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# Japan and South Korea's Implication of Soft Power: Cultural Aspects, Education, and Foreign Aid Diplomacy

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**Abstract:** Over the past years, the concept of hard power has been overtaken by a new approach “Soft power”. As a result, many countries compete to take advantage of this new power at their disposal by implementing in their foreign policies. For instance, numerous countries such as India (Bollywood), and the U.S (Hollywood) have extensively benefited from their soft power, as both countries’ cinemas are considered the most potent cultural export. The following paper explores how the Japanese and South Korean government have been exploiting their soft power by coinciding with their national interest. Both countries were selected based on their limited military intervention despite dedicating a decent budget amount for defense. Especially when looking at Japan’s firm stand policy that adheres to a non-military approach, therefore, increasing the probability of seeking other alternatives to expand its state’s strength. In addition, the selection was carried out by taking into consideration the strong influence they hold in the region in the context of cultural aspects. Furthermore, we address how these tools of “Soft power” such as cultural diplomacy, education, and foreign aid have transformed both countries’ images, especially Japan which had been criticized for its past imperialistic days. The article is qualitative in nature, we referred to the sufficient available relevant works of literature and papers to present soft power and its implication by focusing on two East Asian countries. Finally, we conclude that both countries deploy cultural diplomacy and education for diplomatic purposes and national branding while in the context of foreign aid diplomacy we suggest that it is more than of its humanitarian claims.

**Keywords:** Soft Power, Japan, South Korea, Foreign Policy, Public Diplomacy, Foreign Aid, Culture, Education

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## 1. Introduction

Neo-realist emphasizes a mechanism that encompasses dynamic economic and military capabilities can only lead a state to regional and international dominance. However, this approach of hard power that implies the employment of coercive diplomacy such as economic sanctions, and military intervention toward other countries is becoming obsolete. As a result, ceding the stage for a new contemporary foreign policy tool “Soft power”, which started to be acknowledged by scholars [27]. The first to come up with this term is Nye in his book *Bound to Lead* in 1990 [39], Nye displayed this power through the U. S leadership by arguing that the U. S have become attractive over the years in the international community by its usage of soft power, especially after the cold war which required a new trend to influence other actors in the global arena and minimize the decline of the U.S power.

Nye’s recommendation to the U. S was to seek another alternative that compensates their hard power field since the next century will unlikely accommodate hard power. And he was right, by now in the twenty-one century, despite theories about U. S influence decline, and entering a multipolar world, America has reached every corner of the globe and influenced the majority of the states in the context of culture, education, entertainment, and ideologies.

By now it would be evident that soft power is a tool for foreign policy implications. Although, soft power has been getting full attention from academicians however it was mostly used and studied in descriptive ways without fully examining its policy implication [54]. The following article aims to examine the overall mechanism of soft power by dividing it into three different outlooks (Culture, Education, and foreign aid). With a particular focus on Japan and South Korea’s soft power. We propose the following argument that both countries deploy their available soft power as a national

resource. Both countries were selected based on the influence they have on the region, especially South Korea which raised from scratch to become an Asian giant. It is possible to conclude that both Japan and South Korea utilize this power at their disposal to project their image by coinciding with their ultimate national foreign policies, yet given their limited military capabilities, especially Japan. The article confirms that soft power has been a great consolidation in filling the gap of their military presence and depicting both countries not only as developed states but as a destination for many people who are seeking Korean and Japanese culture. The article has three sections with every section assessing separately the aforementioned countries (South Korea and Japan). The first section focuses on culture as a diplomatic tool, and how it has transformed Japan's image by portraying it as a friendlier country especially when we recall its imperialistic days. Simultaneously, how South Korea's investment in cultural exportation helped introduce the Korean wave. The second and third section considers the purpose of education and foreign aid as a diplomatic tool that extends beyond its humanitarian claims.

## 2. Culture as a Diplomatic Tool

### 2.1. Japan

In the past years, different types of cultural products, such as animation, music, fashion, magazines, foods, and movies have been endorsed by several countries. And this strategy has been widely utilized as a tool for foreign relations between involved countries such as for promoting the country's economic model abroad. Japan is a prominent example, as the government found a niche in the Asian market, and now it constitutes an integral part of the Japanese trade exchange. However, this is surprising especially when we recall Japan's imperialistic past, which might still be remembered by some Asian countries. So according to Japan, this acceptance of Japan's culture and embracing it, can play a key role in diplomatic purposes and present Japan as a friendlier image (Cool Japan) thus, amending the wounds Japan had inflicted during its imperialistic days [41].

