

## Final Project Milestone IV:

Japan's Use of Power Throughout History

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### ***Milestone I: Country Selection, Outline, Abstract***

#### **Country Selection**

For this project, a thorough examination and analysis of the use of Hard and Soft power in the nation of Japan will be conducted. The selection of this country is underpinned by the careful consideration and the academic interest of Japan, due to Japan's renowned culture and unique historical significance, with regards to not only the United States (U.S.) but also how dramatically Japan changed their Hard and Soft power strategy before and after World War II. Japan's intricate historical relationship with the United States politically, characterized by an unprovoked attack directly on United States soil and through this war to becoming a close ally with both close economic and military ties, presents a compelling and fascinating case for academic exploration. This choice is driven by a genuine curiosity to delve deeper into the historical cultural aspects and the modern intricacies of a nation that has such a fascinating use of the Hard and Soft power changes, from world military domination to political and economic neutralism.

#### **Outline**

##### **Milestone 1: Country Selection, Abstract, & Outline**

###### *Country Selection*

1. Japan
2. Rationale for choosing Japan.

###### *Abstract*

- 1) A brief overview of what the paper aims to learn.

###### *Outline*

- 2) Give a breakdown of the structure of the project.

## **Milestone 2: Literature Review, Supporting Tables/Charts, and Introduction**

### *Introduction*

- 1) Brief History of Japan
- 2) Purpose of the assignment

### *Literature Review*

- 1) Analysis of existing literature on Japan's use of hard and soft power
- 2) Identifying research gaps and available sources

### *Supporting Tables/Charts*

- 1) Identify supporting charts or tables to showcase power use by Japan.

## **Milestone 3: Conflict Analysis and Resolution**

### *Conflict Analysis*

- 1) Historical conflicts and outcomes:
  - a) Disputes with Russia over Kuril Islands.
  - b) Role in WWI & WWII
  - c) Locate other major power conflicts.
- 2) Current conflicts:
  - a) Territorial disputes, trade issues, etc.

### *Resolution*

- 1) Japan's approach to conflict resolution.
  - a) Identification of possible improvements
  - b) Identification of possible vulnerabilities

**Milestone 4: Final Paper***International Relations*

- 1) Evolution of both Hard and Soft Power in Japan
  - a) Ancient and feudal Japan.
  - b) Transition from Edo to Meiji Restoration.
  - c) Post-World War II reconstruction and the American influence
  - d) Rise as an economic and World power.
- 2) Type and Use of Power by Japan
  - a) Political power:
  - b) Economic power: Japan's economy, its strengths, and global influence.
  - c) Military power: Japan Self-Defense Forces, neutralism, and recent changes.
  - d) Soft power: Culture, technology, and international relations.
- 3) Influence of Power on International Relations
  - a) Japan-U.S. relations: Security and economic ties.
  - b) Relations with neighboring countries: China, South Korea, and Russia.
  - c) Japan's role in international organizations: United Nations, NATO, etc.
  - d) Diplomatic strategies:
- 4) Potential Future Path
  - a) Economic Outlook
  - b) Military Stance

*Conclusion*

- 1) Recap of Japan's power journey
- 2) Reflection on what was discovered about the uses of power by Japan.

## Milestone 5: Share Your Research

### *Research*

- 1) Upload the project to my online portfolio.
- 2) Share research findings with peers and my class.

### **Abstract**

Japan, a nation with a history dating back thousands of years, has seen considerable shifts in its use of Hard and Soft power over time. From its ancient feudal system to becoming an economic giant in the latter half of the 20th century, from its ancient isolationist mentality to a temporary world domination ideal, to its modern-day neutralism, Japan's use of both Hard and Soft power has gone through many changes. In addition to these changes, Japan's approach to the use of power has significantly influenced its international relations in many ways throughout history. This research aims to trace and analyze the evolution, type, and use of power by Japan, especially its international decision-making. Through an exploration of Japan's political, and economic soft powers, military hard power, and many other types, this study seeks to delve into how Japan navigates its role on the global stage. The study will focus particularly on its relationships with major powers like the United States, and neighboring countries and how these relationships have changed over time. Additionally, potential trajectories for Japan's future, along with its approach to conflict resolution, will be examined, shedding light on how Japan might further influence global geopolitics for years to come.

