

**“BECAUSE WE’VE EXPERIENCED THAT TOO”:
INDONESIAN SUPPORT FOR JAPAN FOLLOWING THE 2011
GREAT EAST JAPAN EARTHQUAKE**

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Abstract

People and organisations around the world undertook activities to express support for Japan in the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake of 11 March 2011. Although the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake of 11 March 2011 has generated significant discussion relating to issues of energy security and nuclear power use, the activities undertaken to morally and financially support Japan have received little attention. Amongst the demonstrations of this support, especially interesting are fund-raising efforts by those in countries that are significantly less economically powerful than Japan, such as Indonesia. Based on interview material with an array of Indonesians (who work neither in government nor international relief) who undertook such activities, this article proposes that the outpouring of support for Japan must be understood not in terms of the outcomes of either Japan’s foreign aid activities, its considerable soft power, or even an incipient global moral economy, but that all three of these are required together to account for the nature and extent of the support Japan received from those in Indonesia.

Keywords: Indonesia, Japan, Fukushima, Tohoku Earthquake, Great East Japan Earthquake, Philanthropy, Soft-power, Global Moral Economy

1. Introduction

In the wake of the magnitude 9.0 earthquake and tsunami that hit the Tōhoku region of Japan on 11 March 2011, and the reactor meltdowns at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, much discussion about the Great East Japan Earthquake has dwelt not only the lives lost and affected, but also on the future of nuclear power, with Belgium, Germany and Switzerland announcing that they would eliminate the use of nuclear power (Alderich, 2013, pp. 261-2). Academic discussions of 3/11, as the confluence of natural and man-made disasters is sometimes referred to, have largely focussed on

issues relating to energy security and policy within Japan and around the world (e.g. Woodall, 2016; Al-Badri and Berends, 2013; Wittneben, 2012; Vivoda, 2012). This article, however, is the result of a research project that examined an array of efforts in Indonesia to demonstrate support for Japan after 3/11. Investigating why ordinary people (not involved in government or international relief) in Indonesia undertook many spontaneous activities to give financial and moral support to Japan at this time enables us to gain insight in an array of interconnected issues related to what has come to be described as the “global moral economy”, soft power, and the efficacy of foreign aid programs in fostering goodwill. This outpouring of sympathy and financial donations is especially revealing here because the financial impact of that support is relatively modest after currency conversion, but would have been significant within the Indonesian economy. Why people sought to offer such financial as well as moral support to Japan, especially when there are other disasters effecting as many or more people elsewhere, is a question of particular interest.

Indeed, the Japanese government posed the same question. In Japan’s Official Development Assistance White Paper 2011, the first chapter of responds to the question “Why Does the World Help Japan?” (MOFA, 2011, p. 6). “It can be assumed”, the report suggests, that behind the support it received from 163 countries, “is a feeling of trust and gratitude toward Japan that has been fostered through many years of interaction with each country” (MOFA, 2011). It illustrates this conclusion through examples from ASEAN, Mongolia, and the Maldives. The latter had earlier received Japanese aid to build a seawall. This seawall protected it from a tsunami following an earthquake in Sumatra and, following 3/11, the Maldives sent 600,000 cans of tuna to Japan (*ibid.*, p. 7). The Mongolian government, meanwhile, convened a “special cabinet meeting and decided to send an emergency rescue team, relief supplies, and a donation of \$1 million” (*ibid.*) The Minister for Foreign Affairs, reflecting on the support Japan had received, wrote in the report that “It gave me the deep sense that behind the goodwill and encouragement we received from around the globe was significant trust and a feeling of solidarity with Japan” (*ibid.*).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Official Development Assistance White Paper 2011 must, however, “assume” the motivations of those who helped. The white paper also largely focuses on the activities of governments, missing non-government initiatives and the motivations behind those instigating and participating in activities in support of Japan. By drawing upon ten interviews with Indonesians from Jogjakarta, Bandung and Jakarta who undertook activities in support of Japan,¹ this article addresses these shortcomings and provides a fuller account of the diverse motivations of those, in Indonesia at least, who supported Japan after 3/11. This article thus not only describes some of these heretofore overlooked activities in Indonesia, but also shows, through a presentation of interview samples, that Japan’s foreign aid program has been efficacious

1 In Indonesia, interviews were recorded in November and December 2013 and translated by Natasha May and Mahatma Putra. Interviewees were purposively sampled and identified through newspaper articles, blogs, and word of mouth. These interviews were supported by a research grant from the Sumitomo Foundation.

in fostering positive sentiment towards Japan amongst many in Indonesia. However, an important further element to Indonesia's response to 3/11 revealed by the interviews we present is the cultural "soft power" that Japan projects globally. These considerations in turn allow us to critically evaluate the concept of a "global moral economy" in which people increasingly feel connected to distant others as a result of diverse processes associated with globalisation. Before proceeding to our findings, we now outline some of the scholarship pertaining to Japanese soft power and then the global moral economy in order to inform our interpretation of the interviewees' remarks and the conclusions that we ultimately draw.

