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BRIDGES OF INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING: THE ROLE OF JAPANESE CULTURAL SENSITIVITY IN GLOBAL DIALOGUE

In the modern world, cultural pluralism is becoming increasingly important for advancing global dialogue. This paper explores the role of Japanese cultural sensitivity as a bridge for intercultural understanding and defines the concept of cultural sensitivity. Through an analysis of Japanese tradition and philosophy, it defines Japanese cultural identity and emphasizes that building capacities for cultural sensitivity fosters better understanding between societies. Traditional Japanese values, such as respect, harmony, and balance, can serve as a foundation for developing deeper international ties. Through examples from political life, culture, and philosophy, the paper shows how Japan's cultural heritage contributes to the development of global dialogue. By embracing diversity, societies can better cooperate, reducing misunderstandings, and strengthening relationships. The Japanese perspective provides valuable insights into the importance of preserving cultural identity while adapting to contemporary challenges. In conclusion, the paper emphasizes how cultural sensitivity and interculturalism can play a key role in building a harmonious and connected world. By embracing these values, the global community can collectively respond to challenges, promoting peace and understanding.

Keywords: interculturalism; cultural sensitivity; Japan; global dialogue; cultural pluralism

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, where many of Earth's inhabitants see themselves as citizens of the world, the exploration of intercultural understanding is becoming not only interesting but also necessary. Global dialogue and intercultural sensitivity are essential for fostering understanding and cooperation in an increasingly interconnected world. Engaging in global dialogue allows individuals and communities from diverse cultural backgrounds to share perspectives, ideas, and values, promoting mutual respect and appreciation. According to Singhvi (2018), global dialogue is essential for establishing and maintaining a thriving global democratic order. It serves as a constructive alternative to the division and conflicts that may arise between civilizations and cultures. Singhvi emphasizes that such clashes are neither unavoidable nor unchangeable — they can be prevented through meaningful and ongoing dialogue rooted in mutual responsiveness. This kind of dialogue offers a balanced and comprehensive approach to addressing the pressing challenges faced by humanity today. Therefore, intercultural sensitivity involves recognizing and appreciating cultural differences, which is vital for effective communication and cooperation in today's intercultural environments. By cultivating these skills, societies can bridge cultural differences, jointly confront global challenges, and build more harmonious international relations.

In Japan, a country with a rich cultural heritage and deep traditions, intercultural dialogue and sensitivity occupy an important place. As Japan faces increasing globalization, the need for effective communication and mutual understanding between different cultural groups is becoming increasingly important. Intercultural dialogue refers to the open exchange of views between individuals from different cultural backgrounds, with the aim of fostering mutual respect and understanding. Sensitivity, on the other hand, involves an awareness and appreciation of cultural differences, enabling individuals to communicate with empathy and respect.

Historically, Japan has had a relatively homogeneous society, with deeply rooted customs and social norms, and it is important to note that it is an island nation that only opened up to the world in the 19th century. However, the recent influx of foreigners, students, and tourists has necessitated a shift towards a more inclusive and intercultural approach. This transition is essential for strengthening social cohesion, reducing cultural misunderstandings, and promoting harmonious coexistence, making intercultural dialogue and sensitivity key components on the path to a more inclusive and harmonious society in Japan. Embracing these concepts not only enriches the country's cultural image, but also strengthens its position in the global community.

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY: WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Tolerance, intercultural dialogue and respect for diversity are more important than ever in a world where people are becoming increasingly interconnected.

Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations

Just as it is important in individual relationships, cultural sensitivity is also extremely important in relationships between different societies. At the individual level, intercultural sensitivity broadens perspectives and encourages openness, contributing to personal growth. When people recognize and respect different cultural norms and values, they create the foundation for more harmonious communication and cooperation. Cultural sensitivity is one of the competencies that should be cultivated in today's interconnected world, as it enables better understanding between cultures, reducing misunderstandings and prejudice. At the societal level, cultural sensitivity helps build more inclusive communities. When individuals feel accepted and respected regardless of their cultural backgrounds, they are more likely to integrate and contribute to the community. This strengthens social cohesion, promotes social justice, and reduces conflicts arising from cultural misunderstandings. Therefore, cultural sensitivity is a key component in building a world in which different cultural identities are recognized and valued.

