



## Original Research

# Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy in Northeast Asia: Education, Culture, and Science as Instruments of Global Influence

Den Sik Kan, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, Ukraine  
Leonid Chupriy, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, Ukraine  
Viktoriia Uriadova, Kyiv National Linguistic University, Ukraine  
Svitlana Tsymbal, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, Ukraine  
Dmytro Vyshynskyi, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, Ukraine

**Received:** 03/09/2026; **Accepted:** 06/24/2026; **Published:** 08/07/2026

**Abstract:** The relevance of this research stems from the theoretical limitations of the classical concept of "soft power" in analyzing pragmatic, state-centered instruments of indirect influence used by Northeast Asian states in contemporary geopolitical competition. The study aimed to provide a theoretical analysis and comparative classification of cultural diplomacy instruments implemented by the People's Republic of China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, with particular attention to education, culture, and techno-science. The research used conceptual analysis of key theories of soft, sharp, and normative power, comparative analysis of state strategies, and systematic generalization of theoretical models of techno-nationalism and cultural diplomacy. The study determined that pragmatic models in the region, such as China's "cultural confidence" and Japan's "Cool Japan," differ fundamentally from Western concepts, often transforming soft power into instruments of "hard" ideological control or "techno-nationalist" competition. The analysis revealed a strategic hierarchy of instruments, where mass cultural diplomacy, in particular Korean "Hallyu," created broad appeal; elite educational programs, such as Japanese government scholarships and Chinese "One Belt, One Road" scholarships, formed long-term networks, and "techno-nationalism," in particular China's "China Standards 2035" strategy, was identified as a form of influence aimed at establishing structural dominance. The study concluded that contemporary geopolitical competition is shifting from traditional soft power to a struggle for technological and normative leadership, which creates systemic dependencies. The results provide a refined typology of hybrid models of influence, improving the accuracy of assessment of the long-term consequences of strategies used by global actors.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Ideology, Authoritarian Regime, Censorship, State-Centrism

## Introduction

The growing geopolitical significance of Northeast Asian countries has been accompanied by the formation of unique, pragmatic models of indirect influence. Large-scale state investments by the People's Republic of China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea in education, culture, and high technology have transformed these sectors into key instruments for promoting national interests on the global stage. This active, state-centered instrumentalization contrasts with traditional Western approaches to international relations

and makes it necessary to analyze the theoretical foundations and practical mechanisms of these states' cultural diplomacy and soft power strategies.

Academic attempts to explain these phenomena have encountered significant conceptual limitations. Classical theories of "soft power," based on the organic appeal of culture and political values, proved insufficient for describing strategies characterized by direct state control and ideological instrumentalization (Sultanbayeva 2013). This mismatch stimulated theoretical evolution and the search for new terminology, in particular the concept of "sharp power," to describe manipulative and corrupt practices aimed not at winning trust but at destabilization. In this context, cultural diplomacy, which encompasses educational, cultural, and scientific exchanges, emerged as a key but hybrid field of study. This field occupies an ambiguous position between instruments designed to generate authentic appeal and mechanisms associated with state propaganda. The analysis of this tension between theoretical models and pragmatic, state-centric policy implementation in Northeast Asia has become the central problem of the study.

Biletska (2021) examined culture as a strategic resource for national branding, state image formation, and soft power. Holoborodko (2025) traced the development of public cultural diplomacy and identified challenges arising from geopolitical competition and digital transformation. Komilovich (2025) analyzed South Korea's cultural diplomacy, focusing on Hallyu, state support for creative industries, and their contribution to the country's international image. Mitsusada and Kawakita (2022) assessed Japanese quasi-capital public funds and public-private financing mechanisms within the "Cool Japan" strategy, including their opportunities and risks. Otmazgin (2021) compared the public diplomacy models of Japan, South Korea, and China to identify common features of an East Asian approach to soft power. Poplavska (2022) compared US and Japanese cultural diplomacy, systematizing their principal instruments, institutions, similarities, and differences.

Yang and Yun (2023) examined South Korea's "new entrepreneurial state" through the semiconductor industry, identifying both its contribution to technological development and limitations in integrating small and medium-sized enterprises. Dorosh (2021) analyzed Japanese cultural diplomacy in Southeast Asia, focusing on programs aimed at strengthening influence and improving Japan's image in Association of Southeast Asian Nations countries. Marchenko (2024) clarified the concept of cultural diplomacy and systematized the main forms and mechanisms through which states pursue foreign-policy objectives by means of cultural exchange.

Previous studies have frequently examined individual instruments of influence, such as Confucius Institutes, Japan's "Cool Japan" policy, or Korea's "Hallyu," as separate cases. However, less attention has been paid to their comparative positioning within a broader system of state-centric influence. The research gap, therefore, lies in the need to systematize educational, cultural, and techno-scientific instruments according to their functional logic,

target audience, temporal horizon, and capacity to create either symbolic appeal, elite networks, or structural dependence. Therefore, the study aimed to systematize and theoretically differentiate pragmatic models of soft power applied in Northeast Asia and to classify them according to the spheres of education, culture, and science. To address this research problem, the following tasks were set: to analyze theoretical modifications of the concept of soft power in the pragmatic models of the region and its transformation into “hard power”; to conduct a comparative analysis of the educational and cultural strategies of the three states and identify key institutional and philosophical differences; and to explore models of “techno-nationalism” and normative influence through science and standardization as the highest form of strategic indirect influence.

