
COOL JAPAN'S ROLE AS A JAPANESE PUBLIC DIPLOMACY STRATEGY THROUGH THE ASIA KAKEHASHI PROJECT IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

After World War II, Japan had a bad image in the international community. The Japanese government then tried to rise by using its public diplomacy strategy through educational instruments, namely the student exchange program initiated by Japanese Prime Minister Shizo Abe at the 23rd International Conference on The Future of Asia which aims to improve image, spread values and culture, and increase influence. Japan in the Asian region, including in Indonesia. To achieve this national interest, Japan uses its soft power element, namely Japanese popular culture through Cool Japan to attract foreign people to visit Japan, especially Asian people including Indonesia. The influence of Cool Japan has succeeded in improving the image of Japan as a country that is known to preserve and spread its uniqueness and positive values in its culture. This study uses qualitative research methods by conducting data/information searches that rely on humans and print media as research instruments. So in this study, we will discuss Cool Japan as one of Japan's public diplomacy activities to attract foreign people to visit Japan through the Asia Kakehashi Project student exchange program. Indonesia is one of the Asian countries appointed to send participants to take part in the Asia Kakehashi Project in Japan to participate in improving relations between the two countries by participating in a series of program activities by spreading

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values, understanding, experiences and positive opinions about what they get while in Japan.

KEYWORDS

Cool Japan, Asia Kakehashi Project, Public Diplomacy, Shinzo Abe.



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INTRODUCTION

Japan or what is often called the Sakura Country is one of the island countries located in East Asia that has the desire to become a nation's leader in the Asian region. In the economic field, Japan also has an important role where its per capita income and the stability of the Japanese currency make it one of the developed countries in the Asian region. In addition, Japan is a country that has traditional cultural values and is still very strong today (Katzenstein, 2018).

Traditional cultural values that have been embraced by Japanese people for hundreds of years are always developing and growing in society even in the midst of the current era of globalization (Siddle, 2003; Yoshino, 2005). Japan adapts and reworks these foreign values into new cultural values which later develops and is known as Japanese Popular Culture (Iwabuchi, 2015; Sussman, 2002). Popular Culture is defined as a culture that is liked by many people, based on this it makes popular culture a cultural product that is produced for mass consumption. The examples of Japanese Popular culture are; cosplay, harajuku fashion street, visual kei, anime, specialty food, dramas and films, and manga that have long been the hallmark of this Sakura country.

The uniqueness of Japanese popular culture (Huat, 2015; Iwabuchi, 2002) is used as an entry point by the Japanese government to start or carry out diplomacy with other countries including Indonesia. With the introduction of cultural values by Japan, such as through manga and anime, Japan has succeeded in giving a strong cultural impression to people in several countries, including Indonesia. This then prompted the Japanese government to form the Cool Japan strategy, which started with the Gross National Cool (GNC) in 2002. The Gross National Cool (GNC) was the idea of McGray a journalist who stated that Japan is not only an economically rich country but also culture (Darling-Wolf, 2014; Fukunaga, 2006; Moody, 2006).

GNC as a reminder that when a country is able to organize trends and commercial products owned by the country well, it will also have a good impact on its political and economic goals. GNC is a promising Soft Power potential for Japan to continue to take advantage of the popularity of popular culture so that it can affect Japan's good image. Then the strategy was used by the Japanese government to promote Japanese culture to all corners of the world (Vogel, 2013). The Cool Japan strategy is actually a Japanese effort whose goal is to make the international community more interested in Japanese cultural values, starting from popular culture such as (anime and manga), films, music, drama series, architecture, arts, crafts, design, performing arts, publishing, toys to culinary and fashion industries, which the Japanese government is seriously working on in achieving Cool Japan's goals (R. Dore, 2013; R. P. Dore, 2013).