### ***Milestone II: Introduction, Literature Review, Supporting Tables/Charts***

### **Introduction**

Japan is a nation full of intrigue that spans centuries. Delving into this vast history, to seek out evidence of Japan's use of power is the goal of this paper. Embarking on a journey

through this fascinating history to the heart of Japan's modern international power dynamics was both difficult and rewarding. This study is poised to unravel the intricate tapestry of Japan's strategic deployment of Hard and Soft power. To contextualize it within the broader narrative of international relations and geopolitical shifts. The selection of Japan as the subject of this rigorous analysis is rooted in its profound cultural heritage and pivotal historical turning points, particularly in relation to its complex interactions with the United States and its astounding post-World War II (WWII) metamorphosis and complete transformation from the world-dominating power to the neutral nation it is today. In fact, "scholars have noted the importance of examining how countries navigate between hard and soft power" as in the article written by Hagström and Pan in 2020. However, the purpose of this project transcends a mere historical recount; instead, it aims to dissect the nuanced layers of Japan's power strategies while examining the country's evolution from a feudal island nation that harbored isolationist tendencies to its rise as a pacifist economically mighty global player.

## **Literature Review**

The literature on Japan's use of Hard and Soft power is as diverse as it is extensive, with scholarly debates often intertwining historical analysis with current geopolitical strategies. Central to understanding Japan's maneuvering between these powers is the recognition of its unique socio-historical context—a context marked by seismic shifts from feudal closure to global integration, from militaristic aggression to constitutional pacifism. With these facts in mind, a review of the current literature was conducted to identify what current research discusses, and what holes exist in the research.

The first article reviewed was titled *Traversing The Soft/Hard Power Binary: The Case Of The Sino-Japanese Territorial Dispute*. This article showed research on Japan's hard and soft

power, and it has examined its evolution over time. This article shows how the authors Hagström and Pan (2020) trace Japan's shifts from feudal isolationism to modern neutralism and analyze how it strategically utilized different powers. It is also interesting to note how Hagström and Pan (2020) challenge the dichotomization of hard and soft power, showing how they are intertwined in practice through case studies like the Sino-Japanese territorial dispute. They demonstrate how representational force legitimizes physical force and therefore a combination of hard and soft power is typically used. The article also critiques the dominant view in the literature that soft power and hard power are empirically and normatively dichotomous opposites. It further argues that the soft/hard power binary is discursively constructed and plays a performative role in constructing identities of Self vs Other. The idea of self is associated with 'Soft Power', which is the use of attraction as stated in the article "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments". The ideology of 'Other' is associated with 'Hard Power', which is the use of coercion and force. Actors use the binary to get audiences to empathize with the Self and against the Other, which is an interesting notion. The article then concludes that the soft/hard power binary is not empirically or normatively dichotomous as commonly viewed. Instead, it states that soft power actors also exercise disciplinary power physically, and the apparent juxtaposition of soft and hard power in Northeast Asia can be explained by how identities are constructed through this binary interaction and the ideas of soft/hard power and self/other are empirically intertwined and not the separate binary dichotomy that is believed.

The next article, titled *The Image of Japanese Soft Power*, defines soft power as the "power of influence by cultural tools regardless of the ability of arms and ammunition" (Bhuiyan, 2020), with the Japanese version "is bearing the image of the countries development and for spreading a country-brand image through language, culture, attitudes, social exchanges,

etc." (Bhuiyan, 2020) The article discusses how soft power comes from a country's culture, political values, and foreign policies. Bhuiyan's (2020) study adds to research on Japanese cultural diplomacy by providing a qualitative analysis of specific soft power tools. Then it concludes that Japan has been quite successful in utilizing soft power tools like culture, values, and foreign policies to shape a favorable perception and influence other countries. Japan has done this successfully even as its military and economic power declined relatively compared to countries like the US and China. Bhuiyan concludes that soft power has helped advance Japan's national interests and image globally in a non-coercive way (Bhuiyan, 2020).

The next article utilized is titled *The Global Success Story Of Japan's Soft Power: Debating 'Cool Japan' As A Model For Turkish Soft Power Protection*. This article examines the soft power of Japan and argues that Japan's soft power success story offers valuable lessons for Turkey to improve its own soft power strategy. Joseph Nye's concept of soft power and how culture, political ideals, and foreign policy can contribute to a country's soft power is discussed and analyzed rather well. However, there are some limitations and critiques of the soft power concept that are acknowledged. The article does a good job in providing an overview of the literature on Japan's soft power, which focuses on aspects like cultural attractiveness, cultural diplomacy, economic strength, and humanitarian initiatives. Japan is among the top 5 in the use of Soft Power, because of their idea that "soft power is not just a natural outcome of a country's vast hard power reserves... but is a phenomenon that could be "designed" – to a large extent – by a government" (Huseynova, 2023). Also, "Japan's various successful policies such as the "Cool Japan" program and Tokyo's systematic cultural and economic diplomacy" have made Japan very successful in its use of soft power (Huseynova, 2023). Their culture, technology, music,

animation, Mangas, and other forms of entertainment have influenced countries and cultures around the world.