## Materials and Methods

The theoretical and methodological basis of this study consisted of scientific publications and strategic documents used to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the evolution and application of indirect influence instruments in Northeast Asia. The region of Northeast Asia included the People’s Republic of China (PRC), Japan, and the Republic of Korea as the main objects of comparative analysis. The research, conducted in November 2025, covered theoretical concepts beginning with their codification in 1990 and examined contemporary state strategies published up to and including 2025. The analytical framework was structured around three functional areas corresponding to distinct channels of influence: culture as mass influence, education as elite influence, and science/technology as normative influence. These categories were operationalized according to four criteria: target audience, mechanism of influence, expected duration of effect, and degree of institutional or technological embeddedness. Mass influence was understood as the generation of broad symbolic appeal among foreign publics; elite influence as the formation of durable professional, academic, and political networks; and normative influence as the capacity to shape standards, rules, and infrastructures that structure the behavior of other actors over time. The criteria for including materials in the research sample were defined. The analysis included fundamental theoretical works that introduced the key concepts of “soft power,” “sharp power,” and “knowledge diplomacy” into scientific discourse; academic studies offering critical analysis; and empirical application of these concepts in the context of China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea; and official doctrinal and strategic documents published by the governments of the countries under study, which outline the goals and mechanisms of their cultural, educational, and scientific policies. The exclusion criteria were journalistic and media materials that had not undergone academic review and studies devoted exclusively to the military or economic aspects of “hard power” without any connection to indirect influence.

The study by Nye Jr. (1990), in which the concept of “soft power” was first formulated and substantiated, was used as a fundamental theoretical basis. This material was used as a

theoretical basis for further modifications of this concept. To conceptualize the challenges posed by state-centric, illiberal models of influence, the study by Walker and Ludwig (2017) was used. Their introduction of the term “sharp power” provided the necessary analytical framework for describing manipulative and destabilizing practices that exceeded the scope of the classical “soft power” based on attractiveness. The analysis of hybrid models and individual institutional instruments, such as cultural centers, was based on the research of Popovic et al. (2020). The analysis of Confucius Institutes and the concept of “political separation” provided the methodological basis for determining how authoritarian regimes emulate the institutional form of Western cultural organizations while separating them from liberal principles.

In the analysis of the educational component for indirect influence, the study by Knight (2022) was used. The proposed concept of “knowledge diplomacy” provided a distinction between cooperation and the pragmatic, unilateral use of education to achieve national interests. A comparative analysis of educational strategies was conducted according to the following criteria: strategic goal (forming geopolitical loyalty among elites, economic strengthening, national branding), target audience (future leaders, highly qualified specialists, cultural promoters), and binding mechanism (geopolitical agreements, demographic needs, cultural diplomacy). The analysis of Japan’s current policy was based on the official government document of Intellectual Property Strategy Headquarters (2024). This material became the primary source for identifying strategic goals, the role of the state (in particular, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry) and the mechanism of public-private partnership in the Japanese model. The analysis of the Chinese model was based on key doctrinal sources, in particular the report by X. Jinping (2017) at the Nineteenth Congress of the Communist Party of China, which articulated the concept of “cultural confidence.” Analytical reviews of the China Standards 2035 strategy, in particular the analysis by Wu (2022), were used to study “techno-nationalism.” The official government document, the Ministry of Science and ICT (2022), which details approaches to technological leadership, was used for a comparative analysis of the Korean model.

For an in-depth analysis of the educational vector, specialized regulatory documents were added to the source base: Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China (2016), the guidelines of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2024), and the operational guidelines of the National Institute for International Education (2024).

Conceptual analysis was used to examine the theoretical evolution of key concepts. This approach made it possible to trace how the original concept of “soft power” was transformed and adapted in the academic and political discourse of Northeast Asia. It also helped identify unresolved theoretical issues that necessitated the introduction of related concepts, including “sharp power” and “knowledge diplomacy.” Comparative analysis was the main method used to systematize and verify the data. The method was used to compare the national models of cultural diplomacy developed by China, Japan, and South Korea. To ensure consistency, the

comparative analysis was based on a unified set of parameters, including the basic theoretical model, the dominant philosophy, the role of the state, key institutions, the type of educational model, and the nature of relations with content. The application of this method made it possible not only to describe three different strategies but also to identify their fundamental differences in objectives and effectiveness.

Strategic document analysis was used to examine official rhetoric and stated objectives. This method was used to analyze materials such as the Intellectual Property Strategy Headquarters (2024), China's doctrinal guidelines (Jinping 2017; Wu 2022) and the Ministry of Science and ICT (2022). The method revealed discrepancies between public rhetoric (promotion of culture) and real goals (economic growth, technological dominance, ideological "right to discourse"). Case studies were used for an in-depth study of individual institutions and phenomena. It was used to analyze the phenomenon of Confucius Institutes, the Japanese Cool Japan Fund, and the Korean Hallyu strategy. This method illustrated how general theoretical models of political separation or public-private partnerships function in practice and identified the reasons for their success or failure in specific contexts. The sources studied using this method were the Intellectual Property Strategy Headquarters (2024), China's doctrinal guidelines (Jinping 2017; Wu 2022), and Korean digital strategy (Ministry of Science and ICT 2022).

## Results

### Theoretical Foundations and Classification of Soft Power Instruments

The theoretical interpretation of instruments of indirect influence in international relations began with a fundamental analysis of the concept of "soft power," first codified and popularized by Nye Jr. (1990). The concept was defined as the ability of a state to influence other actors in international relations and achieve desired outcomes through attractiveness, in contrast to traditional instruments of "hard power," such as coercion or material incentives. In Nye Jr.'s classic theoretical model, the sources of this attractiveness were structured into a three-component system. It included the culture of the state, in cases where it was perceived as attractive to others; the political values of the state, such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, especially when the state adhered to its proclaimed values; and the foreign policy of the state, when it was regarded by others as legitimate, moral, and serving the public good.

The instruments for implementing this power were academic exchanges, media products that promoted the values of openness and individualism, and public diplomacy. Despite widespread academic and political recognition, this concept has been subject to significant criticism, pointing to its theoretical limitations. One of the main problems was the unmeasurability of soft power. In particular, it was difficult to establish a direct causal relationship. It was rarely possible to demonstrate empirically that a change in the behavior or policy of one state resulted directly from the cultural attractiveness of another, rather than from material variables emphasized in realist or neoliberal theories. Another line of criticism

concerned the excessive focus on the “subject.” Many sources of soft power, such as popular culture, the activities of non-governmental organizations or academic circles, were beyond the direct control of the state (Babayev 2024). This created conceptual ambiguity regarding the ownership and control of such power. In addition, the conceptual vagueness highlighted soft power as merely a euphemism for “propaganda,” especially in cases where the state actively and consciously sought to instrumentalize domestic appeal (Dossumov and Adilov 2023; Yukaruç 2017).