Besides that, cultural cooperation is very important for Japan's national interest, namely as a restoration of the image of the countries it once colonized (Curtis, 1999; Toivonen, 2012). In fulfilling this national interest, one of what Japan has done is the creation of a student exchange scholarship program initiated by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, namely the Asia Kakehashi Project with the aim of spreading Japanese values

and culture as well as increasing Japan's influence in the Asian region. Indonesia as one of the largest countries in Asia, especially Southeast Asia is also not spared from the implementation of this program, this is also due to the abundance of young human resources or Indonesian youths who can participate in the program and help become representatives of Japanese values and culture in Indonesia.

At the 23rd International Conference on The Future of Asia held on 5-6 June 2017 in Tokyo, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe conveyed several important points related to steps that must be taken for the progress of the Asian region and Japan's contribution in realizing this. One of the points conveyed was that Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe invited and opened up opportunities for all Asian youth to come to study in Japan with the aim of creating a prosperous Asian life and helping create Society 5.0. This opportunity will provide an interesting experience for Asian youth and can learn a lot about culture, people's life, values, and also the Japanese language firsthand.

The Asia Kakehashi Project is a culturally based Japanese public diplomacy effort by providing scholarships to students in Asian countries including Indonesia to come and study directly in Japan. While in Japan, of course, students from Asian countries will get direct experience and exposure from life and learning in Japan. Which of course also gets a direct experience of seeing and learning the culture, values, and customs that exist in Japan. This situation will be used by the Japanese government to instill value.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the author uses a qualitative approach based on the type of data taken and then explained in descriptive form in order to produce a discussion that leads to research conclusions. The qualitative approach according to Bogdan and Taylor cited by Moleong is a research procedure which will produce descriptive data, namely written or spoken words from people or observable behavior.

The method used emphasizes the process of searching for data/information that is used at the time of interpretation. wholeness, relying on humans as research instruments, utilizing qualitative methods, conducting inductive data analysis, directing the research objectives to efforts to find theory from the base, descriptive, more concerned with process than results, limiting studies to focus, has a specific set of criteria for check the validity of the data, the research design is provisional, and the research results are negotiated and mutually agreed upon.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Background of the formation of Cool Japan as a Japanese public diplomacy strategy

Cool Japan is a term used to define popular culture that belongs to Japan. Cool Japan was first mentioned by a journalist from the United States, Douglas McGray in 2002. The emergence of the term began when Japan came up with its products in revitalizing the confidence of its people after the economic crisis in the 1990s. Economic competition became very tight at that time where Korea competed by relying on its electronic products, automotive, and steel industry, followed by the United States and China relying on its information technology revolution. However, Japan presents something new with the influence of its products such as Nintendo, Playstation, Doraemon, Hellokitty, Tamagochi,

and Pokemon which are getting stronger in Japanese and international society. This phenomenon is not only popular among children but also something that attracts the attention of all circles.

Through a Foreign Affairs article, McGray expressed his opinion when he saw the phenomenon of Japanese pop culture which increasingly has the potential to make Japan a country with a cultural superpower. This was also later promoted by Japan's Gross National Cool by discussing various Japanese animated characters and comparing them with American culture. However, Japanese culture is considered more capable of creating new trends in the field of art and technology because it has a unique culture that is unique and different from other countries.

Cool Japan is taken from the term "Coolness/Cool" which is used by the Japanese government as a political jargon referring to all the unique and positive aspects of Japan. Cool Japan itself is a strategy that is managed directly by the Japanese government. Actually, the same term has been applied in England before, namely Cool Britain in 1967 to 1996 which was a short-term policy by the British government, but it did not get full support from the community and did not work as expected. However, this policy inspired Japan to adopt the same term in its own country. In the Cool Japan Proposal published by the Cool Japan Movement Promotion Council, it is clearly written in the opening part of the 3rd paragraph, that the inspiration for the formation of Cool Japan Strategy was from Cool Britain.

The formation of Cool Britain by the British also had the aim of building the country's image by utilizing the creative industries that existed at that time, but this was slightly different from Cool Japan which focused on the development of popular culture but still dreamed of the creative industries that existed in Japan.

The main purpose of establishing Cool Japan is as Japan's national branding in the eyes of the world. But recently the Japanese government added another goal, namely for economic development. The phenomenon of Japan's popular culture is becoming more widespread and more promising, so the government has decided that the implementation of Cool Japan is under the auspices of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI). Since under the supervision of METI, the implementation of Cool Japan was then developed to be useful as an instrument of diplomacy.

