

**THE GLOBAL SUCCESS STORY OF JAPAN'S SOFT POWER:
DEBATING 'COOL JAPAN' AS A MODEL FOR TURKISH SOFT POWER
PROJECTION**

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Abstract: There is an ever-growing scholarly literature on various aspects of the soft power of Turkey as this subject has been among the most popular and widely studied aspects of Turkish Foreign Policy in the early 21st century. Yet, comparative works examining the effectiveness of Turkish soft power versus other notable soft powers are still relatively hard to find. Moreover, there is an even more notable gap in the literature in terms of discussing what exactly enables the strategies of “established soft powers” (e.g. U.S., UK, France, Germany, and Japan) to be more successful than that of Turkey, and to discuss what Turkish policy-makers could possibly learn from these tried and tested methods. In the centennial anniversary of the Republic of Turkey in 2023, the time may have come for the Turkish intelligentsia and government to acknowledge the notable rise of Turkish soft power since the 1990s, but also re-think of the ways in which the current vision could be substantially improved in light of valuable lessons drawn from global soft power success stories such as Japan. In this article, I will argue that the case of Japan proves that soft power is not just a natural outcome of a country's vast hard power reserves (e.g. economic power in the manner of Gross Domestic Product), but is a phenomenon that could be “designed” – to a large extent – by a government. Furthermore, Japan's various successful policies such as the ‘Cool Japan’ program and Tokyo's systematic cultural and economic diplomacy offers valuable blueprints for Turkish soft power to be re-designed in our time.

Keywords: *Japanese soft power, Cultural diplomacy, Cool Japan, Turkish soft power, Turkish Foreign Policy.*

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JAPONYA’NIN YUMUŞAK GÜCÜNÜN KÜRESEL BAŞARI ÖYKÜSÜ: TÜRKİYE’NİN YUMUŞAK GÜÇ STRATEJİSİ İÇİN BİR MODEL OLARAK ‘COOL JAPONYA’YI TARTIŞMAK

Öz: İçinde bulunduğumuz erken 21. yüzyılda Türk dış politikasının en popüler ve en çok çalışılan yönlerinden biri Türkiye’nin yumuşak gücünün çeşitli yönleri olduğu için, doğal olarak konu üzerine sürekli genişlemekte olan kapsamlı bir akademik literatür oluşmuştur. Buna rağmen, Türkiye’nin yumuşak gücünü dünyanın diğer hatırı sayılı yumuşak güçleriyle kıyaslamalı olarak ele alan çalışmalar bulmak halen nispeten zordur. Dahası, “büyük yumuşak güçlerin” (örneğin ABD, Birleşik Krallık, Fransa, Almanya ve Japonya) stratejilerinin bu alanda Türkiye’ninkinden daha başarılı olmasını tam olarak neyin mümkün kıldığını tartışmak açısından mevcut literatürde dikkate değer bir boşluk bulunmaktadır. 2023 yılında Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nin yüzüncü yıl dönümünde, Türkiye aydınları ve hükümetinin 1990’lardan bu yana ülkenin yumuşak gücünün yükselişini kabul etmeleri, ancak aynı zamanda da mevcut yumuşak güç vizyonunun daha da geliştirilebileceği yolları yeniden düşünme zamanı gelmiş olabilir. Bu bağlamda, Türkiye’ye rehberlik yapmak açısından Japonya gibi küresel yumuşak güç başarı öykülerinden çıkarılacak derslerin değeri ve önemi büyük olacaktır. Bu makalede, Japonya örneğinden yola çıkarak yumuşak gücün yalnızca bir ülkenin geniş “sert güç” rezervlerinin (örneğin Gayri Safi Yurtiçi Hasıla üzerinden ölçülen ekonomik güç) doğal bir sonucu olmadığını, aynı zamanda da – büyük ölçüde bir hükümet tarafından – “tasarlanmış” bir olgu olduğunu iddia edeceğim. Ayrıca Japonya’nın ‘Cool Japonya’ programı ve Tokyo’nun sistematik kültürel ve ekonomik diplomasisi gibi çeşitli başarılı politikalarının günümüzde Türk yumuşak gücünün yeniden tasarlanması için değerli planlar sunduğunu ve bu anlamda Türkiye için çıkarabilecek dersleri tartışacağım.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Japonya’nın yumuşak gücü, Kültürel diplomasi, Cool Japonya, Türkiye’nin yumuşak gücü, Türk dış politikası.*

Introduction

Power has historically been connected with a country's quantity and quality of military force as well as its economic development level in inter-related fields of International Relations (IR), Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), and International Political Economy (IPE). Yet, the understanding of the concept – and measure – of power has developed throughout the course of history, leading to the conception of “*soft power*” to encapsulate the transformative evolution of global politics and economy from the end of the Second World War onwards. Joseph Nye, distinguished scholar and one of the leading thinkers of Neo-Liberal IR theory at our time, introduced the idea of “*soft power*” in the final decade of the 20th century.² Since then, soft power has become an essential component in comprehending global political and economic affairs, and a key tool by which governments attempt to exercise their influence on the international arena.

Nye notably distinguished “*soft power*” from the more conventional concept of “*hard power*” which refers to the use of coercion or force in order to accomplish one's aims.³ He described soft power as the capacity to influence the conduct of another country's behavior through the use of attraction and persuasion rather than through the use of force. The conclusion of the Cold War in 1991, a time defined by changing power relations and the need for a sophisticated understanding of international influence, served as the background for the development and popularization of Nye's soft power.

The introduction of soft power heralded the beginning of a fundamental paradigm change in the scholarly literature on IR. The ideas presented in Nye's numerous conceptual and empirical works on the subject have inspired more scholarly investigation and discussion over the decades, which have ultimately led to the concept's continued refinement and growth. By investigating the implications of soft power within the larger framework of international relations, notable experts such as Robert Keohane, Giulio Gallarotti, Niall Ferguson, and Susan Strange – as well as many critics – of the concept have made significant

² The term “*soft power*” was first introduced by Joseph Nye in his 1990 book entitled *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. See, for more details; Joseph S. Nye (1990), *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, New York: Basic Books; Joseph S. Nye (2002), “Hard and Soft Power in a Global Information Age”, in (eds. by M. Leonard) *Re-Ordering the World*, London: Foreign Policy Centre, pp. 2-10; Joseph S. Nye (2004), *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York: Public Affairs.

³ Joseph S. Nye (2002), “Hard and Soft Power in a Global Information Age”.

contributions to our understanding of the nature of global politics in the 21st century across the globe.⁴

The application of Nye's conceptual framework to the foreign policy, economy, and politics of many countries has led to a huge explosion of empirical studies on soft power in the last three decades. There is an ever-growing scholarly literature on various aspects of the soft power of Turkey as this subject has been among the most popular and widely studied aspects of Turkish Foreign Policy in the early 21st century.⁵ Yet, comparative works examining the effectiveness of Turkish soft power versus other notable soft powers are still relatively hard to find.⁶ Moreover, there is an even more notable gap in the literature in terms of discussing what exactly enables the strategies of "established soft powers" (e.g. U.S., UK, France, Germany, and Japan) to be more successful than that of Turkey, and to discuss what Turkish policy-makers could possibly learn from these tried and tested methods.⁷

In the centennial anniversary of the Republic of Turkey in 2023, the time may have come for the Turkish intelligentsia and government to acknowledge the notable rise of Turkish soft power since the 1990s, but also re-think of the ways in which the current vision could be

⁴ G. M. Gallarotti (2011), "Soft Power: What it is, Why it's Important, and the Conditions for its Effective Use", *Journal of Political Power*, 4 (1), pp. 25-47; Pınar Bilgin & Berican Eliş (2008), "Hard Power, Soft Power: Toward a More Realistic Power Analysis", *Insight Turkey*, 10 (2), pp. 5-20; Robert O. Keohane & Joseph S. Nye (1998), "Power and Interdependence in the Information Age", *Foreign Affairs*, 77 (5), pp. 81-94; Susan Strange (1996), *The Retreat of the State: The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Niall Ferguson (2004), "A World without Power", *Foreign Policy*, 143, pp. 32-39.

