

# JFTC News

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## JFTC Symposium on “Future of Asia in 2015”

Japan Foreign Trading Council, Inc. held a symposium on July 6th at Keidanren International Hall, in celebration for the publication of a book titled “The Future of Asia in 2015 – in confusion or sustainable development?”. The book was co-authored by the researchers of special task force comprised of major regular member companies of JFTC.

A keynote speech was made by a well-known journalist, Mr. Nobuhiko Shima, followed by a panel discussion on the future of Asia. The four panelists are Mr. Kensuke Ebata, a visiting professor, Institute of World Studies, Takushoku University, Professor Heita Kawakatsu, International Research Center of Japanese Studies, Mr. Kwan Chi Hung, Senior Fellow, Nomura Research Institute and Mr. Akio Shibata, Director, Marubeni Research Institute.

The panel discussion, with some 280 audiences, covered extensive subjects such as – long term and medium term outlook on politics, economy and security in Asia, possible obstacles to sustainable development, possibility of Asian Community and Japan’s roles in Asia.



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Note: the details of panel discussion are written in the September issue of JFTC monthly bulletin, though available only in Japanese.

## Japan’s Soft Power

The July/August issue of JFTC MONTHLY BULLETIN features “Japan’s Soft Power” as a special article. This issue of the JFTC Newsletter features two papers from the BULLETIN contributed by a well-known international businessman, Mr. Glen S. Fukushima, and a gentleman who has lived in Japan for a long time and has been trying to bridge U.S. and Japan in academic sphere, Dr. David H. Satterwhite.

Mr. Glen S. Fukushima, President & CEO of Airbus Japan, who was born in California and worked for USTR (Office of the United States Trade Representative), gives deep insights in his paper on two different views on Japan’s soft power.

Dr. David H. Satterwhite, Executive Director of Japan-U.S. Educational Commission, who arrived in Japan 54 years ago and grew up in Kyoto, gives in his paper a deep analysis and observation on Japan’s society and culture.

## Japan's "Soft Power"

**Glen S. Fukushima**  
President & CEO  
Airbus Japan K.K.



"Soft power" has become a veritable fad concept in Japan. First coined by Harvard University professor Joseph Nye in a celebrated article published in the fall 1990 issue of *Foreign Policy*, it has recently found a wider audience through the publication of a book, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

Simply put, the definition of soft power is power based on intangible or indirect influences such as culture, values, and ideology. As Nye writes, "[Soft power] is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies. When our policies are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, our soft power is enhanced."

Soft power has gained increased attention after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in part because the Bush Administration has relied so heavily on "hard power" – the use of brute military force – to counter terrorism both at home and abroad. Many foreign observers, including America's traditional allies, have been critical of the U.S. tendency in recent years to give short shrift to what they view as the real sources of America's standing in the world – elements of its culture, values, and ideology that have universal appeal.

Although Nye has applied the concept primarily to the United States, many Japanese have found the concept attractive and have started to apply it to Japan. This has resulted in recent years in a plethora of publications, conferences, and symposia on the subject of soft power and Japan. But there appear to be basically two schools of thought among those who have investigated the issue.

The first group argues that Japan is deficient in soft power but needs to develop it. With the relative decline in Japan's economic power compared to the 1970s and 1980s, the rapid rise of other economies such as China and India, and Japan's continued adherence to its Peace Constitution, the argument is that Japan's soft power needs to be strengthened in part to compensate for its modest arsenal of hard power. According to this view,

Japan may be an economic colossus but a pygmy when it comes to intellectual leadership, conceptual discourse and debate, and persuasive power on the world stage when compared to Singapore, Hong Kong, India, and other countries and regions.

The second group argues that Japan actually possesses and exercises a substantial amount of soft power through its traditionally based culture – whether intended or not. Examples often cited are *manga*, *anime*, *karaoke*, *sumo*, computer games, food including especially *sushi*, and music such as "J-pop." Some adherents of this view go so far as to assert that the world, and especially Asia, is enthralled by "Japan Cool," and that Japan is in many respects the exemplar of what it means to exercise soft power. Such a view has dominated Japanese perceptions after the publication of an article entitled "Japan's Gross National Cool" by the American journalist Douglas McGray in the May/June 2002 issue of *Foreign Policy*.

Each side of the debate makes plausible arguments. However, adherents of the second view often misunderstand the meaning and significance of soft power and seem to be engaged in a certain amount of wishful thinking. Japanese no doubt find it gratifying to see that *karaoke* is the rave in certain parts of Asia, *sushi* restaurants can be found in Europe, and *manga* is being read by youth in the United States. But does this really mean that Japan is therefore more respected, trusted, or admired by others, or that it has greater influence on the thinking and behavior of others?

