FACULTAT DE TRADUCCIÓ I D'INTERPRETACIÓ

GRAU D'ESTUDIS D'ÀSIA ORIENTAL

TREBALL DE FI DE GRAU

Curs 2025-2026

Branding a Nation:

An Analysis of Cool Japan Strategy and its Impact on Japan's Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy (2013-2025)

Ariadna Fornos Peraferrer

1631443

TUTORA

CHIAO-IN CHEN

Barcelona, 31 de maig de 2026

UAB Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

CREDITS

TFG Data

Branding a Nation. An Analysis of Cool Japan Strategy and its Impact on Japan's Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy

Author: Ariadna Fornos i Peraferrer
Tutor: Chiao-In Chen
Centre: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Facultat de Traducció i d'Interpretació
Studies: Grau d'Estudis d'Àsia Oriental
Academic year: 2025-2026

Key words
Cool Japan, Soft Power, Nation Branding, Diplomacy

Abstract
Cool Japan is first and foremost a diplomatic strategy, the result of government effort in Japan to promote the country itself to the international market. Under the guise of soft power, as a concept that can be applied to both politics and social study, it was established in 2013 backed by funding stemming from a public-private sector alliance. Since then, it has worked as a way of promoting the most attractive elements of Japanese culture to a worldwide audience. With this comes success, but also setbacks that are in tune with a fast-paced, changing international community. Despite existing research, there remains a gap in understanding why it has gone through many revisions, and what are the specific elements that hold back its potential in diplomatic action.

This study can be considered a specification of a topic in International Relations, and aims primarily to analyze, criticize and demonstrate how subtle shifts can bring about significant changes. This is done by investigating the political, social and economic action Japan has taken since the end of WWII. To achieve this objective, online resources including academic papers and journals on IR topics have been consulted.

There has also been data collected from official government sites, namely the Cabinet Office of Japan, and population surveys regarding social needs have also been consulted.

The results indicate that the main concern is a lack of perspective in the face of the international community; the othering of foreign state actors that don't adhere to Japanese commonality are a setback for the Cool Japan strategy instead of helping the cause, which is one of many contradictions found in Japanese diplomatic action in this pertaining case. These findings suggest that soft power strategies, while being part of the reason Japan is so influential today, also deter the government body (when utilized incorrectly) from exploiting its potential for successful cultural exports.

This study contributes to the discipline of International Relations by taking a concept like diplomacy and interpreting it so as to find faults with it as it is applied to a 10 year long effort like this strategy. The results have implications for the future of Cool Japan, particularly in how it can help Japan maintain its status as a reference in soft power use and avoid cultural fatigue.

CRÈDITS

Dades del TFG

Imaginant una Nació. Un Anàlisi de l'Estratègia Cool Japan i el seu Impacte al Poder Transversal i Diplomàcia Cultural Japonesa

Autor/a: Ariadna Fornos i Peraferrer
Tutor/a: Chiao-In Chen
Centre: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Facultat de Traducció i d'Interpretació
Estudis: Grau d'Estudis d'Àsia Oriental
Curs acadèmic: 2025-2026

Paraules clau
Cool Japan, Poder Transversal, Imatge de Nació, Diplomàcia

Abstracte
Cool Japan és, en primer lloc i sobretot, una estratègia diplomàtica, fruit de l'esforç del govern del Japó per promocionar el país al mercat internacional. Sota el paraigües del poder transversal, com a concepte que es pot aplicar tant a la política com a l'estudi social, es va establir el 2013 amb el suport de fons provinents d'una aliança entre el sector públic i el privat. Des de llavors, ha funcionat com una manera de promoure els elements més atractius de la cultura japonesa a un públic mundial. Amb això arriba l'èxit, però també els contratemps que van en sintonia amb una comunitat internacional que canvia a gran velocitat. Malgrat les investigacions existents, encara hi ha una llacuna en la comprensió de per què ha passat per moltes revisions i quins són els elements específics que frenen el seu potencial en l'acció diplomàtica.

Aquest estudi es pot considerar una especificació d'un tema en Relacions Internacionals, i té com a objectiu principal analitzar, criticar i demostrar com els canvis subtils poden provocar canvis significatius. Això es fa investigant l'acció política, social i econòmica que el Japó ha dut a terme des del final de la Segona Guerra Mundial. Per assolir aquest objectiu, s'ha consultat recursos en línia, inclosos

articles acadèmics i revistes sobre temes de RI. També s'han recollit dades de llocs oficials del govern, concretament de l'Oficina del Gabinet del Japó, i també s'ha consultat enquestes de població sobre les necessitats socials.

Els resultats indiquen que la principal preocupació és la manca de perspectiva davant la comunitat internacional; l'alterització dels estats actors estrangers que no s'adhereixen a la comunitat japonesa és un revés per a l'estratègia Cool Japan en lloc d'ajudar la causa, que és una de les moltes contradiccions que es troben en l'acció diplomàtica japonesa en aquest cas concret. Aquestes troballes suggereixen que les estratègies de poder transversal, tot i que són part del motiu pel qual el Japó és tan influent avui en dia, també impedeixen que l'organisme governamental (quan s'utilitza incorrectament) exploti el seu potencial per a exportacions culturals reeixides.

Aquest estudi contribueix a la disciplina de les Relacions Internacionals prenent un concepte com la diplomàcia i interpretant-lo per trobar-hi defectes, tinguent en compte que s'aplica a un esforç de 10 anys com és aquesta estratègia. Els resultats tenen implicacions per al futur del Cool Japan, particularment en com pot ajudar el Japó a mantenir el seu estatus com a referència en l'ús del poder transversal i evitar la fatiga cultural.

CRÉDITOS

Dados del TFG

Imaginando una Nación. Un Análisis de la Estrategia Cool Japan y su Impacto en el Poder Blando y Diplomacia Cultural Japonesa

Autor/a: Ariadna Fornos i Peraferrer
Tutor/a: Chiao-In Chen
Centro: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Facultat de Traducció i d'Interpretació
Estudios: Grado de Estudios de Asia Oriental
Curso académico: 2025-2026

Palabras clave
Cool Japan, Poder Blando, Imagen de Nación, Diplomacia

Resumen del TFG

Cool Japan es, en primer lugar y sobre todo, una estrategia diplomática, fruto del esfuerzo del gobierno de Japón para promocionar el país al mercado internacional. Bajo el paraguas del poder blando, como concepto que se puede aplicar tanto a la política como el estudio social, se estableció el 2013 con el apoyo de fondos provenientes de una alianza entre el sector público y el privado. Desde entonces, ha funcionado como una manera de promover los elementos más atractivos de la cultura japonesa a un público mundial. Con esto llega el éxito, pero también los contratiempos que van en sintonía con una comunidad internacional que cambia a gran velocidad. A pesar de las investigaciones existentes, todavía hay una laguna en la comprensión de por qué ha pasado por muchas revisiones y qué son los elementos específicos que frenan su potencial en la acción diplomática.

Este estudio se puede considerar una especificación de un tema en Relaciones Internacionales, y tiene como objetivo principal analizar, criticar y demostrar cómo los cambios sutiles pueden provocar cambios significativos. Esto se hace investigando la acción política, social y económica que Japón ha llevado a cabo desde el final de la

Segunda Guerra Mundial. Para lograr este objetivo, se han consultado recursos en línea, incluidos artículos académicos y revistas sobre temas RI. También se han recogido datos de lugares oficiales del gobierno, concretamente de la Oficina del Gabinete de Japón, y también se han consultado encuestas de población sobre las necesidades sociales.

Los resultados indican que la principal preocupación es la falta de perspectiva ante la comunidad internacional; tratar de otros los estados actores extranjeros que no se adhieren a la comunidad japonesa es un revés para la estrategia Cool Japan en lugar de ayudar a la causa, que es una de las muchas contradicciones que se encuentran en la acción diplomática japonesa en este caso concreto. Estos hallazgos sugieren que las estrategias de poder blando, a pesar de que son parte del motivo por el cual Japón es tan influyente hoy en día, también impiden que el organismo gubernamental (cuando se utiliza incorrectamente) explote su potencial para exportaciones culturales exitosas.

Este estudio contribuye a la disciplina de las Relaciones Internacionales tomando un concepto como la diplomacia e interpretándose para encontrar defectos, teniendo en cuenta que se aplica a el esfuerzo de 10 años que representa esta estrategia. Los resultados tienen implicaciones para el futuro del Cool Japan, particularmente en cómo puede ayudar Japón a mantener su estatus como referencia en el uso del poder blando y evitar la fatiga cultural.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to start by thanking Professor Chiao-In Chen, who guided me around the trials and tribulations of writing my first ever thesis work, and trusted me to just jot down ideas, encouraged me to trust myself, and eventually create something I could be proud of. Without her, this essay would surely sound more like an epic poem than a serious academic text. I would also like to acknowledge the faculty staff for these past four years, by showing me how diverse the world is. They have helped me understand my academic and personal future goals beyond the faculty's walls.

I want to thank my friends for always making the mundane experiences the most enjoyable, and for not holding it against me when I disappear for weeks at a time when I get a sudden burst of inspiration to write. I have met extraordinary characters in very little time, and I wish to keep them in my life for years to come. Finally, I could not be where and who I am today if not for my big, wonderful family. Especially to my dad, who has shown me the art of patience, love, and support, even from far away. And to Tana, who has always pushed me to explore the world, taught me how being an adult works and has given me nothing short of what any daughter could wish for.

INDEX

GLOSSARY..... 1

1.COOL JAPAN OVERVIEW..... 2

1.1. Soft Power and Evolution of Japan since the 80's..... 3

1.2 Nation Branding Overview..... 5

1.3 Diplomacy At Large..... 7

2. CJ IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT..... 9

2.1. Multiculturalism..... 12

2.2. Competition and political identity..... 16

2.3. A critical perspective..... 18

3. CRITICISMS, REVISIONS AND THE FUTURE..... 20

3.1. Notable faults of Cool Japan..... 20

3.2. Further contradictions..... 21

3.3. The unclear vision of Cool Japan..... 23

CONCLUSIONS..... 25

ANNEX..... 27

REFERENCES..... 31

GLOSSARY

CJ: Cool Japan. Diplomatic strategy

CJF: Cool Japan Fund. Responsible for the handling of economic resources destined to Cool Japan action.