2. Indonesia, Japan and Japanese Soft Power

In considering the motivations of those seeking to show support for Japan following 3/11, it is helpful to consider some of the economic and historical contexts within which this activity took place. We begin by highlighting that Japan is economically much stronger than its aid recipients. For example, around the time of the earthquake, the gross national income per capita in Indonesia was \$3,420 whereas in Japan it was \$47,888 (World Bank, 2012). One might then ask, given the great disparities in wealth between ordinary citizens of the two countries, why would Indonesians seek to raise funds for people in Japan, especially when, after conversion, its impact would be relatively small? Such fund-raising is suggestive of a considerable depth of sympathy and connection between those Indonesians and Japan, and may provide evidence for the success of Japan's strategies to develop friendly relations.

As has been noted, "The United States is no longer the only foreign power that matters to Japan" (Tipton, 2003, p. 494) and Japan has long had an interest in Southeast Asia, whose numerous nations have the potential to be salutary partners in maintaining Japan's security. However, reconciling economic pragmatism and foreign policy considerations has regularly been a point of contestation in Japanese foreign policy-making. For instance, in the 1960s two key Japanese authorities on the matter were split over the question of aid provision to Indonesia. Namely, the Ministry of Finance was hesitant to give a green light, whereas diplomats at MOFA argued in favour of extending aid as part of anti-Communist alignment with the United States and ultimately prevailed (Murashkin, 2015). By the 1980s and early post-Cold War era, however, countries that received Japanese aid came to criticise Japan's use of foreign aid as means of "buying power" (Arase, 1995) owing to its mercantilism and a large share of tied loans in overall assistance. In response to international peer pressure and a domestic economic slowdown, by the time of the 3/11 Fukushima disaster, Japanese foreign aid demonstrated an increase in its humanitarian component, although there was a slow downsizing in terms of the overall volume, but this trend stabilised in 2010 (MOFA, 2010; Murashkin, 2015).

Japan's efforts to develop friendly relations had previously been set forth in the Fukuda Doctrine, outlined by the then Prime Minister of Japan, Takeo Fukuda, in a speech in Manila in 1977. It sought to boost confidence among ASEAN states in Japan's pacific and friendly intentions in the region and, importantly, to overcome historical psychological barriers stemming from Japan's actions in the region during World War

II (Sudo, 1992; ASEAN, 2012). Among ASEAN states – and indeed among all states in the world – Indonesia has ranked as the largest recipient of Japanese development aid, although the relationship between Indonesia and Japan has been described as “fragile” at times (Stott, 2008a). However, in 2008 a Japan-Indonesia Economic Partnership Agreement came into force with a view to strengthening an already strong economic relationship (*ibid.*)

Although there were 870,000 Indonesians learning Japanese in 2012 (*ibid.*), the attitudes of Indonesians towards Japan have not always been positive. According to Peng Er Lam, some of Japan’s bridge-building efforts have been “undermined by its failure to overcome its burden of history” (Lam, 2007, p. 350; see also Shigeru, 2003). It was in response to this “burden of history” that violent protests took place in Jakarta and Bangkok during a visit in 1974 by Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei. Tokyo’s response to this was the above-mentioned Fukuda Doctrine (*ibid.*, pp. 352-4). More recently Japan has sought to project “soft power” in the form of Japanese cultural formations such as *manga* and *anime*, as well as other initiatives to promote Japanese culture abroad (e.g. Sasaki, 2013).

The projection of soft power, by which “one country gets other countries to *want* what it wants” (Nye, 1990, p. 166), has long been associated with desirability and attractiveness of cultural products from the US, such as its film, music and television (Fraser 2008). The value of soft power has become increasingly appreciated by rising powers such as India and China, the latter of which has sought to proliferate Confucius Institutes around the world to promote knowledge of the Chinese language and an appreciation of Chinese culture (Paradise 2009; see also Gill and Huang 2006). The presence of widespread concerns about the impacts that the influence of Confucius Institutes are having on the way those in universities speak about and treat China (Cohen, 2016; Paradise 2009) are in themselves a testament of the perceived efficacy of soft power activities.