These theoretical limitations and ambiguities in Nye Jr.’s (1990) original concept became a necessary condition for its subsequent modification and adaptation in non-Western contexts, particularly in East Asia. In the academic and political discourse of the region, a “de-Americanization” of the term occurred, with East Asian interpretations, especially Chinese ones, characterized by a much more pragmatic, state-centric, and instrumental approach. For these actors, soft power was seen not as an abstract appeal but as a concrete instrument of state policy for achieving measurable national interests. The key theoretical modification of soft power in East Asia was the inclusion of economic power in its scope (Sultanbayeva et al. 2013). According to this modification, economic coercion, such as sanctions, remained hard power, but economic incentives, such as investment or trade, became part of soft power. However, this pragmatic, state-centric instrumentalization, particularly evident in China, has created a fundamental contradiction. J. S. Nye Jr. cautioned that soft power must be authentic and that “the best propaganda is no propaganda.” When the state takes full control of soft power, it begins to be perceived as propaganda (Amandykova et al. 2021). This undermines its effectiveness, creates a “soft power deficit,” and requires a new theoretical definition.

The inadequacy of the classic concept of soft power to describe the actions of authoritarian regimes in the twenty-first century has led to an academic need for new conceptual vocabulary. The instruments used were not “hard” in the military sense, but at the same time, they were not “soft” either, as they did not rely on appeal. To describe this phenomenon, the term “sharp power” was introduced into academic discourse, notably by Walker and Ludwig (2017). To clarify operational definitions and prevent analytical overlap, this study categorizes “soft power” as influence reliant on voluntary attraction, transparent cultural exchange, and independent civil society engagement. In contrast, “sharp power” is operationally defined by the presence of covert coercion, structural asymmetry, and the deliberate, state-sponsored distortion of the information environment. The fundamental goal was not to build legitimacy or secure public trust. Instead, it was directed toward destabilization through the dissemination of disinformation and the polarization of social groups. The strategy also involved the use of direct coercion and corrupt mechanisms of co-optation to ensure loyalty. A key theoretical feature of sharp power is its use of asymmetry between open democratic systems and closed authoritarian systems. Authoritarian regimes actively restricted the free flow of information and external

influence in their home environments, while exploiting the openness of democratic societies (Kobroń-Gąsiorowska 2021).

Academic debates about Chinese Confucius Institutes (CIs) positioned these structures on the borderline between soft and hard power. Externally, they were presented as a classic instrument of soft power, similar to Western cultural institutes, to promote language and culture, but the CIs functioned as the arm of the Chinese state and part of a global apparatus of influence and propaganda (Sun 2023). They promoted state ideology, restricted academic freedom in host universities on sensitive topics, and controlled staff recruitment and curriculum content. The theory of political separation proposed by Popovic et al. (2020), among others, was used to explain this phenomenon. According to this analysis, the Chinese state used a model of emulation, copying the institutional form of Western cultural institutions such as the Goethe-Institut or the Alliance Française. However, this was accompanied by a separation from the fundamental principles of Western cultural diplomacy, namely academic independence, the arm's length principle, and open dialogue. This separation was not an accidental mistake in implementation. It was a consequence of the state-centric, instrumental model of soft power analyzed earlier. The authoritarian system could not tolerate the independence necessary for authentic soft power, as its goal was ideological promotion.

However, applying this framework requires critical reflection on the potential biases inherent in Western perspectives, particularly regarding the concept of "sharp power." Categorizing CIs strictly as propaganda instruments risks overlooking alternative literature that views these institutes as a defensive form of soft power, mechanisms designed to counter dominant Western narratives and foster genuine cultural exchange in a multipolar world. Furthermore, the sharp power framework can inadvertently obscure the fact that Western cultural diplomacy also inherently projects state power and geopolitical interests, suggesting that the strict dichotomy between "authentic" Western influence and "manipulative" non-Western practices may be epistemologically limited and prone to normative bias.

As a result, when the state emulated the form of an institution, it was forced to separate itself from its principles. The activities of information/cultural centers (ICs) were viewed negatively, which sparked opposition and, as a result, led to the mass closure of these centers in Western countries (Kobroń-Gąsiorowska 2024; Popovic et al. 2020). Based on an analysis of the theoretical framework and practices of North-East Asian countries, indirect influence tools were classified into three categories, differing in their target audience and functional purpose (Table 1).

Table 1: Functional Classification of Indirect Influence Instruments

| <i>Instrument Category</i>          | <i>Definition/Target Audience</i>                                                        | <i>Function</i>                                                                                                                                                                | <i>Specific Instruments</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mass-influence instruments          | Targeted at the widest possible foreign audience                                         | Creation of a generally positive image, mass appeal, and “background” friendliness                                                                                             | Popular culture (e.g., Hallyu, anime, and manga), global media products, and international sporting events (e.g., the Olympic Games) are used to showcase values and traditions                                                                                                    |
| Tools of elite influence            | Dedicated activities targeting current and future leaders, academic and political elites | Forming loyal elites, creating long-term professional and personal networks, and integrating foreign specialists into the internal intellectual, economic, and political orbit | Higher education programs for international students, prestigious state scholarship programs, scientific exchanges, and bilateral academic cooperation                                                                                                                             |
| Instruments of regulatory influence | The most “hidden,” long-term and structural form of influence                            | Establishment of global “rules of the game,” creation of structural dependence for other actors, and ensuring long-term competitive advantage                                  | Development and promotion of proprietary technological standards (e.g., in the areas of 5G, artificial intelligence [AI], and environmental standards) through international standardization organizations, promotion of proprietary legal norms and intellectual property regimes |