FPCJ: Foreign Press Center Japan

IPSH: Intellectual Property Strategy Headquarters

IR: International Relations. Discipline of study that focuses on worldly affairs and connection between actor states.

観光スポット**:** *kankou spotto*, landmarks/tourism spots

EA: East Asia. Geographical denomination of a region in the Asian continent.

SEA: South-East Asia. Geographical denomination of a region in the Asian continent.

LDP: Liberal Democratic Party

Any 漢字 (read *kanji*) or japanese character is followed by an italicized reading in alphabetical script.

1.COOL JAPAN OVERVIEW

The Cool Japan Strategy (CJ) is an initiative proposed by the Japanese government, starting in 2013, as a means of enhancing Japan's "cool" features towards the world. This was in an effort to render it more attractive to both Japanese nationals and international actors that have some sort of relationship to the country itself. The proposal by the Cabinet Office of Japan was created thanks to various government entities, specifically destined to manage and bring forward the CJ initiative. One of those was the Cool Japan Fund, established in 2013, as a public-private fund in order to commercialize "Cool Japan" and increase overseas demand (FPCJ, 2016). Other government bodies will be touched on as this essay progresses, to help clarify methodology in creating the strategy plan.

The initial motivation for CJ was to push soft power as a way of re-branding Japan's image as a valuable actor part of the international stage. That is, a way of pushing for economic stability, also economic power, and prestige of Japan as a whole, aimed at mostly a Western audience. This is especially interesting for scholars of International Relations if we consider the impact that Japanese pop culture has had since the beginning of the 21st century, following both their recovery of the post-war era and the period of economic resurgence in the 80's. This essay focuses on the usage of the CJ strategy in correlation to IR theory, insofar as elements like soft power and diplomacy are related to the topic at hand. It should also be noted that CJ has been through revisions throughout its run, and this essay will take from both of the official texts published by the Intellectual Property Strategy Headquarters (IPSH) of the Japanese Cabinet Office; *Cool Japan Strategy* (September 3, 2019) and *New Cool Japan Strategy* (June 4, 2024), including the outlines provided by the same entity.

In simpler terms, CJ is a nation branding type of strategy that takes the aspects of Japan that render it cool in the eyes of the world, beyond stereotypical elements that are currently a part of popular culture such as anime, manga, food, etc, and enhances their appeal to the public (Cabinet Office IPSH, 2019: 5). Since this process involves both the private and public sectors, the number of actors is bigger in comparison to other past and possible future endeavors.

1.1. Soft Power and Evolution of Japan since the 80's

Soft power is one of the key aspects of conversations about Japanese politics. It stands on its own as an explanation for how power in modern International Relations (IR) theory can be obtained; power is crucial for understanding the current state of the IR sphere and its history. As a discipline, IR is the study and analysis of how multiple states compete with each other in a context of socio-political action, commonly referred to as the international system, an invisible stage. Stanley Hoffman (1985) refers to the work of Raymon Aron, who contributed (and critiqued) a lot of the thought behind modern IR. Since this academic field involves many actors, the analysis of IR may vary according to the characteristics of a certain territory. However, a theory is quite abstract as a form of thinking, so we would need to pinpoint Japan-specific qualities; we must know "what the distinctive features of well-differentiated national states are" (Hoffman, 1985: 15). Power equals influence in IR. Japan has been long considered a multifaceted country when it comes to power, backed by its different economical and political phases in the contemporary era. International Relations is a crucial discipline for all that involves worldly action, since each actor state, apart from influencing and involving itself in political spheres, has their own inner workings. A local government needs to be taken into account, and a big corporation that provides for that government is not more important based on its size. IR takes into account how the world evolves, and what political trends such as the rise of far-right parties or social revolution change the environment of the states that conform the system. Being able to discern if, say, a student uprising for a less strict exam curriculum, can have bigger repercussions on social initiatives like provoking unions is a key ability that diplomats need to have, and that world governments should look to implement in their work. That is, Japan has been able to understand the need for world influence through soft power, and has acted accordingly by creating certain government bodies specialized in this type of work, that in turn have created Cool Japan.

As an overview of Japanese history in the post-war period, Japan experienced a shift that would evolve through the later half of the 20th century. From the 50s (the period of US occupation) they introduced democracy and a change to the figure of the emperor, who would now be only a symbolic imagery of their past glory. It is relevant to note that with a new Constitution, which was promulgated on November 3rd, 1946 and came into effect on May 3rd of the same year, Article 9 has remained relevant in definitions of soft

and hard power. The Ministry of Justice in Japan states that the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right, and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In other words, in rewriting this document, they promoted peace instead of aggression, a stark difference from attitudes held during WWII. And then with US support, the 60s were a period of economic growth, the so-called "economic miracle", that brought about industrialization with results like the successful car industry. For country-wide promotion, the Olympic Games were held in Tokyo in 1964, which meant a return to the IR stage. This period, however, was followed by crisis, specifically the Oil Crisis of 1973[1]. In the face of economic uncertainty, Japan pushed for less energetic consumption and a high tech industry. Good decisions led to the period of "bubble economy", or the 80s in Japan; the country went international, promoting the housing market and cultural influence (soft power policies). However, the economic bubble burst in 1991, which left many in debt due to constant deflation. This period is also known as the "lost decade". Japan has gone through many transformations, social and economic, and while it does not have the most successful legacy in history, it still manages to walk ahead and keep up with current economic demands, which is also part of why they are able to present initiatives like CJ, that would maybe be a risk for less influential countries in the IR sphere. Japan has managed to keep up cultural influence by way of popular culture and thinking ahead.

This part of history is quite relevant to the topic at hand, since CJ is among one of the strategies proposed by the government to recover the part of Japan that is still unsure in international politics, the lost image of safety and (hard) power on the international stage.

In our current International Relations stage, and throughout this essay, the definition of soft power is that of Joseph S. Nye Jr. and all further mentions of power-related statements will be based on his work of "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power " (Nye, 2008, p.94-109).

Nye proposes that in world politics, power is the ability to influence others in three main ways: coercion, inducements and attraction. Soft power, accordingly, is the successful outcome of implementing these strategies or actions upon others, so as to incite them towards what you, as an actor in the system looking for influence, see as the

[1] For further information see Paul McDonald. "Japan's Oil: Coping with Insecurity." *The World Today* 42, no. 8/9 (1986): 147–49.

ideal (procedure) in the socio-political context of the countries involved in each conflict. By this, we mean to say that subtle action can be powerful as well. Furthermore, soft power is not to the detriment of hard power, since both are confirming elements of diplomacy, and states make use of them both in their views, diplomatic agencies, public and private use of government actions and much more. Japan, for all of its current public appeal, has been using this type of influence for a few decades already. This has in fact been well received by the public, which is partly the audience intended for it. We say this partly because the degree of relationship that a state actor has with Japan will affect how they act around each other; the international stage is too complex to only make use of soft power, because states may differ in their type of regime and policies, which creates a confrontation of ideas. In short, competition and cooperation are both key to understanding soft power as more than a theory of politics.

1.2 Nation Branding Overview

Interestingly, CJ is a way for Japan to change imagery further than the type of popular culture that was proposed in the 90's (and beginning of the century). This is because it goes further, both in concept and expected results. It is a response to the resurgence of Japan. What that means, is that CJ was formed as a response to further demand by the diplomatic state of affairs to appeal to the masses; international happenings and the actors involved. This type of procedure relates to another key concept to be talked about in more depth, and that is the policies and efforts for nation branding.

Nation branding has been interesting since the beginning of the century. Some would even argue that it is a political strategy that has been implicit to all territories, all throughout time, as the need to have a strong image is one of the most relevant strategies to impose your position as a state or nation above others. Japan fits into this precisely because, as I see it, the country feels like a product. An albeit realized one, but often and especially in social media, the "kawaii" effect[2] distortionates the image of culture, people and so on. It feels like a big corporation using marketing strategies for a one-and-only product. While yes, this type of politics may be practiced in other countries, I found it becomes a problem of dishonesty. To sum up, the way Japan is seen outwardly is not an accurate reflection of real-life society and that is to the detriment of

[2] For further information see Matt Alt, "Manga. arcades y karaokes. Cómo la cultura pop japonesa reinventó el mundo". Translated by Carlos Díaz Romero. (Península 2022) 140-143. Also see Bibliography for other sources.

many, since the country feels like a theme park and stops being taken seriously in the socio-political sphere.

In the general sense, the way that branding works for states is very similar to how a common ad would work, seeing that it is a process that involves using public appeal by going through scrutiny of what that audience will respond positively to (in politics). For example, a government office can use flashy advertising campaigns that present initiatives to better the political field of the country, as if they were the politicians' words. Imagery and the wording of that "advertisement" is what will eventually influence the public on their decision, and what they believe in terms of the future of their environment. This is also why nation branding is controversial for IR scholars and diplomats, as it can be considered biased, depending on the possibilities that the political parties or entities have, restricted to their economic means. Branding a political view involves the public, but also the private sector as well, since the work is relegated to advertising agencies, branding consultancies and public relations firms, who have found it an extremely lucrative revenue stream during the past few years. We can see that as it stands now, almost every government in the world is engaged in one way or another with nation branding (Keith Dinnie, 2008: 5). Japan has made use of this initiative in the process of the country's promotion on the international stage. Their use of soft power can not be excluded in conversations pertaining to IR studies, since it works with nation branding. It becomes a tool to bring forward country-wide promotion of assets. These assets are the representation of demand, and that can be from the domestic market, but more interestingly for what CJ aims to respond to, the international market. The country uses both imports and exports to find a way into the trade market, and while quantitative results are important for economic study, qualitative findings can help promote diplomatic strategies to government bodies, who will rely, as explained, on trusting public opinion. This can be a risky move for those in power, because annual reports can determine how much funding each section of government receives. Not knowing how to bring about physical results (like monthly gain relative to past months) is detrimental to the private-public alliance that works behind Cool Japan. The government body supports itself by success, since then it can devote their resources to truly important causes. Non-countable instances like the success of CJ depends, truly, on how it manages its assets.

