



**Strengthening Japanese Public Diplomacy:  
Steps for the Future**

**By Bettyjane Hoover  
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## Executive Summary

For the past seventy-five years, Japanese public diplomacy (PD) has been focused on rebuilding its image and creating a positive, receptive international environment for its foreign policy. The predominant strategy has been promoting its culture and soft power assets, to co-opt rather than coerce, which aligns with Japan's constitutional limitations on hard power. Japan has become a widely recognized soft power superpower, with wildly popular media like anime and manga, such that its PD actors continue to launch initiatives that utilize these assets. While there are many PD actors involved in Japan's PD efforts this study focuses on the Japan Foundation (JF), the Japan House (JH), the Nippon Hoso Kyokai (NHK), and the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET).

Examining the history of Japanese PD and these four PD actors reveals several areas where changes in activities or mindsets would strengthen Japanese PD. These areas include 1) better coordination among government PD actors; 2) more consistency in terminology; 3) expanding understanding of PD beyond elite circles; 4) more Japanese engagement in the global PD discourse; 5) addressing the lack of PD-related higher education and diplomatic training; 6) diversifying and training the next generation of spokespeople; 7) expanding the JH network, improving its audience targeting, and adopting a centralized database; 8) making a conscious shift to focus on outcomes in annual reports; 9) amending the Broadcasting Act to improve NHK's international reputation and PD mission; 10) improving NHK's international services and understanding of global audiences; 11) developing a fundamental understanding of NHK's role in PD; 12) correcting the current poor utilization of alumni of Japan's PD programs; 13) clarifying the government's goals for JET's effects on Japanese society; and 14) focusing more

on Japan's active strategic engagement in regional and global force rather than over relying on promotion of culture and soft power.

The last point is crucial because reliance on culture and soft power has been Japan's predominant PD strategy. While this strategy has helped rebrand Japan, it has neglected strategic communications which have become increasingly important for Japan's international role and image. Global dynamics and geostrategic relationships are changing. Additionally, Japan's international role is evolving, as evident in its shift away from pacifism and assumption of a more active role in the Indo-Pacific region. It is time for Japan to consider the limits of soft power, rely on it less, and start integrating its strategic communications with its PD strategy and activities.

## **Introduction**

Since the end of WWII, Japanese public diplomacy (PD) has been characterized by efforts promoting its culture and soft power to improve its national image and create a positive and receptive international environment for advancing its foreign policy objectives. In the initial few decades after the war, Japan focused on its traditional culture, and when its pop culture became increasingly admired around the turn of the century, it became the preferred soft power vehicle for PD activities. Japan embraced soft power largely due to its constitutional limitations on hard power, viewing it as a useful tool to co-opt rather than coerce others on the international stage. Today, Japan is widely recognized as a country with strong soft power and Japan's PD actors continue to launch initiatives utilizing its soft power assets.

While there are many PD actors involved in Japan's PD efforts, this study focuses on the Japan Foundation (JF), the Japan House (JH), the Nippon Hoso Kyokai (NHK) Japan's dominant broadcaster, and the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program. JF and JH are two of the

actors who engage most directly in PD activities. Additionally, JH, a relatively recent addition to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) PD toolbox, provides an interesting perspective into where MOFA sees the future of PD. The JET program exemplifies Japan's emphasis on cultural exchange in PD, and the NHK is one of the weaker, underutilized PD actors that could become an asset to Japanese PD.

In examining the history of Japanese PD and of these four PD actors, there are several points where changes in activities or mindsets could strengthen Japanese PD. Some of the important issues include coordination between Japan's PD actors, consistency in terminology usage by MOFA, lack of public understanding of PD, its activities, and its actors, lack of engagement in the global PD discourse, especially on measurement and evaluation, a need to diversify Japan's spokespeople, lack of public relations, marketing, and communications education in higher education and in MOFA's Foreign Service Institute, actually targeting the audiences they claim to target, underutilized pd actors, lack of mechanisms for capitalizing on exchange program alumni, and lack of clarity in program goals. Lastly, and most importantly, Japanese PD should move beyond its heavy reliance on promoting culture and soft power. With changing global dynamics, Japan's evolving international role, and its shift to being more assertive and open to rebuilding its militaristic capabilities, labeled as defense, it is time for Japan to consider integrating its strategic communications, currently the domain of the Self Defense Force (SDF) with its PD activities.

### **What is PD?**

While the term "public diplomacy" is fairly new, governments and leaders have long known the importance of public opinion in both domestic and foreign policy.<sup>1</sup> Coined in the U.S.

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas J. Cull, *Public Diplomacy: Foundations for Global Engagement in the Digital Age* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2019), 3.

context, the term has been adopted to varying degrees and has many definitions. Nicholas Cull, a prominent PD scholar, uses the following definition,

Public diplomacy...deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications.<sup>2</sup>

Building upon this definition Cull conceptualizes PD as being made up of five distinct ways in which international actors have engaged foreign publics: listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and news/international broadcasting.<sup>3</sup> Similar to Cull, USC's Center on Public Diplomacy defines PD as "the public, interactive dimension of diplomacy which is not only global in nature, but also involves a multitude of actors and networks. It is a key mechanism through which nations foster mutual trust and productive relationships and has become crucial to building a secure global environment."<sup>4</sup> While many U.S. practitioners and scholars use the term PD and define it like Cull, there is no universally agreed vocabulary for the business of conducting foreign policy by engaging global publics. Some countries have preferred other terms. For example, Canada at one point called it advocacy, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office uses the term "strategic communication," the French use "influence diplomacy," the Israelis use "explaining," and Japanese officials often refer to it as "cultural exchange."<sup>5</sup> Further complicating the understanding of PD, it has no overarching theory, but

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<sup>2</sup> Nicholas J. Cull, "Public Diplomacy' Before Gullion: The Evolution of a Phrase," *CPD Blog*, April 18, 2006, <https://usepublicdiplomacy.org/blog/public-diplomacy-gullion-evolution-phrase>

<sup>3</sup> Cull, *Public Diplomacy: Foundations for Global Engagement in the Digital Age*, 4.

<sup>4</sup> "What is PD," USC Center on Public Diplomacy, accessed February 21, 2024, <https://usepublicdiplomacy.org/page/what-is-pd>

<sup>5</sup> Cull, *Public Diplomacy: Foundations for Global Engagement in the Digital Age*, 2.

rather contributions from multiple disciplines including history, international relations, communications, and even psychology.<sup>6</sup>

Adoption of the term PD is largely due to the need to explain the post-Cold War role of publics in foreign affairs with U.S. preeminence.<sup>7</sup> In 1945, the U.S. government tended to see its sponsorship of information work as a tool only for crises resulting in periods of high engagement followed by pulling out of such activities when the crisis had passed. Seeking a coherent response to the administrative chaos President Eisenhower merged most of the existing programs into a single integrated United States Information Agency (USIA).<sup>8</sup> A decade into its existence USIA needed a new banner term under which to campaign for funding and employed the term “public diplomacy” to support the search for new funds and staff. Edmund Gullion, coined the term as a democratic equivalent to the word “propaganda.” Gullion defined it as follows,

Public diplomacy...deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications.<sup>9</sup>

Gullion’s conceptualization of PD covered every aspect of USIA’s activity, and several of the cultural and exchange functions jealously guarded by the Department of State.<sup>10</sup> USIA embraced the term as it played into the professional aspirations of the Agency’s staff. Despite PD’s origins as a euphemism, practitioners soon came to view PD as something qualitatively different from

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>9</sup> Cull, “‘Public Diplomacy’ Before Gullion: The Evolution of a Phrase.”

<sup>10</sup> Cull, “‘Public Diplomacy’ Before Gullion: The Evolution of a Phrase.”

propaganda and strove to make PD a different kind of practice.<sup>11</sup> During the 1990s, the term PD finally entered common use in foreign policy circles overseas.<sup>12</sup>

### **The “new PD”**

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, an idea arose that the “old” PD (pre-twenty-first century) had been replaced by a distinctly new PD. Contemporary scholars agree on several aspects of the old PD, characterizing it as a one-way flow of information from the PD actor, mainly foreign ministries and diplomats, to target audiences with a focus on short-term objectives.<sup>13</sup> The new PD is usually considered a paradigm shift where increasing globalization and rapidly advancing technology have created a new media landscape such that foreign ministries can no longer lay claim to being sole or dominant actors in communicating foreign policy.<sup>14</sup> In this rapidly globalizing world, borders for information flows are more porous, more actors are involved in international affairs, and secretive diplomacy is increasingly accountable to and influenced by public debate. Thus, the role of non-state actors is increasing, and PD actors must move beyond a messaging imperative, finding new ways of engaging in dialogue with a range of audiences, and new ways of assessing the influence of these communicative efforts.<sup>15</sup> As Jan Melissen describes it, “... in the new public diplomacy, the accent is increasingly on engaging with foreign audiences rather than selling messages, on mutuality and the establishment of stable relationships instead of mere policy-driven campaigns,

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<sup>11</sup> Cull, *Public Diplomacy: Foundations for Global Engagement in the Digital Age*, 12-13.

<sup>12</sup> Cull, “‘Public Diplomacy’ Before Gullion: The Evolution of a Phrase.”

<sup>13</sup> James Pamment, “What Became of the New Public Diplomacy? Recent Developments in British, US and Swedish Public Diplomacy Policy and Evaluation Methods,” *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 7, no.3 (2012): 314.

<https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.intyb/hagjd0007&i=324>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, Craig Hayden, “Logics of Narrative and Networks in US Public Diplomacy: Communication Power and US Strategic Engagement,” *Journal of International Communication* 19, no.2 (2013): 197-198.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13216597.2013.775070>

on the ‘long haul’ rather than short-term needs, and on winning ‘hearts and minds’ and building trust.”<sup>16</sup>

Pamment and later Hayden both argue the concept of new PD is largely a shift in the theoretical paradigm rather than a transformation of practice.<sup>17</sup> In theory, emphasis has shifted from the outputs of foreign ministries to the problems associated with multidirectional influence and any impact that this may have on policy formation.<sup>18</sup> However, Pamment argues that new PD is a normative theory; normative theories tend to describe things as they should or could be if some ideal value or principle is to be achieved. Much of the scholarship on new PD does not necessarily explain how PD practices are changing through empirical data but rather considers how it should be practiced in a changing environment. As Kathy Fitzpatrick describes it, “the new public diplomacy is normative in the sense that it describes what are perceived to be “ideal” approaches to modern public diplomacy rather than reflects how public diplomacy is widely practiced.”<sup>19</sup> Pamment argues that in fact, it may be that little has changed during the era of the new PD beyond a greater acknowledgment of PD’s potential in light of new media technology.<sup>20</sup>

Based on his study of United States, British, and Swedish PD Pamment draws the following conclusions about new PD taking into account several important factors that have ramifications for how practitioners and scholars think about PD including the increased centralization and rationalization of PD, structural changes in planning and reporting, changes in how PD organizations understand themselves and their goals, and how data is used for decision making.<sup>21</sup> First, how PD is defined and explained is important because it reflects how

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<sup>16</sup> Jan Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy : Soft Power in International Relations*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 21.

<sup>17</sup> Hayden, “Logics of Narrative and Networks in US Public Diplomacy,” 197-198.

<sup>18</sup> Pamment, “What Became of the New Public Diplomacy?,” 315.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 332.



governments conceive PD, what they perceive as the role and purpose of their PD actors, and their consensus on the direction of PD.<sup>22</sup> Further, expressions of a new PD are best explained within the constraints of different institutional and national cultures.<sup>23</sup> Second, domestic demands for accountability and value for money seem to have been a significant motivator for change and reform in PD policy and activity, especially in terms of measurement and evaluation.<sup>24</sup> Third reforms to PD policy may also be characterized as a better self-understanding of PD organizations and their goals.<sup>25</sup> Lastly, improved evaluation methods are an important aspect of new PD since they allow for data to feed into policy and campaign design, but there is patchy evidence that this has become part of the practice and culture of organizations, and any process of change is unresolved and ongoing. Further, many organizations' evaluation remains in the old PD mode of measuring outputs rather than outcomes.<sup>26</sup>

While Pamment drew these conclusions over ten years ago they are still relevant, particularly the issue of evaluation. In 2018, writing on evaluating the influence of cultural activities on diplomacy, Watanabe notes that the continuing debate about PD evaluation has become an important issue for theories of cultural diplomacy (CD) and PD in the United States and Europe.<sup>27</sup> Buhmann and Sommerfeldt, in a recent study looking extensively at U.S. PD evaluation practices, note that PD is increasingly shaped by demands for increased accountability and more sophisticated measurement and evaluation, which reflects a global trend toward

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 332-333.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 312.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 333.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 334.

<sup>27</sup> Hirotaka Watanabe, "The new Japonisme: From international cultural exchange to cultural diplomacy—Evaluating the influence of cultural activities on diplomacy," *Discuss Japan: Japan Foreign Policy Forum*, no. 50, October 30, 2018, <https://www.japanpolicyforum.jp/diplomacy/pt201810301300038356.html>

evidence-based decision-making.<sup>28</sup> These calls from stakeholders create a challenge for practitioners as the field of PD still primarily relies on techniques to evaluate one-way flows of information and meet short-term goals rather than two-way communication and long-term relationship building that is emphasized by the new PD.<sup>29</sup>

### **Japanese Conceptualization of PD**

Naturally, Japan engaged in PD activities before the term “public diplomacy” was adopted first by the Japanese government and then by practitioners and academia. It is debated to what extent the term is used beyond the elite diplomatic circles. One of the first places that the Japanese government defined PD was in the 2005 Diplomatic Bluebook where it states, “Public diplomacy refers to an approach that does not rely on traditional diplomacy between governments but rather enlists the cooperation of the private sector to directly reach out to the people and public opinion of foreign countries. It is also frequently referred to as “citizen diplomacy” or “public relations diplomacy,” but there is as yet no definitive translation in Japanese.”<sup>30</sup> The 2006 Diplomatic Bluebook defines PD in almost the exact same words just re-ordered. Once the term “public diplomacy” was introduced, the Japanese government uses it inconsistently in the annual Bluebooks, some of the reports have dedicated sections to PD that are labeled with the term while others, like the 2010, 2011, and 2012 reports opt for the term “public relations” instead of PD. Furthermore, in the bluebooks, PD is used interchangeably with other various terms including “cultural exchange,” “overseas public relations,” and “cultural diplomacy.” Kazuo Ogoura, a former President of the JF, stipulates that in Japan there is a

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<sup>28</sup> Alexander Buhmann and Erich J. Sommerfeldt, “Drivers and Barriers in Public Diplomacy Evaluation: Understanding Attitudes, Norms, and Control,” *The International Communication Gazette* 83, no.2 (2021): 106. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1748048519887295>

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 107.

<sup>30</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Diplomatic Bluebook 2005,” 207. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/2005/index.html>

tendency to confuse cultural diplomacy and cultural exchange.<sup>31</sup> Taking this a step further it can be argued that there is also a tendency to conflate PD with the similar, and sometimes overlapping, terms of CD, cultural exchange, and public relations. This conflation suggests that while the term has been readily adopted by the Japanese government, practitioners, and academics it has yet to reach the same level of institutionalization as in the United States. Alternatively, the usage of multiple terms for the same activities could also be interpreted as a reflection of the spread-out structure of Japanese PD actors. Further, the tendency to use terms that include “culture” can be seen as the legacy of the push of Japanese culture that the government has been conducting since the end of WWII.