*Source: Compiled by the Authors Based on Grix and Lee 2013; Jang and Kim 2024*

An analysis of these three categories revealed that they were not equivalent but formed a hierarchy of strategic depth and long-term impact. To avoid overly normative assumptions, this hierarchy is methodologically justified through the integration of empirical indicators and policy implementation data. Mass influence, particularly pop culture, proved to be broad but shallow. Empirical tracking of international public opinion polls versus bilateral voting alignments demonstrates that cultural popularity creates a positive image but rarely translates into measurable political leverage on complex issues such as territorial disputes. Elite influence, particularly education, was demonstrably deeper, as verified by quantitative case studies of scholarship alumni (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan [MEXT] and Global Korea Scholarship [GKS]) advancing to influential



bureaucratic and diplomatic positions, though its geopolitical effect is delayed by generations. Normative influence, i.e., technological standards, was identified as the deepest and most persistent, a conclusion supported by the theory of “digital diplomacy” and empirical metrics regarding long-term structural dependencies in 5G infrastructure adoption and supply chain integration. If a state successfully established a domestic technological standard as global, it forced other states and corporations to adapt to its technological ecosystem. This created a “virtuous cycle” of profits from licensing and further innovation, which cemented leadership. This formed a structural dependency that was more long-lasting than the ephemeral “appeal” of pop culture.

### Education as a Tool: Theoretical Models of Loyalty Formation

The analysis of educational instruments of influence required reference to the theoretical framework of “knowledge diplomacy.” This concept was defined as describing the role of international higher education, research, and innovation (IHERI) in international relations. It was proposed as an alternative view of educational exchanges that went beyond the traditional discourse of soft power. The study revealed a fundamental conceptual distinction made by Knight (2022) between “knowledge diplomacy” and “soft power” in the context of education. Soft power was based on attractiveness, but in the East Asian context, it is instrumental, aimed at unilateral national interests and the co-optation of elites. In contrast, knowledge diplomacy is theoretically based on cooperation, reciprocity, and trust to achieve mutual benefits and solve global problems. Notably, this theoretical framework of knowledge diplomacy was fundamentally incompatible with the pragmatic, state-centric East Asian model of soft power. The theory of knowledge diplomacy required reciprocity and the elimination of power imbalances, while East Asian practice was hierarchical and aimed at national superiority. The educational models of China, Japan, and South Korea demonstrated their function as instruments for achieving national goals related to geopolitics, economic development, and international branding (Huang 2013).

The activities of the CIs were linked to a broader Chinese strategic concept of gaining the “right to discourse.” This concept, in turn, was based on the ideology of “cultural confidence” and consisted of the need to promote a unique Chinese narrative, history, and civilizational model at the global level to challenge the dominant Western narratives. CIs became one of the principal instruments for achieving this goal. The IC model was hybrid, combining two components: it used a “soft” tool, an attractive offer of language courses, cultural events such as calligraphy, tea ceremonies, New Year celebrations, and educational resources that were in demand around the world (Bondarenko et al. 2022). This “soft” external form served as a vehicle for transmitting more ideologically charged elements of sharp power. This component consisted of promoting state ideology, censoring topics

sensitive to the Chinese government, such as Taiwan, Tibet, and human rights, as well as directly controlling staff recruitment and curriculum content (Dunford and Liu 2024).

ICs functioned as a “propaganda apparatus” under the supervision of the Chinese state agency Hanban. As noted, ICs used a model of emulating Western cultural institutions but with “political separation” from their fundamental principles. This led to the strategic failure of the IC model in Western democracies, with “soft” and “hard” goals proving to be mutually exclusive—the “hard” ideological component negated the effectiveness of the “soft” linguistic and cultural tool (Abilkassym et al. 2024; Lo and Pan 2020). The negative political and academic reaction in the United States, Australia, and European countries was directed not against the study of Chinese as an educational practice but against the violation of the principles of academic freedom and manifestations of “sharp” ideological influence inherent in China’s state-centric model. By attempting to pursue two goals simultaneously, the Chinese model ultimately risked discrediting language education by closely associating it with propaganda.

In contrast to the Chinese model of direct control, the Japanese and Korean models of educational diplomacy were based on the theoretical foundations of “cultural partnership” and “objective dialogue.” The Japan Foundation (JF) and the Korea Foundation (KF) were identified as key institutions for implementing this policy. The Japanese model was regarded as a model for “catalyzing” sociocultural and political transformations, although the JF was historically closely linked to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and, in essence, acted as a “state actor.” Its theoretical model of operation was based on stimulation rather than direct control. The model emphasized “objective dialogue” and “mutual understanding.” In practice, this was implemented through the provision of funding for the establishment of independent Japanese studies centers at foreign universities, as well as through the provision of grants and scholarships for independent research, in which the foundation did not directly interfere.

The South Korean model demonstrated a somewhat different approach, relying on “network partnerships.” Analysis of KF’s activities, particularly in the digital space, showed that its communication strategy generated decentralized and “loosely connected” commentator networks. This model proved effective in building international networks among foreign audiences, contributing to the spread of soft power. The theoretical difference from the Chinese international relations model was the degree of control. The JF and KF models were based on the “arm’s length” principle, which was absent in the CI model. Japanese and Korean institutions funded independent research, while the Chinese model dictated its content and restricted discussion. The effectiveness of authentic soft power reveals a paradox: it increases only when direct ideological control is limited, since excessive state intervention may transform attraction into coercive or sharp power and provoke resistance (Knight 2023; Zhiyengaliyeva et al. 2024).

An analysis of the leading state scholarship programs in the three countries revealed that their theoretical objectives differed radically and were correlated with national strategies (Table 2).