In the case of Japan, which has been described as a “soft power superpower” (Watanabe and McConnell 2008), Joseph Nye has asserted that “Japan has more soft-power resources than any other Asian country” (Nye, 2005; see also Heng, 2010, p. 283). The array of, and global dedication of fans to, diverse Japanese cultural products ranging from Godzilla to Pokémon, J-pop (Japanese pop music) to ikebana, has been phenomenal (Tsutsui 2012), and is regularly used as a counter-example to the notion that cultural globalisation is in effect global Americanisation. For a country of its size, its contributions to global culture have been disproportionate and to its advantage.

As a result of the global consumption of Japanese cultural products, in 2007, Japan’s Foreign Minister Taro Aso suggested that “What is important is to be able to induce other countries to listen to Japan. If the use of pop culture or various sub-cultures can be useful in this process, we certainly should make the most of them” (Lam, 2007, p. 351). While interest in Japanese cultural products has a very long history (e.g. MacGregor, 2013, pp. 510-515), in the present era when the geopolitics of Asia is transforming, with Japan and China seeking to maintain or assert their influence by diverse means, the skilful wielding of soft power is as important as ever (Heng, 2010). In this context, among the things that this article demonstrates is that considering the

impacts of foreign aid – which the abovementioned white paper does – is insufficient. Japanese soft power played a significant role in motivating some Indonesians to demonstrate their support for Japan after 3/11, which is suggestive in turn of the value of soft power for nations seeking forms of foreign influence.

3. The Global Moral Economy

In accounting for the responses of the world to 3/11, considering the impact of foreign aid and adding the impact of soft power might also be insufficient. Numerous countries that have not received Japanese foreign aid or which received relatively little also responded with diverse expressions of support for Japan (e.g. Lee 2015, pp. 69-72). Although it is the case that for some former recipients that have graduated from Japanese aid programmes and became donors, such as Kazakhstan, charitable acts of “returning the favour” after 3/11 had a supplementary effect of demonstrating the maturity of a newly independent state, people and collectivities around the world also frequently support others in acute need in distant parts of the world with which they have no personal connection. Indeed, disasters, according to Bryan S. Turner and Habibul Haque Khondker, are especially good ways of illustrating human concern with distant others. They write that “disasters remind us that vulnerability is the basis of common humanity. The collective, global response to such crises also points to the emergence of an incipient global moral system” (2010, 161).

Turner and Khondker link the “globalization of disaster” to the ways in which the media brings images and news of disasters “to the living rooms of those lucky to avoid the disaster spots” (*ibid.*). Increasingly, images of disaster are instantaneously disseminated throughout the world. The minutiae of others’ daily life, the visceral experiences of tragedy and joy at an interpersonal level, appear close and accessible. The speed and also the scope of media and social media coverage fosters unprecedented outpourings of generosity and sympathy in response to far-flung disasters (Oosterhof, Heulvelman and Peters, 2009). As a result, people participate in transnational charity and aid, they donate to end poverty and counter hunger, buy fair trade, and volunteer their time and energy for good causes.

Texts such as *The Empathic Civilisation* by Jeremy Rifkin (2009) and *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce* by Slavoj Žižek (2009) position giving, empathy and sympathy in the context of broader social, economic and planetary contexts. Inquiring into these subjective aspects of globalisation, they tap into longer and ongoing conversations about the role of reciprocity and charity in societies. Their discussions range from suggesting that transnational and planetary solidarities are essential for the survival of life on earth (Rifkin, 2010), to warnings that corporate and celebrity charity support the structures and modes of social and economic organisation that in fact imperil life on earth, condemning humanity to exploitative relations (Žižek, 2010). They situate giving and caring as important objects of philosophical and critical attention.

The scholarly interest in and advocacy for appreciating our shared human frailty and the obligations to others that this engenders (e.g. Elliot and Turner, 2006) recognises that the tools and processes associated with globalisation enable and modulate how the

needs of others are made known. These “give rise to new forms of ‘action at a distance’ such that individuals can act for others who are dispersed in time and space, and also enable them to act in response to actions and events occurring in distant locales” (Silk, 1998, 167). However, John Silk is careful to differentiate between “caring about others” and “caring for others”. With the former there is “genuine ethical and emotional engagement” with the situations of others and a desire to “do good”. However, he continues that the “crucial step is to go beyond this to care *for* others, doing good or actively showing kindness, providing support for their emotional and physical needs and well-being” (*ibid.*).

