukuoka Prefecture Council donated second-hand fire trucks to Bangkok for using in the prevention and mitigation of emergency and disasters. Fukuoka Prefecture is proud and willing to help.

Third, Fukuoka Prefecture wants to share of its technical knowledge and experience of resolving problems that it has previously confronted in order to help the BMA work more effectively. Fukuoka Prefecture proudly offers knowledge and model solutions for Bangkok in a scheme called the “Fukuoka model.” This model deals primarily with environmental protection and disaster preparation. Fukuoka Prefecture is home to the City of Kitakyushu,

which is famous internationally as being an 'eco-town'<sup>1</sup>. Since its achievement in eliminating environmental pollution, which resulted from major economic and industrial development in the 1960s, Kitakushu accumulated knowledge and experience until it successfully transformed itself from a 'gray city' into a 'green city' in the 1970s. Moreover, Kitakyushu has implemented a strategy to promote international cooperation concerning the environment. It has numerous companies that employ advanced technologies to help reduce pollution in the environment and to increase the efficiency of energy usage. Kitakyushu also signed an environmental cooperation agreement with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in 2012 to help developing countries to solve their environmental pollution problems. (JICA Thailand website, n.d.) Fukuoka Prefecture has exported environmental technologies to 15 countries around the world, including Malaysia, Nepal and Vietnam.

Therefore, Fukuoka Prefecture wants to offer this knowledge and experience with Bangkok through the environmental cooperation agreement signed between Fukuoka and Bangkok. Under this agreement, activities include training and seminars, plus provision of supplementary readers on environmental education for students in Bangkok. Fukuoka Prefecture has invited environmental officials from Thailand, such as the BMA and officials from the Pollution Control Department (PCD) under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNE) to visit Fukuoka Prefecture to study its policies and environmental technology since 2006.

This led to cooperation among the PCD, Fukuoka Prefectural Government, the Environmental Sanitation Centre, the JICA Kyushu International Centre, and the Japan Environmental Sanitation Center (JESC) to implement the semi-aerobic landfill project for small and medium-sized municipalities in Thailand during 2012-2015. Sikhio District in Nakhon Ratchasima Province was selected for implementing this project initially because it was overloaded with waste. The PCD hopes that Sikhio District will become a role model for other municipalities in Thailand. Furthermore, in 2016 the PCD and Fukuoka Prefectural Government signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for environmental cooperation. This agreement aims to transfer knowledge and technologies from Fukuoka Prefecture to officers of the PCD to have knowledge and skills for solving pollution problems and tackling waste more

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<sup>1</sup> "Eco-Town" means a community or city with a system of renewable resources in order to reduce waste. The industrial manufacturing sector is the main mechanism to drive building the eco-town by using clean technology based on the 3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle). Kitakyushu is an eco-city that manages waste completely in the form of making businesses more responsible for handling pollution resulted in the emergence of the flow of renewable resource.

efficiently. The agreement promotes exchanges for conducting research and encourages entrepreneurs in Fukuoka Prefecture to recommend environmental-friendly technologies for Thai governmental agencies. The overall goal is to bring about the expansion of environmental cooperation in every field.

(Thaipublica website, n.d.; the Nation website, n.d.; Pollution Control Department website, n.d.)

In addition to serious environmental concerns, the aging of society is an important trend taking place in both Japan and Thailand. Fukuoka Prefecture has been very enthusiastic to cooperate with the BMA in the area of aging-society management because Bangkok is now entering an era of aging society. Experts from Fukuoka have been sent to share knowledge and advice with BMA officers. A proposal for an elderly care system has been offered to each community in Bangkok. Bangkok receives many benefits from this program, including knowledge and experience in the development of information technology and innovation, as well as environmental management and aging-society management, which draw on the successful experience of Fukuoka. This knowledge can be effectively applied in Bangkok. (R. Chartprasert, personal interview, December 9, 2015). If Bangkok and other agencies in Thailand employ the Fukuoka model for both environment and aging-society management, Fukuoka will earn an enhanced international reputation. This is in line with the Fukuoka Prefecture's policy which aims to be a "Comfortable City for the Elderly" and to be the learning center of the aging-society management system. Currently, Fukuoka Prefecture has organized trainings and welcomed official visits from many Asian countries. (Fukuoka Prefectural Government's document, n.d.)