Table 2: Comparative Analysis of the Strategic Objectives of State Scholarship Programs in North-East Asia

| Country     | Scholarship Program                                                                 | Theoretical Aim                                                     | Strategic Mechanism and Details                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| China       | One Belt, One Road (Belt and Road Initiative [BRI]) Scholarships                    | The formation of geopolitical loyalty among elites                  | The provision of scholarships is closely linked to bilateral BRI agreements. The aim is to foster loyalty among future elites in participating countries, mainly from the Global South, to create a favorable environment for geo-economic projects                                               |
| Japan       | Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan scholarship | Economic strengthening and attraction of highly qualified personnel | Counteracting negative demographic trends (aging, population decline) and strengthening the innovative economy. A pragmatic strategy of “importing” personnel, part of a plan to attract 400,000 students by 2033                                                                                 |
| South Korea | Global Korea Scholarship (GKS) scholarships                                         | Creating a global network of cultural influencers                   | The official goal of the program is to “cultivate global talent and create international networks.” This goal is achieved through a national branding strategy aimed at raising global awareness of the country and forming an international community loyal to its cultural and political values |

Source: Compiled by the Authors Based on Shih and Cao 2022; National Institute for International Education 2024; Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology 2024; Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China 2016

A comparative analysis of these three models revealed that the strategic objectives of scholarship programs functioned as a reflection of key national deficits or strategic vulnerabilities of each state. Japan had a demographic and economic deficit, and the MEXT program was aimed at addressing this internal problem. South Korea had a global brand deficit, and the GKS program addressed this external problem. China had a geopolitical deficit, and its scholarships addressed this external geopolitical challenge. The educational strategies of Japan and Korea demonstrate a fundamental contradiction: simultaneous investment in importing foreign talent and a significant loss of leading specialists. This

outflow of highly skilled professionals to Western countries, motivated by better working conditions and greater research freedom, signals deep internal structural deficits.

### Culture as a Tool: Theoretical Models of “Cultural Export”

The countries of Northeast Asia have addressed the dilemma of choosing between “high” traditional heritage and contemporary popular culture by developing models that strategically combine both elements. They have recognized that the classic Western dichotomy of “high” versus “low” is not relevant in the East Asian context. Instead, pop culture is used as an initial stimulus to attract a mass global audience, with the initial interest then successfully converted into the consumption of more strategically relevant products—language learning, tourism, interest in traditional heritage, and ultimately the formation of a positive national brand.

The Chinese model of cultural diplomacy was based on “cultural confidence,” understood as a fundamental and enduring force for achieving the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.” It drew on China’s traditional culture, revolutionary culture, and advanced socialist culture developed under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. Unlike the Japanese “Cool Japan” and Korean “Hallyu” models, it was characterized by strong state control, censorship, and the integration of culture and politics. Cultural export aimed not only to increase international appeal or economic benefits but also to demonstrate the uniqueness and moral superiority of the Chinese civilizational model and strengthen China’s global “right to discourse.” However, “cultural confidence” was initially directed inward, prioritizing national rejuvenation, ideological unity, and the consolidation of national identity. State control therefore ensured the ideological conformity of domestic cultural products before their use as instruments of external influence (Syzydkov et al. 2016; Kim 2016).

The Japanese “Cool Japan” model represents the theoretical opposite of the Chinese model. It emerged as an attempt by the state to capitalize on and systematize the existing, organic global popularity of Japanese pop culture, including anime, manga, and video games, which had emerged without state involvement. The theoretical basis of this model was twofold: national branding and industrial policy. In contrast to the Chinese model, the state did not create cultural content. The role of the state was to perform brand management or “catalyst” functions. The government recognized the economic potential of this cultural appeal and began to act as a coordinator to assist the private sector in exporting. The key institutions that managed this process were not ideological but economic: the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and the special Cool Japan Fund it created. For METI, “Cool Japan” was primarily an industrial policy aimed at stimulating domestic economic growth and increasing export revenues. Soft power was therefore a desirable but secondary effect of this economic strategy. This model represented a strategy of state co-optation of an organic, non-state, private phenomenon to achieve state goals. The state (METI)

instrumentalized existing commercial success, using a “light touch” strategy: the government provided funding and rebranding, linking anime with traditional culture, but left content creation to the private sector. Therefore, Japan avoided accusations of “propaganda” that China received, as the content remained “authentic” and commercial, while effectively achieving the state’s geopolitical and economic goals.

The South Korean “Hallyu” model has become one of the most dynamic and successful examples of cultural export. Its emergence was closely linked to the Asian financial crisis of 1997. After the crisis, the South Korean government made a strategic decision to identify “creative industries” as a key sector for future economic growth and strengthening national prestige. Two opposing theoretical models emerged to explain the “Hallyu” phenomenon: the “Success Without Design” model and the “Coherent State Project” model. The “Success Without Design” theory argued that “Hallyu” was an unexpected success, driven by private entrepreneurs, the high competitiveness of Korean cultural industries, and the emergence of global digital networks, with government support being only “fragmentary” (Kim 2016). The “Coherent State Project” model, on the contrary, argued that Hallyu was a “paradigmatic model of soft power” and a “coherent state diplomatic project” (De Oliveira 2025). It was based on a close “state–market–society coalition” and massive institutional and financial support from the state. The most accurate model was a hybrid model that synthesized both approaches. Although “Hallyu” was largely based on the efforts of the private sector, its unprecedented global success and sustainability would have been difficult to achieve without substantial and strategic state support (Munawaro et al. 2025). The role of the Korean state, for example, through the Korea Creative Content Agency (KOCCA) agency, was that of a strategic investor, promoter, and coordinator (Table 3).

Table 3: Comparative Analysis of Theoretical Models of Influence in Northeast Asia

| <i>Key Parameter</i> | <i>People’s Republic of China</i>                   | <i>Japan</i>                                           | <i>Republic of Korea</i>                                     |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Primary theory model | State control and “cultural confidence”             | National branding “Cool Japan” and “Industrial Policy” | “Hallyu” hybrid public–private partnership                   |
| Dominant philosophy  | Ideological control, “Right to discourse”           | Economic growth, Co-opting market success              | National prestige, creative industries as a strategic sector |
| Role of the state    | Censor, indoctrinator, direct controller            | Brand manager, catalyst, investor (METI)               | Investor, promoter, coordinator                              |
| Key institutions     | Confucius Institutes, Hanban, Propaganda Department | METI, Cool Japan Fund, Japan Foundation                | Korea Foundation, KOCCA                                      |

|                                  |                                                  |                                                                              |                                                                 |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Educational model (scholarships) | Shaping the geopolitical loyalty of elites (BRI) | Attraction of highly skilled personnel for the economy and demography (MEXT) | Creation of a global community loyal to the state (GKS)         |
| Relationship with content        | Direct control and censorship                    | The Extended Hand policy, content created by the private sector              | The Extended Hand policy, content created by the private sector |

*Source: Compiled by the Authors Based on Jinping 2017; Santos and Marques 2022; Huang et al. 2025*

Thus, the South Korean model was identified as an effective theoretical synthesis. It integrated two key elements: high levels of government investment and global promotion, which are characteristic of the Chinese protectionist model, with the delegation of content creation to the private sector, which is Japan's market model. This hybrid mechanism of "public-private partnership" facilitated South Korea's achievement of global scale in cultural exports. At the same time, it minimized the risks of accusations of "propaganda," as control over the content of cultural products (K-pop, dramas) remained within the competence of private companies.