The “incipient global moral system” in which this is more likely to occur has been described as a “global moral economy”. Rebekah Farrell, drawing on Turner and Khondker’s work, describes it as “a society wherein individuals are motivated to act to relieve the suffering of others who may be geographically and culturally distant to them” (Farrell, 2016, 106). She sees the global moral economy as, in short, an enlargement of E. P. Thompson’s notion of a moral economy, which prevailed in small-scale societies, including peasant ones, in which members’ interactions were not purely transactional and self-interested, but premised on expectations of reciprocity and notions of a commonweal (see *ibid.*, 106-109; see also van der Horst and Vermeylen, 2011; Salter and Salter, 2007).

Discussions about global relationships of care between distant others need to explore the actualities of transnational human interaction in this highly interconnected world. They also add depth to and counterbalance both state-bounded narratives of solidarity and identity, and economic accounts of individual, rational actors seeking personal gain. Many of these conversations have focussed on acts of charity and giving associated with aid and volunteering, and raised issues of power and neo-colonialism, imperialism and dependency, suggesting that perhaps the act of charity is a thin bond that is often exercised by the privileged for predominantly selfish reasons, or by elites for coercive reasons (e.g. Kapoor, 2012). Others have explored the complexities of charitable relationships in situ that defy simple categorisation of recipient and donor (Sinervo, 2011).

The presently examined example of Indonesians showing support for Japan presents an opportunity that confounds many of these expectations of how expressions of such care at a distance unfold. To understand in concrete terms both the activities that interviewees undertook in support of Japan and their motivations for doing them, this article continues now with a description of some of the responses from interviewees that sheds light on these matters. The three sections that follow address i) the range of connections that interviewees had with Japan; ii) the activities that were undertaken and why interviewees said they were motivated to help Japan after 3/11; and iii) how they understood the importance of their financial support for Japan given that the economic differences are so great.

4. Interviewees' connections with Japan

Among the organisations spoken to, two had direct links with Japan. Dompét Dhuafa is a Muslim charitable organisation originating in Indonesia, but with offices in other countries including Australia and Hong Kong.² Its charitable work is grounded in traditional Islamic tithing obligations, the donations of which are often institutionalised (Fauzia, 2013). In 2011, a branch in Japan opened and thus, while Mohammad Sated Abdi Lawang, the General Manager of the organisation's Social Development section, had had limited interactions with Japanese people, he said that as a result of his position at Dompét Dhuafa "we often have interactions with several NGOs in Japan". Meanwhile, at the Hoshizora Foundation, cofounder Megarini Puspasari, who had lived in Japan for eight years, and Reni Ekafitriati, described how they had many interactions with Japanese people through the foundation, which works to improve the welfare of Indonesian street children and has an emphasis on education.³ Its name is Japanese and the very foundation of the organisation has strong Japanese links. As noted on their website, *hoshi* is the Japanese word for "star" or "starry" in this case, and *sora*, or *zora* in this case, is "sky", and it symbolises "our sincere hope that every child has a dream and goal for their life that is as high as the stars". Their website goes on to note that the idea for Hoshizora was developed while six Indonesian students studying in Japan sought ways to make education accessible to Indonesian street children.⁴

A third institution with a small but interesting connection to Japan is the Yayasan Pendidikan Salman Al-Farisi School in Bandung. While the Head of School, Ardini Suryati, had had limited interactions with Japanese people – "I once lived at my Aunt's and a Japanese person rented a room there" – she noted that she understood that the founding of her school "was inspired from a Japanese book, *Totto-Chan*." *Totto-Chan* (Kuroyanagi, 1984), which has influenced the development of a number of schools (e.g. Shaji, 2012), tells the story of Totto-Chan, a young girl who is expelled from a conventional Japanese school but who benefits from an unconventional education at another school. While there are naturally differences in the Indonesian context, Ardini Suryati noted that "we have the same spirit, so it's not boring for the students."

For three other interviewees, Japanese literature was their primary connection with Japan. Ekanto Hasan, Mohammad Noval Ridho, and Aryo Ari Wahyoyo, were all Japanese literature students at Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) Jogjakarta. Of these, only Ekanto Hasan had visited Japan, where he had gone on an undergraduate student exchange for a year, and lived there for some years in the early 2000s. Meanwhile, Aryo Ari Wahyoyo's father had worked as a tourist guide and "he learned the Japanese language, and often brought Japanese guests to our house... And starting from that, I developed a liking for Japanese culture." Mohammad Noval Ridho noted that he had been the head of the Japanese Literature Organization at UGM.