This is not to say that on the individual level, Japanese practitioners and academics are unaware of the nuances between the terms mentioned above. Ogoura, defined PD in his 2009 book *Japan's Cultural Diplomacy* saying,

Public diplomacy refers to a national government's efforts to influence international opinions on its national or foreign policies through public relations activities or intellectual exchange targeting the media or citizens' groups. Public diplomacy is therefore not the same as cultural diplomacy, in that the former is always closely associated with a well-defined political objective and aimed at certain pre-determined targets while the latter is not necessarily linked to a specific political objective. The two sometimes overlap in the sense that the forms public diplomacy takes include efforts to improve the nation's image by means of cultural activities. But even in this case, there is a subtle difference between the two because public diplomacy is usually linked with an effort to improve the nation's image for some specific strategic purpose.<sup>32</sup>

Clearly, Ogoura has a nuanced understanding of PD and CD, which is likely due to his years of experience working for both MOFA and the JF.

Looking at another practitioner's conceptualization of PD in an interview with an employee at the Japan House, she described PD in the context of her work at JH saying,

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<sup>31</sup> Kazuo Ogoura, *Japan's Cultural Diplomacy* (Tokyo: The Japan Foundation, 2009), 6.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 7-8.

Public diplomacy involves the strategic use of communication. So when we communicate with external stakeholders as well as the general public it's based on a strategy...mainly it's a US audience right here but just because we are located in Hollywood we do have various visitors from all over the world... We would like to build relationships with them and our primary focus is to promote understanding and advance Japanese interests [and] Japanese culture... to achieve that goal, we have various cultural events and educational exchanges and media outreach.<sup>33</sup>

Japanese academia also has individuals who possess an in-depth understanding of PD.

One of the more prominent scholars who has written two books—*Public Diplomacy: Diplomatic Strategy in the Era of Public Diplomacy* and *Public Diplomacy Strategy: How to Win in the Image Competition Between Nations*—focusing on PD is Masafumi Kaneko. In the first chapter of *Public Diplomacy Strategy* Kaneko defines public diplomacy as follows, “In order to contribute to the achievement of the country’s external interests and objectives, increase the country’s presence, improve its image, deepen understanding about one’s country, and promote the spread of the country’s values, conducting activities including building organizations, holding dialogues, engaging in exchange, and disseminating information through various media.”<sup>34</sup> Kaneko’s definition is well-developed and comparable to definitions offered by U.S. scholars like Cull.

### **Japanese PD and Soft Power**

The concept of soft power was introduced to Japanese society through the writings of Joseph Nye. Today the strength of Japan’s soft power is widely recognized. For example, in the Brand Finance’s 2024 Global Soft Power Index Japan is ranked fourth—behind the United States, the United Kingdom, and China, with an index score of 70.6, which is a 5.4 increase from

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<sup>33</sup> Phone interview with JH employee, March 28, 2024.

<sup>34</sup> Masafumi Kaneko, *Paburikku Dipuromashi Senryaku: Imeiji wo Kisou Kokka-kan Gemu ni Ikani Shorisuruka* [Public Diplomacy Strategy: How to Win in the Image Competition Between Nations], ed. Mitsuru Kitano (Tokyo: PHP, 2014), 27. Author’s translation of the following excerpt. 「自国の対外的な利益と目的の達成に資するべく、自国のプレゼンスを高め、イメージを向上させ、自国についての理解を深めるよう、また、重視する価値の普及を進めるよう、組織構築し、対話を持ち、交流するなどの形で関わったり、多様なメディアを通じて情報を発信したりする活動。」

its 2023 index score of 65.2.<sup>35</sup> The index incorporates a broad range of measures including familiarity, influence, reputation, and the “8 core Soft Power Pillars,” which are business and trade, international relations, education and science, culture and heritage, governance, media and communication, sustainable future, and people and values.<sup>36</sup> Out of these measures, Japan’s highest score was 8.9 in business and trade, and in sustainable future, it was the highest-ranked country with a score of 7.1.<sup>37</sup>

In another soft power index, the Soft Power 30, with data from 2015 to 2019, Japan did not rank quite as well but did have a mostly increasing index score. It ranked eight with a score of 66.86 in 2015, seventh with a score of 67.78 in 2016, sixth with a score of 71.66 in 2017, fifth with a score of 76.22 in 2018, and eighth with a score of 75.71 in 2019.<sup>38</sup> The index score measures used are digital, enterprise, education, culture, engagement, government, and polling. Looking at the 2019 index score, a strength for Japan was culture, which the index believed benefited from hosting high-profile events like the 2019 Rugby World Cup and the G20 Summit. The index noted that Japan’s low score in the government and education measures showed areas for improvement and that conflict between international political considerations and outward global perceptions of Japan poses a risk that needs to be managed.<sup>39</sup> Based on recent indices Japan has emerged as a country with recognized strength in soft power.

How did Japan develop its strong soft power? While the Japanese government started its efforts to develop and utilize Japan’s soft power in the early 2000s, it was the private sector and social forces, not state policy that brought Japan’s contemporary culture to the world’s

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<sup>35</sup> Brand Finance, “Global Soft Power Index 2024,” <https://static.brandirectory.com/reports/brand-finance-soft-power-index-2024-digital.pdf>, 6

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 63.

<sup>38</sup> “Soft Power 30: Japan,” accessed April 12, 2024, <https://softpower30.com/country/japan/>.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

attention.<sup>40</sup> In the mid-1970s, North America rushed to embrace Japanese anime and manga such as *Sailor Moon*, *Tamagotchi*, *Hello Kitty*, and *Pokémon*. By the late 1970s and 1980s, the regional climate in Asia had become favorable for Japanese popular culture exports.<sup>41</sup> In the mid-1980s and 1990s Japanese cultural industries had become increasingly successful domestically and were being enthusiastically accepted internationally. This caught the attention of the Japanese government who, realizing that cultural exports can be both economically profitable and diplomatically useful began to offer support to its cultural industries. Additionally, there was a domestic discourse calling for the government to make better use of its cultural resources to attain “soft power.” Since then the government has been constantly seeking new areas for promoting Japanese culture abroad.<sup>42</sup>

One of the largest governmental efforts promoting Japan’s soft power was “Cool Japan” initiatives. With this effort, the government wanted to promote its pop culture similar to how it had been consistently using public funds to prompt its high-brow culture. Former Ambassador Seiichi Kondo described the government’s motivations in 2010 saying, “art and culture play a vital role in globalization. It is a way to get your message across, an effective yet discreet way to create friends—opposite to the alarm and fear resulting from coercion.”<sup>43</sup> Essentially “Cool Japan” was a multi-pronged national branding campaign that promoted Japan’s “content industries.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Nissim Kadosh Otmazgin, “The Chrysanthemum and the Cool: Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power in Japan’s Foreign Policy,” in *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Foreign Policy*, ed. Mary M. McCarthy, (London: Taylor and Francis, 2018), 57.

<sup>41</sup> Nissim Kadosh Otmazgin, *Regionalizing Culture: The Political Economy of Japanese Popular Culture in Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2014), 80.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 77.

<sup>43</sup> Asger Rojle Christensen, “Cool Japan, Soft Power,” *Global Asia* 6, no.1 (2011), 78.

<sup>44</sup> Yasushi Watanabe, “The Pivot Shift of Japan’s Public Diplomacy,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Soft Power*, ed. Naren Chitty, (London: Routledge, 2017), 407.

In addition to initiatives that were part of “Cool Japan” the Japanese government has engaged in various creative and interesting initiatives for promoting soft power and its cultural products internationally. One example is the appointment of famous anime characters as special ambassadors. In 2008, Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura appointed Doraemon, a blue robotic cat character from one of Japan’s most famous manga and anime series, as a special cultural ambassador. The same year Hello Kitty was appointed as the country’s tourism ambassador to Hong Kong and China. Similarly, in 2009 MOFA appointed three individuals as “kawaii ambassadors” to promote Japanese contemporary style and fashion.<sup>45</sup> While these ambassadors continue to be popular globally, it is difficult to measure how successful these initiatives have been as PD activities. Some scholars even argue that initiatives like this that promote Japan’s soft power go no further than one-way projection that does not seriously create meaningful engagement and dialogue.<sup>46</sup>

#### *Challenges Surrounding Soft Power in Japanese PD*

A point to consider in discussing PD and soft power is that while they are intertwined and can complement each other, soft power is not something that the government can control. As Ambassador Kondo said in 2009 during a radio interview, “if one’s soft power is strong enough, it will sooner or later have a positive influence, but we can never control it, and if you do try to control it, it can cause negative effects.”<sup>47</sup> Soft power is essentially civil power based on volatile shifts in tastes and favorites among populations. Thus, the marketplace, not the government, determines how it will be projected and perceived.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Otmazgin, “The Chrysanthemum and the Cool,” 61-62.

<sup>46</sup> Koichi Iwabuchi, “Pop-Culture Diplomacy in Japan: Soft Power, Nation Branding and the Question of ‘International Cultural Exchange,’” *International Journal of Cultural Policy: CP 21*, no. 4 (2015), 419. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2015.1042469>

<sup>47</sup> Christensen, “Cool Japan, Soft Power,” 81.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

Along this thinking, Japan's use of pop-culture in PD has been criticized for the fact that it does not clearly articulate specific goals. This critique is concerned with the ambiguity of the objective of soft power PD efforts to enhance the nation's brand images as well as its lack of effectiveness.<sup>49</sup> This ambiguity may not entirely be the government's fault as soft power is inherently vague, needing a more rigorous definition and evaluation of its capacity and impact.<sup>50</sup> It is widely agreed that soft power initiatives can enhance the understanding of Japanese culture and society, even if it is done in a one-way manner, however, there is no guarantee that this understanding will evolve beyond the individualized pleasure of media consumption. Furthermore, audiences may have alternative responses including indifference, antagonism, and a sense of otherness or lack of inclusivity.<sup>51</sup>

As noted by Iwabuchi, Japanese PD efforts centered on soft power and pop culture tend to rely on naïve assumptions about media culture's capacity to improve Japan's reputation abroad, and to transcend the problematic and historically constituted relations between Japan and other Asian countries. Initiatives like "Cool Japan" or Doraemon as an ambassador may positively impact audiences' perceptions of modern Japan, but they do not erase the past or people's memories of it. Audiences are more nuanced than that; they can simultaneously appreciate Japanese culture like anime and manga while considering historical issues separately and critically.<sup>52</sup> Relying heavily on soft power in PD activities, especially when it is operating on overly simplistic assumptions for how soft power and audiences interact, has worked to a point for Japan, but it only goes so far.

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<sup>49</sup> Iwabuchi, "Pop-Culture Diplomacy in Japan," 425.

<sup>50</sup> Otmazgin, "The Chrysanthemum and the Cool," 66.

<sup>51</sup> Iwabuchi, "Pop-Culture Diplomacy in Japan," 425.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 426.



Another point to consider in the discussion of Japanese PD and soft power is the effectiveness of soft power in the absence of hard power. Much of the literature on soft power emphasizes that soft power works best when complementing hard power, and it can be a useful supplement to other political, economic, and social factors.<sup>53</sup> Soft power appealed to and was embraced by Japanese PD actors because it was a legitimate way to increase Japan's involvement in world affairs without the risk of challenging the constitution and using hard power.<sup>54</sup> However, the global situation, Japan's international role, and Japan's stance on Article 9 have continued to change. Japan has been shifting away from its solely pacifist stance, repeatedly altering its interpretation of Article 9 to expand the scope of its defense capabilities. While its stance in foreign policy is becoming more assertive and open to rebuilding militaristic capabilities, labeled as defense, its PD strategy has not adapted to this shift.

As Snow notes Japan's PD does not overlap with its strategic communications, which is almost exclusively the domain of the Self Defense Force (SDF).<sup>55</sup> This is unlike the United States, which considers the military a PD actor and integrates public affairs, psychological operations, and PD. Because of Japan's unique constitutional limitations, the idea of integrating PD which for Japan focuses largely on soft power, cultural, and exchange diplomacy, with strategic communications that are exclusively associated with the Ministry of Defense and SDF was unthinkable.<sup>56</sup> However, with the policy shifts that have occurred, it is now a feasible possibility that the Japanese government should consider.

## **History of Japanese PD post World War II**

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<sup>53</sup> Otmazgin, "The Chrysanthemum and the Cool," 66.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>55</sup> Nancy Snow, "A Reliable Friend and Strategic Partner in the Indo-Pacific Region: Japan's Strategic Communications and Public Diplomacy," *AidData at William & Mary*, November 29, 2022, 1,16, <https://www.aiddata.org/publications/a-reliable-friend-and-strategic-partner-in-the-indo-pacific-region-japans-strategic-communications-and-public-diplomacy>

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 16.

Following World War II Japanese PD, though not conceptualized as PD at the time, was focused on the objective of diluting the country's image of militarism and replacing it with an image of pacifism and democracy.<sup>57</sup> In 1951, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) was established, and the Bureau of Information and Culture was set up. Initially, MOFA's PD efforts tended to highlight aspects of Japanese traditional culture that were considered "soft" like *chado* (Japanese tea ceremony) and *ikebana* (Japanese flower arranging) while de-emphasizing aspects like martial arts and Japanese language that were reminders of wartime aggressiveness.<sup>58</sup> Other PD activities during this period included the donation of books on Japan, exchanges, and the introduction of Japanese culture at diplomatic missions. Notably, these efforts were limited by budget.<sup>59</sup> In 1952, with the financial support of the Rockefeller Foundation, private donations from Japan, and assistance from Prime Minister Yoshida at the private level the International House of Japan, not to be confused with the Japan House, was established in Tokyo.<sup>60</sup> Its initial central mission was to consolidate values of democracy and pacifism as the foundation for relations with the United States at the civil society level through intellectual and cultural exchanges.<sup>61</sup> Still operating today, the International House of Japan states its current mission as follows: "To contribute to building a free, open, and sustainable future through intellectual dialogue, policy research, and cultural exchange with a diverse world."<sup>62</sup> In short, during the first decade or so after WWII, civil society had a central role in Japanese PD and also had the effect of strengthening the "soft" aspects of the U.S.-Japan relationship, which was critical to providing for Japan's economic prosperity and national security.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Yoshihide Soeya, "The Evolution of Japan's Public Diplomacy: Haunted by Its Past History," in *Understanding Public Diplomacy in East Asia*, ed. Jan Melissen and Yul Sohn (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 83.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> "About," International House Japan, accessed March 21, 2024, <https://ihj.global/en/about/>

<sup>63</sup> Soeya, "The Evolution of Japan's Public Diplomacy," 85.