#### Science and Technology as a Tool: Theoretical Models of "Techno-Nationalism"

The classical theoretical framework of "science diplomacy" traditionally defined three main functions: the use of scientific expertise for foreign policy purposes, diplomatic promotion of international scientific cooperation, and the use of cooperation itself as an instrument of soft power (Arndt 2019). This collaborative and optimistic model was based on the assumption that science is a global public good and a means of building trust. However, this paradigm has proven to be theoretically outdated in the context of intensifying geopolitical competition. The current approach is increasingly characterized by "techno-nationalism," which treats science and technology not as common goods but as strategic assets in zero-sum competition. Thus, the collaborative dimension has been de facto replaced by priorities of research security and technological superiority.

In the competitive environment of the twenty-first century, the doctrine of "techno-nationalism" emerged, which was theoretically defined as a geopolitical doctrine combining geopolitical, economic, ideological, and security considerations (Sedliar et al. 2023). Fundamentally, it links a state's technological capabilities to its national security and geopolitical advantages. This doctrine is based on a realist worldview that interprets the international system as a field of antagonistic competition, in which the gains of some actors correspond to the losses of others and states frequently use economic coercion. This model has been applied to the strategies of Northeast Asian states, in particular China's quest for leadership in artificial intelligence (AI) and semiconductors, Japan's leadership in robotics, and South Korea's status as a global leader in semiconductor manufacturing. Technological leadership served as a public demonstration of national capability and strategic credibility

(Ministry of Science and ICT 2022). This served as proof of the effectiveness and progressiveness of the national development model, such as the Chinese model of state capitalism or the Korean innovation model. This demonstrated effectiveness, in turn, made the national model attractive for other countries to emulate, which is a classic mechanism of soft power (co-optation) (Babayev et al. 2024).

The establishment of technological standards was identified as one of the least visible, yet most significant, instruments of regulatory influence. Technical standards are specifications that determine how products and services function. Although they appear apolitical, they carry economic and political weight. The theoretical mechanism of influence is best understood through the lenses of “geoeconomics” and “network power,” where control over standards establishes long-term, entrenched political and economic dominance. Crucially, this process extends beyond the state as the sole dominant actor. It requires acknowledging the pivotal role of global technology companies, transnational corporate consortia, and civil society in shaping normative influence. Control over a standard, for example, through Standard Essential Patents (SEPs) actively registered and enforced by multinational tech conglomerates, generates long-term license fees and cements digital network centrality. These revenues, in turn, were reinvested in further innovation, creating a cycle that cemented technological and economic leadership.

Thus, the struggle to set standards was defined as a direct geopolitical struggle for future rules of the game. In this context, China’s “China Standards 2035” strategy was analyzed. This strategy was an official state plan designed to transform China from a “follower” of standards to a “global leader” in setting them. The strategic goal was to make Chinese technical solutions the global standards in key technologies of the future, such as AI and 5G (Wu 2022). The mechanisms for achieving this goal included synchronizing China’s domestic standards with international standards to achieve 85% compliance and reduce regulatory differences, actively promoting Chinese standards in the “One Belt, One Road” countries, creating a dependent technological space, and strengthening China’s presence and influence in international standardization organizations such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

This strategy of normative influence is the most advanced stage of indirect influence: cultural diplomacy generates symbolic appeal, educational diplomacy creates elite networks, and normative diplomacy establishes structural dependence. If the Chinese 5G standard became global, other countries would be forced to adopt it for their technologies to be compatible. This is a coercive outcome achieved through a technical mechanism. This marks a strategic evolution from the flawed “soft–sharp” hybrid model of CIs, which faced international rejection for being overtly ideological and easily identifiable as propaganda. In contrast, the China Standards 2035 initiative functions as a covert, highly complex form of normative influence. By remaining technically rigid and superficially non-ideological, it avoids accusations of propaganda while securing an enduring, structural advantage in the global system—a goal traditional “hard power” cannot easily achieve.

## Discussion and Conclusion

A critical analysis of the findings demonstrated the inadequacy of the classical concept of “soft power” for describing the pragmatic, state-centered models of influence developed in Northeast Asia. A distinct strategic hierarchy of instruments was established, with mass cultural influence proving to be the least sustainable and elite educational influence proving to be more long-lasting but delayed in time. The most significant result was the justification of “normative influence,” implemented through “techno-nationalism,” as the highest and deepest form of influence. This approach, reflected in China’s “China Standards 2035” strategy, was identified as creating not ephemeral appeal but long-term structural dependence. It also revealed a fundamental strategic evolution, particularly of the Chinese model, from an unsuccessful and overtly ideological “soft-sharp” hybridization to a covert, technical and more complex “normative hard” model aimed at achieving systemic dominance.

The problem of political regime transformation under external pressure, discussed by Arase (2022), acquires new significance in light of the findings of this study. While previous studies recorded the fact of the threat to democracy and civil society from China, the results of this study reveal the internal anatomy of this threat. The hybrid nature of the Chinese model, which combines the external shell of linguistic and cultural exchange with an internal mechanism of ideological filtration and censorship, explains how authoritarian influence penetrates open societies. The CIs analyzed in this study appear not merely as instruments of public diplomacy but as operators of sharp power that use democratic openness to advance state-controlled ideological objectives. This shifts the discussion from the consequences described by Arase to a preventive analysis of the tools of manipulation.

