

E Cultural Diplomacy and Overseas Public Relations Strategy

Overview

The purpose of cultural exchange and overseas public relations is to enhance understanding and trust of Japan among the public in other countries and to develop an environment conducive to the promotion of foreign policy by broadly publicizing Japan's foreign and other policies and cultural charm to the international community. In particular, given the fact that many organizations and individuals other than the government have become involved with diplomacy in various ways due to the recent progress of globalization, there is a greater need for the government to explain Japan's diplomatic efforts and their underlying concepts not only to the Japanese public but also to the public in various other countries and to deepen their understanding of Japan. Diplomacy has traditionally emphasized "hard power," such as military force or economic strength, which can prompt policy changes in another country. However, there has been a growing recognition in recent years that "soft power," or the ability to attract another country through the appeal of traditional values or culture, can improve a country's image, enhance its diplomatic resources, enhance national security in the broad sense, and secure the safety

of Japanese nationals abroad. Recognizing the fact that the concept of public diplomacy¹ has become a focus of attention, in August, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) established a Public Diplomacy Department, which combines public relations and cultural exchange in a more systematic way and provides a structure that enables cooperation between the public and private sectors. In addition, in order to utilize the latent potential of Japanese culture more effectively, Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro organized the Council on the Promotion of Cultural Diplomacy² so as to add breadth and depth to Japanese diplomacy. Moreover, MOFA has initiated several different approaches to build networks with local governments and private-sector exchange groups.

Moreover, international cultural exchange can revitalize Japanese society by tapping the intellect and talent of people living abroad and can bring economic benefits, such as increased sales of Japanese products resulting from an improved image of Japan. For these reasons, Japan is striving to improve its images in many other countries over the medium to long term through human, cultural/artistic, and intellectual exchange, including dialogue among civilizations and cultural assistance for developing countries.

1 Promotion of International Cultural Exchange

(a) Exchange of Persons and Educational Exchange Programs

Exchange of persons is an important basis for enhancing mutual understanding among different cultures and strengthening relationships with foreign countries. Japan accordingly organizes a variety of invitation programs at diverse levels, ranging from high-ranking offi-

cial and experts to youth, with a view to promoting a correct understanding of Japan through exchange with Japanese experts from the public and private sectors, visits to industrial facilities, and experience of traditional culture. In addition, Japan actively seeks to increase the number of persons who are both knowledgeable about and sympathetic to Japan through its activities in the field of education.

1. Public diplomacy refers to an approach that does not rely on traditional diplomacy between governments but rather enlists the cooperation of the private sector to directly reach out to the people and public opinion of foreign countries. It is also frequently referred to as "citizen diplomacy" or "public relations diplomacy," but there is as yet no definitive translation in Japanese.

2. The Council is expected to issue a report based on discussions on transmitting Japan's culture, thought, and appeal overseas; establishing Japan as a center for artistic and intellectual activity; cooperating with the private sector and local governments; advancing dialogue among civilizations; and cooperating in the fields of culture and sport.

Soft Power

"Soft power" is a phrase heard frequently today and was first presented as a clear concept by Harvard University Professor Joseph Nye, Jr. in his book written in 1990, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. According to Dr. Nye, in contrast to "hard power," which he describes as the power to force the hand of another country using economic and military strength in international politics, "soft power" is the ability to get another country to move in one's desired direction by eliciting its admiration and charming it by virtue of a strong philosophy and culture. With citizens participating more than ever in the policymaking process thanks to the spread of democracy and the means of transmitting information advancing due to information and communications technology (ICT), the role of soft power in international relations has become increasingly important. As one example, Dr. Nye points out the way that the American concept of democracy led to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

As a country that has renounced war as a means of settling international disputes and that possesses

both internationally appealing traditional and pop cultures, Japan has a wealth of potential soft power, and there has recently been much debate in Japan on bringing out such strength to enhance its global status.

One must be careful, however, not to automatically define military and financial strength as hard power and culture as soft power. What is hard power and what is soft power ultimately depends on how the source of that power is used. For instance, Official Development Assistance (ODA) is an economic approach, but rather than imposing specific models of economic development on recipients, Japan has listened to the countries in need and provided the help that they desire, thus eliciting a sense of gratitude and a favorable image of the country. Therefore, this can be regarded as a perfect expression of Japan's soft power. Likewise, Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) that have been dispatched to Iraq have not forced anything on the Iraqi people but have supported their efforts through humanitarian and reconstruction assistance. This, too, can be thought to be almost the same as soft power.

JET Programme

The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme³ began in 1987 for the purpose of enhancing foreign language education in Japanese middle and high schools and advancing foreign exchange at the regional level through youth exchange. In 2004 Japan invited 6,103 young people from 41 countries, including the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK), through this programme. With over 40,000 total participants to date, the programme has become a major pillar of youth exchange, and Japan has also taken measures to enable foreign youths to maintain their relations with Japan after they return to their countries, such as by providing support to the JET Alumni Association (JETAA).