2. Implementation of Cool Japan as Japan's Soft Power

The bad image that Japan has in the eyes of the world, which is always related to hard-power, military, and power, has made Japan more aggressive in carrying out strategies that can change that view into a good image in the global order. Therefore, the presence of Cool Japan is Japan's national stepping stone in changing the views of the world community through Japanese cultural values and also encouraging the level of creativity of its people in the international sphere. Cool Japan's concept includes all of Japan's popular culture, such as toys, anime or manga, dramas, films, special foods, traditional culture, design products, fashion, to technology products such as robots. (Intellectual Property Strategy Headquarters, 2011). This popular Japanese product also has the potential to increase economic profit for the country. The implementation of Cool Japan is a soft-power asset owned by Japan as it has been proven that Japan's success in shaping the world view of Japan is through popular culture. Japan's popular culture makes Cool Japan one of the attractive assets, namely assets obtained through attraction to make other parties do what they want, because they can reflect positive aspects about Japan.

	Korea Selatan	Indonesia	Malaysia	Thailand	Vietnam
Anime & Manga	25,6%	29,7%	31,5%	18,2%	12,0%
Masakan Jepang	17,2%	17,3%	20,7%	25,0%	12,6%
Film	9,7%	21,7%	18,2%	19,1%	16,7%
Program TV	8,5%	20,0%	24,6%	16,6%	13,0%
Fashion	14,6%	7,3%	13,1%	17,0%	8,4%
Musik Pop	5,8%	7,8%	12,4%	9,1%	9,2%
Sumo & Baseball	9,2%	8,0%	5,9%	6,1%	6,5%
Budaya Tradisional	2,4%	8,3%	7,9%	10,1%	9,8%

Graph 1.1. Percentage of Interest in Popular Japanese Products
Source: corneredangel.com/answer/paper/Japan_soft_power.pdf

The table shows that products from Japanese popular culture such as Anime and Manga are the most favored in Asian countries that take a sample of countries with geographical locations closest to Japan and Indonesia. This interest in Japanese culture then influenced the increase in visits to Japan.

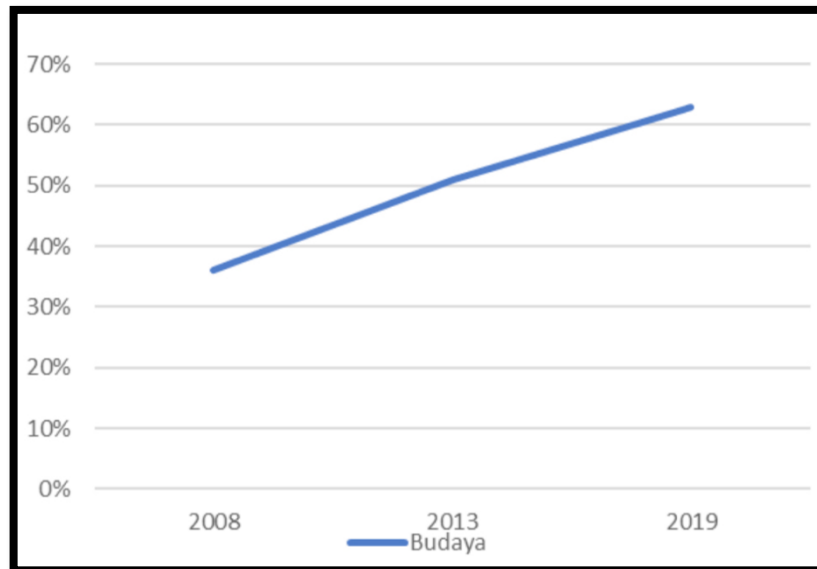
Soft Power owned by Japan comes from low-culture which is then spread abroad through the implementation of Cool Japan which is categorized as the implementation of public diplomacy by the Japanese government. In achieving this, Cool Japan must be able to influence the public by gaining an attraction to attract foreign people to Japan and also increase tourist visits to Japan. The main target of Cool Japan is the global community which is a country that receives and consumes popular culture products exported from Japan. However, the main targets in distributing their products are countries in the East Asian region considering the distance is not too far. And developing countries in East Asia have also received the most from Japan's elements of soft power.