This attitude changes in the Japanese government of dealing with culture by implementing in their international relations has been supported by the domestic and international audience. Even some government officials had expressed their approval of the country's usage of its soft power as a resource consequently compensating for the country's constitutional limitation of employing military power [48]. In addition to the political agreement between the parties and their approval of Japanese cultural diplomacy usage. For example, the conservatives see this culture exportation as a source of national pride and overseas victory while for liberals it indicates the country's "cool and friendlier side" [18].

Before Japan become a global cultural dominant in the Asian continent, it had made several initiatives for the country to reach this strong cultural recognition level abroad

and took some measures that help to expand the cultural aspects of the country. In June 1972 the Diet passed a law establishing the Japanese foundation, the foundation's main task was to monitor Japanese cultural policies and implement them in a way that coincides with the country's government and quasi-governmental agencies such as the cultural affairs bureau, the Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Education, and the Cultural Exchange Section of the Japan External Trade Organization [23]. The foundation has been engaged in organizing and encouraging a passel of several programs that supports academic and cultural events, such as Japanese language/studies, and Japanese art. And later in 2003 after "transmitting the Japanese spirit," and offering the world an "international asset" based on Japanese cultures, the foundation become an institution.

Most Japanese prime ministers understood the significant role that culture plays. In December 2004, Prime minister Junichiro Koizumi provided some recommendations on how the government should further promote the country's cultural diplomacy. Later his successor Shinzo Abe, announced that pop culture was one of Japan's forces. Completed by Gaiso Shimonkikai (The P. M advisory on foreign relations) that "manga and animation was a way of diplomacy". Prime minister, Tarō Asō proposed to designate Japanese anime characters (Doraemon and Hello Kitty) as Japanese cultural ambassador figures overseas [32]. He even went on to declare in his speech when he was a foreign minister that manga is a strong example of how Japanese comics have come to be known and admired around the world and those who fail to take advantage of pop culture are not actually being called cultural diplomacy [20].

Evidently, the most common method people know about Japan is Anime. Doraemon's character is a successful example, which has influenced many people, and interestingly Japanese government seized this opportunity of Japan being recognized through an anime character. Later in 2008, the foreign minister Masahiko Komura named Doraemon officially an anime ambassador in the international Anime Award [16]. The minister's strategy was to create this mechanism where Doraemon's characters raise the attractiveness of international society toward Japan and realize the country's positive side. Another thing that goes with the anime concept is cosplay (Anime Fashion), the government had supported this phenomenon. In 2006 the Japanese government participated as a sponsor in several anime fans meetings, this approach of funding anime enthusiast gatherings is included in the Japanese ministry of foreign affairs policy to increase the understanding of the Japanese culture through anime promotion alongside Hinamatsuri (Summer Festival) and Cosplay which was held in 2003 "The world cosplay summit". Another well-known anime character is Pokémon as the movie was broadcasted in 66 countries and translated to more than 27 languages, and after its success in a few days made to the cover of TIME magazine. Similarly, the monthly magazine of diplomacy which belongs to and is published by the Japanese ministry of foreign affairs institute has a particular section dedicated

to pop culture [34]. Undoubtedly, this excessive investment in anime had demonstrated its fruitfulness, in 2016 the anime market was worth more than USD19 billion, whereas the top export markets are Thailand, the USA, China, Canada, and New Zealand.

It's no doubt, that Japan can't exercise any military power as its constitutional restriction claims (Clause of Article 9), as a result, Tokyo has adopted this soft power by emphasizing cultural diplomacy as a way of overcoming foreign issues by internalizing in their diplomatic strategies. Therefore, the government seeks to enhance mutual trust, and bilateral ties between Japan and other countries by creating a bridge based on soft power instead of running to coercive methods. Nevertheless, the government is constantly looking for new sectors to intervene and promote. Apparently, this demonstrates the harmonized connection between state intervention and cultural industries, whereas cultural aspects are admired for their economic and diplomatic value, consequently perceived as an object of policy and regarded as a controllable tool under the state's directions. In exchange, they similarly benefit from government funding and public support. This intervention somehow appears legitimate for Japan, as the cultural products are regarded as a vehicle for its "Soft power" and it leads to the backdrop of a rising China in the context of culture, alongside South Korea which possesses enough fair share of cultural influence on the region.

Additionally, according to [11], the increasing exportation and reception of Japanese manga, movies, and pop music can be a significant contributor to the branding of Japanese manufacturing goods and services. A study conducted by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations found in 2015 an estimation of 123 billion USD worth of products and services were exported to ASEAN countries, and this amount is considered to make up about 11.5% of total ASEAN imports [1]. And in 2016 more than 10,000 domestic Japanese companies grew their business in ASEAN countries.