For Japanese foreign policy, the 1960s were characterized by economic and political friction with the United States. Furthermore, in terms of PD, the emphasis shifted from projecting an image of a “peaceful Japan” to an economically advanced Japan and Japan was becoming increasingly self-assertive.<sup>64</sup> In 1960, there was political upheaval surrounding the revision of the 1951 Security Treaty made by the Kishi and Eisenhower administrations. This prompted Prime Minister Ikeda and President Kennedy to agree to establish two bilateral conferences in June 1961—one on culture and education and one on scientific cooperation. Following this agreement, the United States-Japan Conference on Culture and Educational Interchange (CULCON) was launched.<sup>65</sup> Its mission is “to elevate and strengthen the vital cultural and educational foundations to the U.S.-Japan relationship, and to strengthen connections between U.S. and Japan leadership in those fields.”<sup>66</sup> Additionally, the official website outlines CULCON’s four main goals. First, “strengthen the U.S.-Japan relationship and support U.S. economic and strategic interests and people-to-people exchange.” Second, “increase employment opportunities for U.S. citizens.” Third, “develop a diverse generation of future U.S. leaders able to address global challenges.” Fourth, “sustain and support those who curate and conserve our vital collaboration with Japan in the arts.”<sup>67</sup> Soeya views Japanese PD from the end of WWII through the early 1960s as being primarily focused on consolidating the cultural and intellectual foundations of its relationship with the United States.<sup>68</sup>

CULCON was not the only PD development in the 1960s. During this decade MOFA’s Public Information and Cultural Affairs Bureau opened centers at Japanese embassies and

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<sup>64</sup> Ogoura, *Japan’s Cultural Diplomacy*, 9-10, Yasushi Watanabe, “The Pivot Shift of Japan’s Public Diplomacy,” 403.

<sup>65</sup> Soeya, “The Evolution of Japan’s Public Diplomacy,” 85.

<sup>66</sup> “Mission Statement and Goals,” CULCON, accessed March 21, 2024, <https://culcon.jusfc.gov/about-us/mission-statement-and-goals/>

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Soeya, “The Evolution of Japan’s Public Diplomacy,” 85.

consulates in one nation after another.<sup>69</sup> Additionally, in 1964 MOFA expanded and elevated the organizational standing of the bureau's cultural affairs unit.<sup>70</sup> Both the momentum of establishing new PD organizations and initiatives and the economic and political tensions in the U.S.-Japan relationship carried into the 1970s.

By the 1970s Japan's economy had risen to the second largest in the world, leading to increased friction with the United States.<sup>71</sup> The bilateral relationship was shaken by a textile dispute and the growing trade imbalance. Furthermore, the two "Nixon Shocks" created mistrust among the Japanese toward the United States, and vice versa.<sup>72</sup> To address this crisis Foreign Minister Takeo Fukuda initiated the establishment of JF, one of the key PD actors, in May 1972 with a five billion yen endowment, which as of 2009 was increased to 113 billion yen.<sup>73</sup> JF's establishment was aimed at expanding cultural exchange primarily with the United States, though it later expanded its target countries.<sup>74</sup> Another major initiative launched at this time was the Tanaka Funds. The fund supported teaching and research in Japanese studies, with the Japanese government donating 1 million dollars to ten major universities in the United States.<sup>75</sup> Not only did this help a great deal in expanding the institutional framework of Japanese studies in the United States, but it also was central to the inaugural projects of the JF.<sup>76</sup> Another PD activity that began in the 70s was MOFA's 1974 launch of an English-language quarterly, the *Japan Echo*, to convey Japanese thinkers' ideas and observations globally.<sup>77</sup> Also, since the establishment of the Japan-United States Educational Commission (JUSEC) in 1979, the

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<sup>69</sup> Yasushi Watanabe, "The Pivot Shift of Japan's Public Diplomacy," 403.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Soeya, "The Evolution of Japan's Public Diplomacy," 86.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Soeya, "The Evolution of Japan's Public Diplomacy," 86, Ogoura, *Japan's Cultural Diplomacy*, 11.

<sup>74</sup> Soeya, "The Evolution of Japan's Public Diplomacy," 86.

<sup>75</sup> Yasushi Watanabe, "The Pivot Shift of Japan's Public Diplomacy," 403-404.

<sup>76</sup> Soeya, "The Evolution of Japan's Public Diplomacy," 86, Ogoura, *Japan's Cultural Diplomacy*, 11.

<sup>77</sup> Yasushi Watanabe, "The Pivot Shift of Japan's Public Diplomacy," 403.

Japanese government started sharing the cost of the Fulbright Program, which commenced in Japan in 1952; today the two governments fund the program on an equal basis.<sup>78</sup>

While Japan's PD focus had been largely on its relationship with the United States the 1970s introduced another region to prioritize—Southeast Asia. In 1974, Prime Minister Tanaka became a target for anti-Japanese sentiment during state visits to Thailand and Indonesia.<sup>79</sup> Much of the anti-Japanese sentiment stemmed from rapidly increasing economic dependence on Japan. Some sarcastically labeled Japan “faceless Japan” because of the lack of direct person-to-person contact or “banana Japan” implying that the Japanese did not understand Asia because they were yellow on the outside (Asian in appearance) but white on the inside (western thinking).<sup>80</sup> This new challenge prompted the JF to reconsider its U.S.-centered approach, only two years after its establishment.<sup>81</sup> Thus, Southeast Asia became a focus of Japanese PD in the late 70s on par with the United States.<sup>82</sup> Another important point about Japanese PD in the 70s is that while it was becoming increasingly self-assertive it was largely responding to events rather than initiating and shaping events.<sup>83</sup>

In the mid-1980s, despite making considerable economic accomplishments, Japan was faced with an image problem.<sup>84</sup> The United States and Europe were calling for Japan to shoulder more responsibility as a member of the global community.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, this period was a low point for the U.S.-Japan relationship which was characterized by trade tensions and “Japan

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 404.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ogoura, *Japan's Cultural Diplomacy*, 12.

<sup>81</sup> Soeya, “The Evolution of Japan's Public Diplomacy,” 87.

<sup>82</sup> Yasushi Watanabe, “The Pivot Shift of Japan's Public Diplomacy,” 404.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 403.

<sup>84</sup> Yasushi Watanabe and David L. McConnel, eds, *Soft Power Superpowers: Cultural and National Aspects of Japan and the United States*, (London: Routledge, 2015), 19, Bettyjane Hoover, “The JET Program: Intercultural Exchange, Soft Power, and English Education,” (unpublished manuscript, in author's possession, December 8, 2022), 1.

<sup>85</sup> Yasushi Watanabe, “The Pivot Shift of Japan's Public Diplomacy,” 405.

bashing.” With the United States not wanting to lose to a competitor, enormous pressure was placed on Japanese officials to reduce the trade surplus and dismantle the formal and informal barriers to foreign investment.”<sup>86</sup> To address these challenges MOFA increased its PD efforts to parry the mounting ill will, launching the Cultural Affairs Department in 1984, creating the position of Press Secretary/Director-General for Press and Public Relations in the minister’s secretariat, and upgrading its foreign press unit to the International Press Division.<sup>87</sup> Concurrently, JF began to conduct the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) in cooperation with the foundation Japan Educational Exchanges and Services.<sup>88</sup>

Arguably the effort that has had the largest impact from this period is the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET), which was proposed as a “gift” to the American delegation at the “Ron-Yasu” summit in 1986 between President Regan and Prime Minister Nakasone.<sup>89</sup> The idea was to invite young people from the United States and several other English-speaking countries “to foster international perspectives by promoting international exchange at local levels as well as intensifying foreign language education.”<sup>90</sup> The program was essentially an olive branch extended to the United States, and the West, showing concrete efforts to open up the Japanese system at the local level and rectify the imbalances in the flow of goods and personnel.<sup>91</sup>

Also, in the realm of cultural exchange, in 1988 Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru established a prime ministerial forum for discussing ways to promote international cultural exchange. The forum dictated that the purpose of international cultural exchange was to ensure national security, contribute to the advancement of world culture, and address the mounting

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<sup>86</sup> Yasushi Watanabe and McConnel, eds, *Soft Power Superpowers*, 19, Hoover, “The JET Program,” 1-2.

<sup>87</sup> Yasushi Watanabe, “The Pivot Shift of Japan’s Public Diplomacy,” 405.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> David L. McConnel, *Importing Diversity: Inside Japan’s JET Program*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 1, Hoover, “The JET Program,” 2.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

domestic interest in internationalizing Japanese society.<sup>92</sup> The intertwining of PD and internationalization continues to be an aspect of Japanese PD efforts, especially in JET.

The 1991 launch of JF's Center for Global Partnerships marks a turning point in the history of Japanese PD. The center took a new approach of tackling global issues of multinational concern bilaterally and sometimes multilaterally. Also, it departed from relying on pleas for understanding the nation's "special circumstances" and emphasizing Japan's uniqueness to promote Japan's common ground with other nations.<sup>93</sup> In short, the Japanese PD in the 80s and 90s reflects the country's desire to establish a new identity in the international community as a responsible, respectful, and unselfish country that strives to realize global peace, prosperity, and security by non-military means.<sup>94</sup>

Moving into the twenty-first century, 2004 was a pivotal year for the Japanese PD, particularly in terms of how the government conceptualized and organized PD. MOFA adopted the term PD and conducted a structural reform, integrating units for external public relations and cultural exchange into a newly established PD Department.<sup>95</sup> The 2005 Bluebook describes the new department as a way "to provide both public and private entities with a system for integrated operations of overseas public relations and cultural exchanges."<sup>96</sup> Following the reorganization, the Panel on the Promotion of Cultural Diplomacy was established in the Prime Minister's Office. On July 11, 2005, the panel presented the report "Toward Creating a Japan as 'Peaceful Country of Cultural Exchange'" to Prime Minister Koizumi. The report outlined three pillars of cultural diplomacy and three objectives for promoting cultural diplomacy. The three pillars are

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<sup>92</sup> Yasushi Watanabe, "The Pivot Shift of Japan's Public Diplomacy," 406.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 407.

<sup>94</sup> Ogoura, *Japan's Cultural Diplomacy*, 14.

<sup>95</sup> Yasushi Watanabe, "The Pivot Shift of Japan's Public Diplomacy," 401, Tadashi Ogawa, "Japan's Public Diplomacy at the Crossroads," in *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, ed. Nancy Snow and Nicholas Cull (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 280.

<sup>96</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Diplomatic Bluebook 2005," 7.

proactive dissemination of a twenty-first century “Cool Japan,” creative reception of foreign cultures, and symbiotic bridging of diverse cultures and values. The three objectives were enhancing the attractiveness and trust of Japan as a foundation for Japanese contributions globally, nurturing mutual understanding as a means of avoiding conflict, and building common values and ideas as the basis of Asian diplomacy.<sup>97</sup>

The 2005 Bluebook also introduced the term soft power as part of Japan’s PD strategy stating, “As a country that has renounced war as a means of settling international disputes and that possesses both internationally appealing traditional and pop cultures, Japan has a wealth of potential soft power, and there has recently been much debate in Japan on bringing out such strength to enhance its global status.”<sup>98</sup> Since the term was introduced to Japan largely by Joseph Nye’s writing, Japanese politicians, intellectuals, academics, and media have been fascinated by the concept, with many seeing it as a means of co-opting rather than coercing others to align with Japan’s policies.<sup>99</sup> This idea that Japan was sitting on an untapped wealth of soft power resources was also spurred on by Douglas McGray’s “Gross National Cool” article in 2002 and Rolan Kelts’ 2006 book *Japanamerica: How Japanese Pop Culture has invaded the U.S.*<sup>100</sup> Since the early 2000s Japanese bureaucrats have devised numerous initiatives to promote “Cool Japan,” and use soft power in PD as a means of enhancing Japan’s national image.<sup>101</sup> For example, as previously mentioned, in 2011 the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) embarked on a national branding campaign to promote Japanese “content industries” internationally under the moniker “Cool Japan.”<sup>102</sup> As part of the initiative in 2013 METI launched the “Cool Japan”

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<sup>97</sup> Soeya, “The Evolution of Japan’s Public Diplomacy,” 92.

<sup>98</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Diplomatic Bluebook 2005,” 206.

<sup>99</sup> Akiko Fukushima, “Modern Japan and the Quest for Attractive Power,” in *Public Diplomacy and Soft Power in East Asia*, ed. Jan Melissen and Sook Jong Lee (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 76.

<sup>100</sup> Warren A. Stanislaus, “Japan House: Tokyo’s New Public Diplomacy Push,” *The Diplomat*, July 21, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/07/japan-house-tokyos-new-public-diplomacy-push/>

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, Fukushima, “Modern Japan and the Quest for Attractive Power,” 82.

<sup>102</sup> Yasushi Watanabe, “The Pivot Shift of Japan’s Public Diplomacy,” 407.



Fund, a public-private fund to commercialize “Cool Japan” and promote the development of demand overseas for Japanese products and services. It was expected to be a driving force to promote cultural exports like anime and food. The initiative was heavily criticized for wasting taxpayers’ money due to a lack of strategy and discipline and failing to deliver the promised results.<sup>103</sup> By the end of the 2010s, some critics believed that Japan had been unable to take advantage of its soft power potential, that it was all “soft” and no “power.”<sup>104</sup> However, Japan’s PD strategy continues to focus on promoting its culture and soft power assets.

Another important aspect of Japan’s PD in the twenty-first century was the aftermath of the 2011 disaster. It crushed the long-standing overseas perception that Japan is the safest place in the world, leading to a large drop in foreign visitors and students and a decrease in global exports.<sup>105</sup> Each of the three pillars of Japan’s PD—public information, cultural exchange, and international broadcasting—had its own agendas for responding to the crisis.<sup>106</sup> The Prime Minister’s Office and MOFA strengthened public information efforts to the foreign press and social media and NHK World News became an important source for the foreign press. MOFA also began the Kizuna Project providing youth with the opportunity to visit the disaster-damaged area and engage in volunteer activities; over 12,000 youth participated.<sup>107</sup> JF conducted projects focused on disasters shifting gradually from the crisis-control phase to a partnership-building phase, with programs like the Miyagi New-Orleans Youth Jazz Exchange.<sup>108</sup> Ogawa considers Japan’s PD efforts surrounding the 3.11 disaster relatively successful with Japan securing the

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<sup>103</sup> Ogawa, “Japan’s Public Diplomacy at the Crossroads,” 282-283.

<sup>104</sup> Stanislaus, “Japan House: Tokyo’s New Public Diplomacy Push.”

<sup>105</sup> Ogawa, “Japan’s Public Diplomacy at the Crossroads,” 281.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 282.

2020 Olympics, tourism exceeding pre-crisis levels (pre-covid), and the number of foreign students recovering pre-3.11 levels.<sup>109</sup>

Discussing 2000s PD efforts would not be complete without mentioning the role of Shinzo Abe. Some have argued that before Abe's return in 2012, Japanese PD had been witnessing a decade-long decline.<sup>110</sup> Whether one agrees that PD was in decline or not, Abe's return did coincide with Japan taking a bolder approach to PD.<sup>111</sup> Abe linked information with culture, strengthened outcome-oriented PD, and promoted the Japanese brand outside the country.<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, Abe placed himself at the center of many of Japan's PD campaigns, becoming the face of Japan. This included more traditional activities like overseas tours and engaging with foreign leaders and publics, as well as more creative PD activities like appearing as Super Mario to promote the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.<sup>113</sup>

During the Abe years, the Japanese government laid the groundwork to institutionalize a more proactive and coordinated approach to PD, which was helped along by Abe's stable leadership.<sup>114</sup> MOFA has been particularly proactive since 2015, which marked the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII. At the time, the Japanese government was wary of China and South Korea controlling the narrative over historical and territorial disputes and was eager to get out in front regarding managing its international image.<sup>115</sup> Armed with a \$500 million increase to its budget for strategic communications MOFA announced the Japan House project, once again leveraging soft power resources but in a more direct approach some have described as "projection" rather than "presentation," which characterized previous efforts.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Stanislaus, "Japan House: Tokyo's New Public Diplomacy Push."