Exchange of Students

The total number of foreign students accepted in Japan as of May 2004 reached 117,302. Accepting foreign students in Japan is instrumental to internationalizing Japan's higher education and promoting friendly relations with foreign countries through the enhancement

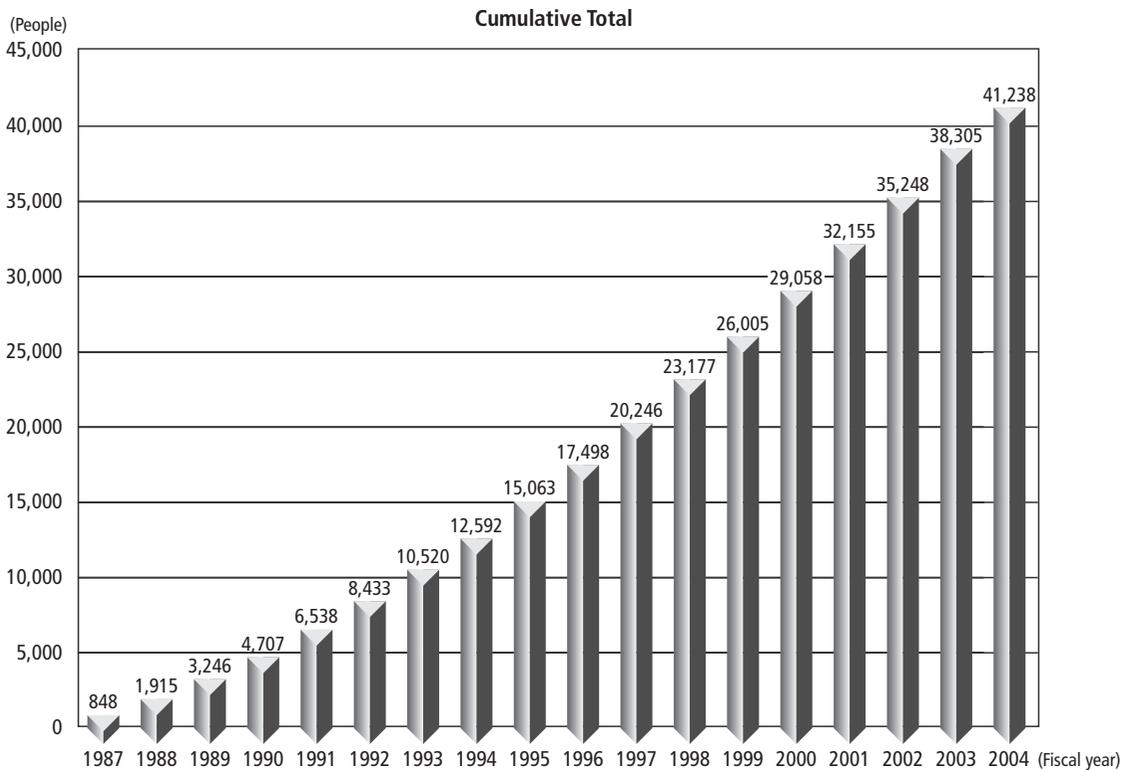
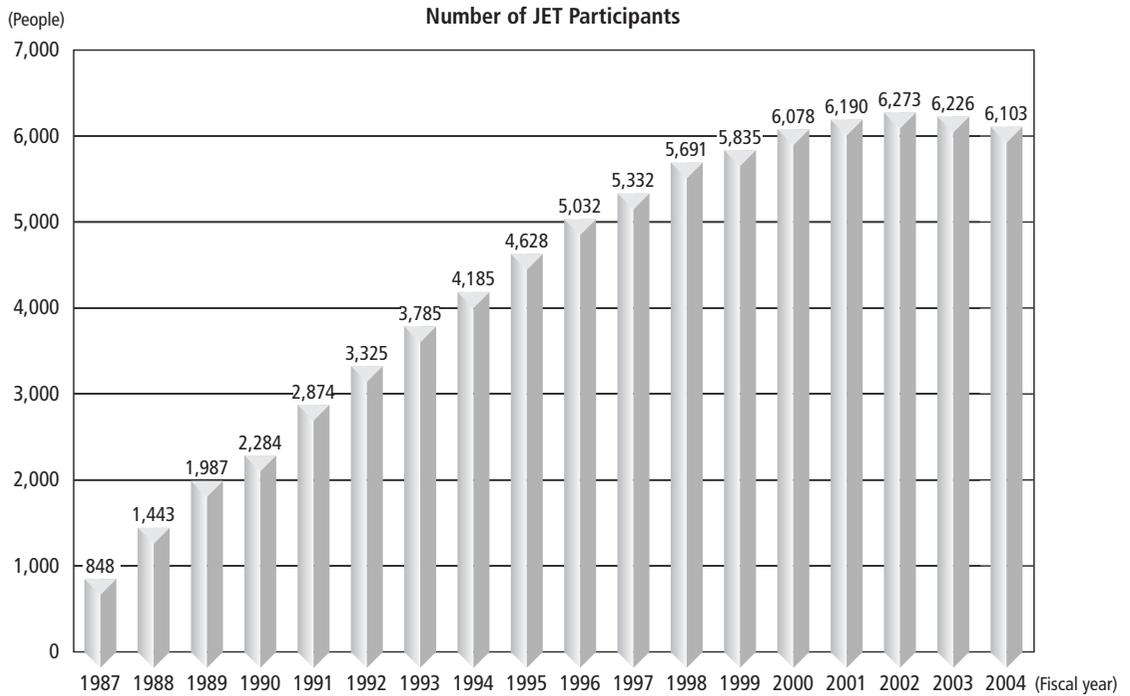
of mutual understanding and human resources development. Japan has taken various measures to attract outstanding foreign students by providing information on studying in Japan (<http://www.studyjapan.go.jp>), recruiting government scholarship students, and offering preparatory education before enrollment in a Japanese school. In addition, Japan supports more than 200 alumni organizations of former students worldwide (including those for former Japan International Cooperation Agency [JICA] trainees) so that they will continue to serve as a bridge between their countries and Japan after they return to their countries.