Cultural relations are both narrower and broader than the interaction of national interests. Rather than power, security, or economic interests, cultural activities are products of intangible factors such as ideas, opinions, moods, and tastes of a country. The symbols, words, and gestures that reflect people's patterns of thought and behavior constitute their "cultural vocabulary," through which they connect with others. It is necessary to develop intercultural understanding, both individually, but for the whole societies as well, in order to maintain respectful and efficient global dialogue.

Although a unified understanding of cultural sensitivity has yet to be established, researchers and theorists working on human development issues now widely recognize the need to understand the cultural sources of human experiences. However, neither good intentions nor awareness of cultural differences alone are adequate to define cultural sensitivity (Dumas et al. 1999). Defining cultural sensitivity requires a holistic approach. Cultural sensitivity refers to awareness of and respect for the differences and similarities between cultures. This includes understanding and appreciating cultural diversity, recognizing the values, beliefs, and customs of different cultural

groups, and adapting communication and behavior in ways that are respectful and inclusive. Cultural sensitivity helps to foster mutual respect, reduce cultural misunderstandings, and promote effective interaction in intercultural settings.

Education is one of the most important tools for acquiring cultural sensitivity competencies. “The basic concept of education for culture would be to present culture as the richest and greatest heritage that we did not create, but with the help of culture we are able to search for what has not yet been created” (Bakić 2013: 75). Thus, cultural sensitivity implies the process of accepting cultural identities, both one’s own and others, with the aim of expanding one’s own knowledge and outlook through the process of lifelong learning.

However, there are factors that negatively impact cultural sensitivity.

“Several factors hinder stronger cultural sensitivity in fields that focus on development issues, and these factors include ethnocentrism, discomfort, closed-mindedness, and philosophical shortcomings. Ethnocentrism is caused by the natural tendency to remain attached to the culture from which one grew up. Discomfort arises from being surrounded by a culture that is different from one’s own. Closed-mindedness prohibits an individual from recognizing that no culture is better than another. Philosophically, several disciplines that focus on human development have tended to conceptualize human behavior in universalistic terms, leaving little room for understanding the influence of cultural variables. All of these factors have been identified as applicable to several social sciences” (Levesque 2018: 828-829).

Developing a capacity for cultural sensitivity reduces the impact of negative factors.

Cultural diversity is already recognized as an empirical fact among contemporary societies. Intercultural sensitivity is essential in our increasingly interconnected world because it improves communication, fosters positive relationships, and helps resolve conflicts across diverse cultural landscapes. By understanding and respecting different customs, beliefs, and practices, individuals can avoid misunderstandings and communicate more effectively, which is vital and enriches the experience of inclusivity and cultural awareness, and is an essential part of liberal peace theory. A step further will take the societies to the next step, transformative peacebuilding, as Lederach (2000) has theorised.

The increased focus on cultural sensitivity helps to emphasize how culture has a pervasive impact on human life. Culture provides form and direction that are desired but not instinctively available to people, such as social coordination and shared meaning (Levesque 2018). Because cultural identity can only be recognized when a coun-

terculture is present, it inherently creates tension. Cultural sensitivity requires accepting the tension caused by differences without insisting that one perception is more correct than another, and developing complex mental capacities to deal with ambiguity, complexity, and dialectical understanding. Cultural sensitivity also requires self-reflexivity, which enables the freedom to think about the sources and meanings of cultures without bias or negativity. As a person becomes more open-minded, then differences will become interesting rather than threatening, and divergence will not require resolution.

