Commemorative Lecture Series
for the 50th Anniversary of
The Japan-America Society of Fukuoka
October 2007—March 2008

Japan’s Soft Power in Asia
Culture, Values and Diplomacy

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Japan's Soft Power in Asia: Culture, Values and Diplomacy

Multicultural coexistence, sustainability, and mottainai (Do not waste!) are some of the constructive ideas shaping the 21st century. This leads us to the question of what soft power does Japan, with its culture, values and diplomacy, have to attain favorable international opinion and credibility abroad? The Japan-America Society of Fukuoka cordially invites you to its 50th anniversary commemorative lecture series from October 2007 to March 2008 to explore, through a diverse range of speakers, the importance of Japan's soft power in Asia.

Part 1: Culture

1. Mangas in French Comics Industry: The Risk of Mimicry [English/Japanese] Mr. Vincent LeFrancis

The French publishing market has grown in part due to the success of the bande dessinée (BD, or French comics) which has a very long tradition in publishing. However, one of the three BDs sold is a Japanese manga. Watching Japanese animation on TV from the 70s, readers are now very familiar with that world. It has become a reference iconography even for some young French authors. LeFrancis looks at the dynamics and the impact of Japan's soft power in the world of the French comics industry.

Vincent LeFrançois, born in France, has a degree in Plastic Arts from the University of Paris Pantheon-Sorbonne and an M.A. in Narrative Technique in Comics from the University of Bordeaux III. In 1991, he arrived in Fukuoka on a Foreign Affairs Ministry's program. From 1993, he started to work as a freelance illustrator, contributing to Japanese newspapers and magazines, designing posters, and exhibiting his works. He now works for Casterman, a publisher of Franco-Belgian cartoons, adapting Japanese cartoons intended for French readers.

2. Japan's Soft Power and Dissemination of News in Asia [English/Japanese] Mr. Shoichi Nasu

The Yomiuri Shimbun and The Daily Yomiuri are members of the Asia News Network (ANN), an alliance of eighteen newspapers from fourteen countries. ANN aims at providing an Asian perspective on the region's news. Focusing on the two papers’ cooperation with this network and the challenges the dissemination of news in Asia presents, Nasu looks at what these dynamics mean for Japan's soft power.

Shoichi Nasu, a graduate of Miyazaki University, is presently a Yomiuri Shimbun, Seibu, senior writer in Fukuoka. Mr. Nasu also served as The Daily Yomiuri editor from 2004-2006. In addition, he was an overseas correspondent at Yomiuri's Naito and London Bureaus, from 1987-90 and 1993-96, respectively.


Under the strong influence exerted by U.S. after WWII, Japan has emerged with its own management values and earnest work ethic. Thus, it was able to become the world’s second largest economy. While the recession dragged on after the economic bubble burst, the export of Japanese culture boomed, especially Japanese food and animation. Hisadome looks at the inseparable U.S.-Japan relationship from the perspective of consumer trends.

Yurioko Hisadome, born in Fukuoka, is a graduate of the Mathematics Department, Tsuda College. After raising a family, she became a Fukuoka Prefecture's consumer consultant in 1983. In 1984, she joined the Nishinippon Bank as a consultant for consumer surveys and lecturer for home accounting. She is President of BisNet Co., Ltd., which specializes in monitoring consumers' perspectives and employee training. She also serves on several municipal and prefectural committees.

Part 2: Values

4. Japan for a Sustainable Global Community [Japanese only] Professor Katsuyuki Nakano

The balancing of environmental protection and economic development is characterized by many difficult issues. These problems provoke not only disparity among regions and citizens, but also global conflicts. While deepening understanding about “sustainable development,” first coined by Japan at the U.N., and fostered by European economies, we, as global citizens, should put this spirit into practice. Nakano, while examining some of the above issues, proposes that our common future is best served through human networking, which will help overcome cultural differences between Europe and Japan.

Katsuyuki Nakano, born in Kikakushiyu, received a Doctorate of Engineering from Kyushu University. As the inventor of Titania photocatalyst solution, he has written many academic papers and owns various patents. Since 2004, he has also served as Director of the Fukuoka University Institute of Recycling and Environmental Control Systems, which is devoted to practical research on environmental technology for the betterment for society. He has recently established as well Fukuoka University’s Office for a Sustainable Future.

- If there are no English speakers in the audience, these bilingual speakers will deliver their presentation only in Japanese.
- The views expressed during this lecture series are solely those of the individuals providing them and do not reflect the opinions of The Japan-America Society of Fukuoka.
5. Seeing Double: Soft Power and a Peace Constitution (English/Japanese)
Reverend Lydia Barrow-Hankins

While awareness of soft power surges, Japan has begun to question the Constitution’s Preamble and Article Nine. Having avoided war for 62 years, it faces the phenomenon of “Heiwa boke” (complacency about peace) and asks if “peace education” has really taken hold. Barrow-Hankins discusses how history is heritage, and what possessing power means for the potential of peace. She also examines how these questions relate to us as sojourners on the earth, travelers in an international world; and citizens of a country with a peace constitution.

■Lydia Barrow-Hankins, born in Georgia, USA, has lived in Japan for 30 years. During the last nine years, she has served as chaplain at Seinan Gakuin Schools. She holds a degree in Public Relations from Georgia Southern University and a Master’s Degree in Theology. She currently serves as Associate Pastor at Seinan Gakuin Baptist Church. She takes university student volunteers to the Philippines each year.