2 Dompét Dhuafa's website is <http://www.dompetedhuafa.org>, accessed 7 June 2017.

3 Their website is <http://hoshi-zora.org/>, accessed 7 June 2017.

4 See <http://en.hoshi-zora.org/history/>, accessed 7 June 2017.

In addition to literature, another cultural product of Japan that had a clear presence in Indonesia was anime, and the activity of cosplay. Cosplay (derived from “costume play”) is a global phenomenon, and involves individuals dressing up as characters from Japanese anime and tokusat (live action anime) series (e.g. Peirson-Smith, 2013; Lamerichs, 2013). Muryadi Saputra from Jogjakarta was a member of the Anime Tokusatsu Community, referred to also as the Atsuki J-Freak community. While having only occasional interactions with Japanese people in cosplay contexts in Indonesia, Muryadi Saputra does possess a Japanese nickname – Yumaki – and on the day of interview, was dressed as Kamen Rider Yuuki. He said that his actions in support of Japan after 3/11 were “a symbol of our gratitude, especially from cosplayers. If it wasn’t for Japan, There would be no anime, and ultimately there would be no cosplayers.”

Another interviewee was Rokhimah Rostiani who, like some of those described above, had studied in Japan. She noted that in 2008, she received a Japanese government scholarship to attend Tohoku University in Sendai, where she took language and economics subjects. Earlier she noted that she had spent six months in Hiroshima on student exchange and where she had clearly developed a fondness for the country. In Hiroshima, she said,

I settled in and enjoyed my life there. So I made a mental note that I would one day go back there, and thank God, when I finished my undergraduate program, I got the chance to go back there. When I arrived in Sendai, I don’t know why, but I could adapt without any difficulties, and until now I’m still proud to say that Sendai, Japan, is my hometown.

The implications of the interview material here with regards to questions about the efficacy of foreign aid and effects of soft power are significant. From the interviews, it can be seen that those to whom we spoke all had direct organisational or biographical links with Japan, and that many of these links were charitable (towards the Indonesian participants) in nature. This resulted in a degree of indebtedness toward Japan, and an eagerness to reciprocate prior good deeds. Even for those who hadn’t been to Japan, like Muraydi, there was still gratitude, gratitude for the gift of anime and cosplay. This may all be seen as evidence of the efficacy of Japan’s program of overseas development assistance and the positive effects of the globalisation of Japanese cultural products, including anime and literature. These appeared to have left the Indonesians we spoke with positive dispositions towards – sometimes admiration for – Japan and Japanese people.

A partial exception, however, was Mohammad Noval Ridho, whose comments point towards the on-going relevance – and perhaps increasing irrelevance – of Japan’s former occupation of Indonesia. He said “I don’t have particular sentiments towards Japanese people. Positive or negative sentiments? None. So I’m not one who really likes Japanese culture, but I’m not anti-Japanese due to colonisation.” He was only one of three who made mention of Japan’s former presence in Indonesia. Another, Mohamad Ridwan, said that “although Japan colonised our country, Japan afterwards contributed a lot to our country.” These contributions included scholarships, which are “proof of Japan’s regret for colonising Indonesia” and a way of “redeeming their mistakes”.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Sabed Abdi Lawang observed that Indonesia was one of many countries colonised by Japan, and although there was “forced labour” at the time, there were benefits, including that they “helped us to repel the Netherlands”. He went on to say, that

They also helped Asian countries to choose their own fates.⁵ Even though there were many human rights violations in the past, our generation doesn’t feel these things anymore. The bitterness may be only for our parents’ generation.

Thus today, for Mohammad Sabed Abdi Lawang, Japan and Indonesia have a close relationship. “Japan depends on Indonesia and Indonesia depends on Japan. If Japan’s economy is unstable, Indonesia’s will be too, and vice versa”. This interdependence could be seen as understanding the global interconnectedness of economies and that there was mutual benefit to their shared success. Their economic fates were thus not just financial, but interrelated and had moral underpinnings – evidence for the relevance of the notion of the global moral economy. Indeed, economic interaction, including as a result of Japanese investment in Indonesia and export of energy resources to Japan from Indonesia (particularly oil and gas, Stott 2009; Stott 2008b), closes some of the cultural and geographical distance that might exist between Indonesia and Japan, and also helps to overcome historical Japanese transgressions.

