

Implementation of the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) Program in Changing China's Nation Branding in Indonesia

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Abstrak

Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) merupakan program beasiswa yang diberikan oleh pemerintah Tiongkok sebagai salah satu instrument yang digunakan sebagai upaya meningkatkan nation branding Tiongkok di Indonesia. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi program Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) dan kontribusinya dalam meningkatkan nation branding Tiongkok di Indonesia. Didalam penyusunan skripsi ini peneliti menggunakan teknik pengumpulan data observasi dan juga analisis dokumen. Teknik analisis data yang digunakan yaitu reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa program Chinese Government Scholarship telah berhasil menjadi instrumen strategis nation branding yang dilakukan oleh Tiongkok untuk meningkatkan citra positif di Indonesia.

Kata kunci: Nation Branding; Diplomasi Publik; Tiongkok; Indonesia; Beasiswa.

Abstract

Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) is a scholarship program offered by the Chinese government as one of the instruments used to enhance China's nation branding in Indonesia. This research aims to analyze the implementation of the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program and its contribution to improving China's nation branding in Indonesia. In preparing this thesis, the researcher utilized observation data collection techniques and document analysis. The data analysis techniques used are data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of this study indicate that the Chinese Government Scholarship program has successfully become a strategic instrument for nation branding employed by China to enhance its positive image in Indonesia.

Keywords: Nation Branding; Public Diplomacy; Tiongkok; Indonesia; Scholarship.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between China and Indonesia has been established since the presidency of Sukarno on January 15, 1950, marked by the first sending of the Chinese ambassador to Indonesia, Wang Renshu, and shortly after that, the Indonesian ambassador Arnold Mononutu was sent to Beijing in 1953 during the transition of power to President Suharto (Sukma, 1999). In the diplomatic relations that have been established for more than 70 years, there is a commitment between the two countries to foster a comprehensive relationship based on mutual respect and to strive for an increase in trade value and investment activities being conducted. The people-to-people interactions are also becoming closer with the implementation of regional and multilateral cooperation (Oratmangun, 2020).

The strength of diplomatic relations and the numerous collaborations in various fields between China and Indonesia certainly encourage more vigorous public diplomacy efforts by China, aimed at nation branding as a strategy for shaping a positive image and public opinion in Indonesia. The establishment of a scholarship program by the Chinese government for eligible Indonesian students is one form of the active public diplomacy being carried out by China. The scholarship opportunities offered by the Chinese government to Indonesia are considered to be beneficial for Indonesia, especially given the fact that China has a highly ranked education system in the world (Syakhrani et al., 2022).

The scholarship program as a public diplomacy step taken by China towards Indonesia is included in the large investment costs incurred by the Chinese government as an effort to attract the interest of Indonesian students to participate in this scholarship program. This scholarship covers tuition fees, accommodation or living expenses, health insurance, and also living allowances provided to the students or learners who participate in the scholarship. The Chinese government offers several forms of scholarships, one of which is the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) that has a broader scope compared to other scholarships offered by the Chinese government.

The Chinese government uses public diplomacy instruments through the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program in Indonesia as an effort to shape a positive image and opinion, as well as to reduce the level of negative perceptions formed within Indonesian society, and to maintain the positive image that has already been established

as the nation branding of China in Indonesia. The Chinese government not only provides opportunities for Indonesian students to pursue education at top Chinese universities but also makes efforts to build and create closer relationships between the two countries. This program created by China is one of the bridges used to introduce Chinese culture, language, and values to the younger generation of Indonesia, which is expected to help shape a positive image and opinion of China.

METHODS

This research is a qualitative study using a descriptive research method. Creswell defines qualitative research as an approach used to explore and understand how meanings arise from individuals or groups related to a problem within certain social contexts and phenomena (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research is a process that has the main goal of discovering an understanding related to a phenomenon by creating a comprehensive picture related to that phenomenon, which can review the existing phenomenon in a holistic and complex manner, and will then be presented in the form of words (Fadli, 2021).

In this study, the descriptive analysis method is used to systematically and accurately describe an existing phenomenon, which can be reviewed based on the data that has been collected. Descriptive research is a type of research in which the researcher closely interacts with the data obtained and uses interpretation to explain that data. In this research, the researcher will conduct a more in-depth study using techniques to find the necessary data such as background, motives, and other factors within the phenomenon being studied. In this study, the author aims to explain how public diplomacy is implemented through the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program, which is then used in efforts to create and shape a positive image of China towards Indonesia. This type of research is descriptive, which contains a comprehensive description and explanation of the issues and problems being studied.

