

Abstract

This study of “Japan’s Soft Power: From Passive to Proactive Policy” aims to analyze the pattern, changes, and policies of Japan regarding “Soft Power” since the 1980s until present.

During the 1980s to the late 1990s, Japan’s soft power had been expressed in terms of development model (particularly in the form of “developmental state”) and the Japanese management. Since other Asian countries were eager to emulate the Japanese models, Japan just gave some passive supports to promote the application of those Japanese concepts.

However, following the 1997 Asian Financial crisis, combined with the prolonged economic recession in Japan, this sort of soft power had dramatically decreased, as many Asian countries came to be disillusioned with the Japanese model of development. Moreover, the rise of China and the increasing influence of Korean Pop culture have also challenged Japan to find a way to maintain its regional power.

Japan, thus, has adopted a proactive policy on soft power since the late 1990s by focusing on cultural diplomacy. Through the active promotion of Japanese contemporary popular culture (J pop) and various youth exchange programs, Japan aims to use its popular culture and cultural exchange as a way to maintain its leading status, that is to strengthen its soft power in the region.