⁵ For some notable examples of this literature, Meliha Benli Altunışık (2008), "The Possibilities and Limits of Turkey's Soft Power in the Middle East", *Insight Turkey*, 10 (2), pp. 41-54; Tarık Oğuzlu (2007), "Soft Power in Turkish Foreign Policy", *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 61 (1), pp. 81-97; Emel Parlar Dal & Emre Erşen (2014), "Reassessing the 'Turkish Model' in the Post-Cold War Era: A Role Theory Perspective", *Turkish Studies*, 15 (2), pp. 258-282; Kemal Kirişçi (2011), "Turkey's 'Demonstrative Effect' and the Transformation of the Middle East", *Insight Turkey*, 13 (2), pp. 33-55; Tarık Oğuzlu (2013), "The Gezi Park Protests and Its Impact on Turkey's Soft-Power Abroad", *Ortadoğu Analiz*, 5 (55), pp. 10-15; Ziya Öniş (2011), "Multiple Faces of the New Turkish Foreign Policy: Underlying Dynamics and a Critique", *Insight Turkey*, 13 (1), pp. 47-65; G. Özkan & M. T. Demirtepe (2012), "Transformation of a Development Aid Agency: TİKA in a Changing Domestic and International Setting", *Turkish Studies*, 13 (4), pp. 647-664; Yohanan Benhaim & Kerem Öktem (2015), "The Rise and Fall of Turkey's Soft Power Discourse: Discourse in Foreign Policy under Davutoğlu and Erdoğan", *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, 21, pp. 1-25; Zafer Yörük & Pantelis Vatikiotis (2013), "Soft Power or Illusion of Hegemony: The Case of the Turkish Soap Opera 'Colonialism'", *International Journal of Communication*, 7, pp. 2361-2385; Michelangelo Guida & Oğuzhan Göksel (2018), "Re-Evaluating the Sources and Fragility of Turkey's Soft Power After the Arab Uprisings", in (eds. by Hüseyin Işıksal & Oğuzhan Göksel) *Turkey's Relations with the Middle East: Political Encounters after the Arab Spring*, London: Springer, pp. 151-168.

⁶ Albeit it is important to note that there are original studies in this regard. See, for example, Nesibe Hicret Soy (2016), *A Comparison of Turkey and Iran's Soft Power in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries*, Doha: Qatar University; Meliha Benli Altunışık (2017), "Turkey's Soft Power in a Comparative Context: The South Caucasus and the Middle East", in (eds. by Mehran Kamrava) *The Great Game in West Asia: Iran, Turkey and the South Caucasus*, London: Hurst Publishers; Mehmet Ali Koçakoğlu (2021), "Belt And Road Initiative and Turkey China Relationships Through Soft Power Concept", *Opus*, 18 (39), pp. 750-776.

⁷ One valuable recent publication in this context is the following: Yaprak Gürsoy (2023), "Reconsidering Britain's Soft Power: Lessons from the Perceptions of the Turkish Political Elite", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 36 (1), pp. 35-53.

substantially improved in light of valuable lessons drawn from global soft power success stories such as Japan. It is essential to keep in mind that the concept of soft power may evolve over time as a result of shifting geopolitical dynamics, shifting cultural norms, and changing global events such as wars and economic crises. The nations that possess the greatest degree of soft power may also vary as this is ultimately dependent on the subjective viewpoints of various specialists. Despite this, several think-tanks and research institutions throughout the world have attempted to put forward comprehensive objective studies to measure the levels of soft power possessed by all the nations on the planet, and they have been publishing yearly rankings as a result of these efforts. Global indexes created by Brand Finance⁸, ISSF (Indian Strategic Studies Forum)⁹, Monocle¹⁰, and Portland¹¹ are regarded as the most authoritative among the academic community because of how extensively they are used and how well they are organized.¹²

Regardless of which of the above indexes is preferred, Japan has been consistently ranked as a top-10 –if not top-5– soft power within the globe since the early 2000s. Various advantages contribute to Japan’s worldwide influence, allowing Tokyo to possess an undisputedly strong influence among the leading top soft powers of the world such as the U.S. and Germany. Traditional Japanese arts, literature, and food in addition to modern pop culture all contribute to Japan’s rich cultural legacy, which is varied and fascinating for many observers around the world. Indeed, traditional aspects of Japanese culture like tea ceremonies, martial arts, and calligraphy and also modern phenomena such as anime, manga, and J-pop music, have a large following around the globe. These cultural exports not only strike a chord with audiences, but also cultivate an interest in and admiration for the inventiveness and beauty of historical and contemporary Japan.

The widespread perception of Japan as a global leader in technical innovation contributes to the country’s soft power as its cutting-edge capabilities and modernity are shown by its advancements in robotics, sophisticated manufacturing, and high-speed transportation systems. The simple fact that Japan has one of the largest economies in the world surely helps

⁸ Brand Finance, Date of Accession: 09.08.2023 from <https://brandfinance.com/>.

⁹ See, for their most recent report: ISSF (2022), *World Soft Power Index 2022*, Date of Accession: 09.08.2023 from https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/905bb114-a609-4bd0-a33b-dabe335781b0/downloads/ISSF_s%20World%20Soft%20Power%20Index%202022.pdf?ver=1660547924817.

¹⁰ Monocle, Date of Accession: 09.08.2023 from <https://monocle.com/all/affairs/soft-power/>.

¹¹ See, for their most recent report: Portland, *The Soft Power 30: A Global Ranking of Soft Power*, Date of Accession: 09.08.2023 from https://portland-communications.com/pdf/The-Soft-Power_30.pdf.

¹² Kiyomet Yavuzaslan & Murat Cetin (2016), “Soft Power Concept and Soft Power Indexes”, in (eds. by Mehmet Huseyin Bilgin & Hakan Danis & Ender Demir & Ugur Can) *Business Challenges in the Changing Economic Landscape Volume 1*, London: Springer, pp. 395-409.

to strengthen its position as a top soft power.¹³ Its economic prowess, which is characterized by sectors like as car manufacture and electronics manufacturing, inspires respect and trust among the public opinion of other countries.¹⁴ Thus, Japan is able to effectively participate in economic diplomacy and advance international cooperation as a result of its formidable economic standing.

Positive reverberations may be felt all over the world as a result of Japan's dedication to global disaster relief and humanitarian help. Its prompt reaction to natural catastrophes within and beyond the country, as demonstrated during the tragic earthquake and tsunami that struck Tohoku in 2011 or the most recent 2023 earthquakes in Turkey, demonstrates that Japan is both a role model in this area as well as being eager to help aid other countries in a time of need.¹⁵ This and Japan's post-Second World War pacifist foreign policy outlook have contributed to the strengthening of Japan's reputation as a caring and responsible leader that is unlike militarily active global powers such as the U.S., Russia, and Britain. Japan's persistently high soft power rankings may be largely attributed to the country's well-planned strategy for the cultivation of all of its aforementioned soft power aspects. Cultural diplomacy, international collaboration, and the cultivation of favorable worldwide attitudes are all seen as valuable by the nation's intellectuals and government officials.¹⁶

In this article, I will argue that the case of Japan proves that soft power is not just a natural outcome of a country's vast hard power reserves (e.g. economic power in the manner of Gross Domestic Product), but is a phenomenon that could be "*designed*" – to a large extent – by a government. Furthermore, Japan's various successful policies such as the "*Cool Japan*" program and Tokyo's systematic cultural and economic diplomacy offers valuable blueprints for Turkish soft power to be re-designed in our time.

¹³ The Japanese economy made a miraculous recovery from the adverse effects of the Second World War the two atomic bombs to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, rising to become the third largest economy of the world in terms of nominal GDP after the two super-powers – the U.S. and Soviet Union – by 1968. From 1990 to 2009, Japan was the second largest economy – only surpassed by China in 2010. As of the end of 2022, Japan's GDP remains around 4,95 trillion \$ and ranked third in the globe ahead of Germany. For more details, see; The World Bank (2023), "GDP (current US\$) – Japan", Date of Accession: 10.08.2023 from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=JP>.

¹⁴ Katja Valaskivi (2013), "A Brand New future? Cool Japan and the Social Imaginary of the Branded Nation", *Japan Forum*, 25 (4), pp. 485-504.

¹⁵ Dilara Aslan Özer (2023), "Türkiye, Japan to overcome earthquake difficulties together", *Daily Sabah*, 17.02.2023, Date of Accession: 10.08.2023 from <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/turkiye-japan-to-overcome-earthquake-difficulties-together/news>.

¹⁶ Takeshi Matsui (2014), "Nation Branding through Stigmatized Popular Culture: The 'Cool Japan': Craze among Central Ministries in Japan", *Hitotsubashi Journal of Commerce and Management*, 48 (1), pp. 81-97; Maiko Ichihara (2018), *Japan's International Democracy Assistance as Soft Power: Neoclassical Realist Analysis*, London: Routledge.

The following first section of the article will begin with a theoretical discussion of the invaluable contributions and potential shortcomings of soft power – as seen in the broader scholarly literature. The second section will provide a brief assessment of the main themes and arguments of the empirical literature on the soft power of Japan. The third and fourth sections constitute the “*heart of the article*”. While the former section studies the rise of Japanese soft power and attempt to uncover the main lessons that could be learned from the experience of Japan, the latter compares and contrasts the soft power visions of Japan and Turkey. The relevance and potential insights of the case of Japanese soft power success for Turkish soft power is the focus of this penultimate section of the article before the concluding remarks.