This research will use observation and also document or data analysis for conducting the study. In this writing, the author performs data analysis using qualitative data. Qualitative data analysis is a process of analysis that is conducted without numerical or quantitative data, but rather an analysis carried out based on data that consists of real information obtained from various literature sources such as books, journals, or also trustworthy official websites.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the era of globalization, which is now experiencing rapid development, nation branding has become an important strategy used by many countries around the world to build a positive image of their nation in the international arena (Fadila et al., 2024). China has become a country that is now aggressively making efforts in nation branding towards other countries considered as its strategic cooperation partners, one of which is Indonesia. China aims to create a close relationship with the Indonesian people and to establish a good perception of China as a strategic partner of Indonesia and a reliable partner that can actively and positively contribute to supporting regional development.

In the steps taken by China to enhance nation branding in Indonesia, there is the Anholt Branding Hexagon which provides a comprehensive framework to analyze how the efforts to improve nation branding undertaken by China in Indonesia are. This model consists of six key elements: investment and immigration, governance, exports, tourism, people, culture, and heritage. The Anholt Branding Hexagon is a model developed by Simon Anholt used to analyze the nation branding of a country. This developed model has six main elements and forms a hexagon that can be used to review the strengths of a country's nation branding and how that country can be perceived by the public around the world (Anholt, 2005).



The first dimension in the Anholt Branding Hexagon is Investment and Immigration, in this dimension, one can assess the extent of value or desire individuals have to settle or choose to live in that country, as well as to study and work there. This is illustrated through the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed train project (KCJB) and the China-Indonesia Economic and Trade Cooperation Forum. The second dimension is

governance, which is a dimension in the Anholt Branding hexagon that can analyze the governance present in a country, which can be observed through China's cooperation with Indonesia in the development of GovTech or Government Technology. This is an effort to reform the governance system, especially in administration. As an effort to reform the government system, particularly the administration. The purpose of bureaucratic reform is to create a professional government bureaucracy, have good performance, and create a professional work environment free from corruption, collusion, and nepotism (Sakila & Khaidir, 2024).

Export dimension, which examines how satisfied the public is with the products and also includes the services produced by the country, as well as the public's tendency to make efforts to seek and acquire these products or to do the opposite. China is very active in this aspect and often implements the export dimension in its efforts to enhance its nation branding in Indonesia to foster a positive image through various integrated strategies. One of these is by introducing Chinese-made products into the Indonesian market in various types of products including electronics, textiles, and food, and by collaborating with local Indonesian companies.

The next dimension is Tourism. This dimension analyzes how to measure the appeal of a country as a location for a tourist destination. This aspect is illustrated through the Promotion of the Global Tourism Destination of the Greater Bay Area of Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau, which carries the theme Charming Guangdong in Jakarta on Monday, June 25, 2024, attended by the Counselor of the Chinese Embassy in Jakarta (Indrastuti, 2024). The next dimension is people, within this dimension it analyzes the perceptions held by the public regarding the individuals residing in a certain country. It includes aspects such as how people behave, their intelligence, friendliness, and the skills possessed by those living in that country. Lastly, there is the dimension of culture and heritage, which is showcased and implemented through the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program.

The dimension of culture and heritage is an aspect that can be used to analyze the perceptions held by the public regarding the cultural wealth of a country or its historical heritage. This dimension encompasses the culture, traditions, artistic values, and customary values that have existed in that country for generations. The Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) is not just an education-based program, but also a

strategy created by the Chinese government as an effort to conduct nation branding of Chinese culture towards other countries, one of which is Indonesia. Through the Chinese Government scholarship (CGS) program, China aims to introduce Chinese culture and also to maintain and strengthen its positive image in Indonesia by using academic bridges as a tool for nation branding, which it implements as a means of public diplomacy. Simon Anholt, in his book titled *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities, and Regions*, defines nation branding as a strategic effort carried out by a country with the aim of building, managing, and influencing its image on a global level (Anholt, 2005).

The Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program is an initiative presented by the Chinese government to strengthen its position in the international arena. Since this program was first launched, it has been designed as one of the strategies to attract the interest of international students from many countries including Indonesia. In Indonesia, its implementation began in the first year of the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program's launch, which was in 1996, but due to several social issues at that time in Indonesia, the implementation of this program did not run optimally. However, this program began to run optimally in 2020, marked by an increase in the number of student quotas from Indonesia to participate in the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program. There was an additional quota of 3000 students in 2020 for Indonesian student (Ilmie, 2020).

This program is divided into two main categories, namely bilateral and non-bilateral. In the bilateral category, the scholarship will be managed directly by the Chinese embassy and consulate in Indonesia, while in the non-bilateral category, the scholarship will be managed by the students themselves. Students interested in participating in the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program can apply directly to universities in China without going through the embassy first (Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Indonesia, 2024).

There has been a significant increase in the number of quotas for the admission of Indonesian students in the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program from 2019 to 2020. In 2019, a total of 820 students from Indonesia successfully participated in the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program, including 380 undergraduate students and 440 doctoral students from Indonesia. Additionally, through the Chinese Government

Scholarship (CGS) program, there are 1,100 students from Indonesia who received short courses, internships, or participated in other short-term school programs. There has been an increase in the number of students from Indonesia who successfully obtained the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS), totaling 15,780 people. Additionally, 19 universities in China have launched Indonesian language study programs as a reciprocal gesture for the influx of Indonesian students through the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program (Ilmie, 2020).

The increase in the number of recipients of the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program in Indonesia is due to the growing interest from the Indonesian public to pursue education or studies abroad. Indonesian society now views studying abroad as an aspect that provides many benefits not only financially but also in other aspects such as prestige or offering a guarantee of quality that is expected to facilitate the path to better career opportunities. Thus, many Indonesians are now very interested in seizing scholarship opportunities abroad, one of which is in China.

Through the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program, students from Indonesia are given the opportunity to study Mandarin either before or during their studies in China. This is one of the main strategies employed by China, as demonstrated through one of the key class offerings in the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program, which is the 4 + 1 program that provides a one-year language class to international students including those from Indonesia. In this program, students can attend language classes for one year for free, funded by the Chinese government at prestigious universities in China. This language class program is specifically established at universities for international students as a tangible commitment from the Chinese government as a key player and also from the education sector to spread the Mandarin language to the public. In these language classes, Indonesian students will learn Mandarin, guided directly by lecturers who are experts in the Mandarin language. The Chinese government often emphasizes that language is a part of national identity and is also a primary tool in the implementation of public diplomacy through education (Hartig, 2015). This program makes an effort to be able to introduce the Mandarin language not only to enhance the country's image and build relationships with the international public, but also because the presence of a language can significantly establish social interaction between one party and another (Norris & Gillespie, 2009).

The Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program encourages the development of a national image that is much closer to the public and can be accepted by society within the international order (Gil, 2009). In 2025, Mandarin will successfully have 1.17 million speakers, which represents China's success in developing in the global order (Statistic and Data, 2024). Besides Mandarin, the exposure provided to Chinese culture also becomes a part of the integral program created by the Chinese government through the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program.

There are many universities in China that cooperate with the Chinese Scholarship Councils, which is the organizer of the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program, offering various programs specifically designed to introduce, disseminate, and also preserve the traditions, arts, history, and philosophy of China to international students, including Indonesian students. In the implementation of the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program, there are many majors related to Chinese culture. Various majors are available, ranging from Chinese Culture and Civilization, Chinese Language and Literature, History of China, Chinese Philosophy, Chinese Art and Calligraphy, Chinese Ethnic Studies, to Archaeology and Cultural Heritage. The dissemination of Chinese cultural values in this aspect of education is considered a strategy to build long-term relationships (Soomro et al., 2020).

In the implementation of the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program, there are programs conducted and organized by the Chinese government for international students, which also includes Indonesian students. These programs include Confucianism seminars, cultural festivals, and classes on Chinese calligraphy and martial arts, which are forms of diplomacy aimed at creating an understanding of Chinese culture and fostering appreciation for China's cultural heritage (Hong & Hardy, 2024).