5. Activities undertaken in support of Japan and motivations for undertaking them

While there were often some clear connections through work or personal experience, and while the sentiments were largely positive and forgiving of past transgressions, interviewees were asked why they undertook activities to support Japan after 3/11. The activities and why they undertook them are important in revealing why reciprocal activities were undertaken toward an economically more powerful country.

Among the interviewees, Rokhima Rostiani is perhaps in the most unusual position, as she was both present during the 11 March 2011 earthquake, and also returned to Japan to provide assistance after being repatriated. Although nervous about returning to Japan, she and some other Indonesians returned to Japan where they prepared Indonesian food every week, which they distributed to people in temporary accommodation established for displaced persons. She reported that they also sought to “reduce the psychological trauma of it, especially for the kids”, with whom they “played a lot of traditional Indonesian games.” For Rokhima, who had received support to study in Japan, where she had also made friends, she expressed a sense of obligation to provide support for Japanese people in a time of great need.

5 Similar remarks have been made by former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad (1999, p. 16).

Megarini Puspasari likewise noted the importance of close ties. “Maybe because I lived in Japan for eight years,” she said, “when something happens there I remember my friends there and it feels close.” She went on to express how, for her, she would feel anxious or restless if she were to do nothing. Ekanto Hasan similarly recalled that his stay in Japan for five years and his ongoing friendship with Japanese people in Indonesia were important. “Maybe because I’m acquainted with Japan, for me personally, I feel compelled to help Japan when there’s a disaster.” With respect to a sense of closeness with Japan, it is also worth mentioning an observation by Muryadi Saputra, who observed that Jogjakarta and Kyoto were “sister provinces” and that “we are proud of being the sister province of Kyoto in Japan. As citizens of Jogja, we can help our brothers in Japan, although not much, to help the tsunami victims in Japan.” Thus the presence of this provincial “kinship” served to reduce the symbolic distance between him and his friends and the people of Japan.

The presence of an existing relationship came through when interviewees discussed the prior assistance given to them by Japan. This was expressed most clearly by Mohamad Noval Ridho. He said that there was “give and take” behind his support for Japan. In helping someone else,

we will get something, even if it isn’t from that [particular] person. For me it’s like that. We had a tsunami, and the donations were not only from the Japanese but from everyone. Automatically we have the same moral thought – we have been hit by a tsunami, we know how hard the suffering is from a tsunami. Now they are hit by a tsunami, what’s the harm in helping them? Because maybe when we are hit by a tsunami [again], they will help us. For me it’s like that.

Later, Mohammad went on to add that “As it happens, I’m from Aceh, and many of my relatives got hit by the tsunami, so I feel that if there’s anyone who experienced the same thing, why not help them?”

The same rhetorical question was asked by Muryadi Saputra who expressed some indebtedness to Japan for their cultural contributions. “First of all, when Japan was hit by the tsunami...we thought that thanks to Japan, we have cosplay, we can be creative, we can create something – so why not help them?” The form that the support took in Jogjakarta was an event called “Jogja Care for Japan”.

“Jogja Care for Japan” took place on Saturday 26 March 2011, and was made up of a full day of events that included day sessions about origami, ikebana, Japanese martial arts and Japanese food, while in the evening bands and other performing artists participated in a charity concert (e.g. Jakarta Post 2011). On their website, the Hoshizora Foundation, whose Megarini Puspasari played a key role in organising the event, described how various communities had pulled together to make the event happen and collect money (Hoshizora, 2011). Among the latter were the foundation’s sponsored children who were assisted by the Hoshizora Foundation and had gone to schools to collect donations. Likewise, members of the Atsuki Community undertook “Cosplay on the Road”, where they, often in cosplay attire, collected monies from passers-by. Among those taking part in this were Muryadi and Aryo Ari Wahyoyo, who recollected

making pins and stickers to sell to people. In addition to the fundraising, Aryo also noted that they made a banner for people to “sign as a symbol of support to the tsunami victims in Japan.” They also took pictures of them in cosplay attire collecting money “to be sent to internet forums that support Japan.” Whereas the Atsuki Community raised 3 million rupiah (US\$300), Jogja Care for Japan raised about 120 million rupiah (US\$12,000).

The non-financial efforts associated with “Jogja Care for Japan” included a thousand postcards prepared by schoolchildren, which were sent to schoolchildren in Japan as moral support. Also, a thousand origami cranes were made by members of the Atsuki Community. Roger Beatty and Yasuko Yamaguchi describe how “the crane is the most common traditional form of origami and is also the only object made from origami paper which is used as a present. A gift of one thousand cranes (*senba-zuru*) is the ultimate symbolic wish for recovery from a serious illness” (Beatty and Yamaguchi, 1976, pp. 811-812).