This article compares Japan's and Turkey's soft power visions and strategies and determines that Turkey should rethink its soft power strategy and learn valuable lessons from Japan's long-term planning like the Cool Japan program to better promote Turkey's culture, values and technological strengths to enhance its international image and soft power (Huseynova, 2023). Japan has become a valuable template by which Turkey can model their use of soft power.

The next article that will be discussed is titled *We Must Protect This Peace with Our Hands*. This title implies a mindset that Japan is struggling to reach given the historical and cultural ideology that they have relied upon since WWII. "Japan's Self-Defense Force (JSDF) has never engaged in combat operations or been used in coercive dispute settlement(s) abroad" (Brumme, 2022). Japan has taken a stance of non-aggression when it has come to any type of military actions. This is a direct response to what happened after their attack on Pearl Harbor, which they saw as a major blunder that brought more pain and sorrow to their own people than they realized was possible. However, because of the threats around the globe and in their own backyard, Japan developed the "Japanese Ministry of Defense (MOD)" and they published a Manga from 2006-2019 to help people to better understand how Japan's MOD portrays Japan's use of military force. During this period of time, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe began to focus more on Japan becoming more proactive in their own defense and the need for them to come to the aid and defense of their allies, like the United States. They have partially been using the very popular Manga entertainment from Japan to communicate this need and the analysis of Manga from 2012-2017 has found high similarities. In these Manga, the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (JSDF)

are seen as a protective, defensive, reliable, professional, and benign organization that contributes to Japan's, regional, and global security and peace.

The use of manga is a very good method to instill norms of willingness to defend Japan and the love of the country in Japan's youth, as well as a resilience in the face of threats (Brumme, 2022). The threat environment that Japan faces is depicted as increasingly diverse, complex, and hostile, although specific adversaries are rarely characterized, which develops the need to face threats without instilling hatred towards a particular adversary. The goal that this article focuses on is Japan's MOD's use of manga to align their national culture and their strategic culture into an acceptable use of scenarios requiring force that will stop not just threats to Japan but also stop threats against allies like the US (Brumme, 2022). There is also a subtle view that the JSDF must be used as well to defend Japan against growing threats. Japan is realizing that it needs to expand its role in international security and in close cooperation with the US.

Toshi Yoshihara's article titled *Japanese Hard Power: Rising to the Challenge* covers the same problem that the previous article covered but focuses on a more direct stance by the Abe government than using manga to achieve their goal of becoming more active in their own defense. This article focuses on the direct actions of the government. "The Abe government has begun to shake off these self-imposed restrictions-a turn for which many in the United States had been hoping for some time" (Yoshihara, 2014). Japan under the leadership of Shinzo Abe is working "to play a larger role on the world stage and address the security problems posed by a rising China" (Yoshihara, 2014) and "to move its defense force from a posture of passive deterrence to one that is agile and forward-leaning." (Yoshihara, 2014).

Shinzo Abe has enacted several policies and agencies that will help Japan achieve its goals. “In December 2013, Japan announced the formation of a National Security Council (NSC) modeled after that of the United States.” (Yoshihara, 2014). He then established three major policies The National Security Strategy (NSS), the Fifth National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG), and The Medium-Term Defense Program (MTDP). These three policies deal with “national security” ...” securing the nation’s regional and global security objectives”, “establishes Japan’s longer-term defense policy and force structure”, and a “programmatic statement of defense requirements and acquisition plans over a five-year period” (Yoshihara, 2014).

Yoshihara also covers the problems that Japan faces, like the growing threat from China economically as well as their neighborhood security environment, which has deteriorated due to China’s disputes with nearby islands. There are also other threats from other surrounding countries like North Korea’s unpredictability. The rising threat from China, which has a massive financial base has forced Japan to face their own budgetary restraints. Japan’s shrinking and aging population (Stewart, 2007) along with their budgetary restraints has caused them to face major problems in their normalization efforts (Yoshihara, 2014). Yoshihara does well to point out that only with sound strategy and meaningful progress in developing Japan’s hard power capabilities with help can Japan hope to navigate regional uncertainties and stay competitive against China’s rising military challenge in the long term. Their sustained political will and investments are needed for Japan to rise to this challenge.