3. CULTURAL IDENTITIES IN JAPAN: THE BLEND OF TRADITION AND MODERNITY

To achieve successful intercultural dialogue and understanding, it is necessary to understand the basic characteristics of identity. Japanese cultural identity is a complex and multifaceted concept, deeply rooted in the country's historical, social and geographical context. It is well known that Japan was isolated from the rest of the world for approximately three hundred years, until the Meiji Restoration in 1868. From the Meiji era, a cultural renaissance emerged and nation-building began in Japan. The blending of Japanese traditions with Western innovations during this period serves as an example of how Japan has historically embraced intercultural exchange while maintaining its identity. Then, following the World War II, Japan adopted a pacifist constitution and emphasized cultural diplomacy to rebuild its international reputation.

„Japan started its post-war construction by proclaiming its resolute determination to be a peaceful and democratic nation and adopted a unique, peace-dedicated Constitution. While some consider this Constitution was imposed by the US occupation forces and try to seek opportunities to revise it, basing it more on Japanese traditional values, the country nevertheless has maintained it for over fifty years, and the majority of the population is fully convinced of its values, especially its resolute emphasis on peace and democracy.“ (Chiba 2004).

Japan's postwar approach to diplomacy highlights the power of peaceful engagement and cultural exchange in rebuilding a nation's international reputation. By focusing on cooperation, humanitarian aid, and shared cultural values, Japan not only overcame its wartime legacy but also emerged as a respected global partner. Its example underscores the potential of soft power in fostering intercultural understanding and addressing shared global challenges.

Japanese cultural identity today is a dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity, deeply rooted in historical values while embracing global influences. Key aspects such as respect, balance, harmony (wa), and mindfulness remain central to Japanese societal norms and practices, evident in customs like bowing and group-oriented decision-making. At the same time, globalization and technological advancements have brought new layers to this identity, with Japanese pop culture, including anime, manga, and J-pop, gaining global prominence and influencing perceptions of Japan worldwide. However, Japanese cultural identity also reflects an ongoing negotiation with issues such as gender roles and aging demographics highlighting both the challenges and opportunities in adapting to a changing world. This blend of enduring traditions and contemporary adaptations defines Japan's cultural identity in the modern era.

“However, as the country prospered economically, a new wave of ‘cultural nationalism’ took hold and gained popularity. This ‘nihonjinron’ (theory of the Japanese) boom, which reached its peak in the 1970s and early 1980s, sought to explain economic success through theories of Japanese cultural uniqueness, emphasizing homogeneity and cultural and ethnic purity. Fueled by scholars, popular writers, business leaders, and the media, the ideas propagated in this wave of cultural nationalism became (and remain) deeply rooted in the minds of many Japanese” (Parmenter 2004).

“Recently, however, theories of homogeneity and uniqueness have come under attack from many quarters (e.g. Befu 2001; Oguma 1995), leading to a reexamination of what it means to be Japanese and how Japan and the Japanese should relate to the world” (Parmenter 2004).

“Nihonjinron,” as an element of Japanese cultural identity, encompasses a wide range of literature and discourses focused on defining the unique characteristics of the Japanese people and culture. As discussed by Sugimoto (1999), “nihonjinron” often emphasizes themes such as group harmony, social conformity, and a deep connection to nature, which are considered intrinsic to the Japanese way of life. Although these theories are popular in Japan, they are sometimes criticized as essentialist and exclusionary, as they create a general picture that can cause prejudice. For example, Nihonjinron literature often highlights emphasis on group harmony and social cohesion as inherently superior traits that distinguish the Japanese people from other cultures. In other words, it would mean that Japanese communication styles characterized by indirectness are uniquely suited for achieving consensus and minimizing conflict. This is frequently contrasted with the more direct, open and individualistic communication styles seen in Western cultures. As a result, approaching culture from an

overly narrow perspective may obstruct authentic intercultural communication and understanding, potentially fostering misconceptions against individuals who do not align with *nihonjinron*.

