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Geopolitics and Soft Power: Japan's Cultural Policy and Cultural Diplomacy in Asia

NISSIM KADOSH OTMAZGIN

Japan's cultural policy and cultural diplomacy in Asia has changed dramatically over the past one hundred years, from actively introducing and imposing Japanese culture during its empire-building period, to essentially avoiding the promotion of Japanese culture in Asia for most of the postwar period due to fears of being seen once again as engaged in cultural imperialism, and more recently, to supporting and encouraging the export of Japanese contemporary culture and lifestyle in order to attain "soft power." Looking at the fluctuations in Japan's cultural policy over these three periods allows us to understand how Japan has used cultural policy to further its geopolitical goals and more basically how it has viewed the role of "culture" in the context of its relations with Asian neighbors. In a broader sense, the Japanese experience shows that cultural policy, even when inward-looking, is not isolated from a country's geopolitical position and its ambitions in the world, regardless of the political system under which it operates.

During most of the postwar period the Japanese government did very little to actively promote its culture in Asia due to fears that such a promotion might resurrect old grievances from the time Japan occupied large parts of this region and attempted to impose Japanese culture on the local population. The government also estimated that cultural exports were not a profitable business that could contribute to the economy. However, the success of Japan's popular culture abroad since the 1990s, and the enthusiastic acceptance of Japanese cultural products such as anime, manga, pop music, and fashion by the younger generations, has caught the attention of the Japanese government. Following the success of the private sector, the Japanese government has recently become

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interested in the economic advantages of popular culture as a way of boosting the country's image abroad and attaining "soft power."[1] This new attitude is supported by a domestic discourse that calls on the government to make better use of its cultural resources. Journalistic and academic reports repeatedly emphasize the economic benefits of cultural exports and stress their potential contribution to the nation's diplomacy.

What is interesting about Japan's cultural policy and cultural diplomacy in Asia is that it has changed dramatically over the past 100 years. Japan's cultural policy during its empire-building period was different from its postwar cultural policy, which was implemented at a time when Japan was attempting to reposition itself as a non-military power primarily concerned with its economy. During the period of occupation and colonization, Japan's cultural policy was designed to help integrate the colonies under the banner of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere"[2] and convince the local people to accept Japan's dominant geopolitical position in Asia. For this purpose, the Japanese government attempted to eradicate Western influence in its colonies and replace it with a "superior" Japanese culture. Japan's assimilation policies in Korea, Taiwan, and Manchuria were especially intrusive and included the imposition of Japanese culture and language at the expense of local culture and traditions. In China and Southeast Asia as well, "culture" was put to work in the service of the empire. Soon after the marching armies cleared the way, "people of culture" (*bunkajin*)—teachers, writers, musicians, comedians, and artists—were sent from Japan to convince the local inhabitants of Japan's superiority and help endorse Japanese control.

Japan's defeat in the war and legacy of American occupation (1945-1952) changed all that. New priorities and constraints under the American umbrella dictated a new policy, which effectively neutralize governmental attempts to actively introduce Japanese culture to Asian audiences. The official fear was that the introduction of Japanese culture might resurrect old wartime grievances, but there were also fears that cultural exports might undermine Japan's important commercial and industrial interests in this region. Thus, the Japanese government estimated that cultural imperialism was not a profitable business and, with a few exceptions, retreated from aiding the export of Japanese culture to its neighbors. For most of the postwar period, Japan's cultural policy became rather inward-looking, fearing that the introduction of Japanese culture in Asia once again would prove to be counter-productive and would undermine Japan's economic interests in this region.

However, the cultural policy changed again in the 1990s, following the emergence of Japan as a cultural power known not only for its industrial and consumer products but also for its innovative contemporary culture and lifestyle. In this later period, cultural policy became increasingly directed toward economic and diplomatic purposes under such slogans as "soft power" and "cool Japan," designed to

produce more export-oriented cultural commodities and present a friendlier image of Japan abroad. The Japanese government has since been supporting various campaigns introducing Japanese culture in Asia under such frameworks as "cultural exchange" (*bunka kōryū*) and "cultural diplomacy" (*bunka gaikō*). Recent initiatives taken by the Japanese government also indicate that it actively intervenes in order to develop its own export-oriented cultural industries, with Asian consumers being a major target.

Looking at the issue from an historical perspective, we can see that the character of Japan's cultural policy has been determined by its international relations in Asia and is linked to Japan's changing geopolitical position. In each respective period, Japan's cultural policy was designed to serve its political agenda, first as an empire, later as a "peaceful power," and more recently as a culturally-exciting country. This is not merely a matter of state branding but part of a wider international conduct where culture and the arts serve as an extension of the state. In contrast to colonial times, Japan's cultural policy is now less explicit and more directed toward appealing to the younger generation, which is expected to lead its country's march toward the future.

In a broader sense, looking at the fluctuations in Japan's cultural policy over the past 100 years allows us to understand how cultural policy and cultural diplomacy is initiated and implemented, and more basically, how governments view the role of "culture" in the political life of the state. How has Japan used cultural policy to further its geopolitical goals? How has cultural policy shaped Japan's relations with its Asian neighbors? How useful is the concept of "soft power" for analyzing the ongoing impact of culture in Asia's international relations? The Japanese experience shows that cultural policy, even when inward-looking, is not isolated from a country's geopolitical position and its ambitions in the world, regardless of the political system under which it operates. However, as the conclusion here cautions, in an age of globalization, cultural policy can be counter-productive if a country is too explicit and too interventionist in its attempts to wield political power out of cultural exports. The state should thus develop a more nuanced approach to wield its culture in a swiftly globalizing world.