An interview by Eleanor Albert with Michael Auslin, an expert at the American Enterprise Institute titled *Japan’s Hard Power Play* is the next article in this review. As discussed in previous articles, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan wants to modernize and normalize

Japan's military capabilities. However, in order for Prime Minister Abe to accomplish this he first must revise or repeal the ban on collective self-defense (Albert & Auslin, 2015). The interview starts with the mentioning of an event in which ISIS kidnapped and executed two Japanese citizens. Part of Japan wants to make ISIS pay for their actions while many others say that the killing of two Japanese citizens is a response to Abe sending 200 million in aid to countries fighting ISIS. They want to keep Japan's stance against using military defense against adversaries and aid allies (Albert & Auslin, 2015). This interview covers the problems that Prime Minister Abe is facing in order to strengthen Japan's security policies and military. If Abe is successful, his actions will face significant opposition domestically along with countries like China and South Korea responding negatively. The United States generally supports a stronger Japan that can handle more of its own defense and be a more capable security partner, but there are some in the U.S. government that have concerns. In the interview it is clear that the US-Japan alliance involves a delicate balancing of policy goals of cooperation and the political realities between the two governments (Albert & Auslin, 2015). The main conclusion is that while Abe is pursuing a stronger military role for Japan, he faces domestic opposition and regional blowback. Strengthening the alliance with the US also requires delicate political navigation given some ideological differences. So overall, Japan has a long road ahead in modernizing its security posture.

Columbia University's educational article titled *Japan's Quest for Power and World War II in Asia* is the last article and it deals primarily with the history of Japan before and up to their defeat in WWII. CU first points out that Japan's expansion in East Asia in the 1930s and before was because of their lack of resources that they had on the Japanese Islands. Therefore, Japan sought to secure raw materials including oil, gas, rubber, and other materials that they needed for

their expansion efforts and economic market needs after emerging from their own depression. However, their domestic politics, ideology, and racism even towards other Asian countries also played major roles. The Japanese military increasingly dominated the government from the 1930s onward, because of their previous victories. The military promoted the religious belief that the Emperor was a divine figure in order to unite Japan behind expanding their control in Asia. CU goes on to explain that Japan's previous battles and their invasion of Manchuria in 1931 caused China to take notice and started a war with them in 1937 (CU, 2023). Japan then took over French Indochina in 1940 and started the "southern strategy" of attacking European colonies for their needed resources. Japan's continued victories and the belief that the Emperor was divine led the Japanese people to believe that they were 'invincible' (CU, 2023). This belief emboldened them into attacking Pearl Harbor in 1941 hoping to destroy the US Pacific fleet and allow it to consolidate control of East Asia. However, this was a miscalculation as it underestimated American resolve and willingness to fight. This led to their being cut off from resources and their ultimate defeat in WWII (CU, 2023). Their ideology of racial superiority and invincibility proved false. In the end, Japan underwent a thorough political, economic, and social transformation under Allied occupation and established a democratic system and economic power.

### Supporting Tables/Charts

TABLE 1  
NDPG COMPARISON: PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT

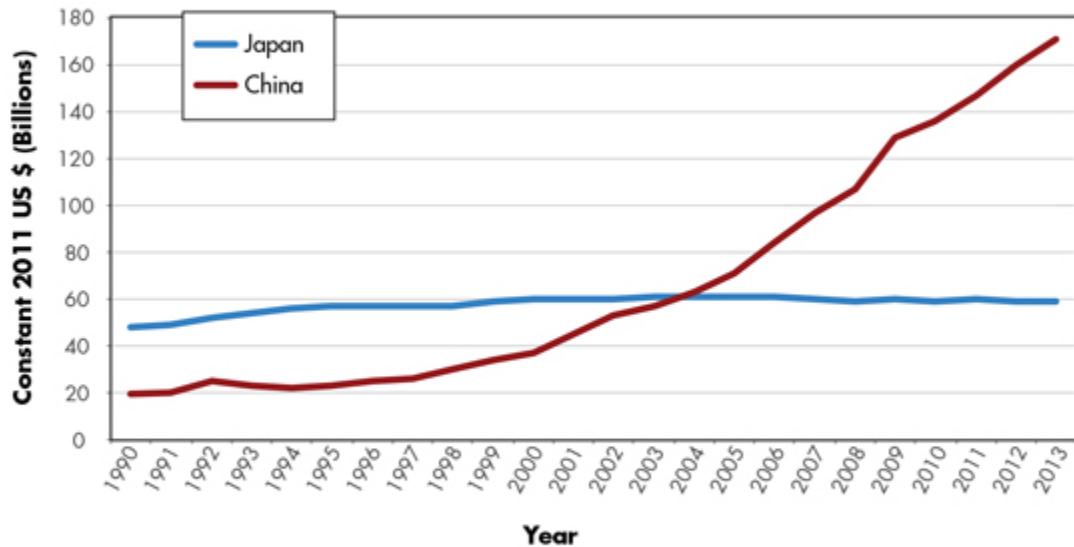
	1995 NDPG	2013 NDPG	Future
<b>SDF</b>			
Active-Duty Personnel	145,000	151000*	151,000
<b>GSDF</b>			
Tanks	900*	700*	300*
Artillery	900*	600*	300*
<b>MSDF</b>			
Destroyers	50*	47	54
(Aegis-equipped destroyers)	—	6	8
Combat aircraft	170*	170*	170*
Submarines	16	16	22
<b>ASDF</b>			
Combat aircraft	400*	340*	360*

Source: Japanese Ministry of Defense, “Defense of Japan 2014,” figures II-4-3-2 and II-4-3-3, [www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w\\_paper/pdf/2014/DOJ2014\\_Figure\\_1st\\_0730.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2014/DOJ2014_Figure_1st_0730.pdf).