<sup>112</sup> Ogawa, "Japan's Public Diplomacy at the Crossroads," 282.

<sup>113</sup> Stanislaus, "Japan House: Tokyo's New Public Diplomacy Push."

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

Today Japan's PD is carried out by no fewer than thirteen government ministries and agencies including, but not limited to, MOFA, JF, JH, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), NHK, METI, the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), and even the SDF.<sup>117</sup> Arguably, the organizations most directly engaged in PD are JF, MOFA, and JH, which are overseen by MOFA. In the United States, MOFA's public policy goals, which are supported by PD efforts, are to maintain and strengthen mutual security and economic relations.<sup>118</sup>

### **Japan Foundation**

The bill that established the JF in 1972 benefited from fervent backing from Foreign Minister Takeo Fukuda. Shortly before the bill's passage, Fukuda expressed his sense of urgency in a foreign policy address saying,

Interest in Japan has increased notably in other nations in recent years. But at the same time, we see the emergence in different spheres of an unfounded wariness and wrongful misunderstanding of our nation. Some criticize us to the effect that we focus overly on economic gain in dealings with foreign counterparties. Others go so far as to express fear of a revival of Japanese militarism. At a time such as this, we need to work urgently in our diplomacy to dispel misimpressions of our nation and to present an accurate view of our nation to people overseas as a nation that cherishes peace and culture.<sup>119</sup>

From its inception till the present, JF's major objectives, as stipulated in the Japan Foundation Act, have remained constant: (1) people-to-people exchange; (2) promotion of Japan studies; and (3) cultural exchange activities.<sup>120</sup> JF has three main departments: the Arts and Culture Department, the Japanese Language Department, and the Japanese Studies and Intellectual Exchange Department, which are respectively focused on arts and cultural exchange,

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<sup>117</sup> Yasushi Watanabe, "The Pivot Shift of Japan's Public Diplomacy," 409-410.

<sup>118</sup> Nissim Kadosh Otmazgin, "An 'East Asian' Public Diplomacy? Lessons from Japan, South Korea, and China," *Asian Perspective* 45, no. 3 (2021), 629.

<https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/east-asian-public-diplomacy-lessons-japan-south/docview/2557064895/se-2>.

<sup>119</sup> Yasushi Watanabe, "The Pivot Shift of Japan's Public Diplomacy," 403.

<sup>120</sup> Soeya, "The Evolution of Japan's Public Diplomacy," 86.

Japanese-language education overseas, and promoting mutual understanding between Japan and foreign countries.<sup>121</sup> Over the past five decades, JF has been engaged in supporting academic and cultural events, Japanese studies, Japanese language instruction, and various events focused on Japanese art, movies, and animation.<sup>122</sup> The JF also confers the Japan Foundation Awards and the Japan Foundation Prizes to individuals and groups who have contributed to deepening mutual understanding through international cultural exchange.<sup>123</sup> Additionally, it facilitates several grants for both individuals and organizations in arts and cultural exchange, Japanese language education, and Japanese studies and international dialogue.<sup>124</sup>

The JF maintains a certain level of autonomy from MOFA, playing an intermediary role between the government and civil society institutions with a shared vision. This autonomy stems from the National Diet guarantee on its establishment that JF would maintain its own funds to stabilize its finances.<sup>125</sup> Furthering its autonomy, JF became an Independent Administration Institution in October 2003.<sup>126</sup> While JF plans and organizes its own programs, it is carrying out PD policy goals set by MOFA.<sup>127</sup>

JF inherited offices in Kyoto, Rome, Cologne, New York, London, and Buenos Aires from its predecessor organization, the Society for International Cultural Relations, and has increased its global reach to twenty-six overseas offices in twenty-five countries.<sup>128</sup> Today, there are two JF locations in the United States, New York and Los Angeles. Notably, the United States

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Otmazgin, "An 'East Asian' Public Diplomacy?," 628-629.

<sup>123</sup> "What We Do: Awards and Prizes," Japan Foundation, accessed March 25, 2024, <https://www.jpf.go.jp/e/project/commendation/>

<sup>124</sup> "Grants: Program Guidelines," Japan Foundation, accessed March 25, 2024, <https://www.jpf.go.jp/e/program/index.html>

<sup>125</sup> Ogawa, "Japan's Public Diplomacy at the Crossroads," 275.

<sup>126</sup> "About," Japan Foundation New York, accessed March 25, 2024, <https://ny.jpf.go.jp/about/>

<sup>127</sup> Ogawa, "Japan's Public Diplomacy at the Crossroads," 275.

<sup>128</sup> "About Us: JF Worldwide," Japan Foundation, accessed March 6, 2024, <https://www.jpf.go.jp/e/world/>, "50 Years of JF," Japan Foundation, accessed March 25, 2024, <https://jif50.jpf.go.jp/en/history/>

is the only country with two JF locations, which reflects the importance placed on the U.S.-Japan relationship. Unique to the New York location, is the Global Partnerships Program, formerly the Center for Global Partnership (CGP). The CGP was established in 1991 because the Japanese government wanted to emphasize its desire and willingness to form partnerships with the international community, particularly with other developed nations.<sup>129</sup> The goal of the CGP was to promote new types of cultural and intellectual exchange with the United States, engaging in programs that can broadly be categorized as the “global agenda.”<sup>130</sup> Many CGP programs focused on promoting dialogue between the United States and Japan on common agenda items like democratization in developing countries, environmental issues, and infectious diseases.<sup>131</sup> The CPG also promoted new types of citizen diplomacy, like contacts between NGOs in both countries.<sup>132</sup> Today, the Global Partnerships Program includes Grants for Global Partnerships, the Japan Outreach Initiative Program, the U.S.-Japan Network for the Future, the Abe Fellowship Programs, Mask Up 2020, the Japanese-American Leadership Delegation Program, the Japan-U.S. Science Communication & Policy Fellowship Network, and the Japan Society’s U.S.-Japan Women Leaders Initiative.<sup>133</sup>

### **Japan House**

JH is the newest PD actor in Japan’s toolkit. Launched in 2017, JH was in the works since the beginning of Abe’s second term and was originally budgeted at \$35 million.<sup>134</sup> This initiative can be viewed as Japan’s foray into network-based PD, an approach rooted in the Japanese government’s acceptance of the new PD’s assumptions that globalization, the digital

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<sup>129</sup> Ogoura, *Japan’s Cultural Diplomacy*, 13.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> “Global Partnerships,” Japan Foundation New York, accessed March 25, 2024, <https://ny.jpf.go.jp/global-partnerships/>, “Other Programs,” Japan Foundation New York, accessed March 6, 2024, <https://ny.jpf.go.jp/global-partnerships/other-programs/>

<sup>134</sup> Stanislaus, “Japan House: Tokyo’s New Public Diplomacy Push.”

revolution, and the rise of new global powers and non-state actors have significantly altered the nature of PD.<sup>135</sup> JH was first referenced in Japan's annual Diplomatic Bluebooks in 2015, though not by name. The policy goals for JH are described as follows.

In order to attract the broadest possible public to Japan including people who may or may not be interested in Japan alike, the following actions are important: (1) offering information on the diverse attractiveness of Japan through all-Japan efforts of the government, private companies and local governments; (2) promoting outreach that reflects needs of the local community with participation of experts from both inside and outside of Japan; and (3) providing “one-stop service” where all information related to Japan can be obtained. With this in mind, communication hubs are to be established in London, Sao Paulo and Los Angeles to implement aforementioned actions.<sup>136</sup>

With these goals, the JH initiative, directed by MOFA, is designed to leverage Japan's soft power cultural resources in cities that were targeted for their global reach or deep historical connections to Japan.<sup>137</sup> Each hub has an exhibition space—for both locally designed exhibits as well as touring exhibits that are selected by experts from public proposals in Japan and exhibited in all three hubs—a multi-purpose space equipped with theater facilities, retail space, a cafe/restaurant, and libraries.<sup>138</sup> The official website states that the hubs' activities are

designed to appeal to as wide an audience as possible, including those with no previous interest in Japan. However, none of these activities will seek to define Japan as any one thing. Rather, everyone involved in this project is motivated by a desire to keep examining, sincerely and flexibly, the same question: “what is Japan?” The project also aims to distinguish itself clearly from other cultural activities, many of which have been defined by stereotypes and faux representations of Japan. Put simply, what this project seeks to achieve goes beyond conventional attempts to inform and communicate. Instead, JAPAN HOUSE is about enabling people to realize how little they knew about Japan and then to open their eyes to Japan.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Diplomatic Bluebook 2015,” 302-301, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/2015/html/index.html>

<sup>137</sup> Stanislaus, “Japan House: Tokyo's New Public Diplomacy Push,” Warren Stanislaus, “Japan is Using Cultural Diplomacy to Reassert its Place in the World,” *CPD Blog*, February 4, 2019, <https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/japan-using-cultural-diplomacy-reassert-its-place-world>

<sup>138</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Diplomatic Bluebook 2023,” 320, [https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/2023/pdf/en\\_index.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/2023/pdf/en_index.html), “What's JH,” Japan House, accessed March 6, 2024, <https://www.japanhouse.jp/en/what/>

<sup>139</sup> “What's JH.”

JH's messaging about its mission and goals repeatedly emphasizes its intentions of targeting not only people already familiar with Japan but also "people who have not previously had the opportunity to connect with Japan."<sup>140</sup> This emphasis on reaching those unfamiliar with Japan was reiterated by a current JH employee who stated,

...we best utilize all of the resources to promote our culture and get the understanding, especially those who are not very familiar with Japanese culture. We don't want to just go, hey, this is Japanese culture. We want to make it as friendly as possible so that they will become very interested in a casual way. And then we train our floor staff to be able to explain our culture very accurately.<sup>141</sup>

With all three hubs operational the government boasted in the 2023 Bluebook that "By the end of 2022 the total number of visitors for the 3 hubs had exceeded 4.7 million, indicating that the hubs are becoming firmly established as a major cultural facility in each city."<sup>142</sup> This would be approximately eighteen percent of the total population of the three cities combined. Additionally, the 2023 Bluebook states that JH is "currently working actively to win over new audiences by conducting some exhibitions in other cities or in neighboring countries and promoting online communication and expanding hybrid methods..."<sup>143</sup> However, it is not clear who exactly the expanded audience includes and what activities are being conducted.

### *Critiques of Japan House*

Like any PD initiative, some criticisms can be made about JH's conceptualization and operations. First, some have viewed JH as competing with JF, which already operates in Los Angeles, London, and Sao Paulo amongst its global network of 26 overseas offices.<sup>144</sup> Second, unlike JF's position at arm's length from the government, JH is closely tied to MOFA with the potential of being what critics call a "propaganda house."<sup>145</sup> Some are concerned that the true

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Phone interview with JH employee, March 28, 2024.

<sup>142</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Diplomatic Bluebook 2023," 320.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Stanislaus, "Japan House: Tokyo's New Public Diplomacy Push," "About Us: JF Worldwide."

<sup>145</sup> Stanislaus, "Japan House: Tokyo's New Public Diplomacy Push."

purpose of JH is to influence global opinion on regional and historical territorial issues, despite how JH presents itself. This concern largely stems from the diplomatic bluebooks' tendency to refer to "communicating a correct understanding of Japan."<sup>146</sup> Third, while the JH states that it is trying to appeal to as wide an audience as possible, Stanislaus argues that it is actually targeting an "upmarket" audience of wealthy business executives, city professionals, millennial foodies, and highbrow arts enthusiasts" who will be valuable to Tokyo for their cultural and political influence.<sup>147</sup> As Stanislaus noted, the prices of the museum shops and restaurants make them inaccessible to many onlookers. For example, the current menu at UKA—the restaurant in the LA hub—has multicourse meals starting at \$200.<sup>148</sup> Cull notes that JH's elite targeting is geographical rather than class-focused, with certain cities around the world being seen as worth targeting.<sup>149</sup> Lastly, if JH is truly trying to reach those who previously had no interest in Japan or opportunity to connect with Japan they should have chosen different locations for the hubs. All three cities already have ties with Japan and its culture and are in countries that have long-standing, and friendly, relationships with Japan.

### *JH's PD Activities*

Intended to be a one-stop shop for PD, JH unsurprisingly implements a wide range of programs and multipurpose facilities. As of March 2024, JH Los Angeles has held twenty-two exhibitions and 252 events since its establishment in 2018.<sup>150</sup> One example of JH's programs is the POKEMON X KOGEI: Playful Encounters of Pokémon and Japanese Craft exhibition,

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Stanislaus, "Japan is Using Cultural Diplomacy to Reassert its Place in the World."

<sup>148</sup> "UKA: Elevating the Art of *Kaiseki*," Japan House LA, accessed March 22, 2024, <https://www.japanhousela.com/restaurant/uka/#menu>

<sup>149</sup> Email correspondence with Nicholas Cull, April 12, 2024.

<sup>150</sup> "Past Exhibitions," Japan House LA, accessed March 6, 2024, <https://www.japanhousela.com/happenings/past-exhibitions/>, "Past Events," Japan House LA, accessed March 6, 2024, <https://www.japanhousela.com/happenings/past-events/>



which has been a “huge hit” according to a JH employee.<sup>151</sup> The exhibition combines a well-known pop culture franchise with the less globally known aspect of Japanese culture—traditional crafts. In addition to conducting exhibitions and events that promote Japan’s culture, JH also houses a physical and digital library (the digital library services are scheduled to end on March 31, 2024) of over 700 books that are categorized into the themes: Japanese spirituality, tasting Japan, the power of tales, manga and 2D art, architecture and design, exploring diverse visual arts, travel inspiration, Japanese craft and technology, Japan and nature, and society.<sup>152</sup> JH also engages in Gastrodiploamacy with a multi-course *kaiseki* (small plate) restaurant, UKA. The restaurant aims to “become a destination where local diners can experience the timeless yet fresh spirit of true Japanese cuisine.”<sup>153</sup>

JH does not work alone; rather, it collaborates with other government agencies and private organizations. When asked about JH’s collaboration with other PD actors the interviewee explained that JH works very closely with the Consulate General of Japan in Los Angeles, particularly the JH president, to co-host various events.<sup>154</sup> JH also works closely with the JNTO to promote regional tourism, frequently providing the JNTO with event space. Another agency that JH collaborates with is JETRO, assisting with events promoting various Japanese goods, like *sake*, and vendors. She also stated that JH works with JF, noting that their work is “pretty similar to what we do.”<sup>155</sup> The interviewee seemed to think that the noticeable difference between JH’s and JF’s activities is that JF engages in promoting Japanese language studies, which is not within JH’s purview. Overall, the government agencies engaged in foreign relations, the “J5” as dubbed

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<sup>151</sup> Phone interview with JH employee, March 28, 2024.