This article casts a wide historical view to analyze the Japanese government's policy toward the promotion of its culture in Asia by focusing on three main periods: before and during the war in Asia and the Pacific,[3] in the postwar period up to the late 1980s, and since the late 1980s to the present. The first part of the article begins with a brief definition of the term "cultural policy" in the context of geopolitics and discusses the reasons why states actually have cultural policy. The second part examines Japan's cultural policy in Asia during its colonial and war period starting from the annexation of Taiwan (Formosa) in 1895 until Japan's defeat in the War in 1945. This part emphasizes the ideological

and practical aspects of Japan's cultural policy, as a way of cultivating support and convincing the locals to accept Japanese hegemony. The next part analyzes Japan's cultural policy during the first four decades after the war. It shows that following its defeat, the Japanese government became uninterested in promoting Japanese culture in Asia due to fears of being accused of manipulating its culture again. The fourth part looks at some of the recent governmental initiatives to promote Japanese culture abroad, especially popular culture, and the way the field of cultural exports has been treated in official discourse in Japan. It is shown that at present, the Japanese government no longer perceives cultural exports to Asia as a potentially destabilizing factor, but following the success of the private sector, it has recently shifted its attention to the economic and diplomatic benefits derived from the newly emerging image of Japan as a culturally-exciting country. The concluding part ends with a discussion on the increasing usage of the concept of "soft power" in Asia's international relations. It is argued that this concept has migrated out of academia and is voiced by government officials and the wider public, especially in Japan, China, and South Korea, as part of a move to explore new means of state power in an age of globalization.

Why do states have cultural policy?

"Cultural policy" refers to a wide range of governmental initiatives, programs, and discourses designed to promote the country's culture, tradition, language, or art. The purpose of cultural policy varies greatly: it can be the dissemination of certain values and traditions the state chooses to articulate, the construction of a national community through the endorsement of shared symbols and narratives, a tool of control to legitimate a regime and mobilize the population by emphasizing their cultural similarities and by convincing them they share similar legacies, or a way to articulate the country's culture and ideas for diplomatic or economic purposes. Cultural policy is usually initiated and implemented by the state, but it can also be the product of a bottom-up process brought by individuals and private organizations. These initiatives, however, may later be rejected, contested, endorsed, or co-opted by the state.

Similar to propaganda, cultural policy is a politically motivated set of initiatives and actions designed to influence mass opinion by appealing to the emotions rather than rational thinking (Kushner 2006: 4). However, unlike propaganda, cultural policy includes a much broader array of activities and fields, which, rather, work on the long term. Cultural policy can come in the form of public support for museums, libraries and archives, visual and performing arts, public monuments, battlefield sites, zoos, botanical gardens, aquariums, and parks. It can also come as assistance for students, community celebrations, fairs, festivals,

and folklore activities (Mulcahy 2006). Cultural policy is also rather implicit about its political intentions. It is less manipulative than propaganda in the sense that it may include programs that promote cultural diversity and the promulgation of ethnic, artistic, and linguistic expression of individuals.

Cultural diplomacy is understood as the application of a state's cultural policy abroad through the exchange of ideas, information, culture and the arts (Milton 2003: 1). Its primary purpose is to appeal to the widest range of foreign audiences—especially important figures and opinions leaders—and convince them to change their mind or improve their view of a certain country. In modern international politics, it is possible to trace the beginning of cultural diplomacy to the post-World War I years. All the major powers of the time (USA, Britain, France, Germany, and Italy) started to initiate some sort of public relations campaign as part of a new diplomatic behavior aimed at mitigating unfavorable images of their state. The Japanese government, as a diligent learner of the West, developed its own cultural diplomacy (*bunka gaikō*), seen as a sophisticated strategy to advance Japan's national interests. As far back as the 1930s, the government ran a variety of cultural and educational initiatives in Western countries, including opening cultural relations centers in Paris, Berlin, New York, and Rome, dispatching Japanese lecturers and artists abroad and inviting foreign figures to Japan, assisting courses in Asian Studies (Oriental Studies) in foreign countries, supporting film production, coordinating student exchanges, and financing translations and publications of materials on Japan (Park 2009: 2-7).

Harvard University Professor Joseph Nye suggests another reason why cultural policy matters in international politics. He argues that states should use not only their military and economic power in the international arena but should also quantify and wield their cultural resources to generate a certain power he calls "soft power." According to Nye (2004a: 15), soft power lies in the ability of a nation to entice, attract, and fascinate other countries and societies so that a country "may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because of other countries admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness—want to follow it." Nye first used this concept to describe America's capabilities, but later cited examples from Europe, Japan, India, and China (Nye 2004b). In this sense, if a certain state wants to succeed in world affairs and in the global economy, it needs to actively promote its culture and values abroad. Thus, the promotion of cultural resources by states directly relates to its interests: to the purported "soft power" of nations.

Nowadays, the usage of cultural policy and cultural diplomacy has developed considerably and most countries today in one way or another display their culture abroad as part of their international conduct. Governments increasingly come to regard cultural policy as their special prerogative to represent the cultural achievements of their polity in international society (Katzenstein 2005: 150; see also

Bound et al. 2007; Hsiao and Yang 2009): witness the activities of the Japan Foundation (and the Japan Foundation Asia Center), Korea Foundation, British Council, Goethe Institute, United States Cultural Center, French Cultural Center (Maison Française), and more recently the Confucian Institute which has been set up by the Chinese government.