The biggest asset, in this case, is that of tourism. This is not restricted to sightseeing, or 観光スポット (*kankou spotto, landmarks/tourism spots)*, because their attributes as a hotspot for tourism go beyond that. Tourism through the lens of nation branding is done through the promotion of culture, for example of isolated rural spots, that are charming because they're different from what the media shows nowadays of a technologically advanced and "convenient" country[3].

However, it is also the use of every resource that can evoke a sense of Japan as attractive. The general public will think of manga, anime, sushi and ramen, but according to policies like what CJ will propose, Japanese culture worth sharing (exploiting) by those in power also comprises intellectual culture such as literature, comedy, architecture, the people and their attitude towards different inputs, education, natural disasters and their protocols, etc (Cabinet Office IPSH, 2019: 6, Figure 1). A balanced mix of those attributes as merit points is difficult to obtain; Cool Japan contains all the attributes necessary for a successful nation branding strategy, but we can conclude that it needs to be revised and adapted constantly to current trends or necessities. Branding a nation is ideal for correct diplomacy.

1.3 Diplomacy At Large

In this first introduction to the topic of CJ, there have been many political strategies and ways of action mentioned. The one to look out for is diplomacy: "diplomacy is the management of international relations by negotiation and presentation, conducted principally by states" (The EU Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox) and other actors. There are many types of diplomacy, and its history is long and discussed often in debates of IR theory and proceeding acts in the international context of states. This essay will be focusing on two types specifically, which are public and cultural diplomacy, as they fit the socio-political context of when CJ was first brought up as an idea to bring forward a better Japanese diplomatic state of affairs. Precisely because diplomacy is so diverse, it is difficult to pinpoint how many types are at play, but reducing the number of propositions by the government, international or non-state actors at the time of establishment of CJ can narrow down the cause, reason and further effects and actions related to the strategy.

[3] Gavin H. Whitelaw. "Konbini-Nation: The Rise of the Convenience Store in Post-Industrial Japan." In *Consuming Life in Post-Bubble Japan: A Transdisciplinary Perspective*, edited by Katarzyna J. Cwiertka and Ewa Machotka (Amsterdam University Press 2018). 69-88

Diplomacy is also the context in which IR actors use soft and hard power. This engagement motivates the need to take these actions, and can be an essential tool to understand how to approach international relations from different perspectives. As mentioned, different states will uphold different values and teachings as they see fit, so hostility is easy to appear in politics (and other related disciplines). Diplomacy works to bridge gaps in IR and act as the neutral stage needed for such discussions, because a peaceful international state of affairs is too vast of a concept to be attainable for every actor involved. Regarding the fairness level of diplomacy, it can never be assured, if only because of the characteristics of the different participants that use it as a tool. It all comes back to the span of influence a state can have on its own people, allies or enemies through "diplomatic" action; the difficulty of finding a middle ground is one of the main discussion points of diplomats around the world, precisely because a content environment will make for easier agreement.

It is then imperative to be critical in discussions around diplomatic strategies and state action, because propositions like CJ can bring forward solutions, but also alternative problems that would not have been considered otherwise; if Japan had not started a campaign to promote inversion, tourism and culture as important exports for a country-wide revival, other states might have been in the dark about how they could take advantage of their position against the country, or the difficulties it would pose to their own social, political or economic practices. I would like to explore this contradiction and how it has resulted in processes like the revisions of CJ and subsequent action.

2. CJ IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

According to the historical context, we see that decision-making in IR theory is the backbone of (good) diplomatic strategies. That is, the balance of what Japan wants and needs can clash against what the other state actors in the International System want for themselves; diplomacy comes into play to ensure that any socio-political conflict that may arise is addressed before it becomes a bigger problem. This can be through direct negotiation or with representatives of each state on a delegation of tasks, like for example, security cooperation efforts led by the military of each country. This is all under the guise of peace. Japan is involved in worldly affairs, for instance it became a United Nations member on December 18, 1956, as the 80th member state as a way of maintaining a free and open international order (Diplomatic Bluebook, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2025). However, as much as the international factor is important, there is a need for a strong national base. Cool Japan is part of the Japanese way of ensuring proper international development of the state of affairs, in a way that plays to their favour.

As we have also seen, soft power is key to Japan's IR politics, and what pushes forward initiatives like CJ. And precisely CJ because it relies on the influence of popular culture and non-military power as national exports, and not physical capital like you would expect in the international market.

The number of aspects of Japanese culture that are suitable to promote through the CJ initiative is large, and the diversity of cultural components brings richness to the project. That is, when presenting a plan of action, the government can take from different social groups and study their experiences to translate them into diplomatic action. For example, human capital can be found in visual artists, like painters, who interpret society differently than say, an office worker, who is also human capital. This distinction in ideals can be beneficial for a focused group study; the government can push for the promotion of more art exhibitions to please the first social group, while introducing an aspect of Japanese culture to other audiences, thus creating a chain of reaction. If the reaction is positive and brings in profit, it acts as a green light on projects that create diverse social environments, which enriches the culture. And continuously, that can help the cause for Cool Japan in advertising.

So, Cool Japan can be defined as a socio-economic strategy for diplomacy that makes use of non-material goods to promote and grow its country's resources and world influence. This is why soft power seems to me like an expression of government necessity, although not necessarily desperate in nature. What I mean is initiatives like pushing for a Japan that is "cool" are the need for those in power to cater to the International System, which changes often and fast. Since the latter half of the twentieth century, uncertainty regarding economic growth and Japan's global reputation has been a persistent concern in Japanese politics. In this context, CJ's proposal appears to reflect a precautionary, "just in case" approach, prevalent as a response to the already established "just-in-time" approach in manufacturing and economic ventures. Japanese soft power is highlighted in East Asian politics because it has achieved something others, like Southeast Asian countries, may struggle with. They are always trying to "keep up"[4]. Japan has managed to converge cultural, economic and human capital to create an image of reliance, positivity, and convenience.

East Asia is quite interesting to look at when we want to understand how Japan has fallen to the use of soft power to such a big extent as they do now. Why exactly has it worked, and to note, why has it managed to keep Japan on the map when China, for example, has been consistently the biggest economical member of this region, and some would argue, the world stage? To start, China is known as an economic giant and has experienced growth big enough to make up the greater share of both the Asian and the global economies (Song et al. 2019). This comes to say that it is a powerhouse in economic competition, and is a big component of the international market, since it can manage huge amounts of trade by way of exports to most corners of the world. While its growth has slowed down and is not as equal in results as the first economic boom it experienced in the 70s (in modern times), it doesn't fall far off from there.

Japan can be considered superior in other aspects. It is not to be left behind for consideration of economic growth. It has served itself from the assets that best represent their soft power approach to politics. While China has cheap labour and is the focal point of huge amounts of production and manufacturing, Japan doesn't lose its footing and utilizes culture as a weapon. If China has production lines to back it up in the competition for economic superiority in East Asia, Japan relies on non-material goods

[4] Ponciano Intal, Jr. "East Asia's transformation and regional architecture. *Asian Economic Integration in an Era of Global Uncertainty*" (ANU Press 2018) 238-241.

that bring in enough revenue to continue the process as stable, looking to preserve a long-running influx of resources and economic capabilities. Japan takes a somewhat slower approach to business, and that can be positive or detrimental. Cool Japan, if it is viewed exclusively as an economic strategy, shows us that "long and steady wins the race". But the East Asian economy seems to work on a trend-based model, where the ability to manufacture the next big thing is what counts. Since the resources destined to market activity differ from region to region, creativity is what wins in reality. The ability to get ahead of other territories in terms of production stems from the novelty of the product that country is selling. Japan does this correctly, and CJ shows it: new anime series come out every month, and the animation process gets faster and better, providing both quality and quantity. Street food vendors can create a product that represents social trends, like the rise of matcha (green tea) flavoured products in both the Asian and international context. On top of that, production value in Japan is highly regarded. However, comparing it to the amount of human capital that China possesses and the speed at which it has shown to keep up economically with big powerhouses like the USA should always be a reason for Japan to keep innovation at the forefront of its priorities.

Japan has a set of issues regarding social conflict that involves both the Japanese and the "outside". The distinction between what Japan is and how everything that is not representative of the country should not be considered can be traced back to the *sakoku* period, where foreign trade was neglected in favour of living isolated from that market. And yet, nowadays, Japan is regarded as a welcoming hub of international influence. That is, under their own terms, so long as their national image of tranquility and (apparent) historical development is kept intact. Ever since the end of WWII the country has experienced tremendous periods of growth, as mentioned before, and it has produced some of the most regarded physical and non-physical goods in the market as of now. We can refer back to animation, and how the merchandising culture, the "kawaii" culture, works to create an image of invitation. The general public perception of Japan is positive, as far as popular opinion is concerned. Nevertheless, and also since the end of the same military conflict, Japan has experienced crises of economic value that have slowed down their potential growth. This is also why CJ is so crucial to keep in mind. We can apply what it tries to do currently to the past, seeing how it would have worked had it been implemented during the economic bubble of the 80s. Perhaps, since

the Japan “experience” was new to the general public, with anime and manga becoming a beast of the entertainment industry simultaneously, the masses would have represented a bigger scope of international appeal. Japan is seen as safe, respectful, spiritual even, and that is all through the effort of strategies like CJ, that try to utilize existing resources to bring about new ones and create a loop that feeds off itself. Knowing how to project uncountable aspects of life, like ethics and ideals, or routines that become second-nature like stopping at a convenience store to pick up a drink every day after work, to a public that can transform it into countable asset for the economy of a country is an incredible feat, and should be kept in mind when analysing Cool Japan against other diplomatic strategies. The Japanese government can keep pushing for soft power as a system that works because the impact can be accounted for. This manipulation of history, to be able to manage the change in resource availability, in demand, for such a long period of time is one aspect of CJ that should be commended despite it being flawed in other ways.