Based on the soft power concept by Joseph Nye, the source of soft power in public diplomacy efforts is to play an important role in other countries in helping to create an attractive image of a country and this can be an opportunity to obtain the desired results. Then, Joseph Nye explained that soft power is a power that is categorized into the scope of cooperative power behavior or an ability that is able to influence and shape what other parties want. One of these attractions comes from cultural elements.

Cool Japan itself is a soft power of the Japanese government where culture is the source of its strength which involves an attraction in influencing and shaping public interest in other countries through popular culture products owned by Japan. The public diplomacy carried out by Japan through popular culture can be consumed by the global public from all walks of life which is able to attract more and more world people to like anything related to Japan and then will attract them to come and visit Japan. Various diplomatic activities through Cool Japan show how the Japanese government's commitment that the use of soft power is very important in an effort to encourage the country to achieve its national interests and also strengthen ties between Japan and the global community voluntarily.

Meanwhile, the Indonesian community is one of the largest in the Southeast Asian region which is influenced by the presence of Japanese culture. The success of Cool Japan's influence as an instrument of Japanese diplomacy in Indonesia is also influenced by the assumptions of the people of a receiving country towards the perpetrator country. This is evidenced by opinion poll data conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan in Southeast Asian countries about how people think about Japanese culture.

Graph 1. 2. Opinion Poll against Japan in Indonesia



Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan

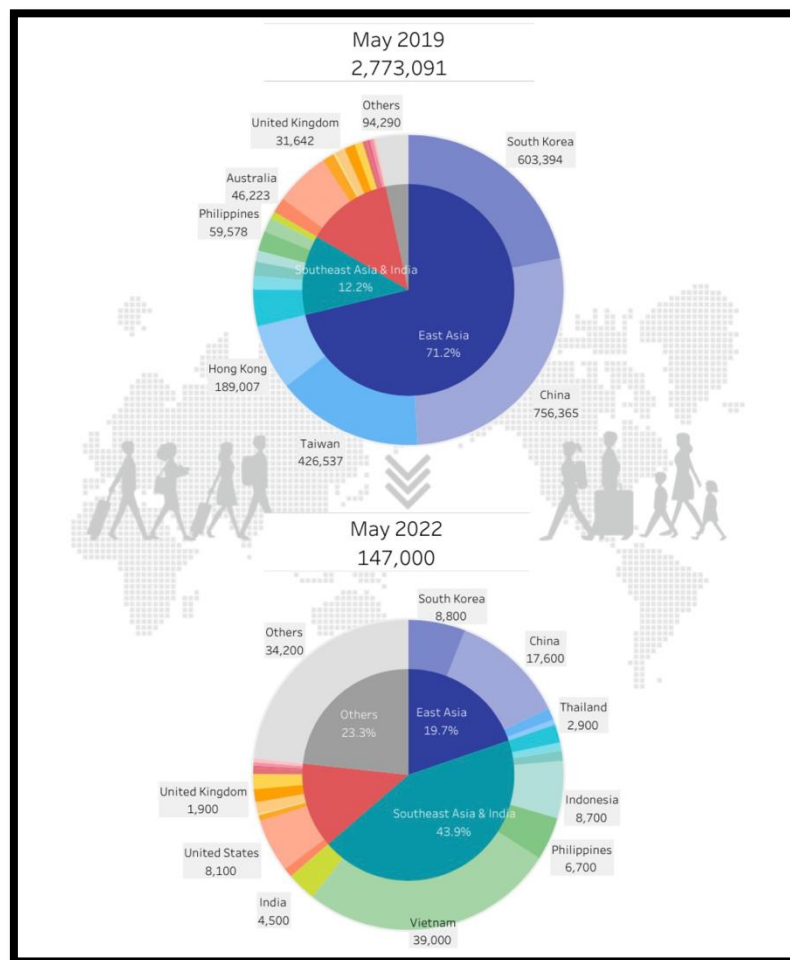
The graph shows how the interest of the Indonesian people towards Japanese culture has increased significantly since 2008 - 2013 after the launch and implementation of Cool Japan. Japanese popular culture plays an important role in the development of tourism and economic flows in Japan. The global public's interest in Japanese culture makes Cool Japan one of the factors that influence the increase in foreign tourist visits to Japan.