1. The Contributions and Shortcomings of the Concept of Soft Power

A key tenet of the theory of soft power is the belief that the collective attractiveness of a country – its cultural influence, social values, policies, and institutions – can possibly influence the choices and actions of other countries.¹⁷ This attraction may be attributed to a nation’s political system, economic prosperity, technical innovation, and the worldwide reach of its cultural goods such as movies, music, and literature. Culture, political ideals, and foreign policy strategy –according to Nye– are the three most important factors that contribute to a country’s overall level of soft power. Accordingly, it is possible for a country’s culture, which includes its language, arts, and customs, to have a substantial impact in luring people to move there for instance. In addition, a country that respects politically desirable and globally popular ideals that are appealing to people all over the world, such as democracy, human rights, and social justice, may supposedly earn appreciation and respect from the rest of the world.¹⁸ The concept of soft power places an emphasis on the role that public diplomacy plays in cultivating goodwill among policy-makers and opinion-shapers in other countries. Public diplomacy encompasses a variety of activities, including cultural exchanges and educational programs, which are used by governments, non-governmental organizations, and commercial institutions to foster beneficial connections between nations and to influence public opinion.

Despite its popularity, the concept of soft power is not without its drawbacks and criticisms. Hard power capabilities, for example, are generally seen as the foundational basis –or

¹⁷ Joseph S. Nye (1990), *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*; Joseph S. Nye (2004), *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*.

¹⁸ Robert O. Keohane & Joseph S. Nye (1998), “Power and Interdependence in the Information Age”.

precondition– for effective soft power, which leads some to suggest that soft power is founded on hard power capabilities and that the two types of power are actually much more deeply connected than Nye anticipated.¹⁹ The stability and safety that are essential for the successful implementation of soft power programs are believed to be provided by a nation’s military might, economic size, and geopolitical influence. If there is not a rock-solid foundation of hard power, then attempts to use soft power would be seen as empty or fake, which would reduce their efficacy.

The effectiveness of a country’s use of soft power is contingent on the culture, values, and principles of that nation having broad appeal. However, it has been suggested that there is no consideration given to cultural relativism or ethnocentrism within the framework of Nye and his followers.²⁰ Something that resonates in one cultural setting may not do so in another because of differences in aesthetic preferences and levels of social authority. The imposition of a certain cultural viewpoint might result in misunderstandings and even reaction, which ultimately reduces the effectiveness of the impact that was intended. Moreover, the proliferation of the internet and other digital communication platforms has resulted in a considerable expansion of the reach and influence of soft power. Because nations may now establish rapid connections with audiences all around the world, they are better able to successfully represent their culture, values, and policies. This digital ecosystem, however, also presents issues in the form of a lack of control over narratives and the spread of false information.

Soft power is a lot more difficult to define and assess than more conventional forms of power, such as hard power, which can be evaluated based on a country’s military might or economic performance. Due to the absence of tangible measures, performing an accurate assessment of the influence that soft power initiatives have may be rather difficult. As a consequence of this, decision-makers may have a difficult time properly allocating resources and making well-informed choices on the distribution of soft power efforts.²¹ Furthermore, the results of attempts to use soft power are often unexpected and variable. Cultural exchanges, educational programs, and public diplomacy campaigns all have the intention of fostering healthy connections on a global scale; nevertheless, it may be difficult to anticipate

¹⁹ Ernest J. Wilson (2008), “Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power”, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616, pp. 110-124; Michelangelo Guida & Oğuzhan Göksel (2018), “Re-Evaluating the Sources and Fragility of Turkey’s Soft Power After the Arab Uprisings”.

²⁰ Pınar Bilgin & Berican Eliş (2008), “Hard Power, Soft Power: Toward a More Realistic Power Analysis”; Susan Strange (1996), *The Retreat of the State: The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy*.

²¹ Ernest J. Wilson (2008), “Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power”, pp. 118-120.

the effects of these activities. It is difficult to determine with absolute certainty how successful endeavors to exert soft power will be since the reception of these efforts is dependent on a myriad of circumstances, some of which include internal politics, historical background, and current events.

It is vital to conduct an in-depth analysis of the idea of soft power's limits and critiques, despite the fact that it presents a fresh method to comprehending the nature of international influence. In the complicated arena of global politics, soft power has a number of significant hurdles – ranging from the difficulties one encounters when attempting to influence authoritarian governments to the difficulties we encounter when attempting to objectively measure its effect. When these limitations are acknowledged, policymakers and academics are able to devise more nuanced methods that take into account both the potential advantages and the inherent constraints of using soft power as a weapon in the conduct of international affairs.²² To be able to create methods to global diplomacy that are both successful and ethical in a world that is always changing, it is essential to have a solid knowledge of the constraints that soft power imposes.

The validity and value of the aforementioned critiques of soft power have helped ensure the refinement of its framework by novel research and the idea of soft power has arguably brought about a revolution in the area of IR and FPA. The concept of soft power may be traced back to the altering diplomatic environment that emerged in the aftermath of the Cold War, and its scholarly contributions have contributed to a more sophisticated understanding of how governments wield influence in a multifaceted world. The major arguments in favor of soft power focus on the allure of a nation's culture, values, and policies, in addition to its part in public diplomacy, its limits, and its connection to hard power. The idea of soft power in our age still remains an essential tool for governments that are attempting to traverse the complexities of international diplomacy, despite the fact that the digital age is continuing to transform both communication and international politics.

2. A Brief Assessment of the Literature on the Soft Power of Japan

The effective combination of Japan's cultural, economic, and diplomatic assets as a tool for exerting influence on the world stage –in the form of one of the top powers in global rankings– is the reason why Japanese soft power has received a significant amount of attention in academic writing. One of the most common lines of inquiry in the literature is on

²² Kiyomet Yavuzaslan & Murat Cetin (2016), "Soft Power Concept and Soft Power Indexes".

the unique allure of Japan's culture which embraces not just traditional arts, but also current pop culture and technological progress.²³ Elements of Japan's culture that have been passed down through the generations such as its tea ceremonies, calligraphy, and architecture continue to hold a fascination for people all over the world. Additionally, the government-sponsored phenomenon known as "*Cool Japan*" highlights the appeal of Japanese animation, manga, J-pop music, and video games in other parts of the world.²⁴ Not only do these cultural exports fascinate audiences, but they also promote a respect for the values and creativity of Japanese society.

Within the incumbent literature, scholars also place a lot of emphasis on the role that cultural diplomacy plays in the formation of Japan's soft power. The Japanese government's initiatives to foster cultural interchange, education in other languages, and creative partnerships are all put forward as factors that contribute to a more favorable image of the country.²⁵ For example, the notable Japan Foundation promotes international cultural exchange by funding language study and other cultural activities all around the globe. This helps to ensure that people from different cultures can communicate with one another via the hosting of Japanese society. By using this strategy to soft power, Japan is able to fortify its worldwide links while simultaneously strengthening its image as a nation that is culturally diverse and welcoming to outsiders.

The contributions that Japan has made to overseas development, disaster relief, and humanitarian help resound as key assets in Japan's soft power arsenal. Scholars believe that Japan's readiness to aid other nations during times of crisis is evidence of the nation's

²³ Yasushi Watanabe & David L. McConnell (2008), *Soft Power Superpowers: Cultural and National Assets of Japan and the United States*, New York: M. E. Sharpe; Ryoko Nakano & Yujie Zhu (2020), "Heritage as Soft Power: Japan and China in International Politics", *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 26 (7), pp. 869-881; Sven Saaler (2022), "Japan's Soft Power and the 'History Problem'", in (eds. by Lothar Wigger & Marie Dirnberger) *Remembrance – Responsibility – Reconciliation: Challenges for Education in Germany and Japan*, London: Springer, pp. 45-66; William Spencer Armour (2011), "Learning Japanese by Reading 'Manga': The Rise of 'Soft Power Pedagogy'", *RELC Journal*, 42 (2), pp. 125-140; Stephanie Christine Winkler (2019), "'Soft Power is Such a Benign Animal': Narrative Power and the Reification of Concepts in Japan", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 32 (4), pp. 483-501.

²⁴ Koichi Iwabuchi (2015), "Pop-Culture Diplomacy in Japan: Soft Power, Nation Branding and the Question of 'International Cultural Exchange'", *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 21 (4), pp. 419-432; Michal Daliot-Bul (2009), "Japan Brand Strategy: The Taming of 'Cool Japan' and the Challenges of Cultural Planning in a Postmodern Age", *Social Science Japan Journal*, 12 (2), pp. 247-266; Elizabeth Agyeiwaah & Wantanee Suntikul & Li Yee Shan Carmen (2019), "'Cool Japan': Anime, Soft Power and Hong Kong Generation Y Travel to Japan", *Journal of China Tourism Research*, 15 (2), pp. 127-148.