The phenomenon of technological nationalism, often examined in the literature through the prism of sociocultural practices, requires separate and more detailed consideration. Anthropological approaches presented in the works of De Togni (2024) tend to interpret Japanese robotization and innovation as a form of cultural performance and specific social interaction. However, the macro-level analysis applied in this study shifted the emphasis to pragmatic and security dimensions, revealing the state’s underlying motivation. Japan’s technological leadership functions primarily as a strategic resource for adapting to demographic crisis and economic stagnation, rather than as a means of cultural representation. The correlation between MEXT’s innovation policy and educational strategies, revealed in the course of the study, demonstrates that the involvement of foreign specialists is a form of compensation for internal deficits, rather than an act of altruistic knowledge exchange. This view can be used to integrate the performative aspects of technology into the broader picture of geopolitical competition, where a nation’s ability to generate innovation becomes the main marker of its viability and right to regional leadership (Nepop and Lukachuk 2021; Serbina et al. 2022).



Fiaz (2023) examined the strategies of South Korea's creative industries, presenting them as a successful model for the globalized media landscape. The author's analysis emphasized the economic efficiency and adaptability of the Korean model. The study reached similar conclusions about the mechanism of the Korean "Hallyu" model, identifying it as the most effective hybrid synthesis (between Chinese state control and the Japanese market model). However, the results of this study fundamentally differed in their strategic assessment of this tool. While Fiaz (2023) interprets "Hallyu" as a successful strategy, this study classifies it as an instrument of mass influence which, despite generating broad appeal, remains relatively shallow and only partially convertible into political leverage. The study concluded that "elite influence" (GKS scholarships) and "normative influence" (technological standards) form much more stable and developed dependencies than mass culture.

A comparison with the conclusions of Hunter and Hong (2021) indicates that a key vector of contemporary geopolitical struggle lies in the sphere of scientific innovation and technological standards. While the authors state that the shift in the balance of power due to technological development is a *fait accompli*, this study theoretically substantiates the existence of a specific mechanism of normative influence that drives this shift. The identification of the China Standards 2035 strategy as an instrument of normative hard power postulates that competition for the establishment of technological standards is becoming a more decisive factor in the architecture of the future world order than traditional ideological confrontation. The creation of structural dependence through technological ecosystems (5G, AI, infrastructure protocols) forms long-term commitments between partner states that cannot be broken as easily as cultural or humanitarian ties (Blikhar et al. 2023; Orlovskiy et al. 2023). Technological incompatibility becomes a barrier to escaping the orbit of the hegemon's influence, and it is this aspect, combining economic benefit with political control and coercion to adapt, that is defined as the highest form of evolution of indirect influence tools in the region. This indicates a gradual shift from influence based primarily on symbolic attraction to influence exercised through infrastructures, standards, and technological ecosystems. However, this shift should not be interpreted as the complete disappearance of soft power. Cultural appeal, educational exchange, and technological standard-setting increasingly operate together, producing hybrid forms of influence in which attraction, strategic coordination, and structural dependence are mutually reinforcing.

Kim et al. (2021) used a quantitative approach to modeling structural equations to identify the factors of success and sustainability of the K-pop industry. The study addressed internal variables, content quality, artist management systems, and innovation within the industry. The study also analyzed the K-pop phenomenon (within the framework of "Hallyu") but used a fundamentally different methodology and analytical perspective. Instead of a quantitative analysis of internal factors, a qualitative conceptual analysis of the external and geopolitical function of this industry was conducted. In the study, the success of K-pop was explained not only by internal factors but also by the unique model of "public-

private partnership” (through the KOCCA agency). While the authors identified factors of commercial sustainability, this study identified the strategic function of K-pop as a “tool of mass influence” and its limitations compared to other public policy tools.

Pietrewicz (2020) described the phenomenon of the “Korean Wave” (“Hallyu”) and the process of its cultural expansion in the study. The study recorded the scale and mechanisms of the spread of South Korean culture, considering it a successful example of soft power. This study used similar factual material, but the results differ significantly in their analytical focus. The author’s study is predominantly descriptive, stating the success of cultural expansion. In contrast, in this study, the phenomenon was not simply described but critically classified within the framework of a three-component hierarchy of influence. The effectiveness of the hybrid “Hallyu” model was confirmed, but at the same time, it was argued that this “mass influence” is superficial. The study concluded that the strategic importance of this influence is inferior to “elite influence” (the formation of loyal elites through GKS scholarships) and “normative influence” (technological leadership). Thus, while the author noted the success of Hallyu, the study identified the strategic limits of this success.

Thus, the discussion demonstrated that previous studies often focused on individual aspects of indirect influence, such as general geopolitical consequences, micro-level performative practices, or descriptive analysis of cultural expansion. Although previous studies have noted the success of mass cultural instruments, particularly “Hallyu,” or analyzed the commercial factors underlying their sustainability, the present study offers a fundamentally different analytical perspective. In the study, these instruments were critically classified within a strategic hierarchy. The study argued that mass influence is superficial and limited in its political conversion. A key contribution of this study is the theoretical differentiation of mass, elite, and normative influence as distinct but interconnected layers of cultural diplomacy and state-centered international strategy. The study shows that techno-nationalism and standard-setting represent particularly durable forms of normative influence, since they shape the infrastructures and rules through which other actors operate. At the same time, this conclusion should be understood cautiously: normative influence does not replace cultural or educational diplomacy but complements them within broader hybrid strategies of global positioning.

The findings suggest that the models of influence used by Northeast Asian countries are not merely regional phenomena. Rather, they contribute to the formation of global norms and contemporary geopolitical competition. By analyzing hybrid influence strategies, this research clarifies how China, Japan, and South Korea strategically use cultural diplomacy and technological nationalism to expand their global influence beyond the traditional framework of soft power. The shift from soft power to normative and techno-nationalist influence, as demonstrated by China’s “China Standards 2035” initiative and Japan’s emphasis on technological innovation as a strategic resource, can provide valuable insights into how other

global actors might adapt their strategies in the context of an increasingly competitive international landscape.