Notes: An asterisk denotes approximate figures. The “Future” column derives from the 2013 NDPG’s discussion of a future defense posture that will probably be achieved within a 10-year period.

(Yoshihara, 2014)

FIGURE 1  
JAPANESE VERSUS CHINESE DEFENSE EXPENDITURES



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, [www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex\\_database/milex\\_database](http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database/milex_database).

Note: The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's total military expenditures for China are estimates.

(Yoshihara, 2014)

Table 1. Summary of Nye's Approach to Power

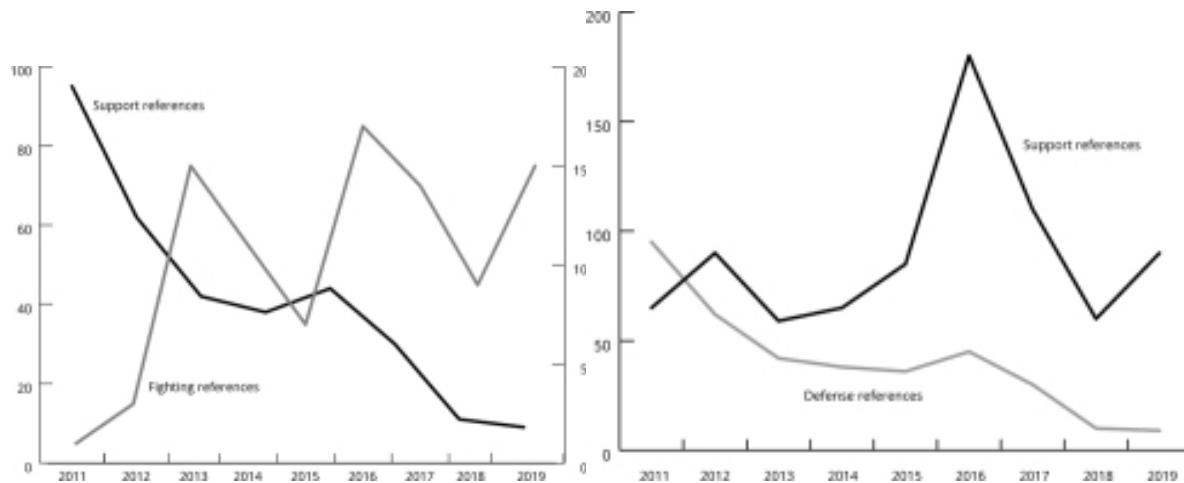
Type of Power	HARD POWER (or direct/command)				SOFT POWER (or indirect/coopt)		
	Command	Military power	Economic power		Attraction	Coopt	
Spectrum of behavior	Command	Coercion Deterrence Protection	Coercion	Inducement	Agenda setting		
Most likely resources (Primary Currencies)		Threat Force	Sanctions	Payment/bribes	Institutions	(Political) Values Culture (Foreign) Policies	
Government policies		Coercive dipl. War alliance	Sanctions	Payments/bribes aid	Bilateral and multilateral diplomacy	Public diplomacy	

Source: Based on models in Nye 1990 and 2004a.

Table 2. An Analytical Framework for (Soft) Power

Type of power		HARD POWER		SOFT POWER			
		Military Power	Economic Power	Economic Power	Soft Power	Soft Power	Soft Power
Spectrum of behavior	Command	Coercion Deterrence Protection	Coercion	Inducement	Agenda setting	Attraction	Coopt
Most likely resources (Primary Currencies)		Threat Force	Sanctions	Payment/bribes	Institutions	(Political) Values Culture (Foreign) Policies	
Government policies		Coercive diplomacy War alliance	Sanctions	Payment/bribes aid	Bilateral and multilateral diplomacy	Public diplomacy	

(Weissmann, 2020)



(Brumme, 2022)

### ***Milestone III: Conflict Analysis and Resolution***

#### **Conflict Analysis**

##### **Trade Disputes Between Japan and South Korea**

Given Japan's vast history that often included the use of hard power in an aggressive manner like with their actions during WWII, it is not surprising that they have made some enemies along the way. Unlike Japan and the United States, a former enemy of Japan and the recipient of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the relationship between Japan and South Korea has not completed a 180-degree change. The relationship between these two nations has remained rocky at best, and hostile at worst. Unfortunately, the trade disputes between Japan and South Korea, which escalated in 2019 (King, 2023), are a prime example of the complex interplay of historical grievances and contemporary geopolitical dynamics between the two nations. Japan's decision to impose export controls on critical materials for South Korean technology industries, supposedly for security reasons, was widely interpreted as a retaliatory move linked to unresolved issues stemming from Japan's colonial rule over Korea (King, 2023). This assumption of retaliation is particularly concerning Japan's use of Korea for wartime labor.