²⁵ Alexander Bukh (2014), "Revisiting Japan's Cultural Diplomacy: A Critique of the Agent-Level Approach to Japan's Soft Power", *Asian Perspective*, 38 (3), pp. 461-485; Peng Er Lam (2007), "Japan's Quest for 'Soft Power': Attraction and Limitation", *East Asia*, 24, pp. 349-363; Yee-Kuang Heng (2010), "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Who is the Softest of Them All? Evaluating Japanese and Chinese Strategies in the 'Soft' Power Competition Era", *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 10, pp. 275-304.

compassion and commitment to maintaining global stability.²⁶ The importance that Japan places on traditional values like harmony, respect, and discipline is also commonly evaluated to be a factor that contributes to the country's soft power in more traditional value-oriented societies such as those in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia.²⁷ These principles, which are strongly ingrained in Japanese culture, inspire respect and act as a counterpoint to the more forceful power projection techniques used by other countries. The capability of Japan to combine modernity with time-honored traditions strikes a chord with viewers all around the world, showing the country as one that takes a novel approach to addressing issues that affect the whole world.²⁸ As cornerstones of Japan's soft power, economic dominance and technical innovation are often cited by academics.²⁹ The dependability and feeling of modernity that may be attributed to Japan is in large part due to the country's innovative strides in the fields of robotics, the automobile sector, and high-speed rail networks.

On the other hand, the academic literature recognizes that Japan's projection of soft power is not without its difficulties and constraints. The historical baggage that Japan carries with it, notably the war crimes committed during the Second World War, continues to throw a shadow over its attempts to use soft power in its region in particular. There is still widespread skepticism over the sincerity of its apologies and the efforts it is making toward reconciliation, which adversely affects its image in countries that historically suffered Japanese occupation such as Taiwan, South Korea, North Korea, China, Philippines, and Vietnam.³⁰ The difficulty of the Japanese language may also be evaluated as a barrier to a more profound comprehension of Japanese literature, media, and conversation, despite the

²⁶ Yee-Kuang Heng (2014), "Beyond 'Kawaii' Pop Culture: Japan's Normative Soft Power as Global Trouble-Shooter", *The Pacific Review*, 27 (2), pp. 169-192; Thomas U. Berger (2010), "Japan in Asia: A Hard Case for Soft Power", *Orbis*, 54 (4), pp. 565-582.

²⁷ Taku Tamaki (2019), "Repackaging National Identity: Cool Japan and the Resilience of Japanese Identity Narratives", *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 27 (1), pp. 108-126; Shin-Wha Lee (2011), "The Theory and Reality of Soft Power: Practical Approaches in East Asia", in (eds. by Sook Jong Lee & Jan Melissen) *Public Diplomacy and Soft Power in East Asia*, New York: Springer, pp. 11-32.

²⁸ Taku Tamaki (2019), "Repackaging National Identity: Cool Japan and the Resilience of Japanese Identity Narratives"; Thomas U. Berger (2010), "Japan in Asia: A Hard Case for Soft Power".

²⁹ Alexander Bukh (2014), "Revisiting Japan's Cultural Diplomacy: A Critique of the Agent-Level Approach to Japan's Soft Power"; Peng Er Lam (2007), "Japan's Quest for 'Soft Power': Attraction and Limitation"; Yasushi Watanabe & David L. McConnell (2008), *Soft Power Superpowers: Cultural and National Assets of Japan and the United States*.

³⁰ Sven Saaler (2022), "Japan's Soft Power and the 'History Problem'"; Jing Sun (2012), *Japan and China as Charm Rivals: Soft Power in Regional Diplomacy*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press; Nissim Kadosh Otmazgin (2012), "Geopolitics and Soft Power: Japan's Cultural Policy and Cultural Diplomacy in Asia", *Asia-Pacific Review*, 19 (1), pp. 37-61.

widespread esteem with which Japan's culture is held internationally.³¹ Because of language obstacles, the full diffusion of Japanese culture and ideas may be hampered.

There is a possibility that Japan's surrounding nations could interpret Japan's soft power activities in a different way owing to past rivalries and territorial conflicts. As a consequence of this, its cultural initiatives may be perceived via a geopolitical lens, which reduce the efficacy of such initiatives. Some academics believe that the breadth and depth of Japan's influence may also be constrained by the country's supposed over-reliance on popular culture as its principal instrument of soft power.³² Despite the fact that anime and manga are very popular, it is possible that they do not always depict the full extent of Japan's cultural variety and history – instead these cultural products may simplify and reduce Japanese culture to stereotypes.

To sum-up, though it is beyond the scope of this study to provide an extensive reading of the broad literature on Japan's soft power, it should be noted that there is a consensus within scholars about the efficacy of many of the dimensions of Japanese soft power – albeit they also suggest improvements as mentioned above. Japan's soft power assets range from its cultural attractiveness and cultural diplomacy to Japan's economic strength and humanitarian initiatives. The capacity of the country to traverse hurdles such as language barrier while exploiting its assets highlights the complexity and dynamism of current international relations. By gaining an understanding of the primary ideas that are presented in this body of research, one may get insights into the ways in which Japan's soft power continues to develop and how it shapes its position in the global arena. The following section will get into more detail to the workings of Japanese soft power strategy.

3. The Rise and Consolidation of Japanese Soft Power “by Design”

3.1. Insights of the “Cool Japan” Initiative

In the early 2000s, the Japanese government made a concerted effort to establish a comprehensive soft power strategy and this effort started to take form from that time to our

³¹ Peng Er Lam (2007), “Japan's Quest for ‘Soft Power’: Attraction and Limitation”; Yee-Kuang Heng (2010), “Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Who is the Softest of Them All? Evaluating Japanese and Chinese Strategies in the ‘Soft’ Power Competition Era”.

³² Nissim Kadosh Otmazgin (2008), “Contesting Soft Power: Japanese Popular Culture in East and Southeast Asia”, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 8, pp. 73-101; Koichi Iwabuchi (2015), “Pop-Culture Diplomacy in Japan: Soft Power, Nation Branding and the Question of ‘International Cultural Exchange’”, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 21 (4), pp. 419-432; Christian John Reynolds (2012), “The Soft Power of Food: A Diplomacy of Hamburgers and Sushi?”, *Food Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 1 (2), pp. 47-60.

present. The beginning of what is later termed the “*Cool Japan*” (クールジャパン in Japanese) campaign in the year 2005 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was a significant step in the right direction. In 2010, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) established the “*Cool Japan Office*” in an attempt to officially systematize the earlier attempts of various intellectuals and advisors for a coherent soft power vision. This project signified a turning point in Japan’s conscious strategy for using its cultural and creative assets for worldwide impact which had previously been non-systematic and spontaneous – hitherto left in the hands and care of Japanese individuals and civil society initiatives. The government of Japan launched the “*Cool Japan*” campaign as a reaction to the growing spontaneous interest shown throughout the world in Japanese pop culture, fashion and entertainment.³³ The title “*Cool Japan*” was chosen by the aforementioned “*Cool Japan Office*” to capture the attractiveness of Japanese cultural exports such as anime, manga, video games, fashion, and food. The Japanese government acknowledged that not just inside Japan, but also among audiences in other parts of the world, notably in other Asian nations, Europe, and the Americas, these aspects had earned a great amount of appeal.³⁴ The purpose of the government plan was to strategically promote and export these cultural treasures in order to improve Japan’s influence in the global community. It featured several measures to encourage the development of industries connected to pop culture, technology, and traditional arts, seeking to expand their reach on a worldwide scale. In November 2013, the government and Dentsu (Japan’s largest advertising agency) established Organization for Overseas Development (the Cool Japan Fund) and the Cool Japan strategy has been under the jurisdiction of the Cool Japan Fund ever since.

The Cool Japan campaign, which was aware of the significance of digital platforms, made systematic use of the internet and social media to broadcast Japanese material, so ensuring it

³³ For more details, see Koichi Iwabuchi (2015), “Pop-Culture Diplomacy in Japan: Soft Power, Nation Branding and the Question of ‘International Cultural Exchange’”; Yasushi Watanabe & David L. McConnell (2008), *Soft Power Superpowers: Cultural and National Assets of Japan and the United States*; Peng Er Lam (2007), “Japan’s Quest for ‘Soft Power’: Attraction and Limitation”; Elizabeth Agyeiwaah & Wantanee Suntikul & Li Yee Shan Carmen (2019), “‘Cool Japan’: Anime, Soft Power and Hong Kong Generation Y Travel to Japan”; Yee-Kuang Heng (2014), “Beyond ‘Kawaii’ Pop Culture: Japan’s Normative Soft Power as Global Trouble-Shooter”; Takeshi Matsui (2014), “Nation Branding through Stigmatized Popular Culture: The ‘Cool Japan’: Craze among Central Ministries in Japan”; Katja Valaskivi (2013), “A Brand New future? Cool Japan and the Social Imaginary of the Branded Nation”.