Despite the global scale, the Japanese culture most of its valuable recognition comes from the regional countries. for example, in terms of tv product distribution and exportation, Japanese tv programs have excessively been concentrated in East Asia. in 2005 According to the Tokyo Institute of information and communication policy, found that 60% of Japanese tv programs were exported to East Asian countries. further, a broadcasting culture research agency located in Japan demonstrated that in 2001-2003 approximately half of the country's tv programs were exported to Asian countries 46%; to Europe 27.9%; North America 7.6%; South America and the rest of the world 7.1; %. The U. S and Europe can be explained by the few cables transmitting Japanese TV programs, additionally, NHK world played an important role as an international broadcasting channel. Furthermore, Japan's tourism board reported the number of arrivals in 2018, mostly from Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.

It is evident from now on that Japan has always sought to reach peace, regional recognition, and establish a strong

community sense that is based on cultural exchange with other countries. However, this cultural role is also aimed to enhance the state's interests such as on the ground of economic gain, improving the perception of Japan in developing countries, and creating a safe environment for opportunities, cooperation, and collaboration.

## 2.2. South Korea

In contrast to Japan, South Korea doesn't have any past that could undermine its cultural expansion or question the real intention behind the rising of Korean culture (Hallyu) in the region. But before the spread of the Korean culture, Korea was ruled by an authoritarian military president (*Park Chung-hee 1961-1979*). His administration emphasized an economic model of state-led, based on excessive intervention and strong regulation of macroeconomic factors, thus influencing all fields, particularly in the field of art and culture [9, 30, 38]. After a period of military rule, Korea started to concentrate on its cultural field. Korea's success in the field of culture began in late 1980 when the country started to adopt an export strategy of entertainment products to other neighborhood regions (China, Southeast Asia, Japan). In 1988 at the Seoul Olympic games president Kim Young-sam supported cultural competitiveness in his address at the 7<sup>th</sup> conference for the promotion of a new economy. To stand up for his words, his administration proposed a plan of five years that involves cultural development through exportation to overseas countries, establishing representatives for Korean cultural symbols, and easing the regulation of cultural products.

The government acknowledged the significance of culture and regarded it as a tool to increase Korea's reputation abroad, and a way of national brand development. For them, this cultural wave is interconnected with the state's economic profitability particularly in the tourism sector. Later in 1994, the government created the cultural bureau and gave full responsibility to the minister of culture and sport to boost the Korean audiovisual industry's fame and promote the Korean film abroad in foreign theaters, as a result, the minister proposed a tax break incentive which in turn attracted the attention of the Korean investors [44].

This economic approach of utilizing culture as a competitive strategy was supported by the former noble prize winner president (Kim Dae-jung). In 1998 his administration adopted the broadcast Video promotion plan, in addition to installing a Korean cultural content agency (KOCCA) in 2001, which specialized in developing the cultural industry [44]. This initiative was embraced by his successor Roh Moo-hyun who continued to encourage the cultural industry to deliver sophisticated Korean-made entertainment. He further went on to create a gaming industry, his administration also supported introducing the hanbok dress abroad (Korean traditional dress). As the government was the major source provider and first sponsor, especially in terms of promotion, it later coincided with the interest of private Korean investors who were looking for a way of compensating for the effect of the financial crisis. Moreover,

Korean public institutions assisted in their own way, according to [22] the bank of Korea provided loans worth 900 million USD to entertainment industries for three years to encourage and promote the Korean wave. The bank considers those sectors of the entertainment and food industry to have remarkable potential in delivering the Korean culture therefore they deserve to be invested in.

Previously, Korea was regarded as a poor, war state (with the North Korean war issues), and a country that supports despotism. However, after the positive Korean wave hit many countries, the perception of many people commenced to change. According to them, now, the state hosts a dynamic pop culture, rich language, and aspiring products. This influence of culture is transparent in Asian countries, many young Asian people relate themselves to K-pop idols, they visit Korean places because they have watched many Korean dramas and this enhanced Korean attractiveness, it also gradually helped the tourism sector, for instance around 80% of East Asian tourists visit Korean places where their best Korean drama was filmed [15]. They even learn the language for the sake of their favorite actors or actress and to understand the culture. This strong attraction transformed the Korean culture into a source of income for the state [8]. In opposite to Japan, which is exposed to several judgments for its past deeds and is affecting considerably its relationship with its neighbors who still linger with the memory of its imperialistic day, Korea in contrast has relatively a smoother relationship with them.