One could argue that *karaoke*, *sushi*, and *manga* have little to do with Japan per se. That is, the non-Japanese who are attracted to these products of Japan may or may not associate them with the nation or people of Japan. Thus, the fact that *karaoke*, *sushi*, and *manga* have gained fans around the world does not necessarily equate to Japan or its people or policies gaining supporters around the world.

Nye posits that hard and soft power are "both aspects of the ability to achieve one's purpose by affecting the behavior of others...Command power – the ability to change what others do – can rest on coercion or inducement. Co-optive power – the ability to shape what others want – can rest on the attractiveness of one's culture and values or the ability to manipulate the agenda of political choices. ...Soft power resources tend to be associated with the co-optive end of the spectrum

of behavior, whereas hard power resources are usually associated with command behavior....Soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others." Thus, soft power is by definition goal-oriented.

Given the above, it is misleading to claim that Japan is exercising its soft power simply because the popularity of *karaoke*, *sushi*, or *manga* has increased around the world. One needs to ask whether such trends allow Japan to influence or shape, more than in the past, the preferences of others.

By now, the reader will have discerned that this writer agrees with the views expressed by the first group described above, i.e., those who argue that Japan is deficient in soft power but needs to develop it. Wherever I travel around the world these past two or three years, I hear the same theme — that Japan's presence is receding, whereas China's presence, attention, and influence are rapidly on the rise.

Part of the reason is, of course, China's aggressive efforts to win friends and allies around the world and to re-establish its traditional role as "the center of the world." But another factor is Japan's continued complacency and unwillingness or inability to explain to others its values, principles, policies, and direction.

Up through the 1980s, it was common to describe Japan's behavior at international fora as the "3S's" — sleep, smile, and silence. Even in the 1990s, a common joke was that the mark of an effective moderator at international conferences was the ability to keep the delegates from India silent while coaxing those from Japan to say something. Such Japanese behavior appears to stem from at least five factors.

The first is an unquestioned dependence on and passive expectation toward the United States to defend Japan's interests, especially on matters of national security.

The second is the traditional Japanese belief that silence is golden, that the truly profound things in life cannot be adequately expressed by mere words, and that feelings and emotion can best be conveyed through such nonverbal modes of communication as "*ishin denshin*" and "*haragei*."

The third is the Japanese propensity not to want to stand out, be conspicuous, or be different from others. This is also related to the risk averseness of Japanese and the fear of making mistakes in public.

The fourth is the weak Japanese education and training

in critical thinking skills and in Aristotelian logic, argumentation, and debate.

The fifth is English-language education in Japan, which has aptly been described as follows: rarely in human history has so much time, effort, and money been spent on language education to produce such meager results. This derives in part from the use of English primarily to extract information and knowledge from abroad and to serve as a sorting device on school entrance examinations. The notion that English might be used as a vehicle to communicate with the outside world seems to be only a recent development.

Given these factors, it is not surprising that Japan is becoming increasingly marginalized in world affairs. Countries and regions much smaller than Japan — Singapore, Hong Kong, Korea, etc. — are becoming more influential in engaging with the global community in the world of ideas, policy proposals, and intellectual discourse. It is almost as if Japan is entering another "*sakoku*" period, as during the Tokugawa Period.

What Japan needs is a grand strategy to win friends, gain supporters, and influence world opinion. Japan's cultural assets can, of course, play an important role in such a strategy, but they must go far beyond the current complacency of some Japanese being satisfied that Japanese food, film, and music are gaining popularity abroad. Such cultural assets need to be deployed strategically to fulfill the true meaning of soft power — "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than through coercion."

## Japan's Society & Culture

### —Dilemmas, Attractions, & Contending Visions

**David H. Satterwhite, Ph.D.**

Executive Director

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#### 1. Introductory Perspectives

Having arrived in Japan exactly 54 years ago in my youth, and then having had the great privilege of growing up in the Kitashirakawa area of Kyoto, I have often had the opportunity to reflect on what has attracted



me to return so frequently to Japan, making Japan and its Asian neighbors the focus of my scholarly research and

the locus of my professional activities for over 34 years. The answer is far more than a “roots” nostalgia for the foothills and pathways of my youth, and is more complex than an appreciation for the cultural nuances and depth that are so attractive to me to this day.