³⁴ Yee-Kuang Heng (2014), “Beyond ‘Kawaii’ Pop Culture: Japan’s Normative Soft Power as Global Trouble-Shooter”; Yasushi Watanabe & David L. McConnell (2008), *Soft Power Superpowers: Cultural and National Assets of Japan and the United States*.

to be available to audiences all over the world and encouraging direct participation.³⁵ The Japanese government clearly understands that increasing its internet connectedness is essential to expanding the scope of its soft power influence. The Japanese government encouraged the export of creative works such as anime, manga, movies, music, and other creative endeavors by providing huge amounts of financial assistance, incentives, and platforms.³⁶

Anime, movies, manga, J-pop, and video games have been the pillars around which the so-called Cool Japan cultural export program centered on, because the advisors to the Japanese government believed that these products are able to transcend any geographical and cultural boundaries that may exist between Japan and the rest of the world.³⁷ Governmental support as part of the Cool Japan program included financial support for cultural events and partnerships between Japanese and international artists, as well as sponsorship for international film festivals.³⁸ Events, exhibits, and performances that highlight traditional as well as modern Japanese art were arranged all over the globe by Japanese embassies and cultural institutes in order to promote mutual understanding and relationships between people.³⁹ These kinds of programs foster discussion between different cultures, help dismantle prejudices, and advance cultural appreciation, all of which have contributed to a strengthening of Japan's impact as a global soft power.

Anime, manga, and video games that originate in Japan have made their way into marketplaces all over the world, becoming part of a new "*global mainstream culture*" in the early 21st century that truly transcends both language and physical barriers. Anime series such as "*Naruto*", "*One Piece*", "*Dragon Ball*", "*Death Note*", and "*Attack on Titan*" have gathered devoted fan bases all around the world, which has contributed to a greater knowledge and love of Japanese culture. Indeed characters like Pikachu from Pokémon and Sailor Moon have crossed national boundaries and become household names, so establishing a worldwide subculture that is enjoyed by peoples of many countries. In a similar vein, the

³⁵ Elizabeth Agyeiwaah & Wantanee Suntikul & Li Yee Shan Carmen (2019), "'Cool Japan': Anime, Soft Power and Hong Kong Generation Y Travel to Japan", pp. 128-135.

³⁶ Takeshi Matsui (2014), "Nation Branding through Stigmatized Popular Culture: The 'Cool Japan': Craze among Central Ministries in Japan", pp. 82-88.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

³⁸ For more details, see; Elizabeth Agyeiwaah & Wantanee Suntikul & Li Yee Shan Carmen (2019), "'Cool Japan': Anime, Soft Power and Hong Kong Generation Y Travel to Japan".

³⁹ Kadosh Otmazgin (2012), "Geopolitics and Soft Power: Japan's Cultural Policy and Cultural Diplomacy in Asia"; Koichi Iwabuchi (2015), "Pop-Culture Diplomacy in Japan: Soft Power, Nation Branding and the Question of 'International Cultural Exchange'"; Ryoko Nakano & Yujie Zhu (2020), "Heritage as Soft Power: Japan and China in International Politics".

success of Japanese filmmakers like Hayao Miyazaki and the works Studio Ghibli has brought the country's cinema to the attention of audiences all over the world. Not only have movies like as "*Spirited Away*" and "*My Neighbor Totoro*" received positive reviews from film critics, but they have also helped people become familiar with the distinctive creative and narrative style of Japan.⁴⁰ The Cool Japan initiative of Tokyo has played a driving role in building upon the already existing critical success of Japanese authentic products and spreading their influence even more via financial backing as well as government-sponsored events worldwide.⁴¹

Supporting the worldwide distribution and localization of Japanese entertainment material is one of the cornerstones of the Cool Japan program since 2012.⁴² The provision of financial support and other resources by the Tokyo government makes it much easier for films, manga, and anime to be translated into other languages and distributed to a wider audience. This approach not only expands Japan's cultural sphere of influence, but also provides financial benefits for the country in the form of higher sales and new licensing agreements. Additionally, the Japanese government is responsible for organizing events and festivals devoted to Japanese popular culture. These events and festivals include Anime Expo and Japan Expo, both of which are hosted in different nations. The purpose of these events is to provide a stage upon which enthusiasts, creators, and artists may come together to celebrate their mutual affection for Japanese entertainment. They also contribute to the formation of multinational fan communities, which further magnify the cultural influence of Japanese popular culture around the world.

Japan's soft power strategy is heavily dependent on the country's technical breakthroughs, particularly in the fields of robotics and electronics. The already-established image of Japan as a technology leader by the early 2000s with globally recognized brands – Sony, Toyota, Honda, Nintendo and Panasonic – has provided a useful stepping stone for the Japanese government to apply the Cool Japan program on this area as well. Via supporting the innovation drive of these brands with various incentives and subsidies as well as using the Foreign Ministry to build partnerships with the governments of developing countries (e.g.

⁴⁰ Thomas U. Berger (2010), "Japan in Asia: A Hard Case for Soft Power", pp. 565-569.

⁴¹ Yee-Kuang Heng (2014), "Beyond 'Kawaii' Pop Culture: Japan's Normative Soft Power as Global Trouble-Shooter"; Shin-Wha Lee (2011), "The Theory and Reality of Soft Power: Practical Approaches in East Asia"; Jing Sun (2012), *Japan and China as Charm Rivals: Soft Power in Regional Diplomacy*; Takeshi Matsui (2014), "Nation Branding through Stigmatized Popular Culture: The 'Cool Japan': Craze among Central Ministries in Japan".

⁴² Koichi Iwabuchi (2015), "Pop-Culture Diplomacy in Japan: Soft Power, Nation Branding and the Question of 'International Cultural Exchange'", pp. 426-430.

Turkey), the Japanese government has played a seminal role in consolidating an image of excellence for Japanese machinery and technology.⁴³ In addition, Japan's developments in robotics have attracted the attention of people all around the world, with humanoid robots like ASIMO – another public relations campaign backed by Cool Japan – becoming iconic icons of the nation's devotion to pushing the frontiers of technological innovation.⁴⁴

Culinary diplomacy, often known as “*gastro-diplomacy*”, is the practice of using food as a tool to develop cultural links and improve mutual understanding between groups of people from different backgrounds. The culinary traditions of Japan, “*sushi*” in particular, have won over the imaginations and palates of people all over the globe. In light of this fact, the government of Japan has made strategic use of culinary diplomacy in an effort to deepen its connections with the rest of the world. As such, the Cool Japan program has also included the Japanese government to get involved in the dissemination of its rich culinary legacy by offering cooking lessons, participating in culinary exchange programs and working together with chefs from other countries in numerous worldwide events.⁴⁵ As a result of Japan's so-called “*Sushi Diplomacy*”, the nation's culinary impact has been further thanks to the proliferation of Japanese restaurants as well as the increasing popularity of television and social media cooking programs that have focused on Japanese food in the last decade.⁴⁶

In this context, one of the most important initiatives is the preservation of the “*Washoku*” culinary heritage, which UNESCO designated as a component of the Intangible Cultural Heritage system in 2013. This acknowledgment boosted the stature and authenticity of Japanese food on the stage of the worldwide culinary community. Since then, the government has been promoting *Washoku* by holding workshops, seminars, and other culinary events. These events provide venues for foreign chefs and food aficionados to learn and enjoy traditional techniques and ingredients used in Japanese cuisine. In addition, the Japanese government has encouraged the globalization of Japanese culinary skills by facilitating

⁴³ Daliot-Bul (2009), “Japan Brand Strategy: The Taming of ‘Cool Japan’ and the Challenges of Cultural Planning in a Postmodern Age”; Taku Tamaki (2019), “Repackaging National Identity: Cool Japan and the Resilience of Japanese Identity Narratives”.

⁴⁴ Timothy N. Hornyak (2006), *Loving the Machine: The Art and Science of Japanese Robots*, Tokyo: Kodansha International.

⁴⁵ Gabriella Lukacs (2010), “Iron Chef around the World: Japanese Food Television, Soft Power, and Cultural Globalization”, *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 13 (4), pp. 409-426; Felice Farina (2018), “Japan's Gastrodiplomacy as Soft Power: Global Washoku and National Food Security”, *Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia*, 17 (1), pp. 153-146.

⁴⁶ Gabriella Lukacs (2010), “Iron Chef around the World: Japanese Food Television, Soft Power, and Cultural Globalization”.

collaborations between Japanese restaurants and local enterprises in a variety of countries throughout the globe.