However, an important point to note here is that different countries regard cultural policy differently. In the United States and the UK, cultural policies are generally designed to promote economic vibrancy and increase the accumulation of wealth. By the 1990s, cultural policy in the United States had been premised around cultural creativity, embracing commercial cultural goods and emphasizing the role of culture and art in promoting economic growth. In the UK as well, in 1997 the Blair administration introduced a new national project called "Cool Britannia," in order to make the nation attractive, make the British people proud, and revitalize the economy (Sugiura 2008: 129-130). In China, South Korea, and Southeast Asia, post-colonial cultural policies have typically represented a way for the government to emphasize and reinforce nation-building or prevent the infiltration of "foreign" cultures regarded as morally harmful or politically dangerous (Chua 2000: 12-13; Keane 2006; Yim 2003: 177). In the case of Japan, as we shall see, the purpose of cultural policy greatly shifted over the years: from supporting empire-building, to an inward-looking and cautious cultural policy, and more recently to a policy to assist the export and valorization of culture and attain "soft power."

Building the empire: cultural policy during war and occupation

Prior to its defeat in the war in Asia and the Pacific, Japan's colonial and wartime intrusions into Asia included the introduction and sometimes imposition of culture at the expense of local and Western cultures. After Japan occupied and colonized Taiwan (1895-1945) and Korea (1910-1945), and launched its conquest into Manchuria and China, culture was seen as the way to diffuse resentment and support local elites sympathetic to Japan. During the Japanese conquests of parts of Southeast Asia and the Pacific, culture was also used in order to strengthen control and nurture local followers.

Japan's cultural initiatives in Asia came into fruition following its rapid modernization and transformation from an agrarian-based economy at risk of colonization in the mid-nineteenth century to an industrial economy and colonizing power in its own right. Along with its military victories and show of strength, Japan also began to develop a sense of superiority toward its neighbors. At that time the rest of Asia was gradually being regarded as an object of negative identification—the embodiment of everything that Japan wished to be disassociated

with. This attitude was redirected in the 1930s and 1940s to a policy designed to forcefully implement modernization in Asia, eradicate Western influence, and replace it with Japanese-led ideas about culture and life.

In the colonies of Taiwan and Korea, and in some parts of Northern China, cultural and educational policies were not only designed to achieve better control but also to facilitate their assimilation with Japan (Caprio 2009: 81-110; Fujii 2006: 70-74). Cultural policies then rested on the notion that it was essential to use other aspects of control aside from militaristic coercion to transform the colonies inhabitants' mental and spiritual outlook and make them susceptible to the "Japanese spirit" (Peattie 1984: 94-104; Tsurumi 1984: 279-83). At the beginning of the twentieth century, the notion of a moral right of "advanced" colonial races (like Japan) to establish dominion over "inferior" indigenous peoples became widespread and was part of the justification used in initiating action in Taiwan and Korea. This sentiment only became stronger with the proclamation of the "Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere," where Asians were supposed to thrive under Japanese leadership.

In the 1930s, as part of the policy of *Kōminka* (literally "imperial-subjectization"), the government allowed Korean and Taiwanese students to study in Japanese universities and legalized intermarriage with Japanese. In schools in Taiwan and Korea, the curriculum reinforced Japanese patriotic and jingoistic themes and the teachers and students were required to bow ritualistically toward the emperor in Tokyo every Monday morning. In Manchukuo, the puppet state installed in Manchuria in March 1932, the cultural policy was designed to enhance its integration into Japan. In July 1932, the *Manchukuo-Japan Cultural Association* (*ManNichi Bunkakyoukai*) was established to introduce Japanese culture to the people of Manchuria. Japanese movies were distributed, exhibitions of paintings by Japanese artists were organized, Japanese books and magazines were translated and published (by 1934 over 280 Japanese magazines were published), and radio broadcasts in Japanese were aired (Roy 2003: 41-45; Suzuki 2005: 197-199).

An important way to promulgate Japanese culture and reinforce the integration of the colonies with Japan was through language. Japanese authorities in Taiwan, Korea, and Manchukuo insisted on making Japanese the "national language" to be used by officials and later by the common people as well. In Taiwan and Korea, the official language became Japanese from the very beginning and the usage of local languages in schools was gradually prohibited. Later on, Koreans and Taiwanese were also required to adopt Japanese names. In Manchukuo, as early as 1932, Japanese replaced Chinese as the "national language." In all these places, the local language publications were censored and publishers persecuted, although the Japanese authorities did not manage to

stop them completely (Mitsui 2007: 47-49; Roy 2003: 42-45; Suzuki 2005: 197, 215-216).

In China, Japan's cultural policy progressed less systematically because of the ongoing war and the fact that the Japanese army never gained effective control of this huge country. Nevertheless, cultural policy was put into practice, mainly in the form of sponsoring Japanese-related events and providing patronage for Chinese students. As early as 1923, the Japanese Diet passed a legislation to establish the China Cultural Affairs Bureau within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to fund and organize cultural activities related to China (Heng 1999). In the 1920s and 1930s, the China Cultural Affairs Bureau, together with the Foreign Ministry's Cultural Affairs Division and the Bureau for Cultural Affairs (*Bunka Jigyobu*), supported various Sino-Japanese associations and student exchange programs. About 6,000 students were sent from China and Manchuria to study in Japan, with the intention of cultivating local elite sympathetic to Japan (Goodman 1991: 4-5). As part of the effort to reach the hearts of the Chinese, even humor was put in the service of the empire. Japanese comedians were sent to the front, primarily to entertain Japanese soldiers, but also to popularize Japanese attitudes about China and justify its war aims (Kushner 2006: 115).