Importantly, the Korean entertainment industry doesn't only provide profits for the economic sector, but it depicts Korea as a developed nation and projects its traditional morals [8]. Certainly, the state views its cultural promotion as a potential source for its economic growth. A study conducted by the Korea chamber of commerce demonstrated that 80% of respondents perceive the Korean cultural wave as building the economy and promoting Korean-made products while the rest manifested their opinion of no improvement of the Korean image (KCCI 2012). Additionally, a survey administrated by the Korean international trade agency found that visitors from several countries such as (Japan, Vietnam, Taiwan, and China) have expressed a positive opinion about Korean products, and about 85% of them voiced their purchasing attitude occasionally, mostly due to the favorable image Korea portrays (KITA 2011). Even outside East Asia, other countries find the Korean culture interesting to follow, for instance, The Muslim countries approved of their entertainment tv programs mostly due to the exclusion of romantic passion that involves sexual content [19]. While most Chinese fans are mesmerized by Korean foods thus resulting in demand for Korean cuisine. Other countries learned about Korea through K-pop songs and K-drama, idols like PSY, Girl generation, 2N1, and super Junior who have increased Korea's influence in the region and on a global scale level, even competing with its former occupier (Japan) [26]. Similarly, the BTS group was addressed at the United Nations general assembly in September 2021.

However, the expansion of the Korean wave was facilitated by the already existing Japanese products in the market that penetrated earlier most Asian regions, subsequently creating a favorable niche market for Korean products and building a cross-cultural understanding between Korea and foreign countries.

### 3. Soft Power in Form of Education

#### 3.1. Japan

It is well known that education is a major driver of a state's development if it's not for development, then for the country's educational institutional recognition and getting acknowledgment globally. Japan had invested in its educational sector, in terms of boosting its foreign students. it is evident from its Sino-Japanese bilateral relation as both nations established exchange programs. The Chinese government sent about 6,000 students to attend Japanese universities and benefit from the Japanese free education since Japan was the leading economic power in the region during these periods (1923). For China, this exchange program was an opportunity to acquire and accumulate knowledge about the advanced technologies and science in the Japanese disposal and consequently implement them in their home country, for Japan this free funded education was a way to reach the Chinese heart and cultivate a pro-Japanese sentiment in the future elite [24]. Over the years, the number of foreign students that travels to Japan has been increasing, in 1990 the estimated number was 40,000 to 121,000 in 2005 [37]. While the number of foreign students that studied the Japanese language in 2003 reached 2,350,745, a major reason can be associated with their obsession and the expansion of manga (Japanese comics).

A famous program that attracts foreigners is JET (Japanese Exchange and teaching), the program focuses on recruiting foreign teachers to teach at Japanese institutions. In 2005 the program invited 6,000 youth from 45 countries to teach different languages mostly English and other foreign languages to Japanese schools. Surprisingly 43,000 applicants participated [36]. A former American JET alumni investigated where the past participants of JET programs ended up. To his surprise, he discovered that most of them were working in sectors that involve the U. S and Japanese contemporary relations [13]. This investigation validates a statement made by [55], who voiced that exchange programs are mostly initiated for political reasons as the participants represent governments, and according to him, these programs cultivate sympathies in the recipient, thus, creating positive emotions toward the sponsored country. Similarly [2] found evidence of such programs, she examined the effect U. S on foreign military officers from less democratized states that come to the U. S for an exchange program, and her results demonstrated an increase in human rights protection in countries that participated in the U. S military exchange programs. This validates the previous argument of Iain that such programs are established for political intent such as

igniting behavioral change which will eventually create a political effect. [35], evaluated the Effect of the JET program on its alumni and revealed that 87% of them displayed a positive intent toward the host country and a greater understanding of the Japanese state after visiting.

The mechanism of Japan employing education as soft power is evident from the Abe cabinet. In May 2014 the Cabinet bestowed on the CSTI (*Council for science, technology, and Innovation*) full leadership to build a friendly nation based on innovation and sciences. The amended act by the Abe cabinet was designed to encourage the CSTI to formulate Science&Technology cooperation linking Japan with outside countries. Japan's S&T capabilities were a tool to engage diplomatically with developed nations as most of its collaboration is with developed states, where they address common targeted problems (the case of the European Space Agency and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency who signed a bilateral relation that consists of exploring the Mercury while a joint committee with Union European scientists on issues regarding aeronautics, addressing Greenhouse gas, and enhancing the Japan-UE health&medical research was signed). Aside from enhancing diplomatic ties, Japan intends to welcome and open up to the scientific community and present Japanese research to the world. We can see from the cooperation and the different scholarship the Japanese government provides to developing nations such as (MEXT and JICA scholarships). The purpose of these programs is to foster and expand creative people who will later promote an international understanding and become reliable leaders [21]. As for Japan, it will revitalize its S&T by influencing its research and development fields and present Japan as an intellectual and dynamic nation to the research and scientific community while building a stable international relationship with its former program participants' countries.