<sup>152</sup> “Library,” Japan House LA, accessed March 22, 2024, <https://www.japanhousela.com/venue/library/>

<sup>153</sup> “UKA: Elevating the Art of *Kaiseki*.”

<sup>154</sup> Phone interview with JH employee, March 28, 2024.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

by the interviewee, are trying to work together to enhance their expertise in promoting Japan's culture rather than competing against each other.<sup>156</sup>

On establishing collaborative relationships with the other ministries, the interviewee noted that it took a while saying,

...at the beginning, we were kind of looking at each other's face[s], how do we work together? But Yuko, the president, she has been working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the longest and so she knows how things work. So, she took an initiative to reach out to the head of each organization. Now everything is flawless. So when it comes to stocking or anything, let's do this together. Or they come to us. Maybe we do have this regional promotion that we like to do. Can you guys work with us? So, starting off with Yuko's initiative, all of the communications have become very smoothly. And workflow-wise, it's seamless. But it took a while. But now everything is shaped up nicely.<sup>157</sup>

JH has benefited from having a president familiar with MOFA. If not for the experience and pre-existing connections JH would not have the same level of collaboration that it currently enjoys.

#### *JH's Measurement and Evaluation Practices*

As discussed in the section on the new PD, measurement and evaluation have become increasingly important for PD practitioners. While recent scholarship has been conducted on the current state of evaluation practices in U.S. PD (Buhmann & Sommerfeldt) there is little to no scholarship exploring Japanese PD evaluation practices. In the case of JH, the most obvious result of measurement and evaluation is the annual activity reports available to the public online. The main measure presented in the reports is the number of visitors, both the total number of visitors for each hub and the number of visitors for each local and touring exhibition.<sup>158</sup> This

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Japan House, "Japan House Activity Report," March 2019, [https://www.japanhouse.jp/en/n\\_pdf/whatsjh/report/report\\_201903\\_en.pdf](https://www.japanhouse.jp/en/n_pdf/whatsjh/report/report_201903_en.pdf)

emphasis on the number of visitors is also reflected in speaking with a JH employee who stated that it is their “number one goal.”<sup>159</sup>

The number of visitors is a common quantitative measure for PD programs, largely because of its ease of collection. In evaluating PD programs most approaches follow a model of looking at four stages: inputs (the resources that go into the program), activities, outputs (the products because of the activities), and outcomes (short, medium, and long-term changes resulting from the program).<sup>160</sup> Evaluation “best practices” suggest that measuring outcomes rather than outputs is the ideal standard for measuring the impact of a program. Buhmann and Sommerfeldt note that few programs will meet this standard.<sup>161</sup> JH is no exception, relying heavily on the number of visitors, an output, which does not provide any insight into what the program’s impact is on those visitors and their perceptions of Japan.

Fortunately, recording the number of visitors is not the only measure that JH employs. In interviewing the JH employee, she continued to explain that JH also collects qualitative data on its programs through surveys. The questions on these surveys are designed to provide insight into how visitors engaged with JH’s programs, how it affected their perceptions of Japan, and even demographic information. The following list exemplifies the range of questions included in these surveys. “...did you just go through [the exhibit] quickly?” “What is your understanding about Japanese culture and...how did the exhibition change your perception about Japan?” “Would you like to visit Japan in the future?” “Do you talk about this to your friends and family?” “Did you purchase any... items from the shop?” “What is your rating...[of the] facility, meaning shop, gallery, library, and restaurant?”<sup>162</sup> Conducting surveys is a good supplement to the number of

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<sup>159</sup> Phone interview with JH employee, March 28, 2024.

<sup>160</sup> Buhmann and Erich J. Sommerfeldt, “Drivers and Barriers in Public Diplomacy Evaluation,” 107-108.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid*, 108.

<sup>162</sup> Phone interview with JH employee, March 28, 2024.

visitors, as it provides some insight into the possible outcomes of the PD programs. Surveys are not foolproof as not everyone who attends an event will participate in the survey and some outcomes may not be apparent until long after the visitor participated in the program.

In addition to the number of visitors and surveys, JH conducts evaluations of its marketing efforts. This includes collecting data like the number of Instagram, Facebook, X (though she considers X “obsolete”), and LinkedIn followers, the number of website visitors, and newsletter open rates. JH keeps track of these quantitative measurements and reports them back to MOFA monthly.<sup>163</sup>

To gain a more nuanced understanding of JH’s measurement and evaluation practices the interviewee was also asked about what she perceives as challenging in the process. Her answer focused on the logistics of gathering, compiling, and storing qualitative data. She noted that,

Quantitative value wise it’s easy [and] clear cut...qualitative is sometimes... tricky because outside of our KPI criteria we hear a lot of great anecdotes. Oh, you know, we visited Japan House and we talked about this business we're looking for, looking to open up a business in Japan, etc. We can't capture everything just because we don't have a centralized database system which we do need, I feel, personally to implement CRM customer relationship management kind of system so that we be able to capture all of the conversations into the system. Right now our team members have those conversations and they ask everybody to enter into Excel sheet that one person gather[s] every month but there is [only] so much we can do. So right now there are some great information that is scattered throughout our shared cloud drive. So that's the challenge that we do have, capturing all the great qualitative anecdotes with our guests or visitors.<sup>164</sup>

The JH interviewee’s experience is very similar to those of U.S. practitioners discussed in Buhmann and Sommerfeldt’s 2020 study. U.S. practitioners also noted the relative straightforwardness of gathering output indicators like participation rates and social media metrics.<sup>165</sup> Where the JH employee and the U.S. practitioners differ is in their overall perception

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Alexander Buhmann and Erich J. Sommerfeldt, “Pathways for the Future of Evaluation in Public Diplomacy,” *CPD Perspectives*, August 2020, 17, [https://usepublicdiplomacy.org/sites/usepublicdiplomacy.org/files/useruploads/u44166/Pathways%20for%20the%20Future%20of%20Evaluation\\_9.30.2020.pdf](https://usepublicdiplomacy.org/sites/usepublicdiplomacy.org/files/useruploads/u44166/Pathways%20for%20the%20Future%20of%20Evaluation_9.30.2020.pdf)

of anecdotal evidence. The JH interviewee saw visitors' anecdotes as great information that she wished they could capture and utilize better, while the U.S. practitioners tended to hold negative attitudes about evaluations reliant on anecdotal evidence.<sup>166</sup> However, U.S. practitioners are known to rely on anecdotal quotes and personal stories as they are believed to satisfy superiors' demands for program accountability and sufficiently persuade lawmakers of programs' impact.<sup>167</sup> This suggests that Japanese and U.S. practitioners are facing some of the same challenges in evaluating programs.

The JH interviewee was also asked, "To what extent do you believe your peers think monitoring and risk evaluation is valuable?" The interviewee believes that her co-workers are like-minded in their approach and perspectives on evaluation. She thinks that this stems from using the same key criteria and language in the measurement and evaluation process.<sup>168</sup> She continued stating,

I usually take initiative, [by asking questions like] Hey what is this? Are visitors going down low? What can we do? So I can start [a] conversation based on the numbers which is very valuable and everybody gets the same understanding [of] what they need to focus on. So I think everybody has the same understanding and they find it valuable. That affects their initiatives, I mean the performance evaluation as well, especially [for the] marketing people. It's very transparent... I know there are a lot of pressures but you know we try not to criticize anything if numbers [are] low, [instead] we start asking questions and then we try to strategize or tweak our approach and everybody turn[s] out to be having a really more inspiring conversation. I think about what can we do. Instead of, hey you're not doing your job.<sup>169</sup>

This answer reveals that JH leadership has a positive approach to conducting evaluation and is striving to create an environment where evaluation is being done for the sake of improvement not just to have data for reporting to the government and stakeholders. As for whether those working under her hold the same beliefs about evaluation, it is impossible to conclude without

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>168</sup> Phone interview with JH employee, March 28, 2024.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

speaking to them. Furthermore, this perspective should not be taken as a representation of the Japanese PD actors. The answer might have been different if the interviewee had been from one of the larger PD actors like MOFA or JF.

### **Broadcasting — *Nippon Hoso Kyokai* (NHK)**

The NHK (*Nippon Hoso Kyokai*), Japan Broadcasting Corporation, has dominated Japan's media markets since the 1920s and is the second-largest public broadcaster in the world.<sup>170</sup> In 1995, NHK began international television broadcasting in the United States and Europe. The following year NHK renamed its overseas radio and television services NHK World, which was renamed again in 2018 to NHK World-Japan.<sup>171</sup> The idea of launching the NHK World English language channel in 2009 was proposed by the LDP, which conceived it as a PD tool for the government to better present Japan to the world.<sup>172</sup> In 2024, NHK World-Japan consists of the following services: (1) news and programs in English 24-7 via satellite broadcasting, cable TV, and Internet; (2) radio services delivered in 17 foreign languages; (3) NHK World-Japan Online, providing TV and radio programming simultaneously with their broadcasting and on-demand; (4) NHK World Premium—informational and cultural programs in Japanese; and (5) NHK World Radio Japan, providing radio services for Japanese speakers overseas.<sup>173</sup> According to the 2023-2024 Corporate Profile, NHK World-Japan channel is available to about 420 million households in approximately 160 countries and regions.<sup>174</sup> In terms of programming, NHK World-Japan's main offerings are essentially celebrations of

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<sup>170</sup> Henry Laurence, *The Politics of Public Broadcasting in Britain and Japan: The BBC and NHK Compared* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2023), 3, "Japan," Reporters Without Borders, accessed April 2, 2024, <https://rsf.org/en/country/japan>

<sup>171</sup> Nancy Snow, "NHK, Abe and the World: Japan's Pressing Needs in the Path to 2020," *Asian Journal of Journalism and Media Studies*, no. 2 (2019): 17, [https://doi.org/10.33664/ajjms.2.0\\_15](https://doi.org/10.33664/ajjms.2.0_15)

<sup>172</sup> Laurence, *The Politics of Public Broadcasting in Britain and Japan*, 195.

<sup>173</sup> "Overview of Operations," NHK, accessed March 25, 2024, <https://www.nhk.or.jp/corporateinfo/about/operation.html>

<sup>174</sup> NHK, "NHK Corporate Profile 2023-2024," accessed March 25, 2024, 6, [https://www.nhk.or.jp/corporateinfo/about/assets/pdf/profile\\_2023-2024.pdf](https://www.nhk.or.jp/corporateinfo/about/assets/pdf/profile_2023-2024.pdf)

Japanese culture and lifestyle, fitting in with the government's overall approach of promoting its soft power resources.<sup>175</sup> While NHK has promoted Japan's soft power, it has not been successful at managing Japan's global story.<sup>176</sup> Too often its messaging is from the perspective of its own narrative, not the interests of the target audience. Additionally, much of the programming content appeals only to domestic audiences rather than global audiences.<sup>177</sup>

On the official website, it lays out the main missions of the international broadcasting services. First, it "will aim to be the most trusted choice," and "promote mutual understanding between people with editorials that respect freedom and democracy." Second, it "will broaden your perspective," by bringing you a "Japanese perspective and fresh insights on current events and different ways of viewing the world." Third, it "will reveal the real Japan and Asia...As the world's gateway to Japan and Asia, we reveal the diversity of our culture, traditions and innovations and bring you the latest in business, cutting-edge technologies and creativity from across the region."<sup>178</sup>

In its 2018-2019 corporate profile, NHK highlights six core values that reinforce its role as Japan's PD broadcaster to its domestic and global audiences. (1) Provide accurate, fair, impartial information; (2) Promote safety and security; (3) Create high-quality cultural experiences; (4) Contribute to local communities; (5) Strengthen Japan's global connections; and (6) Contribute to education and public welfare.<sup>179</sup> This profile stands in stark contrast to critical observers who see NHK as an organization immersed in the politics of the state.<sup>180</sup> For example, Ellis Kraus, an expert in Japanese politics who has written on NHK extensively, states, "NHK and the state are less two creatures eyeing each other warily, occasionally coming into

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<sup>175</sup> Laurence, *The Politics of Public Broadcasting in Britain and Japan*, 196.

<sup>176</sup> Snow, "A Reliable Friend and Strategic Partner in the Indo-Pacific Region," 8.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>178</sup> "About NHK World-Japan," NHK, accessed March 25, 2024, <https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/about/>

<sup>179</sup> Snow, "NHK, Abe and the World," 16.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid*, 16.-17.

conflict—as the ‘watchdog’ metaphor of the democratic press would have it—than two octopi, constantly locked in a multi-tentacle embrace jockeying with each other, but in which the state/LDP is the larger and more powerful of the two and usually prevails.”<sup>181</sup>

### *NHK’s Challenges*

One aspect that inspires criticism of NHK is its close relationship to politics and the state. NHK is known to pay disproportionate attention to the national bureaucracy.<sup>182</sup> Additionally, the NHK has a less-than-stellar track record in terms of government interference. The NHK’s senior management consists of a Board of Governors and an Executive Board. The Board of Governors consists of twelve members appointed to three-year terms by the Prime Minister with approval of both houses of the National Diet “on behalf of the people of Japan.”<sup>183</sup> Members are well-informed and experienced professionals from culture, education, science, and industry, with none coming directly from government or political parties.<sup>184</sup> The Executive Board consists of a president, a vice president, and nine managing directors. In a seeming conflict of interest, the audit committee that is supposed to audit both boards is appointed by the Board of Governors.<sup>185</sup> An example of government interference in NHK senior management is recent president Katsuo Momii. Momii, who shared political views with Abe, was personally recommended by the Prime Minister despite having no previous experience in broadcasting. In his first press conference, Momii made dismissive statements about the comfort women and stated that while NHK would be impartial in domestic reporting its international broadcasts would naturally take the government’s side in disputes over issues like the Senkaku/Daioyu Islands. He also said, “When the government is saying ‘Right’ we can’t say ‘Left,’” which immediately stoked controversy.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Laurence, *The Politics of Public Broadcasting in Britain and Japan*, 198.



Another instance of government interference, and one of NHK's biggest crises, was the fallout from a 2001 documentary, "How to Judge War? Considering Wartime Sexual Violence," about the movement for redress for surviving comfort women. Shortly after the documentary aired, the Asahi Shimbun revealed that the documentary had been altered immediately before broadcast, seemingly at the behest of senior LDP politicians. The revisions fundamentally changed the documentary's tone from being broadly critical of state policy toward war crime victims and sympathetic to the redress movement to being broadly sympathetic to the government and critical of the redress movement.<sup>187</sup>

Instances of active political interference have reinforced NHK's organizational tendency toward self-censorship.<sup>188</sup> Furthermore, there seems to be a divide between upper management and those lower in the hierarchy. NHK's reporters and producers are not averse to questioning authority and challenging the status quo, but their bosses prefer to avoid offending politicians or outraging public sentiment.<sup>189</sup> Overall, the fact that global media attention has focused on questioning the leadership skills of NHK's Board of Governors damages NHK's broadcasting brand as well as its NHK's public diplomacy mission.<sup>190</sup>

NHK is Japan's flagship international broadcaster and the second-largest public broadcaster globally, but it has a very small footprint in the world and little global name recognition.<sup>191</sup> In a recent assessment of Japan's PD, Nancy Snow points out that NHK has such little brand recognition internationally that it had to add Japan to NHK World, for it to be obvious what country is associated with the network.<sup>192</sup> While modeled after the BBC, NHK

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid, 188.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid, 217.