2.1. Multiculturalism

When the demand becomes high, we need to keep in mind the issue of sustainability, both in the long and short run. For example, how much can the Cool Japan National Fund dedicate to revisions and the expansion of CJ initiatives? After all, this is a government-run institution, and the constant use of resources can affect government spending, especially for a strategy like CJ. If we, however, choose to take a short-term and concrete perspective, we need to remember that it relies partly on trends and current popular culture. Trends go through cycles, and they can change weekly, even daily. Also, sustaining an international strategy means that you will find places that do not adhere to the idea of a “cool” country as well as others, partly because they are on a different trend cycle than Japan. In a general economic sense, if the spending doesn’t give profit, this can cause a lack of investment which worsens the possibility of expansion; we can call it economic diplomacy. Economically, Japan has been through major changes in little amounts of time, and has managed to grow from little resources to a big contender for modern economic debates. Diplomacy can work in tandem with economics because the people, which is one main focus of creating a successful diplomacy, are the human capital that Japan has, whether that be Japanese “naturals” or workers from neighbouring countries. To this point, a good way of creating allyship and a sense of respect is to welcome foreign workers to the country for experiences like a “working holiday”, where said worker can immerse him or herself deep into Japanese

culture by experiencing daily life, creating routines, eating local food, taking public transport and making use of what CJ promotes as attractive. A tourist will spend big amounts of money on a holiday, but a resident will pay taxes, buy and possibly sell products, create citizenship accounts like in a bank, pay government fees and much more. Since they will feel integrated, that can be the start of creating good rep to the people they have back in their home, and it creates an idea of Japan as a decent place to live, with much to offer. This is a continuous process of diplomatic work. Diplomacy doesn't involve only official state actors. It can be found in social communities, which is what in the end makes up the population, and the ones that will have to become human capital too, thus providing for the economy.

As is part of this analysis, cultural diplomacy also comes into play here. We focus on how Japan relies on and exploits their culture for economic gain, but also to make a name for themselves as relevant actors in IR affairs. Being on equal footing with big powers when it comes to the import-export market is needed, and the means to get there don't have to be through aggressive action. More so, CJ relies on how clever one can get to promote popular culture to a culture of masses, since not everyone will find appeal in the same things. In this regard, it is important to note that the term otaku has historically carried ambiguous connotations in Japan. For a long time, it referred to individuals with an intense interest in manga, anime, or related media and was often associated with social marginality. However, these perceptions have gradually evolved alongside the global expansion of Japanese popular culture. So truly, the international perception of Japan also changes with the times; some "eras" of anime are revered for incredible social commentary and art[5], while others leave much to be desired.

We can say CJ suffers from a lack of identity. That is, not a lack of direction exactly, but it doesn't know how to hold onto Japanese multiculturalism. Japanese nationalism had seemingly disappeared with imperialism at the end of WWII (Yamamoto, Kana. 2015), and yet an idea of "Japan for the Japanese", of reassuring the Japanese people by mobilizing resources for change that the nation already has, such as "responsible and proactive public finances" or "education, human resources development and supporting our youth" all for "protecting Japan's national interest" (as stated by current Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi in her Policy Speech to the 221st Session of the Diet), still

[5] Matt Alt, "Manga. arcades y karaokes. Cómo la cultura pop japonesa reinventó el mundo". Translated by Carlos Díaz Romero. (Península 2022) 140-143

gives into the myth that it is a homogenous[6] territory, when that could not be farther from the truth. In fairness, there are a lot of Japanese people in Japan, but to claim that the culture is pure, clean-cut Japanese would be hypocritical, especially under the guise of such initiatives like CJ. What makes a country rich is the diversity of culture, and if CJ wants to use that as an export, there needs to be a sense of understanding the multiple sub-cultures and social groups that provide said culture for the country. The Japanese identity is much more than rice-based foods, "geishas" and J-pop; niche cultures are also part of the nation, reflected in groups like the "gyaru", "otaku", "V-kei" music fans and "Harajuku fashion"[7]. Protecting Japan is not a bad initiative in itself, but wanting to limit the resources for this protection to certain groups (i.e. the pure Japanese) can eventually produce a bad sentiment amongst the general population, and for a successful diplomacy you need the consent and comprehension of other states and social action. Instead of tunnel vision for the "cool" Japanese, which can translate to this perception of pureness and promote exclusion, CJ would do good to look for international input in its approach, as certain regions of the world perceive societal living differently, and concepts like the masses versus the individual are relevant to this discussion. Being unique is very appealing to the Western world, where self-expression is widely accepted. In Europe, individualism is a cultural characteristic that emphasizes self promotion and the individual in independence. A good sense of self-worth and expressing your opinion is encouraged, even if it doesn't lend itself to integration in larger entities, like how this concept is largely interpreted in Asian countries (Thu Trang, 2024). If we don't learn to express ourselves, we will fall victim to monotony. Regardless, one of the faults of CJ is how it only follows the upper power's directions; because it is run by a government office, there is a power imbalance. This means to say that Japan tends to work for the masses, and they are what forms culture. However, the masses have little to no say in what "cool" means, when they could be a great asset to understand modern culture, especially since young people are very connected thanks to social media, even across oceans.

To the issue of sustainability, we do need to keep in mind how the current administration is advancing towards more conservative leaning policies, with the win of

---

[6] Katja Valaskivi. "A brand new future? Cool Japan and the social imaginary of the branded nation" (2013) 4-5.

[7] Various social subcultures of Japan. See also Dwi Noverini Djenar, Michael C. Ewing, Howard Manns. "Style and Intersubjectivity in Youth Interaction" (De Gruyter 2018) 1-22, for sociological context.

the far-right Sanseito party in the 2026 general elections. Their policies do include a message of disdain for foreigners. “Foreigners” is a broad term in this case, because we have an idea of these being westerners. However, foreigners would also include all those that don’t conform to Japanese standards even while identifying as so; mixed-race Japanese, non-Japanese born and raised in the country, Japanese born abroad and similar cultural identities. It is strange to want to exclude these groups from society[8], when they work, pay taxes, study and create families much like any other citizen. Multiculturalism also includes how “outsiders” like tourists affect the economy, and how newer citizens integrate and move around in their daily lives, like using public transport or more non-material attributes like learning the language and adapting to social rules. A good diplomatic strategy means, at least for Japan, accepting diversity and working with it, not against it. If the (international) public’s response to differences from the norm, like “gyaru” and such, is positive, why ignore it? I don’t think it’s wise to revisitate and change policies like CJ based on only government ideals, because in both short and long term runs, the loss will be greater than the social benefit and consequently, economically.

Identity in Japan is prevalent in many ways. Social identification is part of the process of being Japanese. However, how sustainable that might be in the face of CJ is debatable. While each world country has a specific culture that reflects the people and their interpretation of social living, Japan values the group over the individual. This idea is repeated quite a lot when talking about the faults of Japan when compared to the Western world. Even the concept of the East and West serve a purpose to immediately push stereotypes for each side of the planet. What is considered Eastern to Europeans is just “normal” to said place. This is why CJ needs to find a sustainable approach to finding the cool in Japan. To explain in not so sociopolitical terms, a Japanese diet and a Mediterranean diet include fish. However, Japan grills it and the Mediterranean pan-fries it. How can the government approach the introduction of grilled fish to such a vast region? It will need to take into consideration the species of fish that that ocean has, the quality of the fishery business, the method of cooking that can adapt to a non-Japanese tongue, and so on, so forth. This simple example can be used to understand the CJ approach, and why it does rely on public opinion, since people make culture. However, it needs a very detailed, hands-on approach to obtain these types of

[8] See Annex, Figure 1

findings, and it is not sustainable to do so towards cultures as engrained into society as theirs. If government bodies don't push themselves out of a comfort zone, there is little chance for them to reach the goals that they set. CJ is very ambitious as a diplomatic strategy, and it needs to be properly sustained by a base of thorough social study and comparison, which the institutions in power right now struggle with.

2.2. Competition and political identity

The Japanese government is not perfect, much like any other corresponding institutions across the world. However, as is relevant to the CJ initiative, a deeper analysis of why is pertinent. To start, the Cabinet Office, the organ that manages CJ, is not the one who runs the country, so to speak. In Japan it is only an administrative agency for the work of the Prime Minister. It plans and coordinates policies, but can't apply them until they are approved by that superior body of power. So, if the pitch for a new CJ strategy happened, and the PM's office denied it, the Cabinet Office would have to deter and work to create something suitable. Luckily, Cool Japan was one of these instances, and it was partly thanks to how it handled the proposition, by focusing on real strengths, the already existing value of soft power strategies. One thing that Japan has going for itself is how it has surpassed its competition in terms of media exportation. Animation and literature are worldwide economical goods, but Japanese animation and literature have successfully entered the international market, since the type of export is unique to them; a recognizable aesthetic, or the expectation for. clean-cut, well-thought product with higher quality. Of course, since CJ uses other non-material resources as exports, things like food, ideals, rules and more need to be considered as part of this success. In this context, other states (countries) will feel the need to compete for this influence on the market, so competition fuels competition. Policies like CJ need to take this into account, because it can change how Japan might uphold relations with different territories according to how much of a threat they present. To put it in simpler words, if neighbouring countries like China, that have cheap labour and fast production, use media as export too, how can Japan succeed? If countries like the U.S start to produce animation, getting inspired, that may well be the loss of market relations for this type of export. Competition also fuels inspiration. So, other government offices can start to push for bigger internal production of non-material (cultural) goods for exportation, and this copy and paste system can be a threat to culture promotion and the "cool" Japan, since a country can produce their own "cool" products.