Sports Exchange

Sports are widely enjoyed regardless of differences in nationality and race, as demonstrated by the worldwide attention on the 28th Olympic Games held in August in Athens (Greece). Japan has worked to enhance friendly relations and promote the understanding of its culture of physical discipline by inviting sports instructors from other countries to undergo training in Japan, particu-

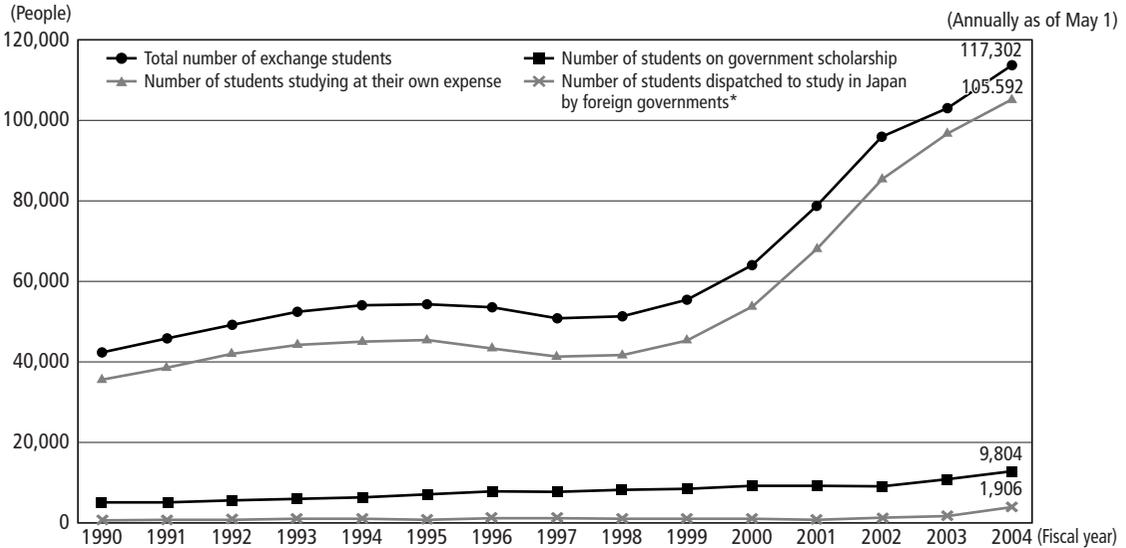
3. See the JET Programme website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs <<http://www.mofa.go.jp/jet/>> or the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR) <<http://jetprogramme.org/>>.

Number of JET Participants and Their Cumulative Total



Source: Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR)

Change in the Number of Exchange Students in Japan



* The students who are dispatched to study in Japan by foreign governments come from Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Uzbekistan, Laos, Viet Nam, Cambodia, Mongolia, Myanmar, China, Bangladesh and the ROK.