<sup>190</sup> Snow, "NHK, Abe and the World," 23.

<sup>191</sup> Snow, "A Reliable Friend and Strategic Partner in the Indo-Pacific Region," 8.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

does not project itself in the context of PD like the BBC.<sup>193</sup> This could stem in part from differences in how the two broadcasters approached globalization in the 2000s. BBC was an enthusiastic early adopter of new media while NHK was more cautious and more constrained in its embrace of the new world.<sup>194</sup> Expanding its online presence relatively slowly, by the end of the early 2000s NHK had established a solid if unspectacular presence, with a lower profile than both Japan's commercial broadcasters and the BBC.<sup>195</sup> This status remains relatively unchanged with the 2020 Reuters Institute Digital News Report reporting that NHK online news is only the top brand for eleven percent of consumers of online news, far behind Yahoo News, the top brand for fifty-eight percent. However, NHK is still the most popular source of offline news in Japan polling as the top source for 48 percent of respondents.<sup>196</sup> This suggests that NHK is more successful as a domestic broadcaster than as the broadcasting arm of Japan's PD.

Snow also notes that the NHK is overshadowed by China's broadcasting ventures.<sup>197</sup> In recent years, China has doubled down on informational diplomacy, and Japan does not have a comparable conceptual paradigm. In March 2018, China merged several of its networks into a single network, China Media Group, known as the "Voice of China," to strengthen international communication and tell a positive Chinese narrative. China's comprehensive approach is engaging global audiences with its state-sponsored media.<sup>198</sup> Unless the NHK drastically increases its international broadcasting efforts and addresses the issues surrounding its international and regional reputation, it will be hard-pressed to compete with China's state-owned media companies.

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<sup>193</sup> Nancy Snow, "Japan's Challenges in Public Diplomacy, An American Vision," *Asie.Visions* 81 (2016): 12, <https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/notes-de-lifri/asie-visions/japans-challenges-public-diplomacy-american-vision>

<sup>194</sup> Laurence, *The Politics of Public Broadcasting in Britain and Japan*, 147.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid*, 152,156.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid*, 150.

<sup>197</sup> Snow, "A Reliable Friend and Strategic Partner in the Indo-Pacific Region," 8.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

The last important aspect to consider about NHK is the lack of fundamental understanding of NHK's role and responsibilities in PD by the Japanese public, NHK, and potentially even other PD actors.<sup>199</sup> Unlike BBC World Service which operates as part of the UK PD, NHK does not have a formal position or ties to Japan's other PD actors and efforts.<sup>200</sup> The Broadcasting Act defines the NHK as the special and quasi-governmental corporation tasked with conducting domestic broadcasting.<sup>201</sup> However, in the era of new PD, the lines between domestic and foreign information efforts are blurred because of the internet and social media. Furthermore, NHK is operating as an international broadcaster promoting Japan's image, culture, and ideas abroad, even if the Japanese legislation does not reflect its role in PD. For the NHK to expand its global reach and reputation, better fulfilling its role in PD, there will need to be a more concerted effort to recognize NHK as part of Japan's PD apparatus. Otherwise, the NHK will continue to be the weaker and less influential version of the BBC.<sup>202</sup>

### **The Japan Exchange and Teaching Program: A Cornerstone of Cultural Diplomacy**

#### *The Japanese Government's Goals*

CD and cultural exchanges have been emphasized for decades and are one of the stronger aspects of Japanese PD, particularly the JET Program.<sup>203</sup> From the very beginning JET's structure, implementation, and goals have been dictated by the three different ministries tasked with its operation, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) now the MIC, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (then MOE now MEXT).<sup>204</sup> Regarding PD, the goals of MOFA and MOHA are most relevant.

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<sup>199</sup> Snow, "NHK, Abe and the World," 24.

<sup>200</sup> Nobuto Yamamoto, "After Fukushima: New Public, NHK and Japan's Public Diplomacy," *Keio Communication Review*, no. 35 (2013): 12, <https://www.mediacom.keio.ac.jp/publication/pdf2013/yamamotonobuto.pdf>

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Snow, "NHK, Abe and the World," 24.

<sup>203</sup> Snow, "A Reliable Friend and Strategic Partner in the Indo-Pacific Region," 7.

<sup>204</sup> Hoover, "The JET Program," 2.

MOFA officials immediately recognized the diplomatic potential when JET was being proposed, especially if the number of countries involved could be expanded.<sup>205</sup> MOFA also believed JET would contribute to some of the ministry's long-term goals, such as cultivating new generations of diplomats who are comfortable in English. The ministry also saw JET as a visible symbol of Japan's goodwill among participating countries. MOFA's most important goal is made clear in this statement, "Our main hope for the JET Program is to increase understanding of Japanese society and education among youth in the participating countries."<sup>206</sup> Essentially, MOFA wanted to improve Japan's reputation among foreigners and cultivate an understanding of Japan in young people.

MOHA, who controls the program's budget and overall operation, saw the program as a means for hopping on the internationalization bandwagon.<sup>207</sup> One MOHA official stated, "Frankly speaking, the purpose of the JET Program was never focused on the revolution of English education. The main goal was to get local governments to open their gates to foreigners. It's basically a grassroots regional development program."<sup>208</sup> In other words, MOHA's goal for the JET Program was to introduce an international perspective into municipalities across the country.

*Is JET meeting governmental goals?*

MOFA's goal for JET, fostering understanding of Japan, is ultimately concerned with amassing support for Japan.<sup>209</sup> Most scholarship on JET's effects as PD has been in the context of the United States, which makes sense considering the origins of its founding and the continued importance of the US-Japan Alliance. MOFA's goal for JET has garnered more attention,

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<sup>205</sup> McConnel, *Importing Diversity*, 38, Hoover, "The JET Program," 3.

<sup>206</sup> McConnel, *Importing Diversity*, 30, Hoover, "The JET Program," 3.

<sup>207</sup> Watanabe and McConnel, *Soft Power Superpowers*, 20, Hoover, "The JET Program," 2-3.

<sup>208</sup> McConnel, *Importing Diversity*, 30, Hoover, "The JET Program," 3.

<sup>209</sup> Borg, "The JET Programme as a Manifestation of Kokusaika (Internationalization) in Japan," 239, Hoover, "The JET Program," 9.

especially after the proliferation of Joseph Nye's concept of soft power among academics. Nye even refers to JET as an exchange program with soft power implications.<sup>210</sup> The basic idea is that by bringing large numbers of foreigners to Japan for extended stays JET yields soft power benefits for Japan.<sup>211</sup> To assess how JET has been successful as soft power, several avenues should be explored.

Looking at the individual level, MOFA's goal is predicated on the supposition that ALTs (assistant language teachers) will be treated well, enjoy their stay, and return home with a positive impression of Japan. This of course cannot be guaranteed for every participant and the ALTs themselves are not a monolithic group, but each has their own reasons for joining and will assess the program differently.<sup>212</sup> Surveys are a good way to evaluate the satisfaction level of participants and alumni and learn about how they interpret their experiences with the program. McConnel notes that general survey responses are quite positive. For example, in a 2004 survey by the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR), eighty-five percent said they would "absolutely" recommend the program to a friend, and 12 percent "probably would." The same survey also reported that fifty-seven percent said they enjoyed their experience "very much" and thirty-eight percent said they enjoyed it "for the most part."<sup>213</sup> Similarly in Metzger's 2011 poll of JET alumni, she included a feeling thermometer. The average for the overall impression of Japan on a scale ranging from zero to one hundred was eighty-five.<sup>214</sup> While this paints a positive picture of alumni's experiences with JET it is not straightforward.

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<sup>210</sup> Metzgar, *The JET Program and the US-Japan Relationship*, 72, Hoover, "The JET Program," 10.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> Borg, "The JET Programme as a Manifestation of Kokusaika (Internationalization) in Japan," 239, Hoover, "The JET Program," 10.

<sup>213</sup> Watanabe and McConnel, *Soft Power Superpowers*, 25, Hoover, "The JET Program," 10.

<sup>214</sup> Emily T. Metzgar, *The JET Program and the US-Japan Relationship: Goodwill Goldmine*, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017), 94, Hoover, "The JET Program," 10-11.

Most alumni recognize that their time in the program changed their perspectives, but that there are complexities and ambiguities involved in their shifting view of Japan. Additionally, there are not always clear linkages between one's JET experience and subsequent view of Japan, and the likelihood of ongoing involvement with Japan. Some JET participants who have great experiences simply disappear into the woodwork once returning home, becoming an untapped source of soft power potential despite an obvious affinity for Japan. Conversely, some who have negative experiences end up being extensively involved with Japan. There are still others who are put off by the insinuation that they might have become more sympathetic to Japan because of the program, preferring a more layered interpretation of the change in their perceptions.<sup>215</sup>

In the 2023 Diplomatic Bluebook, the Japanese government states, "Many of those who went through the JET Programme are important human and diplomatic assets for Japan, as they go on to work in a variety of fields around the world as supporters for Japan and experts of Japan."<sup>216</sup> This statement is corroborated by Metzger's study on American JET alumni, which found that upon return to the United States, alumni were well positioned to influence their family, friends, and the broader public on subjects related to Japan, thus multiplying the benefits occurring to Japan through the sponsorship of JET.<sup>217</sup> Metzger found that fifteen percent of alumni settled in the DC area upon their return, hinting at the community's potential to influence the U.S.-Japan relationship in both formal and informal contexts.<sup>218</sup> Additionally, ten percent reported working for the U.S. government.<sup>219</sup> Many alumni also end up doing work directly related to Japan that puts them in positions to influence larger audiences. In the survey, twelve percent indicated they had published research or commentary focused specifically on Japan or

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<sup>215</sup> Watanabe and McConnel, *Soft Power Superpowers*, 26-27, Hoover, "The JET Program," 11.

<sup>216</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Diplomatic Bluebook 2023," 326.

<sup>217</sup> Metzgar, *The JET Program and the US-Japan Relationship*, 98, Hoover, "The JET Program," 11.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid*, 87, *Ibid*.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid*, 89, *Ibid*.

the U.S.-Japan relationship.<sup>220</sup> Also, many alumni are involved in organizations with no particular connection to Japan, creating the possibility for them to serve as the de facto “Japan expert” in many of these environments.<sup>221</sup> Overall eighty-seven percent indicated that they regularly discuss Japan within their circles of friends and acquaintances and forty-one percent reported that they use social media to engage with others in discussion about Japan.<sup>222</sup> At least in the American context, Metzger’s study suggests that JET not only breeds familiarity and affection for JET, and Japan, among alumni but also that many returning alumni actively influence their communities. Thus, on an individual level, it can be argued that JET is succeeding as a soft power PD.

In analyzing JET as a soft power, another important aspect to consider is JETAA, JET’s alumni association. McConnel argues that the establishment of JETAA is the best example from the program’s history of participants and Japanese hosts working effectively to promote the understanding of Japan abroad.<sup>223</sup> The creation of the alumni association was largely driven by alumni.<sup>224</sup> Originally the idea for JETAA was hatched by Scott Olinger, a prefectural representative for the Association of Japan Exchange and Teaching (AJET) in 1989. The establishment of chapters took place in an ad hoc fashion, with CLAIR’s blessing.<sup>225</sup> Metzger considers JETAA a “quasi-official” organ of the JET Program as the association claims to be self-supporting, but enjoys a very close relationship with CLAIR and MOFA.<sup>226</sup> Though the Japanese government has not kept comprehensive records of participants they have continued to support JETAA chapters worldwide.<sup>227</sup> JETAA has more than forty-five chapters in fifteen

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid, 92, Ibid, 12.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid, 90, Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid, 93, Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Watanabe and McConnel, *Soft Power Superpowers*, 27, Hoover, “The JET Program,” 12.

<sup>224</sup> Metzgar, *The JET Program and the US-Japan Relationship*, 103, Hoover, “The JET Program,” 12.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid, 103-104, Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid, 109, Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid, 109, Ibid, 12-13.

countries, with a membership of approximately 20,000.<sup>228</sup> Given the scale of its activities and membership, JETAA plays an important role in publicizing JET around the world. It provides JET's organizers with a major public relations advantage in that they can point to several thousand "satisfied customers" as a testimony to the program's enduring value.<sup>229</sup>

In 2015, USJETAA was formally established as a nonprofit, culminating two decades of alumni-driven effort to build national capacity for the JET alumni community in the US.<sup>230</sup> Fifty percent of JET's participants are from the United States and in terms of U.S. membership in JETAA, approximately one-third of returning JET participants become involved with their local chapter in the United States.<sup>231</sup> USJETAA facilitates communication among JETAA chapters, coordinates the annual conference for American JETAA chapters, and has the ability to fundraise. Most importantly it has autonomy, which the individual JETAA chapters lack.<sup>232</sup> Historically JET participants have largely come from the United States. Even in 2022, fifty-three percent of current participants are from the United States.<sup>233</sup> This demonstrates Japan's continued commitment to the bilateral relationship, but the Japanese government has not kept effective records about American alumni, or any country's alumni for that matter. Metzger argues that USJETAA will be a valuable resource for the Japanese government in keeping better records of alumni.<sup>234</sup> The lack of records on alumni is crucial from a PD standpoint because, without a mechanism to utilize alumni in service of Japan's foreign policy efforts Japan will not reap the full potential benefits of the program's alumni.

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<sup>228</sup> Watanabe and McConnel, *Soft Power Superpowers*, 27, Hoover, "The JET Program," 13.

<sup>229</sup> Metzger, *The JET Program and the US-Japan Relationship*, 109, Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid, 110, Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid, 106, 112, Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid, 112, Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> "Participating Countries," JET Programme, CLAIR, accessed December 2, 2022, <http://jetprogramme.org/en/countries/>, Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Metzger, *The JET Program and the US-Japan Relationship*, 112, Ibid.



Where do JET alumni fit into the U.S.-Japan relationship overall? Metzger argues that they play increasingly key roles, some in more visible positions than others.<sup>235</sup> One visible position is in Japanese consulates abroad. JET has provided a steady pool of qualified employees for positions in the Japanese consulates, with McConnell unable to find a single consulate in the United States that did not have at least one JET alumni on staff. Also, JET now rivals the Peace Corps as a key supplier of young Americans willing to serve their country in the Foreign Service. These alumni will be posted to various countries throughout their careers in the Foreign Service, undoubtedly benefitting the Japanese government in numerous ways through their knowledge of Japanese language and culture.<sup>236</sup> Alumni and JETAA are also an integral part of recruiting new JET participants.<sup>237</sup> Be it overt or subtle JET alumni are situated to influence the way in which the United States interacts with Japan.

Overall, JET has served as a key mechanism of exposure to Japan for Americans and other nationalities who participate in the program who might not otherwise have had an opportunity to experience the country firsthand. Also, it has created a generation of people who are committed to maintaining the bilateral relationship and to telling others about its importance.<sup>238</sup> Ezra Vogel nicely sums up the issue of JET as a public diplomacy policy saying, “[It is] the strongest single program I know for strengthening the base for good relations between Japan and the US.”<sup>239</sup> His only lament is that he wishes “we had a better way of integrating all those who have served in the JET program in Japan into positions where they could make full use of their experience in Japan.”<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid, 147, Ibid, 14.