In terms of politics, Japan suffers from partly its past mistakes from WWII and the post-war period, but generally from exclusionist (racist) policies. This means that certain countries might be interested in what Japan can offer on a hypothetical level, but government relations are not in a good place. A particular case that comes to mind is the issue of comfort women in South Korea; it refers to the system of sexual slavery created and controlled by the Imperial Japanese government between 1932 and 1945 (Kim et al.). It stands as a non-resolved issue, due to the fact that there has been no move to recognize nor apologize to the Korean public for the atrocities that Japanese soldiers committed against these young girls and women alike. Because of this reticence to assume responsibility, South Korea-Japan relations hold tension. Now, if Japan asks for input on how to appeal to Korean people, they might be hesitant to help. Latent political tension is very important to keep in mind for IR theory, since state actors exist in the context of history. This provides both failures and successes across time, so one actor always loses more than they bargained for and one wins. As such, South Korea could refuse to provide import material or refuse exports coming in until Japan officially apologizes. And that is when Japan loses its "cool" factor, and loses traction with a major popular culture manufacturer like South Korea (Kim 2016).

The current state of affairs in Japan is that of a country that pushes back against (over)tourism, diversification of youth culture and rejection of social rights like those of the LGBTQ community. For more liberal leaning states, this can lead to a vision of Japan slowly closing off from the world again[9], a sentiment of self-exclusion from IR affairs. This return to past ideas is not compatible with CJ. Since Cool Japan aims towards an external audience, it needs to keep in mind modern mass appeal. A common goal of connecting cultures can not be achieved if the government advocates for an "us vs them" or East vs West ideology. Competition in CJ is good for developing it against current times, and that is why revisions are a good thing. However, we have to be critical of how many revisions it has taken to present a diplomatic strategy with positive results (i.e. an interest from international actors), and just how many can be proposed that will also make these smaller social groups content[10]. Misrepresenting Japan, which can lead to disillusionment from tourists, is very easy, especially in current times. Some

[9] Japanese policy of 鎖国, read "sakoku", implemented during the Edo period (1603-1867) that enforced self-isolation from foreign powers in the early 17th century.
[10] Yasuo Takao. "Local Levels of Participation in Japan's Foreign Aid and Cooperation: Issues Arising from Decentralized International Cooperation." *Asian Survey* 54, no. 3 (2014): 540–64.

tourists don't feel welcome, and their idea of a "cool" Japan shatters once they experience racism, even after spending big sums of money on a holiday.

The Japanese (political, social) identity is a difficult topic to approach from a western standpoint, precisely because the image we make of the country is that which has been provided. That is, competition for Japan is filtered through initiatives like CJ, that aim to please a certain audience. So our idea of Japan is provided by the country itself. Thinking of Japan, the concepts of respect, social balance, and a safety net come up first, instead of relevant topics like failing international relations or social discrimination. Transparency is key to honest IR action. This is not to say only Japan is at fault. On the contrary, the imagery of politics is distorted everywhere. There are non-Japanese ideals that are also wrong, but since we are talking about the politics of CJ, it is appropriate to center our attention on how Cool Japan is less sustainable in a less open (conservative-leaning) political sphere.

2.3. A critical perspective

The promotion of Japan as a product, as part of the consumerist society is what ultimately leads to overcrowding and excessive tourism in certain areas[11]. Because the sentiment is to treat Japan like a theme park, a display of both material and non-physical attributes, CJ does provide an insight into why some branches of Japanese society advocate for a less relaxed foreign policy. Globalisation is important in such conversations (Mc Gray 2002) since the spread of any culture to the international stage affects it in such a way that we are creating a world that is gradually more connected. Inspiration is what fuels novelty, and in a world where competition means seeing who can come up with new ideas (for personal gain) faster, promoting Japanese culture to be superior because of originality is not sustainable. CJ is an inaccurate reflection of society, therefore, because it gets inspired by their own ideas, and that reduces the margin of novelty that Japanese goods can achieve in competition with other influential territories, like East Asian countries and the USA.

What this means is that the criticism and subsequent action over popular culture, be it as an export or import, struggles to reflect the true feelings of the Japanese people[12].

[11] See Annex, Figure 2.
[12] 本音 read "honne" and 建前 read "tatemae", two concepts that express one's real intentions or voice, and the public position or attitude (as opposed to private thoughts). Definition found at Shirabe Jisho online.

People are what form culture, and if not all that is considered culture feels represented, it is because the target audience needs to change from intrinsically Japanese to global, and the methods used are not exactly correct. I believe Cool Japan as a diplomatic strategy lacks perspective.

How good can CJ be in bringing out the best of Japan, if it pointedly ignores what the masses consider interesting? There are many videos and media on the internet that give insight into the "real" Japan, like with the host culture and nightlife, which are just as much a part of society, if a taboo for Japanese conversations. What is considered 日本的 (read *nihonteki*), or typically Japanese (Shirabe Jisho, online Japanese language dictionary) is not found in CJ, at least not entirely. That which is typically Japanese also includes the not so "kawaii" things, like sex culture with the cult to the school girl[13] and consent rules, seen in both young and older people going into debt because of big spending on host and hostess clubs, or similarly the loneliness of society despite the amount of population and similar ideas. That is why we need to ask ourselves if all that CJ presents is good. Is all Japanese food tasty, or does it just have a big "made in Japan" sticker stuck to the front? Is all anime good, or is it just massly produced for an audience that will consume it to feel closer to a culture that actively resents them? The criticism of Cool Japan for a successful diplomacy has many layers, since it depends on how varied Japanese culture becomes with time. We should question its capability. It will not be a "good" strategy until the government considers that the bad and the ugly are hurdles, not immovable objects; a critical perspective of CJ aims for gradual but successful change, and not fast and harsh policies that insist on hiding part of what makes Japan so interesting for IR theory. Thus, Japan would end up losing mass appeal, and so, the possibility to affect the market like bigger economic powers do.

[13] Matt Alt, "Manga. arcades y karaokes. Cómo la cultura pop japonesa reinventó el mundo". Translated by Carlos Díaz Romero. (Península 2022) 233-236

3. CRITICISMS, REVISIONS AND THE FUTURE

The "Cool Japan" strategy has gone through many revisions, and on the surface, represents the government putting in the work to better their approach and application of the system to everyday life, which we know adapts to the times. Revisions of diplomatic systems, policies, laws and any other document pertaining to government action are fundamental for a successful diplomacy and subsequent action, since they can bring issues to light as real-life applications take effect. However, the latest CJ revision[14]available to the public seems like a cop-out on the government's part. By this I mean that it is very surface level, full of future plans without much panning out, and also presents some contradictions in terms of previously relevant instances like the relationship between the public and private sectors, or similarly, relations with the West.

3.1. Notable faults of Cool Japan

To the first point, public entities and private organizations working together is nothing new for politics. Nevertheless, the New Cool Japan strategy aims to promote individuals such as visual artists who create the market assets CJ itself uses as a selling point (to note, manga, anime, ad campaigns, translation work and similar instances[15]), the same ones who rely on the profits promised by the private sector handling their business. Although, if these individuals were to be at the forefront of providing assets, wouldn't the government then have to push back to gain control over them, so their liberties wouldn't generate social conflict, such as uprisings advocating for the working class? This is a typical pattern in public-private relations, a push-and-pull of power imbalances. McCabe (2018) writes about this in the Socialist Alternative, citing Karl Marx, and stating that "the contradictions and antagonisms in social relations and the inherent instability and conflict arising from the fundamental division of the world into those who own capital and exploit others, and those who own little or nothing and are exploited; namely, capitalists and workers", thus demonstrating that political and social living coexist together, although not necessarily in harmony.

[14] Published under the name of "New CJ Strategy 2024" by the Cabinet Office. Also see Annex, Figure 6 and 7 for the official outline.
[15] Alwazna, Rafat Y. "Is Translation an Art, Science or Both?". University of Sharjah Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2013).

Non-material exports work just as well to promote government initiatives, and a "cool" Japan can be defined by goods of all categories, since they rely on human production in any case. Some examples include harmony as a society-defining characteristic, or education and what it lacks and excels in. The most widely used language globally is English, a Lingua Franca (Cogo n.d.), and yet Japan faces challenges that persist in achieving widespread English proficiency (Anant Patankar, D. 2025). How can trade, business and logistics for international appeal then be achieved, if this issue is not prevalent in discussions of CJ and what revisions can improve on? Non-material goods are not utilized properly in the framing of CJ. To the point of relations with the West, and why they don't provide the expected results (economically, mostly, since we always have to keep in mind that CJ works if it produces profit[16]), Cool Japan did not put enough focus on outside perspective when it was first started, so it had to gradually change its approach, while at the same time expecting immediate profitable results. Assets are an economical concept, while fields of study like IR put more emphasis on what can bring results without the need of a calculator. For all that Cool Japan misses in its development, it is fair to say it does a good job of incorporating the different areas of government work into a cohesive outline. But on the other hand, while doing so it loses a focal point for successful strategies of soft power, which come down yet again to discerning what exactly can appeal to the diversification of other cultures; what a singular person finds attractive is not a representation of their country, but it is a solid starting point for further research. Thus, their mass international appeal lacked perspective. This contradiction between groups is prevalent in the criticism of CJ and its accomplishments and setbacks.