Foreign Students by Country of Origin

(As of May 1, 2004)

Country/Region	No. of Students	Share of Total	Country/Region	No. of Students	Share of Total
1 China	77,713 (70,814)	66.3% (64.7%)	11 Sri Lanka	764 (608)	0.7% (0.6%)
2 ROK	15,533 (15,871)	13.2% (14.5%)	12 Myanmar	591 (492)	0.5% (0.4%)
3 Taiwan	4,096 (4,235)	3.5% (3.9%)	13 Philippines	525 (508)	0.4% (0.5%)
4 Malaysia	2,010 (2,002)	1.7% (1.8%)	14 Nepal	462 (344)	0.4% (0.3%)
5 Thailand	1,665 (1,641)	1.4% (1.5%)	15 Russia	366 (360)	0.3% (0.3%)
6 Viet Nam	1,570 (1,336)	1.3% (1.2%)	16 UK	351 (357)	0.3% (0.3%)
7 USA	1,456 (1,310)	1.2% (1.2%)	17 Australia	348 (340)	0.3% (0.3%)
8 Indonesia	1,451 (1,479)	1.2% (1.4%)	18 France	339 (276)	0.3% (0.3%)
9 Bangladesh	1,126 (974)	1.0% (0.9%)	19 Brazil	330 (353)	0.3% (0.3%)
10 Mongolia	806 (714)	0.7% (0.7%)	20 India	327 (264)	0.3% (0.2%)

Note: Figures in parentheses are as of May 1, 2003.
Source: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology

larly in events that originated in Japan like judo and kendo.

Promoting the Use of the Japanese Language Abroad

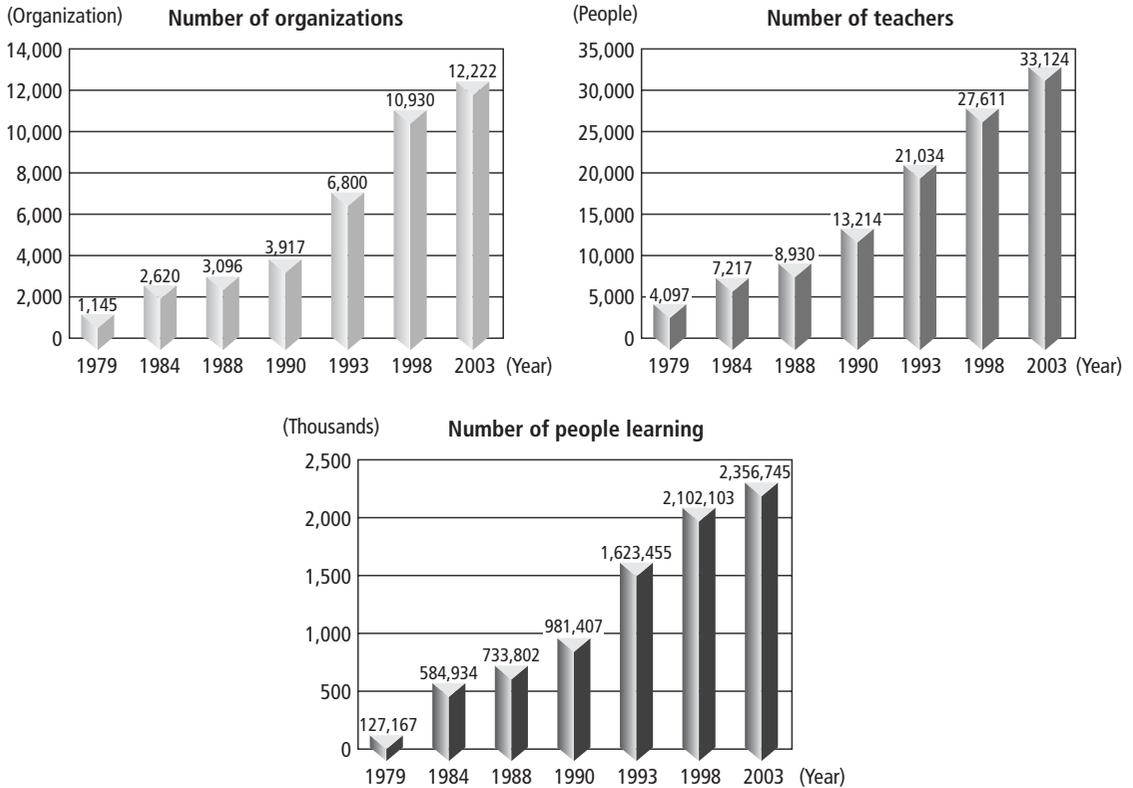
Promoting the use of the Japanese language abroad is essential for enhancing the understanding of Japanese politics, economy, society, and culture. As Japanese language education abroad is frequently not profitable in the private sector, the Japan Foundation has carried out programs to dispatch Japanese language education experts abroad, holding training sessions in Japan for foreign instructors of the Japanese language, donating Japanese

language teaching materials, and administering the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test abroad.

(b) Cultural and Art Exchange

Introducing Japanese culture, works of art, and performances to foreign countries, as well as introducing foreign cultures to Japan, have been typical modes of cultural exchange. Japanese culture is diverse, characterized by traditional performing arts and sports like noh, kabuki, bunraku, and sumo as well as contemporary art, design, music, architecture, animation, manga, and fashion. Contemporary Japanese culture has attracted attention around the world as "Cool Japan." In

Changes in Japanese Language Education Abroad



Source: The Japan Foundation

order to further interest in Japan and create a friendlier image, MOFA has been promoting cultural exchange based on the characteristics of each country through overseas diplomatic establishments and the Japan Foundation, as well as through cooperation with private organizations. For example, in September, a performance of traditional Okinawan dance was held as an event commemorating the 50th anniversary of relations between Japan and Lebanon. And from September to December, the Japan Foundation sponsored the “Japanese Design Today 100” exhibit in Atlanta (September 9 to October 23) and Chicago (November 4 to December 17) and earned favorable reviews.