Part 3: Diplomacy

6. US-Japan Strategic Partnership Post 9/11: Implications for Japan’s Soft Power (English/Japanese)
Professor Stephanie A. Weston

The U.S. still remains Japan’s most important bilateral and global partner in the Asia Pacific. This partnership is characterized by common values and strategic goals including the pursuit of democracy and prosperity as well as the protection of human rights. Given this context, Weston specifically examines the U.S.-Japan strategic relationship post 9/11 and the implications for Japan’s soft power.

■Stephanie Weston is this Commemoratory Lecture Series Coordinator. From 1997-88, she worked as diplomat for the U.S. State Department with tours in Latin America, the U.S., and Japan. She served her last tour as Consul at the U.S. Consulate Fukuoka from 1985-1988. Presently, she is a Professor of U.S.-Japan-China Relations, Faculty of Law, Fukuoka University. Her past research includes publications on the U.S.-Japan alliance and U.S.-Japan global partnership. In addition, she is a board member of The Japan-America Society, Tiempo Iberoamericano, and the Kitakyushu Asia Women Forum.

Dr. Hong Pyo Lee

Japan is often referred to as Korea’s closest neighbor, yet the farthest country in a psychological sense. Recent years have witnessed the return of nationalism in both states, which could hamper bilateral relations in the future. It is essential for both countries to work together for the region’s stability and prosperity. Given this, Lee examines why resolution of the history issue is one of the foremost tasks for the promotion of stable Japan-South Korean bilateral relations.

■Hong Pyo Lee, born in Seoul, Korea, graduated from Yonsei University and earned his Ph. D. in Political Science at Indiana University. From 1989, he worked at the International Private Economic Council of Korea and the Sejong Institute as a research fellow and moved to Nagoya University in 2000. Currently, he is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Law, Kyushu University. His main areas of research include Chinese Politics and East Asian relations.

8. Japan-China Relations and Soft Power (Japanese only)
Ms. Rieko Aoki

In order to gain trust and respect from its Asian neighbors and international society, Japan must reevaluate what they promote and think. This involves how Japan develops its soft power and attractiveness as a country rather than its military and technological power. From the Asian perspective, this means it is necessary to become a model country, and have well developed diplomatic policies. While it is the second largest economic power, Aoki analyzes why Japan is a political middle power and what this means for Japan-China relations.

■Rieko Aoki, a former Fukuoka Prefecture official, has been active as a Chinese language and China specialist. She has served as the main translator for VIPs from China on their visits to Japan. While managing several China-related firms, such as, DLC Japan-China Consulting Co., Ltd., as president, she publishes books on China and gives lectures across the country.

9. Cooperation on Capacity Development for Southeast Asia Countries (English/Japanese)
Mr. Eishi Yasunaga

The Development Bank of Japan and the Japan Economic Research Institute have implemented capacity development programs to improve credit analysis and project appraisal for industrial and financial sectors in Southeast Asian countries. These programs nurture respect for aid; recipient’s ownership; and encourage a climate of mutual partnership. Yasunaga focuses on how to apply Japanese experiences to such capacity development in Southeast Asia.

■Eishi Yasunaga joined the Development Bank of Japan (DBJ) in 1979 after graduating from Waseda University. During his 27 years of service, he was seconded to Deutsche Bank as a trainee in Germany in 1987, and was assigned to DBJ Washington, D.C. Representative Office from 1993-95. Since 2001, he has been seconded to the Japan Economic Research Institute (JERI), a consulting institution for development issues in Asia. He became an Executive Vice President of JERI in 2007.
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Japan in the first decade of the new millennium is still the second largest economy, the U.S.’ best ally in Asia as well as the 3rd largest grantor of ODA. Japan, an economic superpower but a political middle power, continues to search for a stronger presence in the region through bilateral, regional and global mechanisms. For example, Japan has enhanced its security agreements with the U.S.; is a key member of the Six Party Talks the East Asia Summit and ASEAN+3; and has expanded its technical assistance to the Mekong basin countries. In addition, Japan has recently adopted a universal values based foreign policy. It is also considering the revision of its constitution. The influence of Japanese culture is growing too not only regionally but also globally through movies, design and fashion. At the same time, historical differences still remain with neighboring countries. How do these external and internal dynamics, for example, impact on Japan’s soft power in Asia? Soft power, as developed by former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense Joseph P. Nye, means “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.” As the Japan-America Society of Fukuoka will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2008, this commemorative lecture series will try to answer the above question through the respective lenses of invited lecturers.

Coordinator/Lecturer: Professor Stephanie A. Weston  
Law Faculty, Fukuoka University  
A Japan-America Society of Fukuoka Director

Those who wish to attend this lecture series are kindly requested to refer to the schedule inside of this flyer and the instructions below.

Venue: All lectures will take place at Fukuoka Building, 9th floor.  
Address: 1-11-17, Tenjin, Chuo-ku, Fukuoka 810-0001

Fee: JASF members/students...free  
(Corporate members are entitled to designate their substitutes.)

Non-members...¥500 per lecture  
(Please have the exact amount ready and pay at the door.)

Application: Please apply to The Japan-America Society of Fukuoka at least one week prior to each lecture via fax, mail or e-mail indicating your choice of lecture date(s), your name, full address, phone/fax numbers and indicate if you are a student. Only the first 40 people will be accepted for each lecture. (The Society will inform only those who did not make the list of the first 40 applicants.) Personal data provided will not be used otherwise.

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