These nostalgic and culturally-immersed dimensions of my encounter with Japan certainly exist and are strong – including studies of the *shakuhachi*, living the rice-cycle from *taue* to harvest, sitting *zazen* and exploring both the aesthetics and spiritual roots of Eihei-ji, Enryaku-ji, and Koyasan, to name a few. These dimensions are supplemented in more recent decades, however, by a genuine affinity with – and concern over – Japan’s future. The closeness that I feel, and the concerns that are constantly on my mind, arise from my training in Politics and Political-economy, my roles in international business, administration, and education in Japan, my studies of Korea and China, and the frequent requests that I receive to comment on Japan – its past, present, and visions for its future. The thoughts below reflect these concerns, informed by a half-century of participatory observation of Japanese society and culture.

## 2. Cultural Contexts & Connectedness

As I seek to explain Japan to those who encounter it for the first time, the idea of a “high-context society”, and the interconnectedness of each facet of Japanese life as a result, are essential. How else might one explain the failure of the Christian missionary effort to penetrate Japanese society, in which the *individual* – hence *individual* salvation at the expense of the close cultural ties of village, shrine, temple, rice-cycle, and countless other essentials of daily life – has not been the proper term of reference? The individual has existed in this *very* Japanese social context, and foreigners normally take years to grasp the intricacies, not only of the language, but of culturally-appropriate behavior.

There is enormous cultural depth in Japan, richly nuanced, from which highly refined traditions have been handed down. Individuals who stray from the “high-context” nature of Japanese society, and these nuanced interconnections, have risked being ostracized ( *Murahachibu*). It is true that many of these traditions are being eroded, some quite rapidly, but the Japanese people take appropriate pride in what is uniquely Japanese, seeking to preserve the artistic and aesthetic traditions through cultural prizes and the naming of individuals to be Living National Treasures, in order that

Japan not lose the skills and aesthetics of its cultural roots.

## 3. The Legacies of *sakoku* in an Era of Globalization

Japanese society has also undergone enormous stress, in large part due to its long and self-enforced seclusion, and the intensity of its encounters with the global community over the past century and a half. As I reflect on the cultural depth of Japan, yet Japan’s ongoing struggle to think more internationally, I am reminded that the period of *sakoku* – approximately 250 years – is 100 years longer than its openness to the rest of the world since the Black Ships of 1853. The speed of changes Japan and Japanese society have faced since then has, perhaps, been more profound than the internal changes Japan faced during the period of 1603 to 1853, but I mention the long period of *sakoku* because I often find reactions to foreigners – even now, even in the major cities of Japan – to be laced with a powerful sense of *exclusion*. “Japan is for the Japanese,” “you cannot possibly understand the heart and soul of the Japanese people,” “how amazing that you speak the language so well...” What appears foreign is held away at a distance, while what is perceived as Japanese is guarded jealously, made to appear inscrutable, not able to be approached *unless* one is Japanese.

Buffeted as it is by foreign influences, globalization, and a strong desire to be accepted into the world community as a more respected partner, there is a certain tension – one of many dilemmas – between protecting the legacies of Japan’s uniquely insular culture and societal connectedness, yet thinking less exclusively Japanese in an era of instantaneous global communications, finance, and travel across international borders. If many Japanese people take great pride in becoming international – studying abroad, mastering English or other foreign languages, and portraying themselves as urbane, cosmopolitan players on the global stage – expecting to be well – received in the societies they travel to abroad, why is it such a surprise that many foreigners make similar efforts to learn Japanese, immersing themselves in an appreciative way in Japanese culture? Will Japan become less Japanese if it is understood and appreciated by greater numbers of non-Japanese, living and working in Japan? Although *sakoku* has been over for more than 150 years, I look forward to the time that the “*sakoku*-of-the-mind” of many Japanese people – closing off of a truly Japanese



cultural experience from many visiting foreigners — will finally come to an end.

It is in this connection that we return to the richly nuanced cultural roots of Japan, and the effort to maintain Japanese traditions, raising several more dilemmas in the process.

#### 4. When Japan's Culture Clashes with Japan's Changing Needs

Imagine with me the realities — both demographic and societal — Japan currently faces. It is well known that Japan is ageing more rapidly than any other industrialized society, due in part to improvements in healthcare and longevity, and in part to a dramatic decline in the birthrate. While increased life — spans can and should be seen in a very positive light, what are the underlying causes — and implications — of the choice by Japan's young women to postpone marriage, postpone giving birth (or forego childrearing altogether), and even to choose to move abroad in large numbers to study, get married, and chart their futures overseas instead of in Japan?