3.2. Further contradictions

Tourism, as previously mentioned, can serve to revive Japan and its economic means, but CJ fails to interpret social voices regarding what "hotspots" are worth promoting. Hotspots can range from constructions, such as shrines or other religious standalones, all the way to seemingly mundane things (to the Japanese people) like public baths. There are many tranquility retreats being advertised online, with routes that follow natural "onsens" through a 3-day trip (operated from Japan through organizations like JNTO). This is all fine and good, but the international public presents more niche interests regarding the "coolness" of Japan. Since it is an abstract concept, and relies on

[16] See Annex Figures 6 & 7 for further explanation of how CJ presents profit.

person-to-person perspective, what one target audience finds appealing may just be displeasing to another group. We can think about it simpler ways; 牛タン (read *gyutan*) or charcoal-grilled beef tongue is a nationwide enjoyed dish, and yet, any outsider that adheres to Hinduism might find it offensive to be presented with this menu item, according to their religious beliefs to honor cows. While perspective is indeed abstract, and Japan may argue through CJ that a Japanese person should be an expert in what makes their country interesting, actively wanting to be part of a big international market needs proper deliberation on the shortcomings of a nation, and forward action in regards to input against the amount of output they provide. Some outputs can be less explicit, like homogeny, which persists as an ideology for the Japanese, even though it has been labeled as a myth more and more with time (Burgess 2010). It is precisely this spread of misinformation that is to the detriment of soft power strategies like CJ. The output of material and non-material products that become popular relies on authenticity, and Japan has worked to maintain its Japaneseness in cultural exports for years (Farelly-Spain et al. 2023). The concept of the status quo is intrinsic to understanding Japan, but it has become bigger than can be managed, a reason to denounce the "others", which happen to be the audience CJ aims to please. If a country is not ready to host other ways of thinking, stemming from a deep-rooted national perception, it will be difficult for it to emerge into a multicultural world.

One key aspect to be found in how the government pushes for CJ to be at the forefront of soft power strategies is expectations against reality. We have seen a great deal of Japan in politics and the IR stage, and how it manages government action, strategy and promotion. Promotion here means that it expects to be able to show itself through a Japanese lens, as evidenced by the different approaches taken depending on the social, economical, political or cultural development it aims for. So, destining resources towards language education, bigger use of the Cool Japan Fund, etc. Further, a common goal is looking out for the future of the nation. With that, another contradiction arises regarding the renewed CJ proposal. If the input needed for the output of resources relies on public opinion, we need to question what a country's "public" means, and why it is an exclusionary term in the context of this initiative. The "othering" of social groups exists in both national and international settings[17], which just signifies that there

[17] For further information see Mito Takeuchi, "A Case Study of "Othering" in Japanese Schools: Rhetoric and Reality", Chapter 2, 86-92.

is an underlying fear of change behind diplomatic action in Japan. How can a common goal be achieved here, if the commune does not agree on basic concepts like the definition of society? The world is becoming increasingly multicultural, as information is readily available, end-to-end communication develops alongside technology and human capital is distributed to many different places regardless of our origins. CJ would benefit from taking into account diversity within the country as much as international input, since permanent residents of foreign origin, temporary workers and country "naturals" deem different occurrences politically relevant. Keeping in mind this diversification could work to create a more thorough action plan. This is all, of course, in the framework of using soft power for better diplomacy; other disciplines such as sociology can not offer quantitative results, like monetary assets, that help data analysis of foreign policy work (Weed 2023).

To this point, we can argue that the revisions that have been already implemented suffer from repetition, and a lack of results as a consequence. Rather, these new ideas on improvement will eventually cause fatigue for those IR actors that might have been initially interested, which would dwindle the necessary resources, like tourists and the revenue they bring. Cultural exhaustion could set in: the lack of diversification in CJ's approach does not reflect the changes happening in the actual "cool" Japan, and forfeits the opinion of the masses it tries to appeal to. On the contrary, it is creating aversion. Following this narrative, there would be nothing new being proposed for the market, prompting opposing (international market) actors to have bigger retention rates, and getting ahead in the competition.

3.3. The unclear vision of Cool Japan

There are many arguments to bring up when highlighting Cool Japan's faults, like an education system without international perspective, cultural mannerisms not adapting to societal evolution, failure to consider the inability to translate these for common understanding and others. Of course, there are more empirical signs of these shortcomings, such as lack of government funding and poor quantitative results in stakeholders' interests (Cabinet Office 2024). While CJ is diplomatic in nature, it's difficult to separate it from the economical resolutions it also presents, since funding is crucial to continue investing in revisions, even while, Gupta (2026) notes, the country faces financial debt and a domestic affordability crisis. This dependence on regulating expenditure also adds to the pressure of deciding to continue or forfeit the initiative.

Regardless, the overall resolution for these troubles is the lack of perspective CJ presents. Through the inaccurate reflection of what conforms to the society elements it uses for exports, namely culture, it can't improve. Using it without a clear vision of what it wants for the future, Cool Japan begins to feel like a buzz-word that tries to be bigger than its capabilities. This is not a bad approach to bettering diplomatic initiatives, since the bigger the scope of the International Stage is, the more actors are involved and can provide good influence or innovative resolutions to conflict that may arise. However, CJ is stuck in a loop; empty promises of change that don't provide the projected outcome (better diplomacy and related gains) make it so the government initiative finds short-term solutions for a goal only achievable in the long-term. The failure to provide fast solutions deters public interest, and the cycle begins all over again. To sum up, the very structure of CJ has not changed significantly after 10 years, and it will not be successful unless it reorganizes its priorities and brings about countable results soon.

CONCLUSIONS

We can determine that Cool Japan, for now, is not a matter of action but of approach. The root of the problem needs to be identified: a bad foundation can not yield a positive outcome because it lacks structure, point of view and organization. To this we can vouch for countries like the United Kingdom, which uses a system that delegates certain work to government offices or departments to manage spending or strategy, instead of the public-private tandem system that Japan goes for (CJF). The perception of the government does not equal reality, and their expectations therefore aren't fulfilled. How the public receives and reacts to such inputs should be how the country determines the perspective it should take with CJ, provided their goal is to be able to do it all and to a satisfactory degree. Audiences should be at the forefront of perspective planning.

When the governmental goal is of big dimensions, like CJ aims to please both the private and public sectors which are largely at odds, vagueness should be avoided. I argue it is detrimental to diplomatic action, since target audiences include foreign states with different perceptions of culture, economy, society and such disciplines. The more diversification of participating states in CJ, the more adapting Japan will have to do if it wants to fulfill its goal of influencing (with soft power strategies). As stated previously, long term goals are unattainable so long as short-term action is put to the forefront, because it is not realistic to influence big powers in the IR system through actions that don't reflect a clear direction. The fact that CJ has gone through many revisions is not necessarily the greatest loss it has, rather, it suffers most from a bad foundation and its volatility. If a big power in the IR system puts its trust in a volatile strategy like CJ, it takes a big risk, whether that be because of the lending of economic resources, or non-material aspects like credibility amongst its peers. Instead, if CJ would have a stronger foundation, making it seem as steady in its growth, other actors would feel reassured. Further cooperation, which is a key concept in IR theory for soft power strategies, would come easier.

Finally, I want to bring attention to how Japanese history could help understand the motivation behind the strategy and the future of Cool Japan, and any possible diplomatic strategies that may follow. Japan has experienced major changes in small periods of time since the end of WWII, but I would like to highlight the *sakoku* period (1633-1868), which saw the country closed off from foreign influence and enacted an

“us vs them” way of thinking. This avoidance/reticence against all that was not Japanese is a very plausible starting point in understanding current political trends, like the ascension to power of far-right parties, and the feeling of community that has been fostered by Japanese nationals, which denounces impurity and elevates tradition by maintaining the past and present in harmony. While this approach is partly what defines the culture we study today, it also continues to land Japan at a disadvantage in International Relations; modernity can not be embraced fully, with all of its challenges, if we don’t allow for flexibility in how we tackle the state of affairs. If the reflection of the country’s efforts to achieve international influence are to be interpreted through Cool Japan, further policy efforts should be put in place to start from the ground up, and focus on what I would like to preemptively call an “us and them” strategy. This fresh start would also provide a strong foundation for future diplomatic ventures involving the “other” state actors, which is crucial in an increasingly interconnected world.

ANNEX



Figure 1. Provided by Tokyo Times through Google Images, n.d. tokyotimes.org. "Japanese only" sign in a shop in Tokyo.



Figure 2. Provided by Ariadna Fornos, September 24, 2024. View of busy Shibuya crossing in Tokyo from Shibuya Scramble Square observatory.

Provided by the Statistics Bureau of Japan 2021. Survey sample on Time Use and Leisure Activities. Consult at: https://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/shakai/2021/pdf/qub.pdf



Figure 3. Provided by Japan Cabinet Office, June 2, 2025. Program for Promotion of Foreign Direct Investment in Japan 2025 (Summary).

Provided by 日本銀行 Bank of Japan, May 22, 2026. Trade data on Real Exports and Real Imports. Consult at:https://www.boj.or.jp/en/research/research_data/reri/reri.pdf

Provided by animepilgrimage.com, n.d. Interactive Map of Anime Real-Life Location Map, an interesting way for Japanese animation fans to discover the country's hotspots. Consult at: https://www.animepilgrimage.com/ja/maps?c=35.67500%2C139.74400&z=2.50

Provided by Japan House London, ca. 2024. Interactive map for each of Japan's prefecture's signature dishes. Created for further information on Japanese cuisine during the exposition Looks Delicious! Japan's food replica culture (1 October 2024 - 16 February 2025 Consult at: https://www.japanhouselondon.uk/read-and-watch/interactive-map-of-japan/



Figure 5. Provided by Main Figure x. Provided by EXPO 2025 大阪・関西万博公式Webサイト. Promotional Images and catchprases for the international EXPO2025 at Osaka, Kansai, Japan, depicting MYAKU-MYAKU, the official character of the Expo.