(c) Intellectual Exchange and Dialogue among Civilizations

Intellectual exchange is important not only in raising Japan's academic standards but also in systematizing the understanding of Japan and other countries and broadly conveying this across all sectors of society. Moreover, the promotion of dialogue among civilizations by Japan, whose culture is open to different values and which ex-

perienced modernization while maintaining its own traditions, is meaningful as a way to contribute to the peace and stability of the world.

Promoting Research on Japan

Promoting research on Japan's politics, economy, culture, and society abroad not only deepens understanding about Japan in other countries but also is extremely important in developing the next generation of Japan scholars. In 2004, in addition to dispatching teachers, financing conferences, and donating books through the Japan Foundation to 175 institutions throughout the world that serve as the basis of research on Japan, including the Beijing Center for Japanese Studies in China, Japan invited some 160 Japanologists from 44 countries.

Dialogue with the Middle East

In cooperation with the Japan Foundation, the Japanese government dispatched the second Middle East Cultural Exchange and Dialogue Mission comprising five experts to Jordan and Iran in September to promote cultural exchange and dialogue between Japan and the Middle East-

ern countries. This mission organized a symposium, as did the first mission in 2003, and exchanged opinions with experts and dignitaries from these countries. The results of these meetings and exchange of opinions were compiled as proposals on ways to promote exchange between Japan and the Middle East and submitted to Prime Minister Koizumi. Furthermore, MOFA cooperated with the Japan Foundation and local governments to hold seminars in Japan to promote understanding of the cultures and societies of Middle Eastern and Islamic countries. The seminars were held in May in Okayama, July in Yamagata, September in Osaka, and December in Sapporo. The seminars featured lectures by ambassadors to Japan from Middle Eastern and Islamic countries and experts from Japan and included question-and-answer sessions with the participants, presentations from exchange students from the Middle East, and informal discussions.

Intellectual Exchange with Asia, the US, and Other Countries

Japan has planned and implemented projects that focus on joint efforts and exchange among the countries of Asia in order to foster a sense of an Asian community. From July through August, “Future Leaders Forum 2004: Korea-China-Japan” was held, which brought together leaders from the three countries to encourage relationships of mutual trust. There, participants exchanged opinions on challenges shared by the three countries and looked for ways to solve them.

Since its establishment in 1961, the US-Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange (CULCON) has served as a forum where experts from Japan and the US have held discussions and created proposals aimed at promoting exchange and improving mutual understanding in the fields of culture and education. In November 2004, the first Japan-US joint conference working group on the development of future global leaders was held, which explored measures for the development of a new generation of leaders to support the bilateral relationship.

The Japan Foundation has also been promoting intellectual exchange by carrying out joint projects, including research studies, workshops, and conferences, and by providing subsidies and fellowships to research institutes in various countries.

Cooperation with the UN University

Japan held meetings and seminars in partnership and cooperation with the United Nations University, which

is headquartered in Japan, in a wide range of areas, including the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), human security, and the 50-year anniversary of Japan’s ODA.

(d) Cultural Cooperation

Cultural cooperation provides support for the national cultures of developing countries, which are the pride of the people as well as a part of their lives. Cultural cooperation needs to be extended together with economic cooperation aimed at poverty reduction, and this is being actively promoted by Japan.

Bilateral Cultural Cooperation⁴

In the framework of bilateral cooperation, Japan offers cultural grant aid to furnish equipment for mainly cultural and higher education activities in developing countries. Japan implemented 44 projects (total of approximately ¥1.94 billion) around the world in 2004, including the provision of language laboratory equipment to the Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages, which is promoting the spread of Japanese language education in Uzbekistan, and planetarium equipment to the Peruvian Geophysical Institute, the center for astronomical research in Peru. Japan also provides grant aid for cultural heritage to protect cultural assets deemed the common heritage of humankind in the same framework. In 2004 Japan provided support for the construction of a visitor center for Egypt’s Valley of Kings at the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage site. Moreover, Japan provides small-scale, flexible cultural cooperation (grassroots cultural grant aid) for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other grassroots groups. Twenty-two projects were implemented throughout the world (total of approximately ¥160 million), including the provision of musical instruments to Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and judo equipment to the Judo Paulista Federation in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Cultural Cooperation through UNESCO

Japan has been vigorously contributing to the preservation and promotion of tangible and intangible cultural heritage through UNESCO.