While I referred earlier to the “high-context”, highly interconnected nature of Japanese society in a very positive light — indeed, it has been a pleasurable challenge to delve into and become a part of the contextual framework with many Japanese friends through my long residence here — I perceive the complexities of Japanese society as also being at the root of some truly disturbing trends, including the declining birthrate. In short, traditional Japanese expectations of the role of women — in the family, in childrearing, and in the economy — have not changed rapidly enough, and are now a seriously debilitating set of factors that are making worse, and are likely to exacerbate, the problems Japan is facing.

The recent naming of Dr. Kuniko Inoguchi as Minister of State for Gender Equality and Social Affairs is, I believe, both highly significant and almost too late. It is significant in that the gravity of these social trends has finally become apparent even to the nation's male-dominated leaders and policy-makers. It is *almost* too late in that the personal attitudes of young women — and the very personal choices to be made by the young women (and their potential partners, the young men) of Japan — have been molded by societal attitudes towards, and expectations of, young women.

Will the efforts of Dr. Inoguchi and other well-

intentioned policy-makers be in time to change the minds of (mostly male) employers to more fully utilize the skills and expertise of women — in meaningful jobs and with serious prospects of advancement — in the workforce? Will sufficient numbers of quality daycare facilities be set up and certified in time, and will social attention turn to the role of men as co-partners at home in the rearing of children, so that all of the weight of jobs and childrearing does not fall on young women? Are male-dominant Japanese traditions — of the male in the workforce, working late hours, and the woman as exclusive caregiver — able to change, while maintaining other elements of Japan's culture that are so attractive both to the Japanese people and foreigners as well?

My own sense is that these challenging dilemmas can, and should, be met. I take heart in that more young people — men and women — appear committed to facilitating a shift to a more gender-equal society for Japan, and that there are many professions within traditional Japan that are more genuinely shared, with the participation of men and women. Now that the economy of Japan is a far more mature one, no longer requiring the unproductive long hours put in by men (both in the office and in the *izakaya* en route home), there is a real opportunity to make the raising of families a more attractive and socially accepted pursuit, attracting back the interest of Japan's young women to this crucial building of the future of the nation.

#### 5. Envisioning Japan—Some Concluding Thoughts

In many ways, Japan is being called upon — both domestically and in the international arena — to play a greater and more responsible role. The vitality of its economy, which has come back from the long travails of the “lost decade” of the 1990s — attests once again to the resilience of the Japanese people, particularly when faced with serious challenges. In talks throughout Japan in recent years, I have sought to highlight the challenge of Japan's future, putting it in terms of what each person — each citizen, each member of society — envisions for the Japan they wish to live in twenty years from now. As a participant in Japanese society, with an abiding appreciation for its culture and faith in its future, I seek to make clear that each individual must then work diligently both to preserve Japanese culture and simultaneously change it to meet the needs of the future they envision. I look forward to contributing in that effort as well.

## JFTC MONTHLY BULLETIN ON-LINE — Titles

JFTC publishes monthly bulletin covering wide variety of topics for the members and subscribers.

The following contents are available from the website (<http://www.jftc.or.jp>).

Most of the articles are written only in Japanese, but the underlined articles are available in English as well.

### From July/August issue

1. Foreword: "Visiting Philippine"...Osamu Sato, Executive Director of JFTC, President & CEO, JFE SHOJI HOLDINGS, INC

2. Special Articles: "Japan's Soft Power"

- "Japan cool and Shosha"...Tutomu Sugiura, Adviser, Marubeni Research Institute

- "Japan's Soft Power"...Glen S. Fukushima, President & CEO, Airbus Japan K.K.

- "Japan's Society & Culture—Dilemmas, Attractions, & Contending Visions"

...David H. Satterwhite, Ph.D, Japan-U.S. Educational Commission (Fulbright Commission Japan)

- "Investing in Japanese Equities—the Global Investor's Perspective"...Paul Hoff, Managing Director, FTSE Asia Pacific

- "Enhance the attraction of Japanese Economy"...Richard C. Koo, Chief Economist of Nomura Research Institute

3. International Letter: "Traffic Condition in Cairo"...Kiyohiko Hayami, Director, ITOCHU Corp. CAIRO Liaison Office

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### What is "SHOSHA"?

SHOSHA is consistently changing to meet the requirements of each era. Its function, activities and vision are explained in detail in English at <http://www.jftc.or.jp/shosha/english/index.html>