Accordingly, The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) in collaboration with MOFA launched S&T cooperation on current global issues. The program proposes fully funded scholarships under the MEXT supervision, each country's embassies select several students and if they fulfill the scholarship criteria, they are sent to Japan to continue their education. JICA is another agency, they are dispatched in several developing countries they engage in supervising and entering into joint research with the domestic researchers in addition to providing volunteers. During the past years, there have been some Djiboutian researchers working under the minister of higher education who are collaborating with JICCA in scientific research mostly in renewable energies and the environment sectors. The JICCA agency provides as well free Japanese lessons as part of their volunteering activities and engages in joint training with the Djiboutian marines. The purpose behind this collaboration is to develop new technologies for Japan while at the same time enhancing the research capacity of its counterpart countries. However, despite the different programs proposed by the Japanese government, a lot of foreign students don't consider Japan as their primary destination. for instance, [51] mentioned

that difficulty in adjusting to Japanese society plays a significant factor for foreign students not investing in studying in Japan. Moreover, Japan is behind some Asian countries in the number of foreign students (Especially with the CSC scholarship which is competing with MEXT, therefore, making China the major hosting country of foreign students in the region), and South Korea is attracting a decent percentage of overseas students. for instance, China hosted approximately 328,329 while Korea was revealed to have 60,588 foreign students [49]. in the upcoming years this will push Japan to encourage more foreign students to come to study in their universities, but to do so, opening up to the foreign culture will be a prerequisite requirement, and competing with a leading U. S and European universities will be inevitable.

### 3.2. South Korea

Like European countries and USA, Asia provides several scholarships for international students such as The Singapore International Graduate Award (SINGA), Taiwan International Cooperation and Development Fund (ICDF), Chinese Scholarship Council (CSC), and Global Korea Scholarship (GKS). As a public diplomacy tool, the Korean Government initiated the GKS program, however, as the country focuses on developing certain fields, the government limits the number of scholarship receivers, thus selecting a scant number of students. it may be perceived as an altruistic and philanthropic initiative, despite it is tight quotas for accommodating foreign students, however, the Korean government regards this mobility as an element to influence and build relationships with foreign states to achieve its ultimate foreign policies [33, 3]. We can examine this from several directions, Leonard designed scholarship programs as a plan to cultivate in the mind of participants a sophisticated idea of the culture, beliefs, and values of the host country, subsequently promoting the nation's prestige. it is somehow true since the scholarship recipients will see the donor as a consolation, therefore, their image and trust regarding that specific country increases. Other Asian countries implement the same strategy of language promotion such as the Confucius institutes that promote the Chinese language, accordingly, several Chinese taught institutions under the Confucius umbrella are located in Japan, and South Korea, and over the years it expanded rapidly that is now opened in 79 territories [46]. The usage of education as foreign policy tools and public diplomacy purpose is becoming transparent over the years.

Furthermore [47] pointed out, that students will be exposed to the host country's political system, culture, and economy while at the same getting an accurate picture of the country's realities, and this is as much as it can be easy it can be tricky since it could either influence them positively or negatively. Most studies of attitudes indicate that host countries influence foreign students' evaluation, as they can perceive it positively by recommending it to other individuals for tourist or educational purposes, or it can interfere with their positive image by transforming into a more aggressive attitude toward the host country [57, 5, 53].

Besides promoting the Korean image, these scholarships contribute to the Korean economy, especially when we look back on how Korea raised from its recipient status to become a donor member of the OECD. In terms of economics, Korea promotes and sponsors its infrastructure projects through ODA (Official Development Assistance) and KOICA (Korean International Cooperation Agency). The promoted projects include trade, energy, Korean public administration style, and Korean culture [52]. Moreover, the Korean scholarship program is the ultimate plan for the government to provide precise and flawless information about Korea and formulate correct impressions to overseas individuals while promoting their national prestige [4]. As the GKS and other Korean fellowship programs provide Korean language, cultural sessions, and Korean economic models, through these courses, foreign students can transfer their Korean knowledge to other international audiences. Consequently, an accurate perception that is linked to their positive knowledge about Korea during their sojourn will influence their behavior, thus helping with the Korean economic promotion which in turn will fortify economic diplomacy between the involved countries.

The fact that Korea provides financial aid for foreign students in the context of education will lead the authorities to facilitate students to appreciate the country by keeping a close eye and taking into consideration the public treatment of foreigners [28]. [50], noted that GKS holders' interaction with Korean citizens would lead to establishing a comparison between the host country and their original country as foreign students would likely utilize the host country as a reference. Additionally, [45] added that the interaction mechanism diminishes prejudices and increments favorable attitudes.

Attracting overseas students with financial aid programs is somehow an effective way of enhancing public policy. There is no guarantee that foreign students will travel to Korea for educational purposes if they would decide to pursue their education, Europe or U. S will be their primary destination but as long as Korea offers Scholarships it can attract bright minds and take advantage of promoting itself. In 2004 the number of foreign students was 16,830 reaching 104,200 students (Including self-financed students) [3]. Hence, despite the increase of foreign students on Korean soil, it doesn't mean other factors could interfere with students' perceptions. For instance, cultural maladjustment, [7]; suffering discrimination from the people of the host country especially in public spaces [14]; lack of social interaction & language barrier, and poor academic performance [17], these factors may all have significant effects on the individual's view of the country.