With respect to the preservation of tangible cultural heritage (such as heritage sites), Japan made a contribution to the Japanese Funds-in-Trust for the Preservation of the World Cultural Heritage established within UNESCO. Japan has undertaken restoration and preserva-

4. Regarding cooperation with Iraq, see P.101.

tion cooperation in a total of 24 countries, including the Angkor Monuments in Cambodia, the Bamiyan Valley in Afghanistan, and the Gandhara remains in Pakistan. In January, Japan decided to contribute US\$500,000 in order to help save Iran's Citadel of Bam, which suffered enormous damage from a large earthquake at the end of 2003. As postwar reconstruction support for Iraq, in addition to support for the rehabilitation of the Iraqi National Museum (laboratories to restore and study cultural properties), Japan has been supporting several projects implemented by UNESCO through contributions to the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI).

In addition, Japan provides assistance for the preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage (traditional arts and traditional handcrafts, such as ceramics and dyeing) through the Japanese Funds-in-Trust for the Preservation and Promotion of the Intan-

gible Cultural Heritage. In June 2004 Japan became the third party to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage adopted in October 2003 at the 32nd Session of the General Conference of UNESCO. (However, the convention has not come into force as of the end of 2004.)

The 28th Session of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee

The 28th session of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee was held in Suzhou, China, from June 28 to July 7. The Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountains, proposed by Japan, was registered as a World Cultural Heritage site. Also at the committee, the Angkor Monuments were removed from the World Heritage in Danger list, and the international community, including Japan, was highly praised for its efforts in bringing this about.

2 Overseas Public Relations

(a) Improving Understanding and Image of Japan among the Public in Other Countries

In undertaking overseas public relations that contribute to the national interests of Japan, it is important not only to communicate information on specific policies but also to convey accurate knowledge about Japan's situation that promotes an understanding of these policies in other countries and to nurture favorable feelings and a positive image of Japan. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) has introduced the concept of public diplomacy based on an awareness of these objectives and has been working to strengthen its overall ability to communicate information for the purpose of conveying Japan's image, current situation, and policy-related information directly to people in other countries. Specifically, MOFA conducts surveys and analyses of public opinion and press coverage in each region to ascertain the degree and main areas of interest in Japan and considers the content and effective channels for public relations activities based on this information. Regional and national public relations strategies are then formulated, and measures are taken to raise the effectiveness of public relations in partnership with cultural exchange projects. For instance, the government appealed strongly to the people of Iraq and surrounding countries by undertaking sports exchange with and offering support to Iraq on the occasion of the Japan-Iraq goodwill soccer

matches and the Athens Olympic Games, as well as by communicating information about Japan's friendly relations with Iraq and humanitarian and reconstruction assistance for the country.

(b) Specific Programs to Promote Understanding of Japan

Overseas Public Relations

Japan's overseas diplomatic missions implement such public relations activities as lectures and symposia. In particular, given the importance of publicizing Japan's political and economic conditions and government policies, MOFA puts an emphasis on dispatching experts and eminent persons abroad to give presentations. Public relations targeting the younger generation are also an area of priority. Moreover, the invitation scheme for staff members of foreign TV stations provides support for the reporting and broadcasting of Japan-related programs abroad. In addition, the Foreign Ministry invites influential foreign opinion leaders and prominent journalists to familiarize them with the current situation in Japan.

As for efforts to provide information to the foreign press, MOFA gives briefings to correspondents in Japan whenever necessary. This is also widely done on such occasions as visits abroad by government VIPs and visits to Japan by foreign VIPs. Furthermore, MOFA appropriately refutes foreign press reports based on misperceptions or prejudice against Japan.

MOFA makes use of a wide range of public relations media in order to perform effective public relations. This includes printed material, such as pamphlets on Japan's international contributions and reconstruction assistance to Iraq, and audiovisual material, such as the Japan Video Topics that introduce Japan from diverse aspects. The Internet has also become a major medium for overseas public relations.

The Tone of Foreign Press Reports on Japan

Relating to Japan's notable international contributions in recent years, analytic reports have appeared in the international media to the effect that significant changes are underway in Japan. For instance, leading US newspapers, such as the *New York Times*, and the media in various Middle Eastern countries reported on the extension of the dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) in Iraq. In December, CNN broadcast an interview with Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro, in which he indicated his recognition that Iraq could not be allowed to become a safe haven for terrorists. During the hostage crisis involving Japanese citizens, the *Washington Post*, satellite television station Al-Jazeera, and other media organizations covered and reported on Prime Minister Koizumi's refusal to submit to the terrorists' demand that Japan withdraw the SDF.

There continues to be a great deal of interest in North Korea's nuclear development and Japan's diplomacy toward North Korea. For instance, regarding Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to North Korea in May, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that Japan's posture toward North Korea led to the positive result of five family members of ex-abductees being released. Also, the Japanese public's anger toward North Korea's response at a Japan-North Korea working-level consultations and the demand by Prime Minister Koizumi and Minister for Foreign Affairs Machimura Nobutaka for sincere cooperation in ascertaining the truth about the abductees whose whereabouts remain unknown were widely reported, primarily by the media in the United States (US) and the Republic of Korea (ROK).