Fukuoka Prefecture is actively training staff of the BMA and supporting the development of Thai youth in various areas in Bangkok. The Fukuoka Prefectural Government expects that its model could become an intellectual basis for the Thai people. In its youth exchange program, Fukuoka Prefecture will take students to visit interesting places to impress students with everything about Japan. This will nurture in the minds and beliefs of Thai students that Japan is a highly admirable country. This positive enthusiasm will benefit Japan in the future (R. Charprasert, personal interview, December 9, 2015).

The next is economic benefits of cooperation. Economic benefits are undeniable. The costs of international project implementation, including the establishment of an office in Thailand, are expensive. Moreover, Fukuoka Prefecture has policies to stimulate its economy. It seeks investment opportunities for its companies through the presentation of technological systems and innovations in environment and social management for elderly people. In Fukuoka, many companies employ these advanced technologies. Fukuoka brings

representatives of these companies to meet managers of the BMA at every stage: presentation of the project plan, giving lectures to educate the BMA officers and having a team to coach the BMA officers during training. If Bangkok sees the benefits of Fukuoka's technology, it may purchase the technology and equipment from companies in Fukuoka, leading to full use of the 'Fukuoka model'. (R. Charprasert, personal interview, December 9, 2015).

The operation of the Fukuoka Prefectural Government, Bangkok Office was established in 2010. The office not only supports local businesses from Fukuoka in Thailand, but also in other ASEAN countries and India. It also coordinates with Thai organizations to handle many promotional activities such as tourism, local products, Japanese popular culture promotion, education in Fukuoka Prefecture, and information technology education.

Fukuoka Prefecture also has a pro-active role in encouraging the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand to establish a consulate in Fukuoka. The consulate was officially opened in October 2018 for the benefit of expanding trade and investment between Fukuoka Prefecture and Thailand and to promote tourism as a popular tourism destination for Thai people. In addition, the Government of Thailand invited Japanese companies including companies based in Fukuoka to invest in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) which covers three provinces: Chonburi, Rayong and Chachoengsao. (Royal Thai Government website, n.d.; Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, n.d.)

It is obvious that these activities provide economic benefits to Fukuoka Prefecture which correspond to national interests of Japan. However, the Fukuoka Prefectural Government primarily focuses on its local interests. It rarely concerns itself with national interests.

Fifth, Fukuoka Prefecture aims to expand the relationship from the BMA to other Thai agencies such as the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the Ministry of industry, and other local organizations. Fukuoka Prefecture and the Department of Industrial Promotion, under the Ministry of Industry signed an agreement in 2015 aiming to cooperate and coordinate on economic and industrial issues. For cooperation between the Japanese local governments and the Department of Industrial Promotion, the 'Otagai Forum' was established as a forum for sharing information and organizing activities for the benefit of all parties. Fukuoka is a member of this forum, which maintains a strong coordination network. These activities provide economic benefits to Fukuoka Prefecture.

Furthermore, Fukuoka Prefecture and the Board of Investment (BOI) have cooperated with each other to promote the expansion of investment between Fukuoka and Thailand. The Fukuoka Prefectural Government Office in Bangkok serves as the center for coordinating relations between Fukuoka and other Thai organizations. The Bangkok Office of Fukuoka Prefecture coordinates with Thai agencies such as the Thai Travel Agents Association and the Thai foundry association. It also coordinates with Japanese agencies such as the Embassy of Japan in Thailand, JICA Thailand Office, and other Japanese local governments that operate in Thailand. The office also works with the private sector such as the Fukuoka Bank.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

In the early phase of the post-war period between the 1960s and the 1980s, Japan was experiencing high economic growth. Japanese local governments enjoyed huge budgets. They were able to organize frequent international activities. The purpose was simply for friendship and mutual understanding. However, the trend has been shifting in response to economic and social problems in Japan plus challenges from the changing world that surfaced since the 1990s.