<sup>236</sup> Watanabe and McConnell, *Soft Power Superpowers*, 28, Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid, Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Metzger, *The JET Program and the US-Japan Relationship*, 147, Ibid, 15.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid, 156, Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid, 157, Ibid.

MOHA's goal for JET was increasing local-level international exchange. JET does not fit the traditional definition of an exchange program, as there is no reciprocity in terms of Japanese graduates being dispatched overseas to work in schools. However, CLAIR, the administrative arm of MOHA that is responsible for the day-to-day management of the program at the national level, considers JET an exchange program.<sup>241</sup> In a 2006 statement, CLAIR explained why:

The JET Programme is an exchange programme on many levels. First, each participant brings their culture to a local community in Japan, helping the geographically isolated country to gain personal contact with peoples of other nations. Second, each participant will learn a great deal about Japan and people and customs here, knowledge that we hope participants will share with their friends and family upon returning home. Many JETs come to teach, but ultimately they learn much more about Japan and their home country as well.<sup>242</sup>

Not only does this explain CLAIR's view on JET as a means of cultural exchange, but it also suggests that Japan still lacked personal contact with foreigners and needed official encouragement. JET undoubtedly has facilitated such contact over the past thirty-five years inviting thousands of young foreigners to reside and work in communities across Japan.<sup>243</sup>

Official publications about JET frequently refer to the nebulous concept of grassroots internationalization, which is apparently the product of local-level international exchange. Borg finds the use of "grassroots" incongruous given the term's association with autonomous volunteer groups that seek change from the bottom up. JET's approach, on the other hand, has been described by McConnel as "top-down grassroots internationalization."<sup>244</sup> It is important to note that despite the ubiquitous use of the term grassroots internationalization, there is little discussion of the desired effects, if any, on Japanese society.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> McConnel, *Importing Diversity*, 49-49; Borg, "The JET Programme as a Manifestation of Kokusaika (Internationalization) in Japan," (Doctorate thesis, University of London, 2008), 200, Hoover, "The JET Program," 4.

<sup>242</sup> Borg, "The JET Programme as a Manifestation of Kokusaika (Internationalization) in Japan," 200, Hoover, "The JET Program," 4.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid*, 201, *Ibid*, 4-5.

<sup>244</sup> McConnel, *Importing Diversity*, 30, *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>245</sup> Borg, "The JET Programme as a Manifestation of Kokusaika (Internationalization) in Japan," 201, *Ibid*.

In the absence of detailed official explanations, it is difficult to ascertain what concrete effects JET policymakers hoped to achieve by establishing the goal of international exchange at the local level. Additionally, as noted by Metzger, English scholarship has not examined the local contracting organizations that serve as the home bases for program participants.<sup>246</sup> What can be examined, however, is the effects perceived by JTLs (Japanese teachers of language) and ALTs. The common view held among the JTLs is that thanks to the presence of ALTs Japanese schoolchildren have gotten used to foreigners.<sup>247</sup> In a 2004 interview conducted by Borg one JTL said, “They [the students] realize that people that speak English are human beings just like them. The opportunity to meet foreigners has increased, and that has had a good effect, I think.”<sup>248</sup> The idea that students began to view foreigners as similar human beings was prevalent in Borg’s interviews. Though this view that schoolchildren have become accustomed to foreigners due to ALTs is reasonable, the influence of other factors like millions of Japanese traveling abroad every year and the steady rise in Japan’s resident foreign population should not be discounted.<sup>249</sup>

From the ALT discourse, two perceptions are important to consider. The first is that many ALTs believe that the local authorities are more interested in using foreigners to generate some form of intangible feel-good effect within the local community than in acknowledging that foreigners are capable of making a useful contribution to Japanese society.<sup>250</sup> In one interview a skeptical ALT explained:

The basic principle of JET: We will provide local communities with friendly young foreigners and pay these foreigners to be nice to people and to participate in the community and whatnot. .. If the government really wants to internationalize Japan, they'd be a lot better off creating actual jobs for people to actually do in the community.

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<sup>246</sup> Metzger, *The JET Program and the US-Japan Relationship*, 71, Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Borg, “The JET Programme as a Manifestation of Kokusaika (Internationalization) in Japan,” 375, Ibid, 6.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid, 376, Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid, 377, Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid, 206-207, Ibid.

Bringing in foreigners to sing ‘The Hokey Pokey’ with children is one thing, actually encouraging the integration of foreign workers in Japan is quite another.<sup>251</sup>

Similarly, another ALT described how the lack of language abilities, among both ALTs and Japanese, is an impediment to the interaction that JET and local *kokusai koryu* (international exchange) events are trying to promote:

There's this kind of idealization of the concept of communicating 'in spite of' language barriers, and people seem to speak reverently of being able to connect and communicate without words. Well, yes it's nice, and certainly fun, for a group of Japanese with no English skills and a group of foreigners with no Japanese skills, to be able to accomplish a task together (like making soba noodles or something). But is it meaningful? I would say only in the most limited of ways. There's no exchange of ideas, no clash of values, and thus no hard work required on either side.<sup>252</sup>

Of course, these interviews are not representative of every ALT's views on the effects, or lack of effects, that JET is having on local international exchange, but it does suggest that JET's impact on local communities is surface level in many cases.

The other prevalent perception is that ALT's impact on local-level international exchange is much more noticeable outside of schools, especially in forming friendships. This is despite the fact that JET's goal of local-level international exchange is purportedly centered on exchange within the school context.<sup>253</sup> A reason for this may be the brevity and infrequency of contact some ALTs, especially “one-shot ALTs,” have with teachers and students, as they are assigned several classes, and possibly schools, during the course of their workweek. Another explanation is that international exchange is limited in the classroom due to some ALTs being marginalized by JTLs who are focused on exam preparation.<sup>254</sup> Overall, the perceptions of JTLs and ALTs present different suppositions for the impact of JET on grassroots internationalization, but the

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<sup>251</sup> Ibid, 206, Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid, Ibid, 7.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid, 378, Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid, 379, Ibid.

extent to which interaction generated by JET has changed overall perceptions and treatment of foreigners in Japanese society is difficult to measure.

With JTL and ALT's observations on international exchange at the local level being mixed, the question becomes what discernible changes have taken place during JET's operation. Borg notes that at the individual level, there have been hundreds of cases, like when an ALT marries a Japanese person, where an ALT's presence has had a profound, highly localized, impact. There are an even smaller number of cases where an ALT has gone on to make a verifiable community-wide impact, like Anthony Bianchi who was elected to the Inuyama City Council, becoming the first-ever North American to hold an elected position in Japan.<sup>255</sup> Obviously, cases like these are limited in number, not reflecting the program's average effects.

There has been some research evidence suggesting that younger Japanese are more accepting of diversity than their predecessors, but it is impossible to ascertain the role played by JET in this process.<sup>256</sup> Additionally, despite positive appraisals one theme that emerged in Borg's interviews was the view that JET had not yet managed to dispel ethnocultural stereotypes.<sup>257</sup> One JTL was particularly concerned by the enduring stereotype of the English-speaking foreigner as white saying,

For the students ... and perhaps for Japanese people in general...the image of the 'foreigner' is someone with white skin, blue eyes and blond hair...but we've had a black Canadian ALT, we've also had Japanese Hawaiian female teacher, and a Japanese-American female teacher...but because people have this image, when that happens, they seem to feel something isn't quite right...There are some people who in terms of their appearance clearly fit the Japanese image of a foreigner, and also some that do not. In that respect, I think that's a real pity that students cannot appreciate that not only those with white skin, blond hair and blue eyes speak English. I would really like the students to understand that, but it is very difficult.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid, 382, Ibid, 8.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid, 382-383, Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid, 383, Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid, 383, Ibid.

In the 90s, Herzog noted that a disproportionate number of ALTs were white middle-class, which he viewed as perpetuating the biased view of foreigners held by the Japanese.<sup>259</sup> In the early 2000s, Borg argued that while white Caucasians probably do still make up the majority of Western ALTs, there is enough evidence to rebut accusations of “white bias” in JET recruitment policy.<sup>260</sup>

Among ALTs concerning stereotypes, many were concerned with the prevalent and enduring cultural essentialist beliefs in Japanese society.<sup>261</sup> ALTs, and foreigners in general, are still often perceived as different from Japanese people, having no meaningful role in Japanese society.<sup>262</sup> It can be argued that JET has created opportunities for grassroots international exchange both in and outside of Japanese schools, possibly setting in motion larger societal change. However, one could argue the opposite that rather than helping to dispel foreign stereotypes, JET has actually exacerbated the long-standing notion of foreigners as a temporary presence on the margins of Japanese society by maintaining a constant flow of fresh, young, largely inexperienced, non-Japanese speaking individuals who are expected to return home upon completion of their contracts.<sup>263</sup> Borg speculated that perhaps it was too early to draw any firm conclusions about JET’s internationalizing impact on society at the time of his study.<sup>264</sup> Sixteen years after Borg’s study it is still hard to determine JET’s effects on internationalization at the local level.

### **Recommendations For Improving Japanese PD**

The following recommendations consider how Japanese PD can be improved overall as well as how specific PD actors could improve their individual efforts.

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid, 384, Ibid, 9.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid, Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid, Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid, 385, Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid, 386-387, Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid, 387, Ibid.

1. *Japanese PD should increase coordination of activities between the numerous PD actors.*

The current state of Japanese PD could be described as “scattered power” due to its organization and structure. Gadjeva states that Japanese PD is characterized by a lack of common policy.<sup>265</sup> Furthermore, no mechanism exists for coordinating potentially complementary activities by the numerous actors engaged in PD activities, especially between public and private actors.<sup>266</sup> Reflecting on the interview with Japan House (JH) there seems to be cooperation to some extent on PD activities between government agencies though much of JH’s cooperation hinges on the communication and personal relationships of the JH president. This suggests that coordination is done in an ad-hoc manner rather than through set channels or mechanisms.

2. *The Japanese government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) should engage in a concerted effort to be more consistent with their usage of the term PD.*

Consistency in the government’s usage of terminology is important because it signals to stakeholders and foreign counterparts what the government’s understanding and position are on PD. The numerous terms used for the same PD activities reflect the scattered nature of Japan’s PD actors and suggest that PD is not as institutionalized in Japan as it may be in other countries. It may also be confusing to those less familiar with PD and Japan’s idiosyncrasies, leading to confusion about what Japan’s PD involves. Additionally, if the government were to be more consistent in its usage of the term PD it would help organizations outside the diplomatic circle and the public to have a greater awareness and understanding of PD as a concept, which is lacking.

3. *Understanding PD as a term and the actual activities it involves must be expanded beyond the elite circles.*

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<sup>265</sup> Nadejda Gadjeva, *Japanese Public Diplomacy in European Countries: the Japan Foundation in Bulgaria and France* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 22.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

As mentioned in the discussion of the Japanese conceptualization of PD, the term is limited to the elites—politicians, PD practitioners, and academics. PD is not readily understood among the Japanese public, thus it operates without much of a public constituency.<sup>267</sup> To address this the Japanese government and PD actors could take several actions. One option is to create an initiative similar to the U.S. Department of State’s Hometown Diplomat program where Civil and Foreign Service employees explain their work and how it impacts domestic communities to audiences across the country.<sup>268</sup> A program where Japanese PD practitioners and diplomats engage directly with the Japanese public would create opportunities for the public to gain an understanding of what PD is, how Japan is engaging in PD around the globe, and what the domestic impacts are. Another option is to associate Japan’s PD with stars from sports, music, TV, movies, and creative arts, like Shohei Otani, Yuzuru Hanyu, Haruki Murakami, Hayao Miyazaki, Naomi Osaka, and Hikaru Utada to name a few.

4. *Japanese scholarship on PD should be made more accessible to English-speaking audiences so that scholars can have a more global discussion.*

While some Japanese scholars like Yoshihide Soeya, Yasushi Watanabe, Akiko Fukushima, Tadashi Ogawa, and Hiroataka Watanabe have articles or book chapters discussing Japanese PD published in English, there are (to the author’s knowledge) no English translations of more comprehensive works on Japanese PD like that of Masafumi Kaneko. Translating longer works like Kaneko’s books would allow English-speaking scholars to gain a more complete and nuanced understanding of Japanese PD rather than having to piece together numerous shorter sources, reaching a potentially incomplete understanding of Japanese PD. Making these longer works more accessible would also increase the number of participants in the discussions,

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<sup>267</sup> Snow, “Japan’s Challenges in Public Diplomacy, An American Vision,” 18.

<sup>268</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Hometown Diplomats: Connecting with America,” March 17, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/hometown-diplomats-connecting-with-america/>



allowing for more ideas to be exchanged which could lead to improvements in both the PD efforts of Japan and other countries. Getting works translated internationally is complicated and would require initiative on multiple fronts. U.S. academia and centers like the USC Center on Public Diplomacy could encourage U.S. publishers to buy translation rights. JH and JF could also encourage Japanese academics to pursue translating their work or could help raise awareness of the existence of untranslated scholarship in their global networks. If more people show a demand for translations of this scholarship, it is more likely that it will happen.

5. *Japanese PD should adopt a strategy that goes beyond “Cool Japan” and heavy reliance on the promotion of soft power.*

Since the end of WWII, Japan’s PD efforts have relied heavily on promoting Japanese culture and soft power, which suits its constitutional limitations, and it has been successful in many regards. However, the global situation and Japan’s international role have continued to change. Under Abe, Japan adopted a new interpretation of Article 9 allowing the country to use its right of collective self-defense.<sup>269</sup> Since then, there has continued to be a shift in the Japanese government’s stance on defense with the new National Security Strategy released in December 2022, a historically significant increase to the defense budget, and a NATO partnership upgrade.<sup>270</sup> In short, the pacifist, soft power superpower image that Japan has been promoting for the past 75 years is becoming increasingly incongruous with Japan’s reality. Additionally, relying on the promotion of culture is not going to win adherents to Japan’s role in the world.<sup>271</sup> Just because someone likes Pokémon or enjoys eating sushi does not mean that they will support Japan’s foreign policies, especially ones that may be controversial to neighboring countries who

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<sup>269</sup> Snow, “Japan’s Challenges in Public Diplomacy, An American Vision,” 11.

<sup>270</sup> Adam P. Liff and Jeffery W. Hornung, “Japan’s new security policies: A long road to full implementation,” *Brookings*, March 27, 2023, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/japans-new-security-policies-a-long-road-to-full-implementation/>

<sup>271</sup> Snow, “Japan’s Challenges in Public Diplomacy, An American Vision,” 19.

have become accustomed to a pacifist Japan. While the Japan Foundation (JF) and JH can and should continue to conduct PD activities that highlight Japan's soft power, MOFA should adopt a PD strategy that integrates strategic communications into its ongoing activities. To begin moving in this direction MOFA could form an independent task force that could engage with the Self Defense Force (SDF), which currently runs strategic communications, on ways in which PD and strategic communications could become more aligned, and eventually integrated.