Problems between Japan and China, such as those involving the Asian Cup soccer tournament and the undersea navigation of a Chinese nuclear submarine in Japan's territorial waters, also attracted the attention of the foreign media and were covered by major European and US newspapers. In some Asian newspapers, there were expectations that relations between the two countries would improve. Regarding bilateral economic relations, the growth of China's economy

was viewed as a plus for Japan's economy and industry.

Regarding the series of natural disasters like typhoons and massive earthquakes that struck Japan, the Western and Asian media devoted significant coverage to the earthquakes and praised the response by the public and private sectors. And following the major earthquake off the coast of Sumatra and the tsunami disaster in the Indian Ocean, emergency assistance from Japan and tsunami-warning efforts made by Japan were also reported.

Also, on October 13 and 14, 2004, the Donor Committee Meeting and Expanded Meeting of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, chaired by Japan, were held in Tokyo and attracted the attention of the foreign media. Also broadly reported were the current state of Japan's politics, economy, and culture, including the government's economic reforms and trends in Japan's business climate; stories involving the imperial family; the surge in popularity of Japan's pop culture, particularly among young people; and the arrival of a "Korean boom" in Japan in advance of Japan-Korea Friendship Year 2005.

Promoting Japan

The promotion of policies to spread proactively Japan's charms abroad under a branding strategy and improve Japan's image is expected not only to attract more overseas people to Japan but also to lead to the revitalization of Japan's economy, society, and culture through growth of investment and tourists from overseas. In particular, Japan's so-called sub-culture, such as animation, movies, comics (manga) and Japanese cuisine, is becoming more and more popular in Europe, the US, and Asia.

(i) Large-scale Cultural Campaigns in Major Countries

As a program to give priority to improving Japan's image in foreign countries, MOFA holds "commemorative projects" focusing on cultural exchange between Japan and other countries or regions to mark special occasions, such as the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. These programs serve as opportunities for the government and the private sector to show Japan's attractiveness to people in other countries and dramatically enhance their affinity toward Japan. Through partnerships with Japanese companies operating in foreign markets, these programs can also contribute to improving the image of these companies. In addition, since these programs are often participated in by VIPs, including heads of state or government, they

are extremely effective in increasing interest in Japan and promoting tourism.

In 2004, to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Treaty of Peace, Amity, and Commerce with the US, commemorative projects in many different fields were held in the US and Japan to promote further understanding and friendship among the citizens of both countries. Events included performances of such traditional arts as kabuki, noh, and kyogen; film festivals, including *anime*, or animation; performances by US-based Japanese musicians; and various lectures.

The main anniversary projects in 2005 will be Japan-Korea Friendship Year 2005 commemorating the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with the ROK and the 2005 EU-Japan Year of People to People Exchanges aimed at the 25 countries that make up the European Union (EU). And the Australia-Japan Year of Exchange is being planned in 2006 as a major commemorative project celebrating the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Japan and Australia.

(ii) Tourism Promotion (Publicizing an "Attractive Japan")

MOFA has been actively promoting tourism, particularly by utilizing overseas diplomatic missions, to publicize Japan's attractiveness through cooperation with related ministries, the Visit Japan Campaign (VJC) headquarters, the Japan National Tourist Organization (JNTO), and local governments.

Specifically, in addition to forming local promotion committees headed by the directors of overseas diplomatic missions in priority markets like the US, ROK,

China, and Europe to consider tourism promotion measures, MOFA held "promotion parties" at the facilities of the diplomatic missions. During the June 2004 inauguration of the local VJC promotion committees in France and Germany, evening receptions, including fashion shows, were held at the respective ambassador's residences. Diplomatic missions also participate in such events as overseas tourism exhibitions in cooperation with affiliated organizations to promote Japan's attractiveness. And through regular public relations activities, efforts are made to actively take up topics that will promote tourism, such as conveying the attractiveness of Japan's outlying regions.

(iii) Promoting EXPO 2005

The 2005 World Exposition, Aichi, Japan (EXPO 2005), which will be held in Aichi Prefecture from March 2005, is the first world exposition to be held in the 21st century. Based on the theme of "Nature's Wisdom," it is an endeavor to bring together the world's wisdom in addressing various issues faced by humankind and to present new models of a society that coexists with nature. EXPO 2005 aims to enhance mutual understanding between Japan and countries around the world through a "Grand Intercultural Symphony" and can be considered an extremely significant event on the international exchange front.

As a result of active efforts by Japan, including overseas diplomatic missions, to seek the participation of many countries, more than 120 countries and international organizations have expressed their intention to participate, the highest number ever for a world exposition held in Japan.