The relations between Fukuoka Prefectural Government and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), emerged in 2006, represent a new trend in local relations which have been apparently shifted from sister-city projects for promoting friendship and mutual understanding in the early phase of the post-war period toward interest-oriented relations in the current era. These can be seen from considering various activities in which Fukuoka Prefecture has been implementing with the BMA such as youth exchange, sharing knowledge and expertise related to environment and aging-society management. This way is the use of local resources and expertise of Fukuoka Prefecture to design international activities with the BMA.

Fukuoka Prefecture not only established friendship relations with the BMA, but also signed cooperative agreements with other central government agencies of Thailand such as the Ministry of Industry, Ministry of National Resources and Environment, and the Board of Investment aiming to create economic and industrial linkage with Thailand. It can be claimed that Fukuoka Prefecture has been using of Bangkok as a base to establish relationships with other Thai government agencies.

In addition, Fukuoka Prefectural Government also established its branch office in Bangkok aiming to not only to be the center of relations with the BMA and other Thai organizations, but also to implement other economic and social activities; for example, creating incentives to attract foreign investment; finding new markets to sell local products; promoting tourism, education, popular culture, and local industries. These can be claimed that the establishment of Fukuoka Prefectural Government, Bangkok Office is a constructive way to promote its economic interests in Thailand. This branch office also facilitates local businesses and implementing other activities with other ASEAN countries and India. In this sense, Fukuoka is also engaging with Bangkok as a launching pad to connect with these countries owing to the geographical location of Bangkok is closed to these countries. Interestingly, Fukuoka Prefecture encouraged the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand to set up a consulate in Fukuoka Prefecture recently. This reflects a step of Fukuoka's achievement to pursue opportunities in Thailand.

There are many motives and goals of Fukuoka Prefecture in the relationship with the BMA. Bangkok is attractive in various dimensions. Meanwhile, Bangkok wants to utilize the strengths of Fukuoka Prefecture, especially in environmental management and aging-society management. Both partners see the mutual benefits; therefore, they have real incentive to carry out cooperative activities and exchanges together. No doubt, Fukuoka Prefecture expects to enhance its international reputation, if the Fukuoka model is recognized and widely used abroad. Fukuoka and the BMA have another important purpose to build friendship and mutual understanding. This can be observed in the focus on youth exchange program and exchanges of cultural events which are organized annually. Cultural exchanges can be described as soft diplomacy of Fukuoka Prefecture. It is also an activity that serves the needs of Fukuoka Prefecture as a cultural hub of Asia. Economic benefits are one of the key driving forces for the Fukuoka Prefecture government to seek opportunities outside the country. The theoretical concepts of sub-national governments by Purnendra Jain (2005) and paradiplomacy by Alexander Kuznetsov (2015) can be applied to understand these motives and interests very well.

Key factors that drive the Fukuoka Prefectural Government to seek foreign benefits include both internal and external factors. The 1985 Plaza Accord resulted in appreciation of the yen. This contributed to local companies moving production bases to Asian countries, including Thailand. Globalization and internationalization have awakened the province of Fukuoka to be aware of the importance of the need for making adjustments in response to global trends through international exchange activities and to seek economic interests abroad.

Japan has a problem with China, resulting in the Fukuoka Prefecture government wanting to establish relations with cities in other countries.

These reflect the objectives of international strategy of Fukuoka which can be characterized somewhere between for friendship and interest-oriented relations. Fukuoka Prefecture reflects a new type of local government role in international affairs, which is also the case in many other prefectural governments.

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