Outside of Jogjakarta, Mohammad Ridwan of the Salman Al-Farisi School in Bandung noted that they told their students of the hardships being faced by Japan after the earthquake “to arouse their empathy with other people”, and donated what was collected. Thus it served as a means to develop the characteristics of sympathy and awareness in the pupils. As a dedicated charity, Dompot Daufa, based in Jakarta, gathered a larger amount, 300 million rupiah (US\$30,000). But some of its assistance was of a more direct nature. As it happened, a Dompot Duafa staff member was in Japan to set up a branch of that organisation there when the earthquake occurred. Mohammad Sabed Abdi Lawang described how “when the disaster happened, he [the employee in Japan] mobilised Indonesians and Indonesian students in Japan to help with logistics, especially with equipment in the refugee camps in the prefecture of Miyagi, if I’m not mistaken, and some regions near Fukushima.” The fact that they happened to have someone on the ground there “was a blessing in disguise” as “there would be difficulties for international NGOs to arrive in Japan after it was hit by the disaster.”

When asked about whether the interviewees’ religious backgrounds had a role in their support for Japan, very few suggested that it was relevant. Mohammad Ridwan noted that there are Quranic injunctions to help others, and that God helps those who help others, “both in this world and in the afterlife... One who helps others without discrimination will have his wealth multiplied by God.” Mohammad Sabed Abdi Lawang, of Dompot Duafa, however, affirmed that while “we want to spread the values of Islam which are kind, universal and for all, there is no intention to be missionaries for the religion.” Indeed, most interviewees were outright in stressing the unimportance of Islam in motivating them or obliging them to render assistance. For example, Megarini said, “I didn’t even think about that. It’s more about humanity.”

Among the things that the above reveal is support for the utility of the notion of a global moral economy. This is in part supported by the references by interviewees to shared vulnerability to disaster, a characteristic of the global moral economy emphasised by Turner and Khondker (2010, 174). Furthermore, much of the support shown by Indonesians was symbolic in nature, and a key illustration of the global moral

economy for Turner and Khondker was the global outpouring of symbolic support for those affected in New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina and, “Symbolic though it might have been, it was unprecedented” (*ibid.*, 161).

What also appears to come through in the above is that there is support for the assumption outlined in Japan’s Official Development Assistance White Paper 2011, that assistance rendered to Japan came from “a feeling of trust and gratitude toward Japan that has been fostered through many years of interaction with each country”(MOFA, 2011, p. 6). Some interviewees noted how they or people they knew had received assistance from Japan, whether through education or through disaster relief. For others, their motivations appeared to lie in a respect or fondness for Japan, such as by those who appreciated anime, which is suggestive of the role of Japanese soft power. And for others still, the emotional links were less direct, and their charity was an exercise in the development of the moral character of schoolchildren. In all cases, however, interviewees recognised the limitations of them as Indonesians in Indonesia to gather sums of money that would seem large when converted into Japanese currency. How such financial support is understood is important in complicating assumptions about the relationships-of-power that can exist between donating and donated-to countries.

6. “It’s just a little”

Given the significant differences in incomes between those working in Japan and those working in Indonesia, the size of funds raised in Indonesia for Japan were *relatively* small, in terms of what could be done with those funds in Japan. Speaking of Dompot Dhuafa’s contribution of 300 million rupiah, Mohammad Sabed Abdi Lawang noted that while “our donation is small for Japanese, for Indonesian’s it can be used to buy a house, or as capital for 300 merchants. So it’s pretty big for little people in Indonesia.” Given this, and Japan’s relatively more powerful economy, how the Indonesians who undertook activities in support of Japan saw their contributions was a point of interest.

For Ekanto Hasan, “it’s not about poor or rich.” Rather, he felt a desire to help those in Japan “because I’m a Japanese literature student, and I owe the government of Japan because of the exchange program”. Aryo Ari Wahyoyo, also a Japanese literature student, emphasised the importance of affirming humanitarian bonds and the interest of the Atsuki Community – of which he is a part – in Japanese culture. “Because we are fond of Japanese culture, and although we can’t do big things for Japan, at least we can help, although it’s small... Although we are a poor country, we have sympathy for other people... Maybe financially it’s small, but the moral support is most important.” For Muryadi Saputra, also a member of the Atsuki Community, gratitude was important. “Although the aid from Indonesia was not much, it was at least a sign of gratitude from us.”