The Cool Japan's secondary objective was to increase awareness of Japanese language and cultural studies courses offered at educational institutions located all over the globe.⁴⁷ The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program evolved into a venue for cross-cultural communication when it extended invitations to participants from other countries to teach English in Japan. By participating in this program, individuals from other countries are given the opportunity to become fully integrated into Japanese society, acquire Japanese language skills, and discuss their own cultural traditions, so fostering a two-way exchange of information and experiences. The Japanese government has shown its dedication to the promotion of cultural interaction as well as language learning via the creation of the Japan Foundation as well as Japan Information and Cultural Centers in a number of different nations. Programs for language acquisition and cultural exchange are made possible thanks to the work of these organizations, which also serve to build bridges between individuals of many origins.

In addition to modern pop culture, the government of Japan places a high importance on preserving and promoting traditional arts and crafts. These time-honored customs not only serve as an important component of Japan's soft power strategy, but also serve as a reflection of the country's extensive cultural history. Because of their complexity and emphasis on the present moment, traditional Japanese arts such as tea ceremonies, *ikebana* (flower arrangement), calligraphy, and origami have fascinated audiences all over the globe. The "Living National Treasures" program is one of the many initiatives of Cool Japan that honors master craftsmen and artists who have attained a remarkable level of proficiency in many forms of traditional art. The government guarantees the continuation of these ancient techniques and presents them to audiences all over the world by providing financial assistance to the artists and presenting their work in public exhibits and events.⁴⁸

To sum-up, recognizing the potential for Japan's cultural exports to improve foreign relationships and perceptions was one of the motivations behind Japan's decision to launch the Cool Japan. This marked an intentional change in Japan's approach to soft power. It is essential to highlight that although the Cool Japan campaign was a big step, the notion of soft

⁴⁷ Koichi Iwabuchi (2015), "Pop-Culture Diplomacy in Japan: Soft Power, Nation Branding and the Question of 'International Cultural Exchange'", pp. 420-424.

⁴⁸ Ryoko Nakano & Yujie Zhu (2020), "Heritage as Soft Power: Japan and China in International Politics".

power had been present in Japan's foreign involvement for decades. However, it was during this era that a more systematic and concentrated strategy arose. The methodical approach Japan has used to increase its soft power may serve as a model for other countries who want to increase their influence via cultural allure and diplomatic efforts. Cool Japan is founded on the promotion of popular culture exports, gastronomic diplomacy, technical leadership, and global connectedness. Even if there are still obstacles to overcome, Japan's efforts to build its soft power provide an invaluable guide on how to leverage cultural diversity, innovation, and cross-cultural engagement in order to project a global legacy.

The aforementioned success of Cool Japan strategy notwithstanding, it is important to acknowledge the specific conjuncture in which the Japanese government and its various agencies and partners (Dentsu) felt the need to develop and heavily invest in this project. It has been noted that Japan was in a way pressured towards soft power as a result of its declining hard power capacity in the form of the longstanding economic stagnation the country began to face since a series of financial crises from 1991 to 1997, triggering what is now widely termed the "*Lost Decade(s)*".⁴⁹ Hence, we can perhaps understand the Cool Japan more an urgent necessity. Moreover, Cool Japan has received various criticisms such as its alleged tendency to place a higher priority on the export of culturally "*cool*" features that are marketable outside, while often ignoring parts of Japanese culture that are more traditional and have less to do with commercialism.⁵⁰ The argument put out by detractors is that adopting such a strategy might result in a watering down of the genuineness of Japanese society, so producing an artificial image of Japan that is wholly predicated temporary and superficial cultural trends.

The economic viability of the Cool Japan approach has also been called into question. Accordingly, popular cultural exports have the potential to create cash in the near term, however it is unlikely that they will be a reliable source of income for the sustainable growth of Japanese economy in the long run.⁵¹ An unhealthy dependence on these patterns may result in unstable income sources. Furthermore, despite the fact that large firms and government efforts are involved in the Cool Japan approach, there is not always support from the grassroots level. Some observers maintain that genuine cultural impact originates from the bottom up, in the form of individual artists and innovators as well as grassroots

⁴⁹ Yasushi Watanabe & David L. McConnell (2008), *Soft Power Superpowers: Cultural and National Assets of Japan and the United States*, pp. 191-206.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 195-201.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

community efforts.⁵² As such, in order for the Cool Japan strategy to gain more success than it already has, it may be necessary for the Japanese policy-makers to take into account the above criticisms and attempt to work on an approach that is all-encompassing, more inclusive and sustainable while still accurately representing the breadth and depth of Japanese cultural traditions.

3.2. Japanese Cultural & Economic Diplomacy in East Asia

The use of Japan's soft power diplomacy has become an increasingly important instrument for the country in terms of molding its ties both within East Asia and on the international arena. In spite of the fact that historical conflicts and mutual antipathy with neighbors (e.g. North Korea, South Korea, and China) continue to exist, Japanese governments have generally been aware of the significance of soft power in the process of cultivating amicable ties with its neighbors.⁵³ Japan's approach to soft power diplomacy in East Asia centers heavily on the country's economic and cultural "*deep relationships*" with its neighbors. Investments, trade ties, and financial support for economic growth all contribute to Japan's outsized economic impact in East Asian affairs.

Trade accords such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) highlight Japan's commitment to free trade and economic integration in the region – Tokyo attempting to play the role of Germany or France in the formation of the European Economic Community and the EU. Through its participation in these accords, Japan is able to strengthen its economic influence, which in turn envisages collaboration and projects a favorable image in the area. Japan participates in regional projects in order to solve difficulties that are shared by other nations and to foster cooperative efforts. Economic integration and diplomatic conversation are both encouraged through events and gatherings such as the Japan-China-Republic of Korea Trilateral Summit and the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership (AJCEP). By participating in these forums, Japan aims to have the opportunity to resolve historical and political disputes while simultaneously strengthening its relations to the area.

⁵² Daliot-Bul (2009), "Japan Brand Strategy: The Taming of 'Cool Japan' and the Challenges of Cultural Planning in a Postmodern Age".

⁵³ Kadosh Otmazgin (2012), "Geopolitics and Soft Power: Japan's Cultural Policy and Cultural Diplomacy in Asia"; Thomas U. Berger (2010), "Japan in Asia: A Hard Case for Soft Power"; Jing Sun (2012), *Japan and China as Charm Rivals: Soft Power in Regional Diplomacy*; Sven Saaler (2022), "Japan's Soft Power and the 'History Problem'".

The importance of Japan's economic diplomacy in assisting East Asia's economic growth via the formation of trade relationships, investments, and the provision of development aid cannot be overstated. The participation of Japan in various trade agreements such as the CPTPP has helped to the region's progress toward economic integration.⁵⁴ The nations of East Asia would be able to access wider markets, diversify their economies and entice foreign investment as a result of the accords that have been reached. The economic expansion of various East Asian and South-East Asian economies (e.g. Philippines, Taiwan, South Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia) in the last decade has been significantly aided by Japan's help in the form of financial investments as well as the construction of various types of physical infrastructure.⁵⁵ The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has been engaged in a wide variety of projects, ranging from transportation networks to environmental protection. These initiatives have helped to maintain economic stability and have lessened the development gap between different parts of the area.

The investments in education made by Japan have also contributed to the promotion of peace throughout the region. Young leaders from East Asia have been able to study in Japan thanks to scholarships, exchange programs, and academic alliances. These initiatives have helped to promote cross-cultural understanding and contributed to the development of a network of persons devoted to peaceful relations. The Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths (JENESYS) program is one example of a Tokyo-supported initiative that helps to enable educational and economic exchanges, which in turn contributes to the stability of the area and fosters cooperation.⁵⁶ Direct relationships between East Asian countries have been fostered by cultural diplomacy, which has enabled individuals to engage with Japan's cultural history outside the confines of political narratives. These interactions have brought a more human dimension to the connections between the parties and helped inhabitants of East Asian countries with a contentious historical past develop more empathy and comprehension for one another.

The diplomatic efforts made by Japan to face its wartime past have also been critical to the improvement of ties in the region. It has been proved that Japan is committed to reconciliation with its neighbors via the offering of official apologies, the admission of past

⁵⁴ Y. Abe & D. Collins (2019), "The CPTPP and Digital Trade: Embracing E-Commerce Opportunities for SMEs in Canada and Japan", *Transnational Dispute Management*, December.

⁵⁵ Raymond Yamamoto (2020), "China's Development Assistance in Southeast Asia: A Threat to Japanese Interests?", *Asian Survey*, 60 (2), pp. 323-346.