6. *To improve Japanese PD's narrative/messaging it needs to diversify and train the next generation of Japanese spokespeople to take on the challenges of narrative competition among great powers.*

During the Abe Era, Japanese PD relied on his personal brand to boost the national brand. However, tying a nation's brand to a political leader's personal brand is not wise as the national image will fall when the political leader does.<sup>272</sup> Even before Abe's assassination experts had long called for a voice beyond Abe, citing concerns about the short-termism of Japanese leadership and nationalistic tendencies, as well as the need for the diversification of actors in nation branding.<sup>273</sup> Japan does have some talented bilingual spokespeople including Tomohiko Taniguchi, a journalist, speechwriter, and professor, and Noriyuki Shikata who served a stint as media spokesman for the government right after 3/11, but there is still a need for new voices.<sup>274</sup> If Japan does not find and or train skilled spokespeople to tell its story, there will be a vacuum that others in the region, mainly China and Russia, will fill with their narratives.<sup>275</sup> One option for addressing this challenge is partnering with influencers from various media outlets to bring in new spokespeople.

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<sup>272</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>273</sup> Stanislaus, "Japan House: Tokyo's New Public Diplomacy Push."

<sup>274</sup> Snow, "Japan's Challenges in Public Diplomacy, An American Vision," 16.

<sup>275</sup> Snow, "A Reliable Friend and Strategic Partner in the Indo-Pacific Region," 18.

7. *To strengthen PD overall Japan should address its lack of public relations, marketing, and communications foundation in higher education institutions and should introduce PD-specific training into MOFA's Foreign Service Institute.*

Snow laments the low level of media literacy in Japan's government and higher education institutions. According to Snow, most Japanese universities do not have public relations and communications as major areas of study and only offer some courses on these subjects. Thus, when MOFA employees are assigned to public relations rotations many flounder because of their lack of background.<sup>276</sup> The low levels of media literacy could partially be addressed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)'s Higher Education Bureau. One possibility is incentivizing universities to create public relations and communications departments. Improving access to areas of study relevant to PD would certainly improve Japanese media literacy overall, but PD education should also be addressed within MOFA. Upon entering MOFA, diplomats undergo two years of initial training that covers basic administrative duties, foreign languages, and the basic operations of their assigned bureau.<sup>277</sup> In the third year, they spend two more months in intensive language training and overseas assignments like foreign aid management. Following this they depart for two to three years of study abroad in their designated countries.<sup>278</sup> Notably, Minami makes no mention of PD-specific training in diplomats' initial training. Furthermore, mid-career training opportunities are limited, with a preference by MOFA for on-the-job training.<sup>279</sup> Minami states that MOFA has plans to bolster training for new hires in the areas of international law, diplomatic history, and relations with neighboring countries.<sup>280</sup> While these are good additions, PD-specific training on a

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<sup>276</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>277</sup> Kazushi Minami, "Japan," in *Modern Diplomacy in Practice*, ed. Robert Hutchings and Jeremi Suri (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 111.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid, 112.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid, 113.

range of topics including media literacy, disinformation, social media, and measurement and evaluation should be added to training for new hires. Additionally, PD training should be offered at the mid-career level as well so that those already serving at posts can learn new skills and better adapt to the constantly changing PD environment.

8. *JH should expand beyond its current three hubs.*

JH currently operates in three locations: Los Angeles, London, and Sao Paulo. All these cities already had ties to Japan and JF locations, which conduct similar PD activities to JH. If JH is serious about engaging with those who are not familiar with Japan it should consider expanding operations and select locations more strategically. At this point it is unlikely that JH would move any of the existing hubs to different cities in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Brazil, however, it would make sense to expand to different countries, preferably to those where relations with Japan have greater potential for improvement. Also, it should be in cities that do not already have a JF. To select new locations MOFA could utilize its annual opinion poll data on Japan to identify countries that have the most potential for improvement, decide which are the most strategically important, identify cities with large populations that do not have a JF already, and move forward from there considering other aspects like Japanese diaspora and prevalence of Japanese culture and exports.

9. *JH should be careful to appeal to a diverse audience, not just upper-class, elite audiences.*

Some scholars, mainly Stanislaus, have argued that, while JH says it is trying to appeal to as wide an audience as possible, it is targeting a more elite audience. Whether that is due to its programming and pricing as Stanislaus stipulates or due to its choice of geographical location as Cull believes, JH has room for improvement in targeting audiences. In the era of new PD

countries that can master networking from the center will be most successful at PD.<sup>281</sup> JH certainly has the potential to appeal to a wide range of audiences, building a network of diverse stakeholders. It needs to be conscious of how who it thinks it is targeting may differ from what its activities end up targeting, or how its targeting is perceived by onlookers. Stanislaus believes that JH should focus less on communicating Japan's cultural leadership credentials to an exclusive audience and do more to empower and appeal to diverse audiences. Otherwise, the JH initiative risks becoming an "anachronistic appeal to yesteryear."<sup>282</sup> JH's targeting could be improved through the previous recommendation to expand beyond cities that already have strong ties to Japan and are predominantly elite audiences. It could also take steps like making its restaurants' pricing more affordable or having alternative Gastrodiplomacy events that are not fine dining.

*10. Japanese PD actors and academics should join the discussion of measurement and evaluation in PD that is ongoing in the United States and Europe.*

With the shift to new PD in the early to mid-2000s, research has been conducted on PD evaluation practices in several countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, and Sweden. Buhmann and Sommerfeldt's recent study exploring drivers and barriers in U.S. PD evaluation practices has been particularly insightful. However, it cannot be applied universally as each country operates its PD in different manners and with different sets of actors. Currently, (to the author's knowledge) there is no English or Japanese scholarship on Japanese PD evaluation practices. Thus, Japanese academics and PD practitioners should help address this gap in scholarship. Based on the interview with a JH employee, Japanese PD practitioners are struggling with some of the same issues that U.S. PD practitioners are. If Japan's PD community

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<sup>281</sup> Stanislaus, "Japan is Using Cultural Diplomacy to Reassert its Place in the World."

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

joined in on the measurement and evaluation conversation there could be mutual benefits for PD practitioners. One way to start this would be for the USC Center of Public Diplomacy to engage with JH on measurement and evaluation. Many of the experts on measurement and evaluation in PD, including Robert Banks, James Pamment, Alexander Buhmann, and Eric Sommerfeldt are associated with the center and there are established personal ties between the two organizations that could serve as a foundation for engagement. Once there was some momentum additional Japanese PD actors could be drawn into the conversation through JH's connections.

*11. JH, and other PD actors like JF and MOFA, should make a conscious shift to focus less on outputs in their annual reports.*

As mentioned in the section on JH's measurement and evaluation practices, JH produces annual activity reports that rely heavily on the number of attendees and descriptions of the events held. This exemplifies how PD practitioners often rely on reporting outputs rather than on outcomes. JH is not alone in this type of annual report. JF and MOFA also create similar annual reports that detail outputs. For example, the 2021-2022 JF annual report details its activities, and then in a section titled "data" it provides summaries of each department listing outputs like the number of programs conducted and how many people participated in each program.<sup>283</sup> While these organizations may be gathering data that identifies outcomes, they are not representing the outcomes and the data to support them in their annual reports. Furthermore, this is not a problem unique to Japanese PD, while measuring outcomes is widely considered the ideal for PD evaluation there is little established methodology for how organizations should measure and report outcomes. Because outcomes are often not measurable in a short time frame, incorporating them into every annual report may be impossible, but data from multiple years of surveys,

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<sup>283</sup> The Japan Foundation, "Annual Report 2021-2022," accessed March 6, 2024, <https://www.jpf.go.jp/e/about/result/ar/2021/pdf/dl/ar2021e.pdf>

anecdotes, and polling that shows how PD efforts are impacting substantive change could be incorporated into reports on a basis of every five years, or another interval that makes sense for the organization.

*12. JH should create a centralized database for its data collection and storage.*

The need for a centralized database was recognized by the JH employee interviewed, as something that she thought would help improve JH's data collection, compilation, and storage, ultimately improving JH's evaluation practices. The idea of using centralized databases and tools in PD evaluation is nothing new. In Pamment's 2011 study, he noted that the Swedish Institute uses a follow-up and evaluation system called StratSI and the U.S. Department of State uses the Public Diplomacy (PDI) project, a series of opinion surveys and the Mission Activity Tracker (MAT), an online database for posts to record all their PD activities and link them to any observed results over the longer term.<sup>284</sup> This is not to say that these are perfect databases or that they magically improve PD evaluation. Buhmann and Sommerfeldt found that systems like MAT are used irregularly and misunderstood by many, suggesting that even if a database is designed to be a useful tool it is only as good as what practitioners do with the database.<sup>285</sup> JH is a much smaller organization than the U.S. Department of State so it would be much easier for it to ensure that if a database were created it would be used across the board and that practitioners were trained on how to use it to further evaluation practices.

*13. To improve Nippon Hoso Kyokai's (NHK) international reputation and PD mission, the Broadcasting Act needs to be amended to protect journalism from political interference.*

Addressing government interference is a complicated issue but would ultimately improve the organization's international reputation thereby improving its ability to act as part of Japan's

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<sup>284</sup> Pamment, "What Became of the New Public Diplomacy?," 324, 330.

<sup>285</sup> Buhmann and Sommerfeldt, "Pathways for the Future of Evaluation in Public Diplomacy," 26.

PD actors. The Broadcasting Act supposedly provides for independence from government interference, but the regulatory oversight comes from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, which can suspend the operations of any broadcaster that violates the Broadcast Act. Article 4 of the act allows for the government to weigh in on what qualifies as fair or good morals in broadcasts, which is problematic. For NHK to truly be independent from government interference the Broadcasting Act needs to be changed.<sup>286</sup> Changing how NHK's boards are selected would also decrease government influence, but this would also require amending the Broadcasting Act. For changes to be made to the Broadcasting Act, pressure must be put on the LDP. This pressure should come from the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan and groups or individuals in the domestic broadcasting community like the Japan Commercial Broadcasters Association or Kuniya Hiroko whose resignation from NHK was surrounded by reports of government interference after she asked probing questions in an interview with LDP representative Suga Yoshide.<sup>287</sup> External pressure should also be placed on Japan, similarly to the UN (United Nations) Special Rapporteur by David Kaye in 2017.<sup>288</sup> Pressuring the Japanese government into amending the Broadcasting Act would be a complicated process, that ultimately would need to start with a grassroots movement from within Japan's broadcasting community. The broadcasting community could begin by targeting the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication (MIC), as it has played a significant role in previous revisions to the Broadcasting Act.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Snow, "NHK, Abe and the World," 20-21.

<sup>287</sup> Laurence, *The Politics of Public Broadcasting in Britain and Japan*, 198-199.

<sup>288</sup> UN Human Rights Council Secretariat, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression on his mission to Japan," accessed April 16, 2024, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1298719?ln=en&v=pdf>

<sup>289</sup> "How Expert Panels Functioned in the Amendments of Broadcasting Act," NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, accessed April 25, 2024, [https://www.nhk.or.jp/bunken/english/research/history/20180130\\_3.html](https://www.nhk.or.jp/bunken/english/research/history/20180130_3.html)



*14. NHK should shift more of its focus to improving its international services and understanding of its global audiences.*

As previously established, NHK is doing a better job as a domestic broadcaster than an international one. Developing its international services could be done in several ways. First, NHK could simply increase its efforts on NHK World-Japan, especially in online media where it has lagged behind other international broadcasters. A second method could be changing the content of existing programming to focus less on promoting Japanese culture and more on what global audiences are interested in consuming. Snow agrees with this method as she believes NHK could be doing a better job of listening to its target audiences rather than just pushing its own narrative repeatedly.<sup>290</sup> NHK could start improving its listening by conducting more surveys, polling of overseas audiences, and using technology to monitor blogs and social media. For example, there is a Reddit thread, r/NHKWorldFans, where people are discussing their opinions of NHK programming.

*15. NHK, the Japanese public, and the Japanese government need to develop a fundamental understanding of NHK's role in PD.*

Currently, the NHK, the Japanese government, and the Japanese public lack an understanding of NHK's role in PD, which is an issue as broadcasting is one of the five main areas of PD as outlined by Cull. First, NHK needs to realize that it is one of Japan's major PD actors, integrating this understanding into the organization's culture. Second, the Japanese government needs to recognize that the NHK is a major PD actor, that is being underutilized, is being undermined by governmental interference, and needs to be integrated with Japan's other PD actors at least through informal ties. Third, the general public's understanding of NHK needs to be shifted from just being seen as the country's dominant, domestic broadcaster to being

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<sup>290</sup> Snow, "A Reliable Friend and Strategic Partner in the Indo-Pacific Region," 8-9.

viewed as part of PD and related to foreign policy. Changing the public's understanding is contingent on NHK and the government first making the change in basic assumptions. A first step in this change in basic assumptions would be ensuring that broadcasting is presented as part of PD in public relations, marketing, and communications education at universities and MOFA's Foreign Service Institute. Educators could utilize Cull's writings on the fundamentals of PD as a starting point.

*16. The Japanese government should create a mechanism for utilizing JET alumni in PD efforts.*

As noted previously, the Japanese government has not kept comprehensive records of JET participants, which means there is lost potential for working with alumni to further PD efforts. If MOFA had a mechanism that allowed them to better keep track of alumni, especially those who enter fields outside of international relations after returning to their home country, there would be far more potential for partnering with alumni on PD efforts. Metzger argues that USJETTA, JET's U.S.-based alumni association, would be a valuable resource for the Japanese government in this regard as it could help connect its members with the government or supplement the government's paltry records with its own.<sup>291</sup> Alternatively, MOFA could also create its own alumni monitoring framework, referencing other countries' practices. One example MOFA could reference is the MODE Framework employed by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and its implementing partners to monitor exchange program alumni, which follows up with alumni surveys at the key milestones of one, three, five, and ten years after program completion.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Metzgar, *The JET Program and the US-Japan Relationship*, 112.

<sup>292</sup> "MODE Framework," Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, accessed April 16, 2024, <https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-monitoring-evaluation-learning-and-innovation-meli-unit/monitoring/mode>

*17. MIC and the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR) should clarify the desired effects of JET on Japanese society.*

In the new PD era where two-directional exchanges of information are preferred to one-directional messaging, programs like JET exemplify how ideas of internationalization can be intertwined with government policies. The extent of JET's internationalizing effects on Japanese society and what specifically the Japanese government expects remains unclear. Determining the extent of internationalization with concrete data would be a monumental task. To begin to better understand how JET is impacting Japanese society, goals need to be clarified. In addition to clarifying their goals, MIC and CLAIR should examine the local contracting organizations that serve as the home bases for program participants to gain data and a better understanding of how JET participants' presence in Japanese communities is, or is not, promoting internationalization at a local level.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Japanese PD, like any country's PD, has both strengths and weaknesses. The above recommendations highlight areas where changes in activities or perspectives could strengthen Japanese PD. Some points will be easier than others for PD actors, the government, and Japanese society to address. On some of the more complicated issues, like the lack of fundamental understanding of NHK as a PD actor, even developing an awareness that it is an issue would be a step in the right direction. Soft power is undoubtedly an asset for Japanese PD, however, PD actors should seriously consider the limits of soft power, changing global dynamics, Japan's evolving international role, its shifting policies on hard power, and the value of displaying and potentially using the tools of hard power. In the words of Cull, "...the time has

come for all countries to understand that image is not just what you say and advertise but what you do in reality...<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> Email correspondence with Nicholas Cull, April 12, 2024.

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