This approach by Japan in leveraging economic sanctions is an example of their use of Hard Power. Despite this strategy not being in the realm of military might, in the economic sphere, it is still seen as a form of hard power that is dramatically impacting South Korea's vital tech sector. Which is a surprising move for a nation that claims neutrality. Japan's defense of its actions apparently used security concerns as an excuse for taking these measures (Thai News Service Group, 2019). However, the timing and context seem to suggest a link to the historical disputes between the two nations (Choi & Oh, 2022). Particularly the South Korean court rulings in 2018 that awarded compensation for wartime forced labor imposed on their people during

WWII from two Japanese companies, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Nippon Steel (The Financial Times Limited, 2023). It was shortly after this ruling that Japan enacted the sanctions giving credibility to the claim that it was retaliation. The South Koreans also insist that the sanctions specifically target materials essential for their production of semiconductors and display screens (King, 2023). These technology-based categories are sectors where South Korean companies are global leaders and heavily reliant on Japanese suppliers. Therefore, these trade sanctions could potentially have devastating impacts on these South Korean markets.

One thing these sanctions have successfully accomplished so far is they have exacerbated tensions between the two countries. The increased tension is leading to a deterioration in diplomatic relations. Partially due to South Korea perceiving the sanctions to be an act of economic aggression that is tied to their historical disputes (Deacon, 2022). As a result of this hostility, South Korea has responded by exploring alternative supply chains and accelerating its efforts to reduce dependence on Japanese imports (Choi & Oh, 2022). This shift in trade sources could potentially undermine Japan's long-term economic influence over South Korea and in turn further damage their already deteriorating relationship. These economic consequences could have broader implications. In fact, it is feared that the dispute could spill over into other areas of cooperation jeopardizing security collaborations and regional stability. This could snowball into a larger issue, especially in the context of the North Korean threats to the area.

In essence, the Japan-South Korea trade disputes of 2019 highlight the complexities of using economic power as a tool in international relations, especially when intertwined with deep-rooted historical issues (Deacon, 2022). While Japan's strategy had immediate impacts on South Korean industries, its long-term effectiveness has yet to be determined. Making the decision to enact the sanctions questionable at best and devastating at worst. In light of the resulting strained

relations and South Korea's adaptive measures, the consequences may be greater than Japan anticipated. This case exemplifies the need for careful consideration of the broader implications of economic sanctions and suggests that incorporating elements of Soft Power, particularly in addressing historical grievances, could lead to more sustainable and less confrontational solutions in international disputes in the future.

## **Resolution**

Given the complexities underpinning the Japan-South Korea trade dispute, a return to the negotiation table was essential. Thankfully, Japan and South Korea have taken significant steps towards resolving their trade disputes this year, which had strained relations since 2019. In a major development, Japan agreed to lift export controls on chemicals crucial to South Korea's semiconductor industry, imposed in 2019 (The Financial Times Limited, 2023). In response, South Korea withdrew its complaint against Japan filed with the World Trade Organization (The Financial Times Limited, 2023). This resolution came ahead of a key summit in Tokyo, marking the first official meeting between the nations' leaders since 2011, signifying a concerted effort to mend bilateral relations.

Taking a deeper look into the actions, it is clear that Japan's decision to lift export controls marks a significant step in easing economic tensions, which directly addresses the core issue of the dispute. In addition to their response, South Korea's move to withdraw its WTO complaint is a gesture of good faith, which also contributes to the normalization of trade relations. With these actions, South Korea also announced a new approach to compensate victims of Japanese wartime forced labor through a fund financed by South Korean companies (The Financial Times Limited, 2023). While this move was seen as a compromise, it faced criticism internally for not securing direct contributions from Japanese firms as well. However, both

countries have agreed to establish "future partnership" funds, which will be financed by their respective business lobbies (The Financial Times Limited, 2023). These funds will hopefully foster cooperation in various areas, including youth exchanges and global supply chain issues according to the article.