⁵⁶ Elizabeth Agyeiwaah & Wantanee Suntikul & Li Yee Shan Carmen (2019), "'Cool Japan': Anime, Soft Power and Hong Kong Generation Y Travel to Japan".

wrongs, and the visiting of monuments of the victims of war crimes committed by Japanese forces before and during the Second World War in countries such as South Korea and Taiwan.⁵⁷ These initiatives have led to a more open discourse about the past, which has reduced historical animosities and created a framework for collaboration. While obstacles still persist, this has arguably created a helpful foundation for cooperation in the long term.

The scope of Japan's soft power diplomacy goes far beyond East Asia, and it includes a plan for global involvement that highlights the country's contributions in the areas of culture, technology, and global challenges. The scope of Japan's soft power includes worldwide programs that tackle important concerns like climate change, disaster assistance, and international development. Both the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Cool Earth Partnership are prime examples of Japan's dedication to international collaboration.⁵⁸ By taking an active role in these projects, Japan could be able to strengthen its image as a responsible member of the global community and foster greater international cooperation throughout the 21st century. Japan has been an active participant in a variety of regional forums and organizations, including the East Asia Summit (EAS) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). These forums provide chances for diplomatic conversation and problem-solving, enabling nations to debate difficulties that they face in common, express their points of view, and build confidence among one another in the process.

Japan's soft power diplomacy has made significant contributions to the political stability, economic growth, and overall peace in the East Asia area. Japan has contributed to the healing of historical wounds and the development of a deeper level of empathic understanding among countries via its promotion of cultural exchange, efforts toward historical reconciliation, and educational programs. Cooperation on the economic front, investments, and aid to developing nations of the region has also contributed to increased economic growth and stability.⁵⁹ At the same time, measures taken at the regional level and diplomatic efforts have created venues for debate and the consolidation of confidence. Despite the continued existence of obstacles (e.g. the Senkaku Islands dispute between Tokyo and Beijing or the Liancourt Rocks dispute between Tokyo and Seoul), it is clear that Japan is

⁵⁷ Stephanie Christine Winkler (2019), "Soft Power is Such a Benign Animal": Narrative Power and the Reification of Concepts in Japan"; Sven Saaler (2022), "Japan's Soft Power and the 'History Problem'".

⁵⁸ Yee-Kuang Heng (2014), "Beyond 'Kawaii' Pop Culture: Japan's Normative Soft Power as Global Trouble-Shooter", pp. 172-187

⁵⁹ Raymond Yamamoto (2020), "China's Development Assistance in Southeast Asia: A Threat to Japanese Interests?"; Y. Abe & D. Collins (2019), "The CPTPP and Digital Trade: Embracing E-Commerce Opportunities for SMEs in Canada and Japan".

dedicated to use its soft power to bring about constructive change in East Asia. Japan's soft power diplomacy could be anticipated to play a continuing role in maintaining an atmosphere of peace, economic advancement and political stability as the area continues to evolve, eventually contributing to the shared well-being and prosperity of East Asian countries.

A few important questions will remain at the center of debates over the future of the region: How will the ongoing rise of China as a super-power affect China-Japan relations and peace in East Asia? Could the increasingly positive relationships between Japan and its key neighbors such as South Korea lead to an EU-like regional economic/cultural/political union? And what about the potential for war between China and the U.S. over a military conflict in Taiwan? Despite all of its aforementioned successes, these will be tough challenges for Japanese soft power alone to resolve.

4. The Many Lessons of Japan for Turkish Soft Power Design and Projection

The aforementioned success that Japan has had in using its soft power may provide other developed and developing nations with useful lessons on how to increase their global influence, strengthen diplomatic ties in their respective regions and develop more cross-cultural understanding. Japan has been able to have a long-lasting effect on the international scene as a result of the above combination of its cultural exports, technical innovation, economic development aid, and diplomatic activities. When other countries study Japan's soft power programs, those nations have the opportunity to adapt and apply the lessons they learn to their own distinct cultural, economic, and diplomatic settings. As such, countries may learn from Japan's example and improve their own soft power plans to build a more integrated and peaceful world by capitalizing on their cultural strengths, embracing innovation and promoting international collaboration.

Japan's global soft power success has been significantly shaped by the country's cultural exports (e.g. anime, manga, film and food) via a systematic, well-thought, and government-financed Cool Japan vision. The exports that the Cool Japan built its plans upon are more than just a source of amusement as they have been deliberately chosen to symbolize the identity, values, and creative spirit of Japanese society in its traditional era as well as ultra-modern and high-tech present. Utilizing one's own cultural strengths and high potential goods –that already have some degree of popularity– to have an effect on a global scale is definitely a key lesson that other nations may take away from Japan's soft power model.

In this context, wannabe or rising soft power nations should make it a top priority to highlight different aspects of their cultures in order to create an authentic and original appeal for a broad audience of all ages, values and nations. The cultural products that Japan exports have proven to have widespread appeal that cuts across language and cultural divides throughout the world. The narrative abilities of Japan's animation and manga industries have captivated worldwide audiences' hearts and forged profound bonds. The power of narratives is something that other nations may focus to harness in order to successfully express their ideals and points of view. Countries wishing to emulate Japan should learn the key lesson of working to package their cultural offerings in ways that appeal to a wide variety of audiences and use these skills to attract tourists with social media campaigns in our age – just as Japan had done with the rising internet platforms of the early 2000s at the inception of Cool Japan.⁶⁰

The technical advancements that Japan has made from robots to electronics are evidence of the country's dedication to innovation and prosperity. Japan's method of technology-driven soft power is an example for other nations to follow since it demonstrates their strengths while simultaneously tackling issues on a global scale. Countries wishing to follow in the footsteps of Japan must place an emphasis on finding technological solutions to real-world problems (e.g. earthquakes) in order to demonstrate their capacity to have a constructive effect on issues that affect the whole globe. In this field, Japan has led global programs such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Other countries should invest in increasing their ability to create partnerships with other countries in order to solve common problems. This aspect of Japanese soft power will be more and more valuable in the coming decades of the 21st century as the adverse effects of global climate change (e.g. increased average temperature levels, so-called climate refugees and struggles over water and food resources) may put the futures of various countries around the world in jeopardy.⁶¹

The success of Japan's diplomatic initiatives, such as aforementioned cultural exchange programs, economic alliances (e.g. with the US, Taiwan and South Korea),⁶² and participation in aid and human development enhancement throughout the Asia-Pacific region have all contributed to the country's rapid rise and consolidation of soft power since the early

⁶⁰ Koichi Iwabuchi (2015), "Pop-Culture Diplomacy in Japan: Soft Power, Nation Branding and the Question of 'International Cultural Exchange'"; Katja Valaskivi (2013), "A Brand New future? Cool Japan and the Social Imaginary of the Branded Nation".

⁶¹ Yasuko Kameyama (2017), *Climate Change Policy in Japan*, London and New York: Routledge.

⁶² Glenn D. Hook & Julie Gilson & Christopher W. Hughes & Hugo Dobson (2012), *Japan's International Relations: Politics, Economics and Security*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 104-125, 215-230.

1990s. The above ways in which Japan builds connections and promotes mutual understanding may serve as a model for other nations to follow. Strong people-to-people relationships have been established as a result of Japan's engagement in cultural exchange programs. Initiatives that allow for direct public participation and the exchange of experiences should be given priority in all nations wishing to emulate Japan. The engagement of Japan in economic partnerships and trade agreements in its region has made it easier for other countries in East Asia to work together and jointly advance their economies. By fostering economic integration and prosperity, other nations around world also have the opportunity to increase their level of "soft power" which could help them become regional powers in their respective areas.

To improve Turkey's worldwide image, foster cultural diversity and fortify international ties, the Turkish government may learn a great deal from Japan's approach to soft power. The government of Turkey may take a page out of Japan's playbook by capitalizing on its own unique cultural history in order to attract the attention of the world community and promote intercultural understanding. Turkey is home to a diverse and extensive collection of historical and cultural artifacts. It is important for the government of Turkey to offer an accurate portrayal of its culture. They should steer clear of clichés and generalizations in order to project an image that is real and approachable.

It is possible for Turkey to cultivate its cultural outputs such as movies, television series, and works of literature with an eye on worldwide audiences, putting an emphasis on global issues that are relevant across national borders. The aforementioned Cool Japan program provides all the blueprints of a successful cultural export strategy in this regard and the Turkish government under the longstanding command of the Justice and Development Party (AK Parti) may develop a similar systematic financial backing program by identifying the already successful and popular products of Turkish society and then channeling serious amount of investments via ministerial budgets.