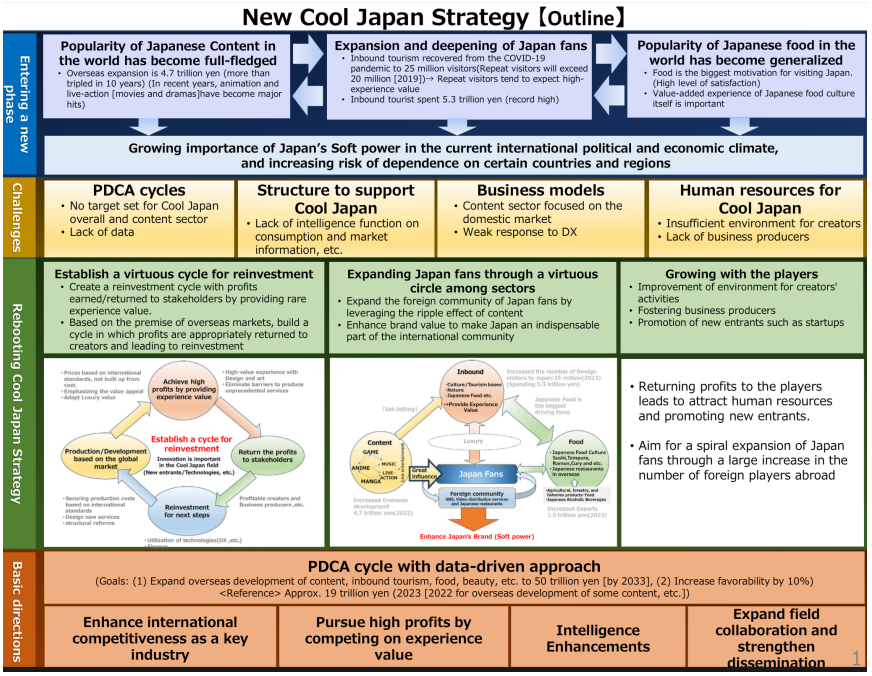

Figure 6. Provided by Japan Cabinet Office, 2024. First half of the outline for the New Cool Japan Strategy.

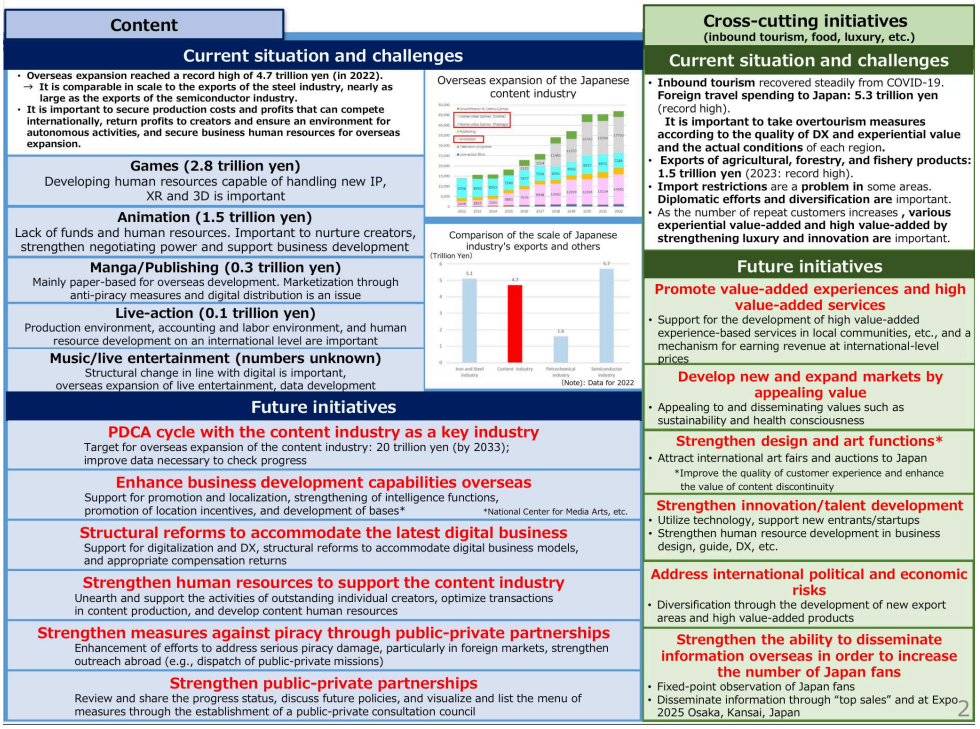

Figure 7. Provided by Japan Cabinet Office, 2024. Second half of the outline for the New Cool Japan Strategy.

REFERENCES

Alt, Matt. “Manga, arcades y karaokes. Cómo la cultura pop japonesa reinventó el mundo”. Translated by Carlos Díaz Romero. *Península* (2022). ISBN-13 978-8411000505.

Alwazna, Rafat Y. “Is Translation an Art, Science or Both?”. *University of Sharjah Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2013). Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Rafat-Alwazna/publication/280261318_Is_Translation_an_Art_Science_or_Both/links/5d47f878299bf1995b6648c9/Is-Translation-an-Art-Science-or-Both.pdf?origin=publication_detail&_tp=eyJjb250ZXh0Ijp7ImZpcnN0UGFnZSI6InB1YmxpY2F0aW9uIiwicGFnZSI6InB1YmxpY2F0aW9uRG93bmxvYWQiLCJwcmV2aW91c1BhZ2UiOiJwdWJsaWNhdGlvbiJ9fQ

Anant Patankar, Diwakar. “The Evolution of English Language Learning in. Japan: A Historical and Statistical Analysis”. *International Journal of Progressive Research in Engineering Management and Science (IJPREMS)*, Vol. 05, Issue 01, pp.1411-1420 (January 2025). Available at: https://www.ijprems.com/ijprems-paper/the-evolution-of-english-language-learning-in-japan-a-historical-and-statistical-analysis

Arase, David. “Public-Private Sector Interest Coordination in Japan’s ODA.” *Pacific Affairs* 67, no. 2 (1994): 171–99. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/2759416.

Berton, Peter. “How Unique Is Japanese Negotiating Behavior?” *Japan Review*, no. 10 (1998): 151–61. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/25791022.

Biedma, L et. al. “ESS guidelines on revision policy for PEEIs”. European Commission, eurostat. *Methodologies and Working Papers Collection* (2013 edition). PDF Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3859598/5935517/KS-RA-13-016-EN.PDF

Burgess, Christopher James. 2010. “The ‘Illusion’ of Homogeneous Japan and National Character: Discourse as a Tool to Transcend the ‘Myth’ vs. ‘Reality’ Binary.” *Japan Focus* 8 (9). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1017/s1557466010009381.

Cabinet Office. “Cool Japan Strategy”. (2019), Available at: https://www.cao.go.jp/cool_japan/english/main_document_2019.pdf.

Cabinet Office. “New Cool Japan Strategy Intellectual Property Strategy Headquarters.” (2024). Available at: https://www.cao.go.jp/cool_japan/english/main_document_2024.pdf.

Callery, Katelin M., "THE ACCELERATION OF THE FASHION TREND CYCLE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA". *Selected Honors Theses*. 175 (2023). Available at: https://firescholars.seu.edu/honors/175

Capitalmind - Portfolio Management Service. “Inside Japan’s 1980s Asset Price Bubble: The Lost Decades”. (July 17, 2024). Available at: https://www.capitalmind.in/insights/lost-decades-japan-1980s-asset-price-bubble.

Chung, Ah-Young. “Japanese Pop Culture Boom. Inspiring South Korean Entertainment Industry”. *JAPAN SPOTLIGHT. Cover story. Japanese Culture: Source of Power on World Stage?* 4 (September/October 2009). Available at: https://www.jef.or.jp/journal/pdf/167th_cover04.pdf

Cogo, Alessia. “What is English as a Lingua Franca? An introduction to the field”. *Goldsmiths, University of London*, n.d. Available at: https://www.gold.ac.uk/glits-e/back-issues/english-as-a-lingua-franca/

Cool Japan Fund Official Website. Available at: https://www.cj-fund.co.jp/en/.

Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox Online. Available at: https://www.cyber-diplomacy-toolbox.com/Diplomacy.html

DALIOT-BUL, Michal. "Japan Brand Strategy: The Taming of 'Cool Japan' and the Challenges of Cultural Planning in a Postmodern Age." *Social Science Japan Journal* 12, no. 2 (2009): 247–66. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/40649685.

Dinnie, Keith. "JAPAN'S NATION BRANDING: RECENT EVOLUTION and POTENTIAL FUTURE PATHS". (2008). Available at: https://www.brandhorizons.com/papers/Dinnie_JapanNB.pdf.

Djenar, Dwi Noverini, Michael C. Ewing, and Howard Manns. "Style, Intersubjectivity and Youth Sociability." *Style and Intersubjectivity in Youth Interaction*, 1st ed., 1–22. De Gruyter (2018). Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvbkk0b0.9.

Garrido, Lorenzo. "Japón: Del PIB Ascendente al Estancamiento Secular". For the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. *La Economía Internacional En El Siglo XXI* (2012). ISBN-13 978-84-95531-54-4. Available at: https://dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/articulo/4125444.pdf

Gómez Aragón, Anjhara. "Japón y su relación con Occidente. Conmemoración de los 400 años de relaciones España-Japón". *Universidad Internacional de Andalucía* (2014). ISBN-13 978-847993-248-0. Available at: https://dspace.unia.es/server/api/core/bitstreams/67a9bbdd-d51b-4c58-971a-2623d2fe8f15/content

Gray, Colin S. "HARD POWER AND SOFT POWER: THE UTILITY OF MILITARY FORCE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF POLICY IN THE 21ST CENTURY." *Strategic*

Studies Institute, US Army War College (2011). Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep11431.

Hoffmann, Stanley. "Raymond Aron and the Theory of International Relations." *International Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (1985): 13–27. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/2600476

Intal, Ponciano. "East Asia's Transformation and Regional Architecture." In *Asian Economic Integration in an Era of Global Uncertainty*, edited by SHIRO ARMSTRONG and TOM WESTLAND, 235–58. ANU Press (2018). Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt20krz01.16.

International Crisis Group. "Evolution of Japan's Defence Policies." *Embracing Arms: Securing Japan in a "New Era of Crisis."* International Crisis Group (2025). Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep74817.5.