In addition to this major step towards mending the bonds that were so close to being broken, the resolution that ended the trade dispute will pave the way for broader cooperation between Japan and South Korea. Particularly in response to challenges such as the US-China competition and global supply chain issues as well as the mutual threat from North Korea. In fact, it was partially due to the growing threat from North Korea's nuclear program, that inspired both nations to return to the negotiation table. This was a step in the right direction that inspired both nations to agree to strengthen security cooperation and intelligence sharing. This is an indication of a shift towards more collaborative defense strategies in the future. It also helps that the decision to address the sensitive issue of wartime forced labor through a domestically financed fund was also included in the negotiations. This move reflects a complex balancing act, navigating between historical accountability and present-day diplomatic imperatives that utilize both hard and soft power. Despite this monumental change, the outcome of the negotiations has still been met with some internal criticism in South Korea. They believe the agreement failed to secure adequate compensation from Japan for their historical misconduct in utilizing forced labor and accusations of wartime sex slavery (The Financial Times Limited, 2023). However, the ending of the sanctions and the withdrawal of the complaint demonstrates a willingness to find workable solutions amid challenging historical legacies.

The recent resolution of the Japan-South Korea trade dispute highlights a significant turn in their bilateral relations, driven by a combination of economic pragmatism and strategic

diplomacy. The resolution approach, while not without its challenges, represents a meaningful step towards rebuilding trust and cooperation. It underscores the importance of multifaceted strategies in resolving international disputes, especially those deeply rooted in historical and geopolitical complexities.

#### ***Milestone IV: International Relations and Conclusion***

##### **International Relations**

Japan's journey through the pathways of power began in its feudal era. This era is characterized by a strict social hierarchy enforced by the samurai class. This period saw Japan adopting a policy of isolationism, known as Sakoku, and the limiting of foreign influence (Hellyer, 2002). The term Sakoku literally translates to 'a county in chains' and was a fitting terminology for the type of foreign policy Japan had at the time. During this period of their history, they had very limited trade relationships with China and the Dutch traders living on an island in Nagasaki Harbor (Hellyer, 2002). They also had an intense focus on internal governance and control of their people. It is believed that because of its isolationist stance, Japan developed a rich cultural tradition, which laid the foundations for its future 'Soft Power' through arts, literature, and distinct cultural practices that still have a strong global influence today.

The next phase Japan went through was the transformation from the Edo to the Meiji period in the 1860s (Grunow, 2023). This metamorphosis marked Japan's entry into the global stage. It was within this era that Japan expanded its influence through military conquests and colonial endeavors, signaling a stark departure from its previously isolationist policies that had existed throughout its history. In fact, "by 1912, when the Meiji Emperor died, Japan had not only achieved equality with the West but also had become the strongest imperialist power in East Asia" (Jansen, et al., 2023). It was this new sense of power that helped drive their ambitions

during WWII (Yoshihara, 2014). It was during this age of Japanese globalism that bore witness to the Iwakura mission, which inspired the U.S. and Europe to initiate negotiations with Japan in an attempt to inspire them to align their treaties in a way they would be more compatible with Western ideals (Jansen, et al., 2023) (CU, 2023). These negotiations failed. Then in 1940 they attacked British Malaya to gain access to and control their oil and rubber (CU, 2023). It was this action that led to the American Embargo, which were economic sanctions that cut off oil and gasoline exports to Japan (CU, 2023). This embargo fueled Japan's resolve to gain military control of needed raw materials, which led to their attack on Pearl Harbor (CU, 2023). After WWII, Japan had to change their views about their position in the now altered international stage. Having been defeated, they were left in a state of bewilderment and shame (CU, 2023).

Ultimately, it was the aftermath of World War II that sparked a turning point for Japan. Japan was forced to change their way of thinking and they realized that they were not invincible. With an attitude of incomprehension Japan began embracing Westernization and industrialization. Japan rapidly developed its industrial and economic capabilities, showcasing a significant shift towards economic Hard power and enveloping the nation in what was called an 'economic miracle' bubble (Dan, 2022). This inevitable change led to the adoption of a pacifist constitution under U.S. occupation (Albert & Auslin, 2015). This period saw Japan renouncing war and focusing on economic recovery and development. The 'economic miracle' of Japan was achieved through a strategic use of 'Soft power', leveraging trade, technology, and cultural diplomacy, underpinned by the security assured through the U.S.-Japan alliance (Jansen, et al., 2023). Then by the late 20th century, Japan had emerged as a global economic powerhouse. Its Soft power was skillfully utilized through the global appeal of its brands, technological innovations, and a burgeoning entertainment industry, including the popular manga, anime, and

video games. Japan's extremely effective use of these entertainment mediums had not only made Japan's culture provocative and fun in nations around the world, they have also been using these same methods to change the mindset of their own people. This change began to bring about the acceptance that Japan needed to convert their military capabilities to more of a defense for themselves and enhance their ability in aiding their allies like the United States with their defensive military and political actions (Brumme, 2022). Japan has also skillfully maintained strategic economic and political partnerships, which helped in balancing their rise in power with a non-aggressive international posture. Despite the current leader's efforts to move towards a more assertive military posture, Japan's predominant stance on military power remains passive and reliant on soft power. This approach has become a roadblock in bringing Japan up to speed with the current threats and dangers in the world. (Albert & Auslin, 2015; Brumme, 2022).