Individuals also helped disseminate Japanese culture, believing it was a way to "save" China from the West's exploitative control. Their efforts, however, were cynically co-opted by the government and turned into instruments of the Japanese imperialism in China. One of these individuals was Aizan Yamaji, a Japanese sinologist, who advocated strengthening China through introducing the Japanese experience of advancement. The Japanese authorities, however, did not share his enthusiasm, but his efforts and knowledge were nevertheless co-opted by the Japanese government and put to use in the service of Japan's military intelligence (Ito 2004). There are many similar documented cases. Reynolds Douglas (1989), for example, examined the stories of four Japanese individuals, Ginko Kishida, Sei Arao, Jitsuichi Machida, and Hajime Nezu, who worked to establish Japan's relations with China differently from what they recognized as the West's exploitative attitude. They genuinely believed in their cause to liberate China from Western colonization. Their initiatives and efforts were also later adopted and co-opted by the Japanese government.

In Southeast Asia, the implementation of Japan's cultural policies were more haphazard and not the product of a well-planned program. They were mainly ad hoc initiatives introduced on the eve of an invasion or after establishing military control. The conquering Japanese army commanders, some of whom were convinced of Japanese moral and "spiritual" superiority, directed the policies. These consisted mainly of propaganda gained from experience in Korea, Taiwan, Manchukuo, and in previously military-occupied areas in China. Part of the propaganda campaign included the recruitment, mobilization, and

utilization of thousands of Japanese *bunkajin* ("men of culture")—writers, artists, professors, and musicians—to "re-educate" the populace and "bring them docilely into Japan's cultural orbit" (Goodman 1991: 2-4). These "men of culture" were organized into special "propaganda units" (*senden butai* or *sendenhan*) with the mission of using the latest media technology (printed media and radio broadcasts) to solicit the support of local elites. However, as Mark Ethan (2010) shows about Indonesia, most of these men had little or no knowledge of Southeast Asia so that their mediation attempts were only partly successful.

As in Northeast Asia, schooling was an important aspect in Japan's cultural policy and local students from the South were also invited to Japan. In 1943, the "Special Overseas Students from the Southern Region" program (*Nanpō Tokubetsu Ryugakusei*) was established. As a part of this program, Southeast Asian students were sent to study in some of the best Japanese institutions for higher education. The aim was to train future leaders who would be indoctrinated in Japan with *Yamato Damashi* (Japanese spirit) and who, on returning home, would help to mold their fellow countrymen into ideal participation in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. The program, as Grant Goodman (1991: 4-5) points out, was "truly a singular achievement," and the surviving "products" of that experience "are to this day among the fastest friends of Japan throughout Southeast Asia."

Finally, an integral part of Japan's cultural policy included the usage of propaganda against foreign influences. In fact, during the war both Japan and the United States carried out full-fledged propaganda wars against each other, trying to show that they can save Asia from the danger of American/Japanese imperialism. English newspapers and movies were banned by the Japanese throughout the empire and anti-American campaigns were constantly voiced from Japanese-controlled radio. One campaign warned the people against the harmful results of drinking Coca-Cola. According to this campaign, Coca-Cola contained a special drug which made the people who drank it become addicted to it. In Indonesia, Malaya, Burma, and Singapore the teaching of English was also banned, although the Japanese conquerors sometimes needed to use English in order to deliver their orders. One interesting episode was at the Greater East Asia Conference (Dai Tōa Kaigi) held in Tokyo in November 1943, when the representatives of the nations, which were "liberated" from the West's exploitative control, conversed in English—the language of the enemy—because it was the only language everyone could communicate in.

The results of Japan's cultural policies in Asia during the years of war and occupation were mixed. On the one hand, Japanese concepts about culture and life were introduced throughout the empire, especially in Korea and Taiwan where cultural policies were implemented more strongly. The widespread usage of the Japanese language in Korea and Taiwan is perhaps the most successful indi-

cation. No doubt, in the short term, cultural policy helped Japan gain better control of its colonies and to integrate them into its expanding empire. On the other hand, however, Japanese-controlled areas in China and Southeast Asia were simply too big to make Japan's cultural policy effective. Only a small segment of the population actually met the "men of culture" sent from Japan and in this sense Japanese culture did not have a great impact. From the very start, it was rather hard power that most strongly held the Japanese empire together.

A second important point to emphasize is that in the eyes of Japan's top policy makers, especially the military leadership, Japan's cultural policy was basically an instrument of control. Indeed, some Japanese truly believed that Japan had a moral obligation to eradicate Western influence, as part of Japan's quest for cultural and moral parity with the West, so as to "correct" Asia and "fix" its culture by persuading it to accept the Japanese "enlightened" culture (Lee 1989: 257-6). A few intellectuals, such as the nationalistic critic Tadataka Ikezaki and Tokyo Imperial University Professor Masamichi Shinmei called on the government to promote a "Far Eastern Culture" (*kyokutōbunka*) as a way to win the hearts and minds of Asians and present an alternative to the Western-dominated international order (Shinmei 1939: 113-140; Yomiuri Shimbun, November 19, 1938, evening edition, p. 2). However, the Japanese leadership did not always share the same enthusiasm. For the government, cultural policy and diplomacy was rather viewed as a means to achieve better control of the empire and advance the assimilation of the colonies with Japan. As Ken'ichi Goto (2003: 287) sums it up, the rhetoric of "Pan-Asianism" and the need to liberate Asia from the hands of Western colonizers was essentially a lip service strategically voiced by Japanese generals and bureaucrats at the time when the Japanese empire was getting bigger.