Asia Kakehashi Project Program as an instrument of Japanese Public Diplomacy
The implementation of Cool Japan is being intensified by the government by not only spreading it through communication media, but also involving foreign publics and their interactions to have direct experience of Japan.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) as a representative of Japan once started the implementation of the Japan Friendship Association Program in 2016 by implementing Cool Japan as a form of promotion of people to people exchanges between Japan and various countries in Asia-Pacific, North America, Europe, Latin America, and Caribbean to promote understanding of culture, history, politics, economics, education and diplomatic relations among participants. (Cabinet Office, 2016)

The next exchange program is the Asia Kakehashi Project (AKP) which is a youth exchange between Japan and Asian countries. The Asia Kakehashi Project is a public diplomacy effort initiated by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the 23rd International Conference on The Future of Asia where it was stated that in this program, around 1000 youths from the Asian region will be given the opportunity to participate in the Asia Kakehashi Project program in brackets. 5 years (2018-2023). The Asia Kakehashi Project

is a scholarship program from the Japanese government for high school students to bridge intercultural understanding between Japan and countries in Asia under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology of Japan (MEXT). The establishment of the Asia Kakehashi Project program has the aim of reviving the Japanese economy by promoting international interest in Japan, increasing the number of foreign tourist visits to Japan, promoting a global understanding of Japan's strengths both in culture and technology as well as Japanese values embodied in Cool Japan. . (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2017).



Graph 1. 3. Tourist Visits to Japan by Country/Territory Highest 2019-2022
Sumber: JNTO (Japan National Tourism Organization)

Based on the data above, after the realization of the first batch of the Asia Kakehashi Project program in 2019, Japan experienced a significant change in the number of tourists, mainly from Asian countries as participating countries in the Asia Kakehashi Project program. Where from 2019-2022 countries in the Asian region contributed the highest number of tourists. This program is proof that Japan has succeeded in spreading positive trends to foreign tourists, which has made Japan's economy better through increasing tourists.

Since the establishment of the Asia Kakehashi Project program, the Japanese government has explained that this program is an instrument in the implementation of

Japanese public diplomacy, especially in Asian countries. The Japanese government is also trying to provide detailed information about its public diplomacy and also asks for the participation of the Japanese domestic community to contribute so that this program runs optimally where the public will introduce Japanese culture to exchange students who later when they return to their respective countries will become a bridge. between Japan and its country in terms of culture, society, and country. Every year, 200 students from 20 countries in Asia are sent to study and live in Japan. These countries include Indonesia, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, India, Republic of Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Brunei, Singapore, Thailand, Turkey, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka.

The name of the Asia Kakehashi Project program has a meaning that is in line with the purpose of this program which is related to public diplomacy. The word "Kakehashi" is taken from the Japanese language which means "Bridge". As stated by Japanese PM Shinzo Abe at the 23rd International Conference on The Future of Asia meeting that to create Society 5.0, AI and Big Data in Japan also teaches Japanese Style Inclusive Society to Asian countries, there is a need for a bridge that connects Japan and other countries. the Asian region countries.

The choice of the word Kakehashi in the Japanese public diplomacy program is also explained on the AFS Japan website as the NGO that helps organize the program that in this Asia Kakehashi Project the participants who take part are expected to become bridges to strengthen relations between Japan and their home countries and are expected to form long-term relationships. between the two countries.

During the program, students who become ambassadors of their country will study at a local school and live with a local family called the Host Family or in a school dormitory. That way, participants will experience firsthand how daily life, cultural values, and the education system in Japan are. The role of the local community, especially the Host Family, is very important to increase the positive image of the values about Japan that they apply and show to the participants.