## 4. Soft Power in the Context of Aid Assistance

### 4.1. Japan

After World War II, Japan was hoping to restore its diplomatic relation with its neighborhood, and culture didn't

appear an appealing diplomatic strategy as it might be regarded by some of them as another Japanese invasion, so by then, the government changed its direction to investing heavily in manufacturing products by exporting it to the region with great emphasize on restoring its foreign relations. In addition, to the Japanese-made manufacturing export strategy, the government started to provide financial aid to many countries, mostly due to the country's strong economy which projects Japan as a potential donor.

During the two past decades, Japan was the second largest donor, while it ranked number one in the 1990s, although, it is now surpassed by Germany and UK, however, the government still provides a significant portion of economic aid to countries they have strong bilateral relation. During the end 1980s, Japan distributed more than 9 billion USD aid to developing and underdeveloped countries including pledging an amount of 64 billion USD debt relief for some countries [56]. Most states provide aid for several reasons; One, it helps decrease the burden that low-income countries have on them and as more developed countries pour aid on them, more likely the burden will cease as they develop at a considerable pace such as (South Korea). Second, they regard it as an economic diplomacy tool, the UE officially considers foreign aid one of their economic diplomacies, but others might interpret it differently such as atoning for their past deeds. Thirdly, it is aimed at closing the gap that exists between the poor and rich while ensuring multilateral agreements through aid assistance and focusing on achieving the Development goals that were set by the U. N.

The Japanese government had long emphasized matching foreign aid with foreign policy goals, particularly when the country has limited diplomatic tools. Unlike the U. S which could easily penetrate any market and country, Japan still struggling to compromise with its neighbors (South Korea and China) for it is past. However, Japan's foreign aid mechanism can be slightly different from its western counterparts, which (Western countries) provide assistance normally under some conditions such as respect for human rights values, rule of law, and good governance [25]. Whilst Japan's goal is to contribute to peace and bilateral development between the recipient and donor with minimum interference in the other country's internal affairs or dictating any moral values.

Moreover, as a potential U. S ally, Japan is mostly pressured by the U. S to change its defense field. Although Japan kept its nonmilitary pledge, nevertheless it supports its western allies through aid, and other reasonable financial support while keeping its neutrality as a nonmilitary badge. For some reason, Japan increases its aid to countries that are regarded as Japanese friendly or strategically important, while at the same it doesn't hesitate to cut its aid to some others. Japan froze the financial aid for Vietnam, canceled its aid grant for Myanmar, and Libya, and increased its financial sanction on USSR allies. Evidently, Japanese punitive aid measures are somehow a compensation for its lack of military intervention and if we examine closely, they are mostly influenced by the policies of its international allies.

However, in some cases, Japan is forced to prioritize its national interest before further venturing into its ally's interest. In November 1973, the Arab states-imposed Japan an oil embargo regarding Japan's position in the middle east. Most Arab states were demanding that Japan supports and acknowledges the 242 resolution that promotes "the respect of Palestinian territory and withdrawal of Israeli army" [29, 42]. Despite consultation with its strongest ally the U. S, Japan decided to accept the Arab demands by recognizing Palestinian rights. After a few days, the OPEC lifted its embargo, on December 1973 during his trip to the middle east Japanese minister of foreign affairs (Takeo Miki) announced an estimated amount of 126.5 million as an aid to contribute to rebuilding the Suez Canal and additional aid of 100 million USD for the people of Egypt.

By now Japan's major partners in the region are Saudi Arabia and Egypt after it reduced its relation with Iran. The foreign aid poured by the Japanese government in the middle east between 1985 and 1997 has been 10 percent. [42] argues that Japan employs foreign aid in the region because they have significant pressure in terms of resource diplomacy, and strategic aid, the former signifies that it generates a stable flow of natural resources into Japan's soil, especially in sectors that demand energy resources, however at the expanse of fulfilling the demand of the Arab nations which primary request is helping countries such as Sudan, Yemen and providing aid to the Palestinian refugees through the U. N agency. The latter (Strategic aid) comes from the western pressures who propose their specific demand that involves providing assistance aid to the countries they found strategically important in the Middle East.