Distancing Asia: cultural policy and "cultural exchange" in the postwar years

The defeat in the war and the legacy of American occupation broke the course of relations between Japan and its neighbors and effectively neutralized the Japanese government's will to actively promote its culture in Asia. After regaining independence from American occupation in 1952,[4] Japan had to rehabilitate its relations with some of its Asian neighbors and promoting Japanese culture again was not seen as the right way forward. Culture was rather seen as a risk that might hamper Japan's quiet return to the region in order to purchase the resources needed for its economy. Moreover, the Japanese government did not regard "culture" and the cultural industries as worth investing in. In sharp contrast to the government's strong support for the export of manufacturing products, such as automobiles and electronics, the Japanese government did very little to support the commercial export of culture. Hence, for most of the postwar

period there was no real political or economic incentive for the Japanese government to actively promote culture as a constructive component of its relations with other Asian countries.

Domestically, however, the Japanese government was given a role in the country's cultural life from the very beginning. This is in contrast to the situation in America, where cultural policy was shaped by a fundamental tendency toward limiting and restricting the government's role in cultural affairs. The Constitution of Japan that came into force on May 3, 1947 dictated in Article 25 that all people are entitled to enjoy the minimum level of a "healthy and culturally-rich life." The promotion of the nation's cultural life and the guarantee of people's cultural rights were thus the responsibility of the Japanese government (Watanabe 1999: 62; Zemans 1999: 31).

After the government regained independence from the American occupation in 1952, its cultural policy was heavily directed inward. The Ministry of Education's (now Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [Monkashō]) Art Promotion Division was created in 1945 "for the purposes of reviving Japan culturally as a nation and actively promoting policies for art and culture" (Bunkachō 1993). Cultural activities mainly consisted of promoting traditional and artistic practices and preserving cultural monuments and legacies. According to one critique, both the government and the local authorities promoted the notion of *Nihonjinron*[5] through enhancing activities they regarded as representing traditional culture and norms, like *ikebana* (flower arrangement) and *shodō* (calligraphy) (McVeigh 2004: 166-181, 189-198).

This, however, does not mean that Japan completely pulled out from promoting its culture overseas. The government invested in promoting its culture to where it thought it was more beneficial, especially to North America and Europe. This, however, took place within the wide, non-obliging framework of "cultural exchange" (*Bunka Kōryū*), and of other "softer" terms frequently used in official vocabulary, such as "intellectual and cultural exchange," "cultural cooperation," "cultural interaction," "cultural understanding," and "cultural dialogue." These terms came to be seen as a neutralized, friendly way to actively disseminate Japanese culture abroad as it implied that there was a multi-directionality of cultural flows where Japan was also at the receiving end.

For example, in 1959, the Ministry of Education started to subsidize artists' federations, sending artists overseas and supporting international performances. In June 1968, with the merger of the Ministry of Education's Cultural Affairs Bureau and the National Commission for the Protection of Cultural Properties, the Agency for Cultural Affairs (*Bunkachō*) was established with the mandate to "promote and spread culture and preserve cultural properties." This was the first recognition of the legitimacy of public policy concerning the arts and culture. Although the focus of the agency lay primarily within Japan, from

1968 it was also in charge of international exchange (until this responsibility was transferred to the Education Ministry's International Affairs Bureau in 1974). In 1993, one of the agency's objectives was redefined by the Monkashō to include "enhancing international cultural exchange and promotion," through the introduction of Japanese creative works to other countries, and the promotion of international cultural exchange (Bunkachō 2003).

Utilizing culture as part of Japan's foreign policy also became the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), especially through the Japan Foundation. The Japan Foundation was established after the Japanese Diet passed the Japan Foundation Law in June 1972 as part of the Japanese government's attempt to pay more attention to cultural aspects of international relations. The Foundation was designed to implement Japan's cultural policies in concert with such governmental and quasi-governmental agencies as MOFA's Information and Cultural Affairs Bureau, the Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Education, and the Cultural Exchange Section of the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) (Kahn 1999: 72). Since its establishment, the Japan Foundation has been primarily engaged in promoting the USA's understanding of Japan's needs through cultural exchange (Winston 1999: 69-75; Havens 1987: 335). It has organized a large number of programs to support academic and cultural events, Japanese language instruction, Japanese studies, and various performances and exhibitions dealing with Japanese art, film, television, and the like. In October 2003, the foundation became an "Independent Administrative Institution" under the "Incorporated Administrative Agency Japan Foundation Law." It became a de facto agency of the Japanese government with a program strategically designed to complement government objectives. Today, the Japan Foundation operates on a global scale, yet the United States remains its major area of focus (Japan Foundation 2005).

In Asia, however, Japan's defeat and its repositioning in the postwar Asia Pacific order completely changed the governments' previous cultural policy. New priorities and constraints, as well as the bitter memories and resentments that continued to fester among many Asians, dictated a strong cautiousness. This was coupled with the fact that some of the region's governments banned the importation of Japanese culture due to historical and political considerations. The Taiwanese government banned the importation of Japanese culture between 1972 and 1993, following Japan's establishment of relations with the People's Republic of China. In South Korea, Japanese culture was banned soon after the occupation ended and was allowed back in only in 1998. In Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Singapore, certain products of Japanese popular culture, especially manga and anime, were occasionally banned due to their suspected "violent" and "pornographic" nature (Otmazgin 2005: 514).

In the 1970s, however, Japanese leaders felt secure enough to publicly suggest "cultural understanding" and "cultural exchange" in the framework of relations with Asian countries—not with China or Korea where resentment was still high but with Southeast Asian nations where the Japanese occupation was relatively short and firm diplomatic relations were already established. Nobusuke Kishi, Japan's prime minister from 1957 to 1960, pioneered the way for diplomatic and economic relations between Japan and the Southeast Asian nations through a network of personal ties between politicians and their business associates, assisted by Japanese reparations and economic aid. These new relations basically meant trade and resource procurement within the framework of "economic cooperation" (Shiraishi 1997: 176-9). During this period, there was no mention of "culture" as being a factor in Japan-Southeast Asian relations.

However, Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda was the first to include the issue of culture as part of his Southeast Asian agenda. In his 1977 doctrine, Fukuda stated that Japan wished to promote "cultural exchange" with Southeast Asia as part of a wider dialogue, and emphasized that Japan did not wish to become a military power once again (Sudo 2002: 35-39). Perpetuating the soft rhetoric of "cultural exchange" and "cultural cooperation" was seen by Fukuda as a way to improve relations with Southeast Asia and ease its fears over Japan's economic success. This new attitude, of introducing a cultural aspect to the relations with Southeast Asia, came only three years after Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka's failed visit to the region. In Thailand, a mob paraded outside the hotel where Prime Minister Tanaka was staying, screaming anti-Japanese slogans. In Indonesia, he was a virtual prisoner inside the Presidential Palace for three days, as demonstrators outside vigorously protested his visit. The Indonesian police killed eleven demonstrators, forcing Tanaka to cut his visit short and flee Jakarta early one morning by helicopter (Schlesinger 1997: 76). This was a strong reminder of the fact that feelings of resentment and hatred towards Japan still existed, and that these feelings should be taken more seriously by Japan if it wants to continue its stable political and economic relations with this region.

In the 1980s, under Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, Japan embarked on *kokusaika* (internationalization) as an official policy, designed to make Japan a more internationalized country that contributes to the international community. Even though progress in Japan's *kokusaika* has been painstakingly slow (Itoh 2000: 5-6), one of the outcomes has been an increase in support for Japanese language learning abroad. A few years later, Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita continued Fukuda's line of diplomacy. In 1987, he declared that "The key to [ASEAN] achievement has been the spirit of cooperation guiding ASEAN, which I believe has its roots in the spiritual tradition of Asia that values harmony and consensus in diversity. As an Asian sharing this tradition, I take a particular pride in the accomplishment of ASEAN" (Takeshita 1987). Prime

Minister Takeshita was also the first to initiate a concrete plan to promote Japanese culture in East Asia. In 1988, his cabinet appointed a committee to advance the export of Japanese television programs to Asian countries. This, as we shall see in the next part, opened the way for a big number of governmental initiatives designed to introduce Japanese culture in Asia for the purpose of improving relations.

To conclude the postwar period, the Japanese government exercised extreme caution in promoting its culture in Asia, especially in the first three decades after the war. Given the traumatic experience of colonialism and war, the legitimacy to use culture as a political tool was still very weak. The Japanese government's cultural policy de jure concerned the preservation of cultural heritage and traditional artistry inside Japan. Contemporary artistic and cultural creativity, commodification, marketing, and export were left entirely in the hands of the private sector (this is in spite of the fact that some Japanese popular culture products became popular in the region, such as the television drama *Oshin* and the animated character *Doraemon*). During the economic "miracle" years from the 1960s to the late 1980s, Japan was preoccupied with getting its factories running and the economy working. For this purpose, it needed to rely on the importation of raw materials from East and Southeast Asian countries and on the local workforce in Japanese factories in the region (Hatch and Yamamura 1996). The introduction of Japanese culture to Asia was considered potential stimulation to anti-Japanese sentiments and could have endangered the important business relations Japan wanted to continue with this region. This attitude, however, as we shall see next, dramatically changed in the 1990s.

From traditional culture to *Cool Japan*: cultural diplomacy and "soft power"

In April 2005, the Japanese government launched a new vision called "Japan's 21st Century Vision," declaring that by 2020 Japan would become a "culturally creative nation." According to this vision, Japan needs to invest more in utilizing its tradition, creative power, and technology, and increase the free exchange of culture, in order to enhance a new global position. Two years earlier, in April 2003, the Japan Foundation's annual report underscored the potential of Japanese culture to draw a sympathetic "national image" of Japan and assist its diplomatic purposes. This report also emphasized the rising importance of culture in today's diplomacy characterizing it as "soft power" (Japan Foundation 2003). And in 2004, a series of 23 articles published in *Nikkei Shimbun*, Japan's leading economic newspaper, strongly called on the government to endorse and develop the country's cultural industries. The articles outlined the need to stimulate growth in Japan's cultural industries in the new digital age and recommended that the

government provide adequate support for this sector (Nikkei Shimbun, 2004, January 5–February 4, pp. 1-3).

The above reports and media coverage exemplify the changing attitude in Japan toward the utilization of "culture" for economic and diplomatic purposes. They are also indicative of the Japanese government's attempts to embrace the newly emerging image of Japan as a "cool country" for envisioning a new, post-crisis future for Japan. This time, however, the government is not leading the promotion of Japanese culture abroad but its actions are rather responsive, following and accommodating the success of the private sector in producing and exporting commodified culture. Nevertheless, the government has de facto become involved in the efforts to promote Japanese culture abroad and is constantly seeking new areas for state intervention in the newly promising cultural industry sector (Leheney 2006; Otmazgin and Ben-Ari 2011). This entails a relatively new connection between the state and the cultural industries, where culture and cultural products are now valorized for their economic and diplomatic value, and culture has thus become an object of policy that is seen as manageable through political channels in the service of the nation. In other words, the active promotion of culture, once again, is seen as a legitimate area for state-intervention.