Reni Ekafitriati noted that the Hoshizora Foundation has many dealings with Japanese people and there are “bonds of friendship”. She also noted that in May 2006, Jogjakarta had an earthquake and “So we know what a disaster feels like... perhaps because I was in need of help, so maybe they are in need of help too. From us, it’s not so much about the financial as about the psychological effects.” She went on to say that, “we don’t need to be rich to help other people”, and while the Japanese might not need Indonesia’s financial

support, “from the mental or psychological perspective, we need to help them. Especially when there was the earthquake, because we’ve experienced that too.”

Megarini made similar comments. It was important “to demonstrate our concerns and sympathies, and perhaps that’s more meaningful than the money. This would raise their spirits – to know that there are a lot of people who care for them.” And while expressing the concern of Indonesians was important, Megarini also noted that while “Jogja Care for Japan” was *for* Japan, the event was also of benefit to Indonesians. Of the event’s success, and the mutual benefits for Japan and Indonesia, she said,

... it was extraordinary the people who came for the concert. Even though the preparation was only two weeks, there were so many people who attended and a representative from the Embassy of Japan came too. And we had a teleconference with a friend in Japan to tell us live how the situation was there, how the people were dealing with the situation. And it was not only for Japan, but for us it was a lesson too... that although Japan was facing a disaster, they were surviving. They didn’t fight over food, they queued, didn’t loot and so on. It was a lesson for us. And they still went to work. I mean, they had a short day off, but then they went back to work. It became a lesson for the people in Indonesia too. So there was a mutual benefit.

Thus, although we can see that while the interviewees recognised that the financial contributions they were able to make were modest when converted into Japanese currency, the size of the donations they were able to collect was secondary to the fact that they collected them, and sought to express their support and friendship – their care – for Japan. The question of which country and people was richer – a major academic consideration in critiques of social and political impacts and subtexts of foreign aid – was set aside as irrelevant. The interconnection between the countries was the more important, and if the gift was large by Indonesian standards and could have been put to much more use in Indonesia, that was as an expression of the meaningfulness of the gift for the Indonesians. Like most gifts, the real value of the gift is not located in the gift, but in the giving of it.

7. Conclusion

The impacts of foreign aid, soft power and an emerging global moral economy have been put forward as disposing people to act in support of distant others in diverse ways. By examining the grounds stipulated by Indonesians for acting in support of Japan following 3/11, the interview material presented here addressed assumptions about these impacts, and concretised sometimes abstracted discussions about their effects. We find that speaking about the impacts of foreign aid, soft power or a global moral economy separately is inadequate, at least in the case of Indonesian support for Japan. All three were important in motivating Indonesians to act. We do not believe that any of them alone would have been sufficient to have elicited the magnitude of the response that did in fact transpire.

It might be argued that the array of connections with Japan possessed by the Indonesians spoken to undermines the notion of the global moral economy. If such connections are important, then is it likely that people will act beneficently towards others with which they had no connection? The outpouring of support to Japan from people and countries with fewer such connections (e.g. Lee, 2015, pp. 69-72) does provide some evidence to contradict this doubt, as do countless other examples of beneficent actions towards unknown others in distant places. However, it is doubtless the case that the show of support for victims of disaster in countries such as the US (Turner and Khondker, 2010, 160-162) and in Japan – which can eclipse that of similar-sized disasters elsewhere – does point to the importance of both sizable foreign aid programs as well as the role of soft power and having a place in the consciousness of people around the world. Disasters of similar and greater scale in places of less prominence in the global consciousness are often overlooked and elicit far less global sympathy. It is sadly the case that a humanitarian crisis in the Lake Chad Basin affecting many millions of people can be described as the “world’s most neglected crisis” (Byanyima and Egeland, 2017).

From a foreign affairs perspective, countries seeking to expand their influence need to consider a suite of bridge-building and connection-making activities. For Japan in the context of China’s evolving and expanding presence in their shared region, building on their soft-power and foreign aid achievements will remain or become increasingly important for their geopolitical interests. However, from a humanitarian perspective, activating empathetic feelings – developing “care about others” – and going on to act on those feelings – developing “care for others” – is of existential importance. For example, in an era of impending climate change and when our decisions today will affect others elsewhere, failing to foster empathies towards others not only threatens other people, but threatens humanity (Klein, 2014, 46-54). Against this context, our discussion of the efforts of some Indonesians to support Japan in 2011 has a contribution to make.

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