As an important part of their identity, the Japanese have a special social etiquette, which includes various social and cultural practices such as bowing as a sign of respect. Language also plays a significant role in shaping Japanese cultural identity. The Japanese language, with its complex system of honorifics and hierarchical expressions, reflects the importance of social order and respect in Japanese society. According to Miller (1982), the structure of the Japanese language not only influences communication styles, but also reinforces social norms and cultural values. The use of polite language (*keigo*) is a clear manifestation of how language maintains cultural identity, as it requires speakers to be constantly aware of their social relationships and status in relation to others. The difference in the choice of language to use in a particular dialogue provides the opportunity to define whether it is a business or a friendly relationship. Learning the Japanese language plays a significant role in promoting global dialogue by fostering cultural understanding and bridging diverse societies. “In 1991, the Japan Foundation received 58,000 applications for its annual Japanese Language Proficiency Test, a figure that had increased 500% to 286,000 by 2002, over a period of just 11 years” (Tsutomu 2004). As of 2023, over 3.85 million people worldwide are actively studying Japanese, according to the Japan Foundation’s report on Japanese language education. This increasing interest reflects Japan’s cultural influence and the appeal of its traditions, philosophy, and pop culture. By bridging linguistic and cultural gaps, Japanese language education serves as a vital tool for fostering meaningful connections and enhancing cooperative relationships in a globally interconnected world.

Traditional arts and customs, such as tea ceremonies, calligraphy, and martial arts, are also essential in preserving and expressing Japanese cultural identity. These activities are more than just hobbies; they are cultural rituals that embody Japanese aesthetic values and philosophical principles. For example, the tea ceremony, as described by Sen (1979), is a highly ritualized practice that embodies the principles of harmony, respect, purity, and serenity. „It became a type of „sogo bunka“, or a „cultural synthesis“ of the country’s traditions. The combination of politics, culture and tea is still evident in contemporary Japan. Even the country’s cultural ambassador to the United Nations, Sen Genshitsu, is a tea master“ (Eplett 2015). Such practices provide a tangible connection to Japan’s historical heritage and continue to shape contemporary cultural identity, as they are one of the most recognizable features of Japanese culture. Additionally, *kintsugi* allows tradition, art and philosophy to com-

bine. This traditional art of repairing broken pottery with gold reflects the philosophy of embracing flaws and imperfections (Kemske 2019). Kintsugi carries metaphorical significance for fostering global dialogue — it is a reminder to appreciate diversity and approach differences with compassion, a mindset essential for building inclusive relationships.

Japanese philosophy, characterized by concepts such as “wabi-sabi” (the beauty of imperfection) and “omotenashi” (hospitality), provides unique insights into values that may be at odds with Western individualism. These cultural philosophies contribute to global dialogue by offering alternative perspectives on lifestyle, sustainability, and community. The practice of tea ceremonies, for example, not only highlights Japanese historical tradition, but also serves as a metaphor for awareness and connection, fostering a space for dialogue that transcends language barriers. The concept of “wa” (harmony) is another cornerstone of Japanese cultural identity. This principle emphasizes the importance of social cohesion and avoiding conflict. As Hendry (1993) notes, “wa” is evident in various aspects of Japanese life, from corporate culture to family structures. It fosters a sense of community and interdependence, which is an integral part of the Japanese social fabric. The emphasis on group harmony often leads to the prioritization of collective goals over individual desires, a characteristic feature of Japanese cultural identity. One way “wa” enriches Japanese culture is through its impact on group-oriented behaviors and decision-making processes. For example, the practice of *nemawashi* — a form of consensus-building — ensures that decisions are made harmoniously, fostering cooperation and reducing conflicts in both social and professional contexts (Haghirian 2010). This prioritization of group harmony over individual interests reflects the cultural value of maintaining social cohesion, which remains deeply embedded in Japanese business practices and daily life. Additionally, “wa” is evident in traditional arts and cultural activities, such as tea ceremonies and *ikebana* (flower arranging), which emphasize balance, mindfulness, and mutual respect. These art forms are not only aesthetically significant but also serve as practices that promote peaceful interpersonal connections and a sense of tranquility, reinforcing the importance of harmony in individual and communal settings (Sen 1979). Furthermore, the concept of “wa” is closely linked to Japan’s approach to diplomacy and international relations, where emphasis is placed on fostering amicable relationships and resolving conflicts peacefully. This cultural value has contributed to Japan’s image as a nation that prioritizes collaboration and mutual understanding on the global stage (Dolan and Worden 1994). In essence, “wa” enriches Japanese culture by fostering a collective mindset, influencing traditional prac-

tices, and shaping Japan's contributions to global diplomacy. In 2019, when the emperor Naruhito took the throne, he has pledged to "stay close to the people" and "always think of the people," reflecting this ideal (Voice of America 2019).