Asian markets are viewed as a favorite destination for Japan's cultural exports. First, in recent decades a big urban middle class has emerged in many parts of Asia, with increasing consumption demands and leisure time needs, which could be accommodated with Japanese consumer and cultural products ranging from rice cookers to video games and anime. Second, Asian markets are also important because Japanese contemporary culture and lifestyle have had its biggest success in this region. In recent years, a wide range of cultural products, such as music, animation, comic books, television programs, fashion magazines, movies, and other popular culture fields and artifacts have been endorsed by the local popular culture markets of Asia and now constitute an integral part of the cultural lives of many young people in this region (Iwabuchi 2002). This acceptance of Japan's popular culture in Asia is especially surprising given Japan's imperialistic past. Although the people in Asia today may still remember Japan's past wrongdoings and might still be critical of the Japanese government's treatment of its wartime history, they continue to buy animation, comics, and J-pop albums in the tens of millions and routinely watch Japanese-made television programs and movies.

The changing attitude of the Japanese government toward the role of culture in Japan's international relations has been overwhelmingly supported by the domestic audience. Intellectual and popular discourse in Japan is generally supportive of the idea that the export of culture can play a diplomatic role in healing the wounds inflicted by Japan's imperialistic past by presenting a friendlier image of the country abroad (Otmazgin 2011: 318-319). A few government officials

have even indicated that using Japan's resources of soft power abroad is exactly the solution to the constitutional limitations that prevent Japan from using its hard power (e.g. military power) in its international conduct (Sugiura et al. 2004: 30). There is also a cross-political agreement on the need to spread Japanese culture abroad. For liberals, the export of contemporary culture is seen as reflecting the country's "friendlier" side, whereas, for conservatives, the overseas success is viewed as a source of national pride (Iwabuchi 2002: 201).

The personal interest of a few politicians in Japan also brought wider attention to the issue of cultural policy and diplomacy. In December 2004, then Prime Minister Junichirō Koizumi established a think tank to recommend how the government should promote the country's cultural diplomacy. In September 2005, his successor, Shinzō Abe, announced during his election campaign that "pop culture" was one of Japan's strengths. Later that year, the Prime Minister's advisory institute on foreign relations (*Gaisōshimonkikai*) declared "Manga and Animation Diplomacy." The recommendations included organizing international events to promote Japanese culture, establishing a "Japan Manga Award" for outstanding foreign animators, and forming a joint study group involving bureaucrats and industry personnel. Prime Minister Tarō Asō, reportedly a fan of comics, proposed designating Japanese anime characters, like *Doraemon* and *Hello Kitty*, to be Japan's international cultural ambassadors (Asahi.com, 2005. April 10, Yomiuri Shimbun, 2005, November 11). In a speech from 2006, when Asō was still Foreign Minister, he argued:

"[manga is] a powerful example of just how far Japanese manga has come to be known around the world. I think we can safely say that any kind of cultural diplomacy that fails to take advantage of pop culture is not really worthy of being called 'cultural diplomacy'" (Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006).

In actual terms, the state's support for cultural promotion overseas contains a wide range of uncoordinated initiatives involving no fewer than 13 governmental ministries and agencies. The most prominent are MOFA, the Japan Foundation, the Agency of Culture (under the auspices of the Monkashō), the Prime Minister's Cabinet (PMC), and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI). However, as in other fields when different governmental ministries and agencies are involved, there is routine competition over resources, overlapping responsibilities, lack of coordination, and struggle over prestige. The terminology used by different ministries also varies. MOFA advocates supporting "pop culture diplomacy," METI talks about supporting the "content industry" (the ministry defines any cultural and artistic work with commercial value as content), and the PMC states that it wishes to promote Japanese "life culture" abroad by introducing Japanese cuisine, fashion, and Japanese brand names to foreigners (Zykas 2011: 155-157; 163-66).

Cultural diplomacy's functions are the responsibility of MOFA. Together with the Japan Foundation, it is charged with the international dimensions of

cultural policy. In its publications and reports, the Japan Foundation routinely highlights Japan's cultural capabilities and gives testimony to the popularity of Japanese culture overseas. Encouraged by these assessments, in 2005, MOFA allocated JPY 1.16 billion for promoting Japanese animation and pop music in China. In 2006, the amount was almost tripled to JPY 3.11 billion, a move meant to preclude any further deterioration of Japan's image in China following an upsurge in anti-Japanese sentiment sparked by Prime Minister Junichirō Koizumi's visit to the disputed Yasukuni Shrine. In the same year, MOFA also decided to allocate additional funds for financing the export of Japanese animation to developing countries as a part of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) program (an annual budget of JPY 10 million was already allocated in previous years). The justification given for allocating the funds was that the animation programs would improve the perception of Japan in developing countries (Asahi Shimbun, 2005, December 22, p. 26).

Responding to the growing importance of the Asian region, in 1989 the Japan Foundation created the ASEAN Cultural Center, renamed the Japan Foundation Center in 1995. It funds intellectual exchanges in Asia as well as programs to encourage a better understanding of Japan in Asia through the introduction of Japanese culture (Katzenstein 2005: 154). Curiously, in its attempts to present a positive image of Japan in Asia the Japan Foundation faces the same dilemmas as its predecessor, the Society for International Cultural Relations (Kokusai Bunka Shinkōkai), faced in the 1930s: what artifacts and fields best represent the Japanese state and should therefore be displayed abroad? In 2004, Kazuo Ogura, the President of the Japan Foundation, called for a policy shift by propagating more contemporary art forms abroad, like anime, music, and manga, alongside Japanese high culture, such as the *noh* theater, *bunraku* (puppet theater), *ikebana*, and *chanoyu* (tea ceremony), which were still, in his personal view, "transmitting the Japanese spirit," and offering the world "international assets."