Aside from the foreign pressures, Japanese aid was mostly dominated by altruistic and public relations effects, relying on aid diplomacy has designed the country as friendly by eliminating the old cruel image that Japan used to project on many Asian states. To keep being perceived in this manner, P. M Fukuda announced in his address to the ASEAN countries a pledge of 1 billion USD aid while other former prime ministers reported their intention of giving financial aid during their ruling term, Naksonse who distributed more than 18 billion USD for recycling initiative and 489 million USD for sub-Saharan countries, former P. M Uno pledged his contribution of 34 billion USD for climate change at the Paris summit. Japan acknowledges that foreign aid is one of its soft power pillars and relies on it to win the heart of developing countries in lieu of military power. However, other actors emerged in the continent and have established themselves as donors such as China mostly focusing on African countries by investing in the African infrastructures, and recently in 2016, it built its first military base in Djibouti. This new Chinese aid initiative changes the African countries' perception and creates a soft spot in the country's leaders who in turn presents their trust to the new provider, as a result challenging Japan's position as a potential foreign aid.

On the other hand, it is undeniably clear that this aid policy helped Japan to be regarded differently from its imperialistic days and amplified Japan's economic gains abroad by

projecting its infrastructures, while at the same obtaining the admiration and appreciation of its western counterparts despite being rebuked for its nonmilitary clause.

#### **4.2. South Korea**

South Korea's emerging from a recipient status to a donor has been the center of the debate, but recently, new fresh countries join the OECD community thus expanding to 38 members in 2022. This status gives south Korea national pride and designs it as a symbol of motivation for other emerging countries.

In order to be regarded as a symbol, south Korea has helped developing countries. This is obvious from its humanitarian assistance in Central Asia. both Japan and South Korea's development assistance has extended and grown 10 times over the last years with a huge concentration on infrastructure, human resources, and public service assistance. Although Japan is the top donor in the region, they are both considered top foreign donors, particularly for Uzbekistan. According to [12], Korea is one of the major commercial partners in Central Asia, it provides significant foreign investment. Lee Myung-bak's administration fortified the relationship with the region, his effort aimed to provide financial assistance in exchange for energy exportation in order to reduce Korea's dependence on Arab oil. It is comprehensible why South Korea is interested in the region, as the Central Asian countries, project a potential market and abundant natural resources for the Korean eyes. and because of their unrelated historical relationship in opposite to China, Russia, and the U. S, Korea could easily penetrate their market by presenting itself as a partner while enhancing its national profile.

Korea's tendency for foreign aid assistance and to play an active role in the OECD society could be traced back and linked to its background. Korea was once considered a poor country that mostly lived on foreign aid, and through these lenses, it sees itself sharing the same concern with developing states and understands them more than any other OECD member. therefore, providing development assistance in every possible way is somehow an unspoken method of returning long-bearing gratitude toward the international community.

Moreover, Korea's humanitarian approach to foreign aid is no longer seen as it might be claimed. As Korea begins to utilize this financial aid aspect in order to test its soft power by projecting itself as a bridge between developed and developing states. In 2011 the forum on aid effectiveness was held at Busan where Korea manifested itself as the Bridger between donors and recipients. This self-acclaimed position can't be argued, unlike Japan which enjoyed an unrivaled economic strength in the past decades, while Korea was so behind most OECD members.

Additionally, after joining the donor members Korea grew the idea of being associated with the global elite community [12]. And it is true, yet it plays a minor role as a donor but the government tries to coincide this new bestowed role with their interest. The government contributes to the global

community by sending affordable aid to the ODA and dispatching volunteers to underdeveloped countries (*Roh Moo-Hyun, increased the number of volunteers to the third world*) in addition to playing an active role in the climate issues. Through these activities of granting aid and loans, Korea was clever enough to accomplish international friendly cooperation that is based on common prosperity and stands itself as a potential emerging power in Asia. Simultaneously, while pursuing these activities, Korea draws a dependable, philanthropic image by increasing its nation's branding and projecting itself as a globally responsible state. Accordingly, in 2010 the minister of foreign affairs mentioned, that the international community expects a lot from Korea and that it plays an important role in burden sharing. As a result, they should not underestimate their national power and they must increase their foreign aid to other countries in order to keep this strong image [3].

A study conducted by [31] demonstrated that Korea's soft power has been increasing rapidly, their result showed that Korea scored higher than China, Japan, and the U. S. Korea's favorable score is likely because of its neutral relation with its neighbor. For instance, Japan is less favored by Chinese citizens while Korea ranked the third state liked by China, the same with Japan which is inclined toward Korea's soft power. This positive bidirectional relation between China and Korea; and Japan and Korea are influenced by the negative relation between China and Japan who appear to have an unfriendly relationship except beyond trade. Subsequently, positioned South Korea as the favorite friend in the region.