Modern Japanese cultural identity is also influenced by globalization and interaction with other cultures. Although Japan is known for its strong preservation of tradition, it has also deftly integrated foreign elements into its culture. This synthesis is evident in the popularity of Western fashion, cuisine, and entertainment, which coexist with traditional Japanese customs. Researchers such as Ivy (1995) argue that this blend of tradition and modernity is a defining characteristic of contemporary Japanese cultural identity, demonstrating Japan's ability to adapt and innovate while maintaining its cultural core. Being aware of and respecting these cultural practices is essential for anyone dealing with Japanese individuals or communities. According to Lebra (1992), understanding these cultural nuances helps foster better interpersonal relationships and avoid misunderstandings in social and business contexts.

4. CAPACITIES OF CULTURAL SENSITIVITY IN JAPAN

Cultural competence and interculturalism play a significant role in Japan's participation in global dialogue, especially given the country's unique position as both a technologically advanced nation and a society deeply rooted in traditional values. Cultural competence involves the ability to understand, communicate, and interact effectively with people from different cultures. For Japan, this means striking a balance between maintaining its cultural identity and engaging with diverse global communities. According to Deardorff (2006), developing intercultural competence is essential for meaningful international engagement, enabling Japanese individuals and organizations to build stronger and more effective global relationships. Japan's emphasis on interculturalism is evident in its education system, which increasingly incorporates global perspectives, and it has been argued that the education system is the foundation for the development of an intercultural society. Programs such as the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET), which brings foreign teachers into Japanese schools, aim to foster intercultural understanding and language skills among Japanese students. This initiative not only helps students become more proficient in English or another foreign language, but also exposes them to different cultural norms and customs, building their intercultural competence in parallel. According to a study conducted by McConnell (2000), such programs have been instrumental in promoting intercultural awareness and sensitivity among the younger generation in Japan.

In the business sector, cultural competence is crucial for Japanese multinational corporations operating in different markets. Japanese companies such as Toyota and Sony have established extensive global networks and must navigate through diverse cultural landscapes to maintain their international competitiveness. This requires a deep understanding of local customs, business practices, and communication styles. A study conducted by Tung (1984) highlights that Japanese multinational managers who possess a high level of cultural competence are more successful in their overseas operations, as they can effectively bridge cultural gaps and foster better working relationships with local employees.

Cultural competence also plays a key role in Japanese diplomatic and international relations. The country's scores in the Freedom Index reflect its mature democracy, high political and legal stability, and prosperous economy, with only slight fluctuations over the last thirty years (Shiojiri 2025). In Japan, one key element of this stable success is the general reluctance to criticize the government, which is seen as a way of prioritizing national interests over individual concerns. This lack of political dissent has helped Japan pursue national goals with a sense of unity, driving its stability and prosperity, keeping the Liberal Democratic Party in power for so long, keeping citizen's respect and harmony. The societal inclination to conform and focus on collective well-being shapes governance in both beneficial and limiting ways. While this cultural foundation is deeply ingrained in Japan's identity, it also restricts the country's capacity for significant, transformative progress. As Pew Research Center (2018) showed, 62% of Japanese respondents said that no matter who wins an election, things do not change very much. As Japan engages in global diplomacy, understanding and respecting the cultural contexts of other nations is essential. Japan's approach to international cooperation often emphasizes mutual respect and the importance of cultural exchange. This is reflected in initiatives such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meetings, where Japan actively promotes intercultural dialogue and cooperation. Research by Keohane and Nye (1998) suggests that Japan's commitment to interculturalism enhances its ability to cooperate on global issues such as trade, security, and environmental sustainability.