To conclude, the government policy since the 1990s and the recent promotion of Japanese culture did not start with the government's vision but rather was a reaction to the popularity of Japanese culture abroad. However, the Japanese government has been increasingly aware of the possibilities present in promoting its culture and has gradually changed its attitude toward the constructive role that culture can play for Japan. Encouraged by the domestic discourse, it is examining new ways to assist its country's cultural exports in order to gain economic benefits and possibly nurture positive appreciation of the country overseas. This shift is especially significant in the case of Asia, where traumatic memories from the war with Japan still remain.

The redirection of Japan's cultural policy back to Asia is especially important because the younger generation there gets to shape their image of Japan not only from history textbooks or from the rhetoric of their leaders, but also through the

consumption of Japanese popular culture, which presents a friendlier picture of the country (Otmazgin 2008). The soft power argument has become a key phrase in governmental and public discourse as a response to the success of Japan's popular culture abroad, and is now appropriated as part of the state's attempts to explore new arenas of intervention. In this context, "culture" is once again seen as a manageable tool to advance the country's interests abroad, this time in a rather explicit and "softer" manner.

Soft power Asia

The soft power argument itself has grown fashionable in Asia in recent years, and is presently used both as an engine and as a justification to peruse an active cultural policy, which contributes to national diplomacy. Politicians often use this term to advance their agenda and government and media reports routinely quote it to indicate popular culture's diplomatic advantages. Soft power, however, has different meanings in different countries. In Japan, as we saw, it is not only used as part of the government's attempt to seek new arenas for state intervention but also as part of the struggle among different governmental ministries and agencies over resources. In South Korea, government officials tend to view this term as a way to implement industrial change, to encourage the export and consumption of Korean consumer products, like electronics and automobiles, and to establish South Korea's global position as a middle power (Lee 2011; Sohn 2008). In China, this term is regarded as a way to facilitate better relations between the state and the media industries, and more recently as a way to advance China's interests abroad, in what Joshua Kurlantzick (2008) calls "China's charm offensive."

However, to what extent is the soft power argument beneficial for analyzing inner-Asian cultural relations in an age of globalization? For our discussion of cultural policy in Asia this concept is still important since it has become part of a popular political and economic discourse that fuels interest in cultural production and consumption, and has thus become a legitimate object of, rather than concept for, analysis. In fact, the issue of soft power is no longer only in the hands of academic researchers; it has assumed a life of its own and become an integral part of the vocabulary regarding the role of culture in international politics and leading to calls for states to intervene in order to let this sector grow (Otmazgin and Ben-Ari 2001). In other words, the very term "soft power" has become a political resource since attributing power or soft power to someone is itself a political act.

No doubt, cultural exports—and their recent marriage with soft power—are beneficial for the producing country as they present a friendlier, softer, image of this country abroad. Culture can also generate economic value for the producing country in the form of direct income from export or indirectly from encouraging

such commodities as tourism and increasing the visibility of this country's consumer products abroad. The diffusion of cultural products, like music, food, or films, can also be important measures of regional interactions by promoting contact and cooperation among civil society groups and spurring communalities of consumption habits and lifestyle.

At the same time, however, cultural products can also be a double-edged sword for governments trying to extract state power. For once, in an age of globalization, cultural products and ideas disseminate, interact, hybridize and localize to the point that it is impossible to read or lead them in any monolithic way. When a Japanese animation, for example, is being marketed in Asia, localized by anime fans, and reproduced in Chinese (illegally or not), there is very little the Japanese government can do to extract political power from this process. In other words, the state should not attempt to deliberately obtain soft power from the proliferation of its popular culture as such an attempt to wield political benefits might produce resentment and prove futile, if not harmful.

Another problem is that while cultural policies remain national cultural flows increasingly become global. While countries like Japan, South Korea, China, and India export a lot of their culture and ideas they are also importing a lot from the US, Europe, and other parts of Asia. There is no unidirectional flow of culture and ideas and in this sense Japan has also became a diligent importer. This, to some degree, may limit the impact of Japan's soft power abroad and lead to a more complex environment where the state has a very small influence on the outcome of its cultural policy.

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Notes

1 "Soft power" is a term coined by Joseph Nye to describe the growing importance of non-traditional means, such as the culture and ideals, a country can wield to influence another country's wants (Nye 2004a).

2 "Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" (*Dai toa kyoeiken*) referred to the formation of an autonomous region under Japanese leadership. The exact limits of "Great East Asia" were never clearly defined; however, the term usually included Japan, Korea, Manchukuo, and those parts of China and Southeast Asia that had been brought under Japanese control. Sometimes

the term designated a wider area and included India, Australia, Hawaii, New Zealand, Outer Mongolia, and Eastern Siberia, which were not yet under Japanese control. See documents of Yabe Tei, Matsuoka Yosuke and Tojo Hideki, in (Lebra 1975). More on the broader perspective of Japanese-centered regionalism during the 1930s see (Mitani 2004).

3 Many names have been used to describe the war: "World War II," "the Pacific War," "the Asia and Pacific War," "the Greater East Asia War" (*Daitōa Sensō*), etc. This reflects the sense of confusion over the scale of Japan's wars and over the very basic question of when did the war really start. Was it following Japan's invasion into Manchuria in May 1931? Following the Marco Polo bridge incident in June 1937? Perhaps only following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 and the occupation of Southeast Asia? For this paper, I prefer the term "the Asia and Pacific war" since it relates to Japan's actions in the wider Asia and Pacific areas yet separates them from the war in Europe. For more on the terminology and framing of Japan's wars, see (Hotta 2007).

4 Except from Ryukyu Islands, where the American occupation continued for another 20 years.

5 *Nihonjinron* literally means "discussions of the Japanese" and refers to defining the uniqueness of Japanese culture, society, and national character. For a comprehensive discussion of this concept and the vast array of literature written on this topic see (Yoshino 1992; and Befu 1993).

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