However, the reality is that South Korea despite contributing to global foreign aid is still behind the targeted percentage of the U. N which is 1.7%. In 2021 South Korea ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> out of 36 members with 0.8 percent. Most on the top of the list are countries from Europe. Although, European countries and other Asian regions, and, the U. S hit harder by the pandemic than South Korea, which questions Korea's ability to provide foreign aid. In addition, OECD reported in 2017 that Korea's multilateral aid is about 23.2 percent far behind its OECD counterpart which provides around 51%. Obviously, South Korea is set to keep its low ratio. [40, 43], implies that South Korea is a recent member of the OECD club and with its past experience it tries to minimize how much aid it can provide without falling harder behind. And this smart strategy displays Korea as a country that prioritizes short-term bilateral aid while concentrating on to whom they provide their foreign aid.

Academicians have been skeptical about giving aid for humanitarian causes, Despite the real motifs behind the aid policy, it is clear that its main goal before the world wars were based on the moral ground which involved supporting developing countries and reducing poverties [10]. But it gradually started to change over the past years, when the international community began to shift its agenda to climate change and global security [6]. But this changed more in the twenty-one century. [43] insists that aid is mostly a tool for foreign powers and they are unlikely to deny its symbolic goals through which they link to national branding rather

than altruistic behavior or contribution to global goods. And this is evident in the Roh Moo-Hyun administration even his successor increased Korea's branding through diplomacy aids by creating a council for nation branding (PNCP). The council envisaged presenting Korea as being equal to other developed countries and coordinating Korea's image [30].

Finally, despite the U. N pledges to increase foreign aid, recent years have witnessed a change in aid policy. The UK and other European countries are cutting the aid budget, in Netherland, there have been prominent domestic supporters who display their positive agreement to budget cut for foreign aid. On the other hand, other emerging actors appear as aid donors. China and Russia are both emerging donors, despite not being members of the OECD, China helped reduce global poverty in 2015.

## 5. Conclusion

The article seeks to increase our understanding of two east Asian countries by exploring their soft power aspects. The paper suggests that soft power is somehow useful for countries that can't project military power. The potential of developing a soft power, albeit being easier than coercive power, requires creativity, investment, and time in order to be produced. Likewise, countries complement soft power tools with their domestic and foreign policies as it facilitates the states to carry on their agenda easily in the global world without running to physical capacities. In terms of the economy, South Korea's government has been a major stakeholder in cultural industries, after their realization that they can play a key role in the national economy [44]. South Korea's soft power usage has dismantled the stereotypes of "you can't be attractive in the eyes of other countries unless you have a strong international power that presents you as a hegemonic". Both Japan and South Korea's inclination method of culture in their foreign policies have been recognized widely. the Japanese anime (Japanese comic) for example has contributed to the country's recognition [11], most people around the world are familiar with Japan by now, as a result, if you ask them what first comes into their mind when they hear about Japan, most of their anticipated response will be either anime or Japanese cuisine. Other countries have been associated in the same manner, India uses the same method, where people associate the subcontinent with Bollywood songs and see-through Bollywood movie lenses. Similarly, this overemphasizing of culture has allowed both South Korea and Japan to receive a global attraction, consequently increasing the number of tourist travelers for the sole reason of being in the same territory as their favorite anime character or K-pop idol [15, 16, 32]. This attitude of cultural attraction is probably attributed to globalization, as many young people associate themselves with other cultures.

Moreover, soft power's other aspect such as education has contributed to the increase of both countries' foreign students. And each Japan and South Korea acknowledge the usage of education as a method to increase their country's academic

institutions' recognition, regardless of whether it occurs offshore (Exchange students) or onshore (scholarships). Both countries compete in terms of attracting overseas students so that they could promote their country's identities, and mobilize scientific skills and ideas that advance both countries in the field of research and development [10]. Education as a soft power can be approached differently, such as aligning a country's relationship vis a vis toward other countries in terms of diplomatic purpose, and connecting students who later after returning to their home country will become unofficial ambassadors. However, despite attracting a decent quantity of foreign students, both Korea and Japan sense of being surpassed by western universities, especially Japan which believes that most of its students apply abroad to attend well-known American and European universities. Additionally, the scant number of English mediums thought programs available in the country creates a challenge for Japanese educational institutions to attract foreign students. China is another obstacle; it attracts most of the foreign students in the region through several scholarship programs. Besides providing scholarships, both Asian giants provide foreign aid to the developing country. despite Korea's limited foreign aid, however, it remains a full member of the ODA community, and the fact that it was raised from its former status as a recipient is seen as a national pride by the Korean government and is reiterated by Korean politicians. Nevertheless, this doesn't erase the reality that it ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> out of 36 members in terms of foreign aid, and with this ranking despite Korea's satisfaction of not giving aid more than it can provide, international pressure is on its shoulder as this statute as donor puts greater responsibility on its shoulders, which somehow undermines it is aptitude as a provider. Interestingly, with their limited military budgets, both Japan and South Korea present themselves as a strong pillar of foreign aid, which they seek through foreign policy goals, cooperation, and bilateral development but with minimum interference in other's domestic affairs.

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