The formation of a committee of intellectuals and advisers to provide effective advice on the fields of traditional arts, cinema and TV, music, cuisine, food products (e.g. standardization and globalization of Turkish cheese types such as "Ezine" or "Tulum" with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture), and sports may be a very promising on the long road to turn Turkish soft power into a global success story in the second century of the Republic. It is widely known that Turkish soap operas, known as "dizis" in Turkey, have seen an explosion in

popularity throughout the Middle East, Eurasia, and the Balkans in recent years.⁶³ These programs often reflect topics that viewers can relate to such as love, chivalry, family, and the dynamics of society and they do so because of cultural commonalities. A systematic promotion of Turkish cultural products with government support could significantly boost Turkey's already existing success story in this regard.

In a manner that is analogous to Japan's preservation of traditional arts, Turkey may emphasize its own traditional arts such as Turkish calligraphy, pottery, and music in order to highlight the cultural richness of the nation and develop links with audiences all over the world. The historical and archaeological landmarks of Turkey, such as the Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque, add to the country's cultural attractiveness, attracting tourism, and creating knowledge of other cultures. The innovative technology work done by Japan and its combination of their promotion of traditional arts has been of critical importance in the formation of its soft power impact. The manner in which Japan uses modern technology as a tool to display success, encourage innovation, and solve global concerns is an example that Turkey may profitably study. Through the promotion of government programs such as President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's so-called "*Turkey 2023 Vision*" which attempts to position the nation as a hub for the development of technical capabilities, Turkey intends to support the growth of its technology and innovation industries.⁶⁴ Turkey also hopes to demonstrate its potential in a variety of industries, including military, aerospace, and renewable energy by increasing its spending on research and development. Arguably these recent initiatives are evidence that Turkish policy-makers have already taken inspiration from Japan's soft power strategy.

The recent national car manufacture project of the AK Parti administration may be a start, but much more systematic effort on the field of technology and industry are required to produce globally attractive output – which could significantly boost Turkey's ailing economic and human development in recent years.⁶⁵ Turkey has the opportunity to concentrate on technology innovation that solves global concerns such as healthcare solutions, alternative forms of energy, and effective water management. Turkey's image as a soft power may be improved if it makes positive contributions to the well-being of the global community.

⁶³ Zafer Yörük & Pantelis Vatikiotis (2013), "Soft Power or Illusion of Hegemony: The Case of the Turkish Soap Opera 'Colonialism'".

⁶⁴ *Business Turkey* (2021), "2023 Vision of the Republic of Turkey", 20.08.2021, Date of Accession: 10.08.2023 from <https://businesssturkeytoday.com/2023-vision-of-the-republic-of-turkey.html>.

⁶⁵ Ümit Akçay & Ali Rıza Güngen (2019), *The Making of Turkey's 2018-2019 Economic Crisis*, Berlin: Institute for International Political Economy Berlin Working Paper.

Turkey could also build its own technological hubs and research centers to draw worldwide attention and encourage partnerships that emphasize its competence. This can be done by modeling several Turkish cities on the basis of Japan's tech-centric cities such as Tokyo and Osaka.

Turkey has the potential to actively participate in economic partnerships that encourage international trade and investment, positioning itself as a dependable partner in the process of global economic integration – in a manner that is comparable to Japan's engagement in trade accords. Through its participation in regional forums and initiatives like the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), Turkey is potentially able to contribute to the maintenance of regional political economic stability through engaging in mutual conversation, the settlement of conflicts, and cooperative endeavors. Because of its strategic geopolitical position, Turkey plays an important role in economic interactions between Europe and Asia. Initiatives such as the “*Economic Cooperation Organization*” encourage economic cooperation among member nations. This strengthens Turkey's image as an important economic partner – a factor that could further be boosted with a systematic strategy of soft power.

Similar to Japan, Turkey has an extensive cultural past that spans several centuries. It is possible to contribute to a one-of-a-kind soft power strategy by accepting, promoting, and embracing modernity at the same time as its traditions. Turkey can create a narrative that appeals to a broad variety of consumers and promote an image of a vibrant country by celebrating its past triumphs while also showing its present accomplishments – yet avoidance of populist political propaganda is a must for this initiative to work as the Turkish society is already suffering a significant level of ideological polarization and uniting narratives are necessary in this context.⁶⁶ Turkey has the opportunity to cultivate a worldwide network of persons who have an affinity for Turkish culture and language if it makes further investments in currently existing education programs that promote Turkish language and culture.

The cultural exchange programs and regional collaboration efforts that are part of Japan's diplomatic activities include events like the Japan-China-Republic of Korea Trilateral Summit. Its participation in regional forums such as the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN Regional Forum demonstrates its dedication to promoting political stability and economic

⁶⁶ Ozan Aşık (2022), “Ideology, Polarization, and News Culture: The Secular-Islamist Tension in Turkish Journalism”, *The International Journal of Press/Politics* [Online], Date of Accession: 10.08.2023 from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/19401612221132716>.

cooperation in the area. Through programs such as the “*Turkish Cultural Centers*” that encourage traditional arts and crafts, Turkey is able to exhibit its rich historical and cultural legacy. The dedication of Turkey to commemorating its history is shown by the country’s dedication to preserving Ottoman buildings and traditional music. A systematic study of Turkey’s strengths in the cultural realm and valuable investments in this sector by governmental agencies could help consolidate Turkey’s considerable soft power resources.

To sum-up, the soft power methods that Turkey and Japan have adopted reflect their unique capabilities and approaches to building international connections and expanding their worldwide influence. Japan capitalizes primarily on its technical superiority, cultural exports, and diplomatic activities, while Turkey can be argued to mostly capitalize on its cultural wealth and geopolitical importance – though the latter’s soft power strategy needs refinement and systematization to be as effective as Japan in maximizing Turkey’s potential. Both nations strive to maintain their rich cultural traditions while also integrating contemporary values and practices into their societies. Turkey is making concerted efforts to improve its soft power capabilities, notably in the areas of technology and diplomacy. On the other hand, Japan is already in a leadership position in the field of soft power due to its well-established cultural exports and technical innovation. Turkish soft power, in a way, resembles the state of Japanese soft power before the 2000s – definitely on the rise and already achieving success but mostly most on the shoulders of successful individuals and civil society initiatives in a non-systematic form.

Concluding Remarks

As the Republic is about to enter its second century, 2023 is the right time for a revision of Turkey’s soft power strategy in light of insights obtained from more established soft powers such as Japan. This article has argued that one of the main conceptual implications of the case of Japanese soft power is that Japan’s global success story now stands out as evidence of the effectiveness of systematic government intervention in forming a coherent, systematic and visionary soft power plan. The “*Cool Japan*” campaign, which came into effect in 2005, has proven to be a turning point in Japan’s conscious strategy for using its cultural and creative assets for worldwide impact. This strategy had previously been non-systematic and spontaneous – hitherto left in the hands and care of Japanese individuals and civil society initiatives. It is possible that the Japanese methodical approach to soft power may teach the Turkish government a great deal about how to strengthen Turkey’s international connections, promote cultural variety, and enhance Turkey’s image across the globe. The AK Parti

government may wish to develop a similar systematic financial backing program by determining the already successful and well-liked products of Turkish society and then channeling significant amounts of investments through the budgets of its ministers.

In addition to the Cool Japan program, Japan's pacifist and often apologetic soft power diplomacy has made substantial contributions to the political stability, economic progress, and overall peace-building process in the East Asia region. Through the encouragement of cultural interchange, efforts toward historical reconciliation, and the implementation of educational programs, Japan has led the process of mending historical wounds and the growth of a higher degree of empathetic understanding among East Asian nations (i.e. Japan, Taiwan, South Korea in particular). The increasing economic prosperity and stability in the area has also been contributed to by improved economic cooperation on the economic front, as well as Japanese investments and help to emerging economies of the region such as Taiwan, Vietnam, and Indonesia. It is evident that Japan intends to make use of its soft power in order to bring about positive change in East Asia in the manner of the EU in European politics – Japan in this example perhaps attempting to play the role of Germany to the French role of South Korea. This is the case even if Japan continues to face challenges in its relationships with major neighbors like South Korea and Taiwan.

To position itself as a trustworthy partner in the process of global economic integration, Turkey has to actively participate in economic partnerships that foster international trade and investment. In this way, Turkey's involvement in trade accords may be compared to Japan's involvement in the same kind of agreements. Turkey is in a position to potentially contribute to the maintenance of regional political and economic stability through the engagement in mutual conversation, the settlement of conflicts and cooperative endeavors as a result of its participation in regional forums and initiatives such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). Perhaps Ankara could indeed benefit from adopting a Japanese-style pacifist, economic, and cultural exchange oriented diplomatic vision towards the Middle East and North Africa where some of the countries (e.g. Syria and Egypt) may harbor resentment for Turkey's historical occupying role in the form of the Ottoman Empire – somewhat similar to the perception of Japan as an imperial power by other East Asians until the end of the Second World War. Arguably, one of the key lessons of Japanese way of cultural and economic diplomacy is that carrots could be way more effective than stick in assuming a leading role in regional affairs.

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