### **Type and Use of Power by Japan**

#### *Political Power*

Japan's political landscape is governed by a parliamentary system, which has been instrumental in maintaining the current stable and strategic diplomatic ties. This system while using Soft Power has allowed Japan to navigate international politics effectively, balancing its domestic interests with international commitments while maintaining their pacifist military ideology (Bhuiyan, 2020).

#### *Economic Power*

Japan has taken a balance of hard and soft power in their use of economic power and influence. Japan has become the world's third-largest economy while being a group of small islands with limited resources creating an economic powerhouse that is influential around the world (Bhuiyan, 2020; Weissmann, 2020). Japan's dominance in industries like automobiles and

electronics has not only fueled their own economy but has also allowed them to wield considerable economic influence on a global scale (Weissmann, 2020). In understanding Japan's use of their economic hard and soft power and their foreign aid programs it can be seen how Japan has further extended their global economic reach and impact (Weissmann, 2020; Bhuiyan, 2020). It is this extensive economic power that has allowed Japan to place trade sanctions on South Korea that sparked the trade war that just ended this year (The Financial Times Limited, 2023).

### *Military Power*

After Japan's military expansionist actions before WWII in order to control as many resources as possible and their defeat in WWII, Japan took a stance of complete pacifism while maintaining a self-defense-oriented military posture as per their constitution (CU, 2023). However, because of the growing threats in the world and the recent changes under leaderships like that of Shinzo Abe, they have seen a gradual expansion of their military role (Brumme, 2022). This shift towards more active defensive military actions indicates a nuanced use of Hard power that balances constitutional constraints with emerging security challenges (Albert & Auslin, 2015; Brumme, 2022; Yoshihara, 2014).

### *Soft Power*

Japan's global cultural influence is undeniable. From its cuisine to its pop culture, Japan has successfully leveraged their culture and technology to enhance their international image. Strategic promotion of tourism, education, and cultural exchanges has further bolstered Japan's Soft power (Bhuiyan, 2020).

## **Influence of Power on International Relations**

The alliance between the United States and Japan is a crucial component of Japan's security and foreign policy and has been since the end of WWII. This partnership was established on mutual security and economic interests, which has helped Japan maintain a balance between their regional and global priorities, especially in the face of emerging challenges in the Asia-Pacific area. Japan has complex relationships with neighboring nations, such as China and South Korea that are often affected by historical and territorial trade disputes. Despite these tensions, Japan has employed economic diplomacy and multilateral cooperation to handle these relationships. Demonstrating a combination of Hard and Soft power tactics within their negotiations and dealings with their neighbors. In addition to the alliances, Japan's active involvement in international organizations demonstrates their dedication to shaping global governance. It is through their participation in security alliances, which is limited due to their pacifist constitution, that Japan's diplomatic efforts in organizations like the United Nations and regional forums illustrate their strategic diplomatic engagements. Japan employs a unique diplomatic strategy that balances domestic political constraints with strategic international interests. This approach includes engaging in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, navigating regional power dynamics, and responding to global challenges without the involvement of their own military.

## **Potential Future Path**

Despite Japan's achievement of global power, they still face demographic challenges. However, its priority remains focused on sustaining economic growth, especially after the popping of the economic miracle bubble. The added challenge of the 'lost generation', the population crisis, and the growing Hikikomori phenomenon have only compounded their

pathway to stability (Dan, 2022; Simon, 2019; Teo & Gaw, 2010). To overcome these issues and enhance its global standing, Japan is focusing on technological innovation and trade. Japan is also positioning their self to play a larger role in regional security, closely aligning with the United States while exploring opportunities for cooperation with China (The Financial Times Limited, 2023). This approach reflects a delicate balance between domestic political constraints and regional security imperatives. Given the changing geopolitical landscape, Japan will continue to adapt to shifts in regional power dynamics by forming strategic partnerships and employing various diplomatic tactics to maintain its influence and promote regional stability.

## **Conclusion**

Having traced Japan's use of power throughout history, from the age of the Samari to the modern-day pacifists and every stage in between, it is clear that Japan has achieved greater power primarily with their current stance and use of soft power, than they ever achieved with hard power during the global domination phase. Thereby making Japan a perfect example of the strengths of soft power in achieving a place within the ranks of the most powerful nations in the world. They did not achieve that level of recognition with military might, as their defeat in WWII clearly showcases. They instead achieved what was believed impossible after a humiliating military defeat with very little use of hard power.

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