China is striving to create a positive perception among Indonesian students so that they can become informal ambassadors for China, bringing positive narratives related to China when they successfully complete their studies and return to Indonesia. This aligns with the idea presented by Simon Anholt in his book, that to create effective nation branding, there needs to be a strong cultural dimension to create an emotional connectivity with the global community (Anholt, 2016).

According to statistical data released by the Chinese Ministry of Education in 2018, there were 490,000 international students in China, including Indonesian students,

with 63,000 being recipients of the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS), which is 12.8%. The data shows that each year, more than 27 million Chinese students compete to obtain the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS), yet the acceptance rate is only 0.2%, and 1.7% for the master's program. Furthermore, the funding received by international students is significantly higher than what Chinese students receive. For example, the funding for the journalism program at Beijing's Renmin University for Chinese students is 5,000 yuan, while for international students, it is 23,000 yuan (Miao et al., 2019).

In practice, the implementation of the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program in Indonesia does not always run smoothly; however, there are certainly challenges and obstacles present, both structural and perceptual, which can have implications for the effectiveness of the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program as an effort for China's cultural nation branding in Indonesia to strengthen China's positive image. The obstacles and challenges present in the implementation of the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program are certainly one of the factors that can be a measure of the success of the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program.

The main challenges faced include language barriers and cultural adaptation, especially for students who are not fluent in Mandarin, often experiencing difficulties in social communication and participating in learning at the University, which can affect the effectiveness of the Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program (Turcsanyi, 2021). This language barrier can pose significant challenges to students' positive experiences while participating in the program and can become an obstacle in efforts to build a positive public image of China in Indonesia (Rust & Kim, 2012).

Stereotypes about the quality of education in China and the notion that obtaining academic freedom is difficult, along with the strict control exerted by the government over the curriculum, also pose challenges within this program (Brady, 2021). The existence of negative opinions and views held by the public towards China also reduces the public's interest in this program. The lack of promotion and socialization carried out by the Chinese government to introduce this program to the public also causes international students, especially from Indonesia, to be unaware and have difficulty obtaining information related to this program. Therefore, public diplomacy strategies need to be implemented more optimally to attract the interest of foreign students to participate in this program (Wen & Hu, 2023).

Competition with other more established international scholarships also poses a significant obstacle to this program, partly due to the lack of efforts made in implementing public communication strategies to disseminate information related to this program, which could be done through mass media such as print like papers, brochures, and also the use of electronic media as a public communication tool (Junaidy et al., 2024). In addition, geopolitical uncertainty and diplomatic relations, the lack of degree recognition in the professional sector, and the minimal integration of international students with the local community are factors that need to be considered for this program to run more optimally.

Despite facing various challenges, CGS still has great potential in enhancing China's appeal as an educational destination for Indonesian students. To ensure the success of this program, further efforts are needed to improve promotion and transparency of information, strengthen alumni networks and academic collaboration, as well as to adapt the curriculum and learning environment to be more inclusive for international students. CGS can be more effective in building China's soft power and strengthening its cultural nation branding in Indonesia. Collaborative efforts between the government, educational institutions, and relevant parties are needed to maximize the potential of this program (Pujianti, 2024).

CONCLUSION

The Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) program has become a strategic instrument for nation branding in China's efforts to build a positive image and expand its cultural influence on the international stage, including in Indonesia. By offering significant scholarships to foreign students, China not only enhances the attractiveness of its education system but also introduces and disseminates Chinese cultural values and language to the global community. Data shows that the number of scholarships awarded to international students through the CGS program far exceeds the number of scholarships for domestic students. This reflects China's commitment to attracting students from various countries, including Indonesia, to study in China. Thus, Indonesian students who receive this scholarship have the opportunity to understand Chinese culture, traditions, and language firsthand. This experience is expected to create a closer relationship between the two countries and foster a positive perception of China in the eyes of the Indonesian public.

With the increasing number of CGS alumni in Indonesia, a professional network has formed that possesses a deep understanding of China. They have the potential to become cultural ambassadors who disseminate their experiences and knowledge about China, thereby strengthening China's positive image in Indonesia. This strategy aligns with the concept of nation branding, which emphasizes the importance of educational and cultural diplomacy in shaping a country's reputation on the international stage. Thus, the implementation of the CGS program plays a crucial role in China's nation branding strategy, particularly in introducing and reinforcing Chinese culture in Indonesia through educational diplomacy.

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