There are also simple themes used by the Japanese government in the Asia Kakehashi Project program, namely in the form of the slogan "1000 Bridges Over Asia", where this slogan is a derivative of the word "Kakehashi" which means bridge. This slogan is a symbolic form that states that the Japanese Government is committed to creating bridges that will be able to strengthen relations between the Japanese government and all countries in Asia.

As initially introduced in the planning of this program in 2017 that the Japanese Government in the next 5 years will invite up to 1000 students from Asian countries to come to Japan to study using full scholarships. This is what makes the Japanese government use the slogan "1000 Bridges Over Asia" with the intention that the implementation and objectives of the Asia Kakehashi Project for the next 5 years will produce 1000 alumni from the program who are students from Asian countries to become bridges between Japan and other countries. origin and is expected to become 1000 bridges that span across Asia to teach Japanese culture and values to their respective countries, and vice versa. In addition, the 1000 alumni from the Asia Kakehashi Project can later become a bridge that connects the different cultures, people's lives, and lifestyles between Japan and Asian countries.

3. Implementation of the Asia Kakehashi Project program activities by participants from Indonesia in 2018-2019

The Japanese government creates slogans or other symbolic forms that are usually often found in political and marketing campaigns, in its public diplomacy efforts, namely

the Asia Kakehashi Project which is in line with the objectives of the program and will support the positive view of the world community towards the Asia Kakehashi Project program.

The slogan was of course very attached at the beginning of the establishment of the program as conveyed by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the 23rd International Conference on The Future of Asia that to create Society 5.0, AI and Big Data in Japan, as well as to teach Japanese Style Inclusive Society to other countries. In Asian countries, a bridge is needed that connects Japan and Asian countries. The term "kakehashi" as the main slogan which is the name of this program further emphasizes that this program aims to bridge the relationship between Japan.



Figure 1. Super Senpais Project PPA
Sumber: [instagram.com/akpsupersenpais](https://www.instagram.com/akpsupersenpais)

For the first batch of Alumni Asia Kakehashi Project (2018-2019), the project they carried out in Indonesia was to form an AKP Super Senpais community with the aim of sharing information and interesting things related to alumni life while in Japan by providing inspiration, motivation, and encouragement. to other young people in Indonesia to participate in the next Asia Kakehashi Project, and also to open the Japanese Lesson program by inviting Indonesian youth to learn Japanese.

In addition, alumni are required to introduce the education system, cultural values, technology, and others so that it will provide a positive image of the Indonesian people towards Japan as contained in Cool Japan's goals as a Japanese public diplomacy strategy.

CONCLUSION

Japan's public diplomacy efforts using Cool Japan's instruments proved to be an effective strategy in achieving the Japanese government's national interests. Through the Asia Kakehashi Project program, the Japanese government can optimize Cool Japan's role in its public diplomacy activities by organizing activities that involve the public from Asian countries directly in promoting Japanese cultural values during the program until when participants return to their home countries. .

In this case, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and technology (MEXT), AFS Japan, and Intercultural Development implement efforts in implementing the Asia Kakehashi Project program in Indonesia by involving participants

and alumni as actors of public diplomacy who will become bridge in establishing cooperation between the two countries. The implementation of Japanese public diplomacy by using Cool Japan instruments through cultural activities has succeeded in getting a positive response by the Japanese and Indonesian people so as to be able to create positive public opinion towards Japan and change its image as a country that has a unique culture. The implementation of the Asia Kakehashi Project has been successfully implemented over the past few years since it was formed in 2017 by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, and sent 40 students from Indonesia in the first year of the program (2018-2019).

Alumni from the implementation year then carried out several projects after returning to Indonesia through activities carried out by Bina Antar Budaya as a forum for disseminating information about experiences related to their life while in Japan and Japanese cultural values by providing inspiration, motivation, and encouragement to young people in Indonesia to participate in the next Asia Kakehashi Project and invite the public to visit Japan.

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