Letter from Matsui Hideki of the NY Yankees

The Empire State Building and the East River, visible from my window, are now familiar sights to me. I am now entering the third year of my New York life. Though I was worried about my English at the beginning, it has improved a great deal thanks to having media interviews and watching movies on DVD.

What has changed the most in my private life, compared to my days with the Yomiuri Giants in Tokyo, is food. Good Japanese food is frequently unavailable on the road, and I go out to restaurants recommended by my colleagues. In Japan I rarely ate even Italian food, but now I eat what I can.

In addition to common American dishes like steak, I've enjoyed the cuisines of many other countries including Viet Nam, India, and Thailand. And when doing so, even better than the food is the chance to communicate with people of different nationalities. The staff and other guests often ask to have their pictures taken with me, request my autograph, and ask me whether I've got used to American life. So I try my best to communicate in English.

I have encountered a high level of interest toward Japan that I wasn't aware of when I was living in Japan. Our manager prefers green tea to coffee. There's even a teammate of mine who decorates his

locker with Japanese *anime* (animated film) characters. Another teammate who is the same age as me has a keen interest in the Japanese language and teases me by calling me *toshiyori* ("old man") in Japanese just because he was born 10 days later than me. Furthermore, since our season opener in 2004 was held in Tokyo, everyone has become much fonder of Japan.

In November 2003, when I visited the Japanese consulate in New York after my first season, Consul General Ando Hiroyasu told me, "Wherever I go (in the US), you are always the first topic to come up. You've helped build friendly relations in a way that is not possible for us career diplomats." I'm usually not conscious of this, but if my play in the field and my behavior in my private life result in improving Japan's image, nothing could make me happier. I look forward to coming into contact with people from all over the world as I continue my baseball career.



Matsui visits Consul General Ando and presents him with his uniform.
© New York Yankees

Interview with Hasegawa Shigetoshi of the Seattle Mariners

Question: In recent years, Japanese people and products are attracting more attention overseas. This has increased not only the number of people who wish to learn more about Japan or to visit the country but also the opportunities to promote international exchange. Since you began playing in the Major Leagues, more fans have developed an interest in Japan. Have you had any personal experiences that support this notion that favorable feelings toward Japan have grown?

Hasegawa Shigetoshi: I don't think that people like me and Nomo Hideo have changed Major League baseball all that much, but players like Matsui Hideki and great fielders like Shinjo Tsuyoshi and Suzuki Ichiro have shown the world the true caliber of Japanese baseball players. Major League players have developed greater interest in Japan, and they now ask many more questions about our country. I think that this is due to the nearly comparable level of baseball skills in Japan, its guaranteed payment practices, and cultural similarities between Japan and the US. For instance, last year (2004) a teammate told me that although he didn't envision himself playing in Japan professionally, he was attracted to the idea of touring the country with our team. While it might be difficult to travel at the beginning of the season, he was definitely interested in visiting Japan. Moreover, trends show that Americans have become more interested in sightseeing and Japanese culture, rather than just the economic aspects of Japan, as indicated by the success of such films as *The Last Samurai*.

Question: How would you like Japan or Japanese people to change as a result of coming into contact with the US and other world cultures?

Hasegawa: Although Seattle, Los Angeles, New York, and Hawaii are all part of the US, I discovered when I visited these cities that each was unique and had a distinctive regional flavor. By coming into contact with different cultures, I can tell that I've grown significantly. Whether for pleasure, study, or work, by going overseas and seeing other cultures with one's own eyes, one can learn more about different cultures, which in my opinion changes the way we look at the world. I believe that in order to develop new concepts, it is necessary to first go out and experience other cultures and then bring home and share what one has learned. If more Japanese venture out into the world and return with new ideas, I believe that Japan will be able to head in a positive direction, which will benefit both baseball and the global community.

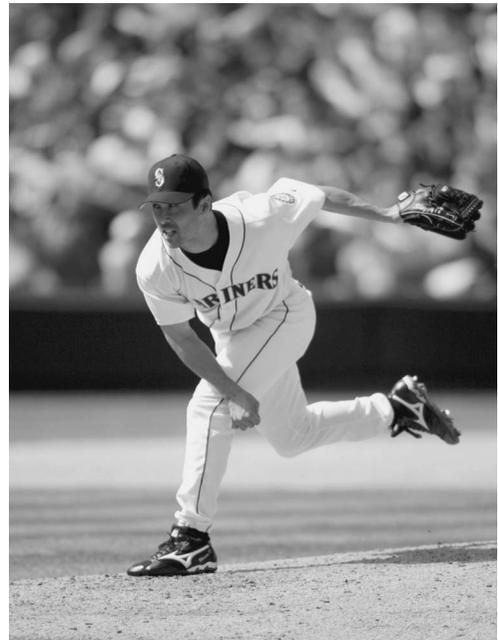


Photo by Ben Van Houten

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