The role of cultural competence in Japan extends to the realm of soft power. Japanese cultural exports, including anime, manga, and cuisine, have global appeal and serve as a tool for cultural diplomacy. „In 2020, Japanese anime industry generated about 24 billion \$, in 2022 it was \$26 billion, and 28\$ in 2023, the anime market is predicted to grow by 60 billion US dollars by 2031“ (SkyQuest 2024). By promoting its culture internationally, Japan fosters greater understanding and appreciation of its

values and traditions, thereby strengthening its global influence. According to Nye (2004), cultural diplomacy is an essential component of a nation's soft power, and Japan's effective use of cultural competence in its global cultural initiatives has significantly enhanced its international reputation. A strong academic example of Japanese soft power in culture is the promotion of Japanese language and culture through government-sponsored initiatives like the Japan Foundation. Established in 1972, the Japan Foundation works to enhance cultural exchange and foster mutual understanding globally by supporting Japanese language education, arts, and cultural programs (Japan Foundation official website). For instance, it funds Japanese language courses, provides scholarships, and organizes cultural festivals that introduce elements of Japanese heritage, such as traditional tea ceremonies, calligraphy workshops, and Noh theater performances. It is important to promote soft power by facilitating intellectual exchanges, such as hosting conferences and seminars on Japanese history, philosophy, and international relations. These efforts contribute to Japan's global influence by sharing its cultural values and traditions, creating a positive image, and fostering relationships with other nations through the soft power of cultural diplomacy.

The previously mentioned concept of "wa," which speaks of social harmony and conflict avoidance, is deeply embedded in various aspects of Japanese life, from workplace interactions to everyday communication. People in Japan often prioritize group consensus and indirect communication to maintain harmony, as Hofstede (1980) pointed out in his theory of cultural dimensions, which places Japan high in collectivism and uncertainty avoidance. This cultural trait means that expressing disagreement or directly confronting someone can be seen as disruptive and rude. Non-verbal communication is another critical aspect where the role of cultural sensitivity is important. Japanese people often rely on subtle body language, facial expressions and tone of voice to convey their true feelings, which may not always match their verbal expressions. Hall (1976) noted in his studies of high-context cultures that in Japan, much communication relies on unspoken context, making it essential to pay close attention to non-verbal cues in order to fully understand the message being conveyed.

Cultural sensitivity extends to understanding Japanese formalities and rituals. For example, the practice of exchanging business cards (*meishi*) follows specific etiquette: the card should be given and received with both hands, with a slight bow, and it is considered impolite to immediately put the card away without looking at its contents. Such formalities reflect a broader cultural emphasis on respect and proper behavior.

The importance of these rituals in maintaining professional relationships in Japan is well documented in the work of Yamada (1997), who highlights how these practices contribute to building trust and mutual respect, as the Japanese greatly appreciate it when someone knows their cultural habits.

Finally, understanding and respecting Japanese cultural sensitivities can significantly improve intercultural interactions and cooperation. For example, in the context of international business, cultural awareness can lead to more successful negotiations and partnerships. By acknowledging and adapting to Japanese ways of doing things, such as decision-making processes and communication styles, foreign companies can build stronger and more effective relationships. Research by Peltokorpi (2007) highlights that cultural sensitivity not only facilitates smooth interaction but also improves overall organizational performance in multinational environments.

Intercultural understanding is essential in today's increasingly globalized world because it encourages effective communication and cooperation between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. With globalization bringing different cultures into closer contact through international business, travel, and digital communication, the ability to understand and respect cultural differences has become crucial. According to Ting-Toomey and Chung (2012), developing intercultural competence enables individuals to navigate cultural nuances and engage in meaningful exchanges, thereby enhancing personal and professional relationships across cultural boundaries.

Inclusivity and empathy also directly contribute to a more harmonious and just society. By appreciating the diverse perspectives and experiences of people from different cultures, individuals can challenge stereotypes and reduce prejudice. This cultural empathy fosters a more inclusive environment in which everyone feels valued and respected, regardless of their cultural background. Research by Bennett (1993) highlights that intercultural sensitivity and understanding are key components of creating socially cohesive communities, as they foster openness and mutual respect. In essence, intercultural understanding not only improves individual interactions, but also strengthens the social fabric by promoting tolerance and mutual appreciation.

5. THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN GLOBAL DIALOGUE

Culture plays a key role in facilitating global dialogue, serving as a bridge connecting diverse societies. „Japan's cultural diplomacy has become fundamental part of its diplomatic strategies which contributes to its soft power, its economy and national image abroad“ (Shafiq and Kayani 2025). Japan, with its rich cultural heritage, ex-

emphasizes how understanding cultural identities can enhance mutual understanding and cooperation on the global stage. The concept of cultural diplomacy is key, where cultural exchange fosters soft power and improves international relations. By sharing traditional arts, cuisine, and practices, Japan creates pathways for deeper intercultural communication, emphasizing the importance of culture as a tool for peace and understanding (Nye 2004).

„In 2010 Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) officially launched the Cool Japan Campaign to enhance or boost its economic growth and project its soft power by utilizing the states unique and rich cultural assets. Through this Japanese government aims to achieve international influence and enhance its diplomatic ties by highlighting its cultural treasures. Furthermore, the campaigns' goal is to transform the traditional or old notions of Japan into contemporary cultural identity the attracts people worldwide” (Shafiq and Kayani 2025.)

Japanese initiatives for peace underscore the importance of collaboration across generations and sectors, contributing to offering valuable lessons for the international community in maintaining peace, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan describes Japan's Orientation as a Peace-loving Nation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan official website 2025). Concretely, Japan contributes to UN Peacekeeping and other international peace efforts, Official Development Assistance (ODA) for reconstruction and peacebuilding in conflict-affected regions, diplomatic and intellectual exchange programs aimed at fostering mutual understanding, and active promotion of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation through the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) and the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, which directly intertwines Japanese culture of peace with global peace efforts. As the only nation ever subjected to nuclear bombing, Japan holds a unique and profound responsibility in conveying the inhumanity of nuclear warfare. The devastating attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 left an indelible mark on the nation's history and collective memory, not just through the immediate loss of life, but through the long-term effects on survivors, known as „hibakusha“. Japan's role in advocating for nuclear disarmament is rooted in its firsthand experience of the catastrophic human and environmental consequences of nuclear weapons. Through its ongoing efforts in promoting peace and non-violence, Japan serves as a poignant reminder to the world of the extreme dangers posed by nuclear warfare, underscoring the moral imperative to prevent such horrors from ever being repeated.

In the context of business and diplomacy, understanding Japanese cultural norms such as “*tatemae*” (public facade) and “*honne*” (true feelings) is crucial. These con-

cepts influence communication styles and business practices, emphasizing the importance of cultural literacy in negotiations and cooperation. As Japan is involved in global trade and politics, recognizing and respecting these cultural nuances is vital for effective dialogue and partnership, reinforcing the importance of cultural sensitivity in international relations (Hofstede 1991). In the realm of trade, Japan's emphasis on quality, long-term relationships, and meticulous attention to detail can sometimes be overlooked by those unfamiliar with the country's business etiquette. By recognizing the importance of non-verbal cues, proper protocol, and patience in interactions, global actors can avoid misunderstandings and foster stronger, more productive partnerships. In this context, cultural sensitivity is not merely a gesture of politeness, but a strategic necessity to build mutual respect and trust, ensuring that international relations remain constructive and resilient amidst an increasingly interconnected world.

Japan's approach to technology and innovation is deeply intertwined with its cultural identity. Concepts such as "monozukuri" (the spirit of making things) emphasize craftsmanship and precision, influencing global industries and dialogues about manufacturing and technology. By sharing these cultural values, Japan not only promotes its technological advancements but also contributes to global discussions on sustainability and ethical manufacturing practices.