J.P. Morgan "Fiscal Fireworks: How Debt Is Rewriting the Rules for the US and Japan | J.P. Morgan." *Jpmorgan.com* (2024). Available at: https://www.jpmorgan.com/insights/markets-and-economy/top-market-takeaways/tmt-fiscal-fireworks-how-debt-is-rewriting-the-rules-for-the-us-and-japan.

Kawashima, Nobuko. "Further Development of the Entertainment Industry: Issues to Be Reconsidered Following "Reboot" of the Cool Japan Strategy". *Japan SPOTLIGHT* (2025). PDF Available at: https://www.jef.or.jp/journal/pdf/260th_Cover_Story_05.pdf

Kim, Jungsoo. "Success without Design: Hallyu. (Korean Wave) and Its Implications for Cultural Policy". The Korean Journal of Policy Studies, Vol.31, No.3, pp. 101-118 (2016). Available at: https://www.e-jps.org/archive/view_article?pid=jps-31-3-101

Kim et al. “Teaching about the Comfort Women during World War II and the Use of Personal Stories of the Victims”. *EDUCATION ABOUT ASIA* Vol.24 No.3 (2019).

Klein, Donald W. “Japan 1979: The Second Oil Crisis.” *Asian Survey* 20, no. 1 (1980): 42–52. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/2644006.

Le Thu Trang. “Individualism in Europe: A Comparison to Asia.” *International Journal of Social Science Educ[A]Tion Research Studies/International Journal of Social Science and Education Research Studies* 04, 05 (2024). Available at: https://doi.org/10.55677/ijssers/v04i5y2024-09.

Farrelly-Spain, Luke and Supervisor Norén-Nilsson, Astrid. “Master’s Programme in Asian Studies Spring Semester 2023 Not so Cool Japan? Exploring the Perceptions of Contemporary Japan among Euro-American Exchange Students.” Available at: https://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordOId=9127040&fileOId=9127051.

Martín Maglio, F. “LA GUERRA DE COREA” Fmmeducacion.com (2006). Available at: https://historiauniversal748.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/la-guerra-de-corea.pdf

McCabe, Eddie. 2018. “Karl Marx’s Theory of Class Struggle: The Working Class & Revolution.” *Socialist Alternative* (May 6, 2018). Available at: https://www.socialistalternative.org/2018/05/05/karl-marxs-theory-class-struggle-working-class-revolution/.

McDonald, Paul. “Japan’s Oil: Coping with Insecurity.” *The World Today* 42, no. 8/9 (1986): 147–49. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/40395848.

McGray, Douglas. “Japan’s Gross National Cool.” Foreign Policy, no. 130 (2002): 44–54. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/3183487.

Merriam-Webster. 2025. “Merriam-Webster Dictionary.” *Merriam-Webster.com* (2025). Available at: https://www.merriam-webster.com.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan. “Diplomatic Bluebook 2025. Japanese Diplomacy and International Situation in 2024”. PDF available at: https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://www.mx.emb-japan.go.jp/files/100640672.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwjZ9r-pnfqSAxVMlP0HHRCXC6wQFnoECGQQAQ&usg=AOvVaw01M0ThiEi3YSlUfO12a1T-

Ministry of Justice, Japan 2026. “The Constitution of Japan”. Via *Japanese Law Translation*. Available at: https://www.japaneselawtranslation.go.jp/en/laws/view/174

Munez, Everett. “Sakoku, Japanese Isolation Policy”. *Britannica*, n.d. Available at: https://www.britannica.com/topic/sakoku

中野 Nakano. 2016. “Sharing Cool Japan Aesthetics and Techniques with the World–the Cool Japan Fund’s Investment Strategy by Mr. Nobuyuki Ota, Cool Japan Fund CEO | 公益財団法人フォーリン・プレスセンター（FPCJ）”. 公益財団法人フォーリン・プレスセンター（FPCJ）｜「日本の今」を、世界のメディアへ。取材と広報を支援する情報発信サイト. (January 12, 2016). Available at: https://fpcj.jp/en/worldnews-en/briefings-en/p=39376/.

Noguchi, Yukio. "The 'Bubble' and Economic Policies in the 1980s." *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 20, no. 2 (1994): 291–329. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/133196.

Nye, Joseph S. "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008): 94–109. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/25097996.

Oficina Nacional de Turismo de Japón. "GUIA. Escapadas de relax en Japón". *JNTO*, n.d. Available at: https://www.japan.travel/es/guide/relaxing-getaways/

Ollman, Bertell. "Marx's Use of 'Class.'" *American Journal of Sociology* 73, no. 5 (1968): 573–80. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2775559.

Prime Minister of Japan and His Office. "The Constitution of Japan" (1947). Available as a document online at: https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html

Santiago Iglesias, José Andrés. "Japón imaginado. El imaginario manganime y la peregrinación mediática en el marco de la estrategia "Cool Japan". *Mirai. Estudios Japoneses*. No.1 (2017): 253-262. Available at: https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=6932120

Sato, Kumiko. "FROM HELLO KITTY TO COD ROE KEWPIE. A Postwar Cultural History of Cuteness in Japan." *Education About Asia. Association For Asian Studies*. Volume 14, No.2 (2009). Available at:

https://www.asianstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/from-hello-kitty-to-cod-roe-kewpie-a-postwar-cultural-history-of-cuteness-in-japanA.pdf

Shimazu, Naoko. “Popular Representations of the Past: The Case of Postwar Japan.” *Journal of Contemporary History*38, no. 1 (2003): 101–16. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3180699.

衆議院 Shugiin The House of Representatives, Japan. “The Constitution of Japan”, n.d. Available at: https://www.shugiin.go.jp/internet/itdb_english.nsf/html/statics/english/constitution_e.htm

首相官邸 Shusoukantei Prime Minister’s Office of Japan. “高市内閣総理大臣記者会見 or Press Conference by Prime Minister TAKAICHI Sanae”. Also translated as “Policy Speech by Prime Minister TAKAICHI Sanae to the 221st Session of the Diet”. (February 19, 2026). Available at: https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/105/statement/2026/0218kaiken.html

Simon, Constantin, Alexis Bregere and Ryusuke Murata. Adapted by Nicolas Guillot. “Japón: un primer paso hacia la igualdad para las personas LGBTIQ+ en Tokio”, *FRANCE 24*, 05:36, (January 29, 2023). Available at: https://www.france24.com/es/programas/en-foco/20230129-japón-un-primer-paso-hacia-la-igualdad-para-las-personas-lgbtiq-en-tokio

Song et al. “THE CHINESE ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION. VIEWS FROM YOUNG ECONOMISTS”. Australian National University Press (2019). pp. 21-35 Available at: https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/24737/chineseeconomic.pdf;jsessionid=383E1280DB821AA3DF2CB71348C48F28?sequence=1

Statistics Bureau of Japan. “Outline of the 2021 Survey on Time Use and Leisure Activities”. *1996 Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication* (2021). Available at: https://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/shakai/2021/gaiyo.html

Sweet Escape Japan. “Japan’s Diverse subcultures,” n.d. Available at: https://sweetescapejapan.com/articles/15

Takafusa, Nakamura. “An Economy in Search of Stable Growth: Japan since the Oil Crisis.” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, no. 1 (1980): 155–78. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/132003.

Takao, Yasuo. “Local Levels of Participation in Japan’s Foreign Aid and Cooperation: Issues Arising from Decentralized International Cooperation.” *Asian Survey* 54, no. 3 (2014): 540–64. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2014.54.3.540.

Takeuchi, Mito. “A Case Study of “Othering” in Japanese Schools: Rhetoric and Reality”. *College of Education of Ohio University* (2009). Available at: https://etd.ohiolink.edu/acprod/odb_etd/ws/send_file/send?accession=ohiou1242256335&disposition=inline

Tanaka, Akihiko. “Seven Chapters on Japanese Modernization. Chapter 3. Japan after WWII”. JICA Japan International Cooperation Agency. *Japanese Modernization Lecture Series.* (2019-). Available at: https://www.jica.go.jp/english/activities/schemes/dsp-chair/chair/modernization/index.html

Tevdovski, Dragan, Joana Madjoska, Petar Jolakoski, Branimir Jovanovic, and Viktor Stojkoski. 2020. "Firm Profits and Government Activity: An Empirical Investigation." *SSRN Electronic Journal*. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3676649.

Togo, Kazuhiko. "The Assertive Conservative Right in Japan: Their Formation and Perspective." *The SAIS Review of International Affairs* 30, no. 1 (2010): 77–89. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/27000212.

Tran, Sharon. "*Kawaii* Asian Girls Save the Day! Animating a Minor Politics of Care." *MELUS* 43, no. 3 (2018): 19–41. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/26566151.

Valaskivi, Katja. "A brand new future? Cool Japan and the social imaginary of the branded nation". *Japan Forum* at Taylor & Francis Online (2013). Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09555803.2012.756538

Weed, Toby. 2023. "To Quantify or Not to Quantify? Foreign Policy Needs Measurement." *Fp21* (October 2, 2023). Available at: https://www.fp21.org/publications/foreign-policy-needs-measurement.

Whitelaw, Gavin H. "Konbini-Nation: The Rise of the Convenience Store in Post-Industrial Japan." In *Consuming Life in Post-Bubble Japan: A Transdisciplinary Perspective*, edited by Katarzyna J. Cwiertka and Ewa Machotka, 69–88. Amsterdam University Press (2018). Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv56fgjm

Yamamoto, Kana. "The myth of "Nihonjinron, homogeneity of Japan and its influence on the society". University of Leeds, *CER Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies* (2015). PDF Available at: https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://cers.

leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/97/2016/04/The-myth-of-%25E2%2580%259CNihonjinron%25E2%2580%259D-homogeneity-of-Japan-and-its-influence-on-the-society-Kana-Yamamoto.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwjlqe3Uu_mSAxWHhf0HHX0WO7IQFnoECHYQAQ&usg=AOvVaw07G1YpPLaDN8r5DR4_qbs-