Japan's cultural heritage significantly enriches global dialogue, offering unique perspectives that enhance mutual understanding and cooperation. By embracing cultural diversity, nations can engage in more meaningful exchanges, fostering a world where cultural differences are celebrated rather than divided. As global challenges become increasingly complex, the role of culture in dialogue becomes increasingly critical, underscoring the need for cultural literacy and sensitivity in fostering harmonious international relations. As seen on the previous examples,

„Soft power in Japan's state foreign policy in the 21st century increasingly recognizes the importance as a means of enhancing its global influence and addressing regional challenges. Through cultural diplomacy, educational exchanges, and international cooperation, Japan is building a network of allies that can support its security interests. As the global landscape continues to evolve, Japan's commitment to soft power will likely play a crucial role in shaping its national security strategy and ensuring its position as a key player in the international community“ (Barinov et al. 2025).

6. CONCLUSION

In today's world, cultural pluralism emphasizes the importance of interculturalism and cultural sensitivity for global dialogue. Cultural sensitivity enables better understanding and communication between different cultures, which is essential for maintaining harmonious international relations and constructive global dialogue. As global interactions become increasingly complex, the ability to adapt to different cultural contexts becomes essential. By recognizing and appreciating cultural differences, they can develop deeper connections between social communities. Cultural dialogue enables the exchange of ideas and experiences, which contributes to the cultural richness and pluralism of the global community. Through such exchange, societies can better understand each other's needs and aspirations, thus fostering peaceful coexistence. Cultural sensitivity plays a key role in this process, as it helps overcome stereotypes and prejudices.

Tradition and philosophy provide valuable lessons about collectivism, respect, and balance in Japan, as seen on concrete examples mentioned before. These values can be applied in a global context to promote understanding and tolerance. Japanese art, tradition and philosophy offer unique perspectives that can enrich international dialogue, leading to advanced social, political, and economic relations. Japanese cultural heritage emphasizes the importance of tradition and innovation in connecting different societies. Through the combination of old and new, traditional and modern, Japanese culture shows how one can preserve identity while at the same time adapting to global changes. This serves as an inspiration for other nations to embrace and nurture their cultural values as they face the challenges of the modern age. Intercultural understanding can be used as a tool for enhancing international cooperation and global dialogue with the aim of creating intercultural world, respectful of each societies specificities. By embracing cultural diversity and sensitivity, we can build a more connected and harmonious world. Through strengthening dialogue and mutual understanding, global challenges can be solved through joint efforts. Therefore, cultural sensitivity is not only a tool for improving communication, but also a foundation for building bridges of intercultural understanding, which ultimately creates a better and more just world.

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MOSTOVI INTERKULTURALNOG RAZUMIJEVANJA: ULOGA JAPANSKE KULTURNE OSJETLJIVOSTI U GLOBALNOM DIJALOGU

Summary

U savremenom svijetu kulturni pluralizam postaje sve važniji za unapređenje globalnog dijaloga. Ovaj rad istražuje ulogu japanske kulturne osjetljivosti kao mosta za interkulturalno razumijevanje i definira koncept kulturne osjetljivosti. Kroz analizu japanske tradicije i filozofije definira se japanski kulturni identitet i naglašava da se izgradnjom kapaciteta za kulturnu osjetljivost potiče bolje razumijevanje između društava. Tradicionalne japanske vrijednosti, poput poštovanja, harmonije i ravnoteže, mogu poslužiti kao temelj za razvoj dubljih međunarodnih veza. Kroz primjere iz političkog života, kulture i filozofije, rad pokazuje kako japansko kulturno nasljeđe doprinosi razvoju globalnog dijaloga. Prihvatanjem raznolikosti društva mogu bolje sarađivati, smanjujući nesporazume i jačajući odnose. Japanska perspektiva pruža vrijedne uvide u važnost očuvanja kulturnog identiteta uz prilagođavanje savremenim izazovima. Zaključno, rad naglašava kako kulturna osjetljivost i interkulturalizam mogu igrati ključnu ulogu u izgradnji skladnog i povezanog svijeta. Prihvatanjem ovih vrijednosti, globalna zajednica može zajednički odgovoriti na izazove, promovirajući mir i razumijevanje.

Ključne riječi: interkulturalizam; kulturna osjetljivost; Japan; globalni dijalog; kulturni pluralizam

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