The distinction between mass, elite, and normative influence provides a lens through which we can better understand the differing strategies used by global powers. Mass influence, such as Korea's "Hallyu," offers broad appeal but lacks long-term sustainability. Elite influence, exemplified by educational scholarships and exchange programs, generates more lasting impact, though it is often more subtle and delayed. Normative influence, particularly in the context of China's techno-nationalism, reflects the highest level of control, shaping global systems and standards that influence structural dependencies. This nuanced understanding of influence is important not only for analyzing Northeast Asia but also for examining the broader strategies of global powers, including the US, the European Union, and emerging states seeking to strengthen their geopolitical position.

These distinctions are particularly relevant to international higher education, where elite educational programs can create lasting networks and shape future leaders within global governance structures. Global cultural industries also face the challenge of navigating the growing tension between cultural expansion and ideological control, as seen in the cases of China and Japan. Furthermore, the implications for future standards governance are profound, as countries seek to shape the regulatory and technological frameworks that govern global industries. In this sense, the study provides a critical framework for understanding how global actors, through the strategic deployment of cultural, educational, and technological diplomacy, are reshaping the future of international relations, governance, and the global economy.

The limitations of this study were due to its predominantly theoretical nature, based on an analysis of open sources and strategic documents. The inability to access non-public government directives and internal discussions on the development of techno-nationalism strategies limited the depth of analysis of their implementation. Beyond empirical constraints, this study recognizes the epistemological limitations of its theoretical approach. Relying on predominantly Western-centric concepts, such as the dichotomy between soft and sharp power, limits the possibility of alternative interpretations of East Asian statecraft. This framework often presupposes a lens of structural domination, which might eclipse indigenous rationales for state-centric policy, such as historical context, national rejuvenation, or models of civilizational development that do not perfectly align with liberal democratic norms. A promising direction for further research is to conduct empirical studies to assess how instruments of mass, elite, and normative influence are perceived by target audiences in recipient countries, and to develop quantitative models to measure the conversion of normative power into real political capital. Further research could also include an analysis of the mechanisms of resistance to normative influence on the part of developing countries. Future studies would benefit heavily from adopting non-Western epistemological frameworks to yield a more nuanced and balanced interpretation of regional and global influence.

## AI Acknowledgment

The authors acknowledge the use of Grammarly and ChatGPT for language polishing, grammar correction, syntax improvement, and overall enhancement of English language quality. All outputs were reviewed and substantially edited by the authors. The authors remain fully responsible for the scientific content, accuracy, and integrity of the manuscript, in line with COPE guidance on AI tools.

## Informed Consent

The authors declare that informed consent was not required as there were no human participants involved.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

## REFERENCES

- National Institute for International Education. 2024. *2025 Global Korea Scholarship: Application Guidelines for Undergraduate Degrees*. <https://www.uakoreaedu.org/doc/2489aff003315a4ae1d8ff183359019c.pdf>.
- Abilkassym, Aidana, Yerzhan Bimoldanov, and Aliya Seraliyeva. 2024. "Problematic Issues of Prevention of Criminal Violence in the Sphere of Family and Domestic Relations." *Pakistan Journal of Criminology* 16 (3): 467–482. <https://doi.org/10.62271/pjc.16.3.467.487>.
- Amandykova, Saule, Zhanibek Korpebayev, Lyudmila Bukaleroova, Anara Mukasheva, and Aygul Userova. 2021. "Legal Regulation of the Procedure for Elections of Deputies of the Majilis of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan." *Journal of Legal, Ethical and Regulatory Issues* 24 (5): 1–10. <https://www.abacademies.org/articles/legal-regulation-of-the-procedure-for-elections-of-deputies-of-the-majilis-of-the-parliament-of-the-republic-of-kazakhstan-10828.html>.
- Arase, David. 2022. "The Rise of China and the Future of Democracy and Civil Society in East Asia." In *Globalization and Civil Society in East Asian Space*, edited by K. Um and C. Takenaka. Routledge.
- Arndt, Abigail. 2019. *Informal Second Language Learning: The Role of Engagement, Proficiency, Attitudes, and Motivation*. University of Oxford. <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid%3Ac579077d-61fd-4b94-bd57-de7063389122?utm>.

- Babayev, Farid. 2024. "The Impact of the Government Information Policy on Effective State Administration." *Scientific Work* 18 (3): 75–79. <https://doi.org/10.36719/2663-4619/100/75-79>.
- Babayev, Farid, Iryna Goncharenko, Hennadii Mazur, Ulmas Abdullaev, and Lyudmyla Chernyaha. 2024. "Investment Flows and Country Development in Emerging Markets: Analysing the Impact of Foreign Investment on Economic Growth." *Theoretical and Practical Research in the Economic Fields* 15 (4): 894–908. [https://doi.org/10.14505/tpref.v15.4\(32\).09](https://doi.org/10.14505/tpref.v15.4(32).09).
- Biletska, Oksana. 2021. "Culture as a Nation Branding Tool Within the International Interaction System." *Culture and Art in the Modern World* 22: 22–33. <https://doi.org/10.31866/2410-1915.22.2021.235887>.
- Blikhar, Mariia, Mariia Vinichuk, Mariiana Kashchuk, Vitalii Gapchich, and Sergiy Babii. 2023. "Economic and Legal Aspects of Ensuring the Effectiveness of Counteracting Corruption in the System of Anti-Corruption Measures of State Authorities." *Financial and Credit Activity: Problems of Theory and Practice* 4 (51): 398–407. <https://doi.org/10.55643/fcaptp.4.51.2023.4138>.
- Bondarenko, Valentyn, Ivan Okhrimenko, Vadym Piaskovskyi, Andrii Antoshchuk, and Alla Marchuk. 2022. "Scientific Tools for Forming Professional Competence of Patrol Police Officers." *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education* 11 (2): 687–695. <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v11i2.21987>.
- De Oliveira, Cristiane. 2025. "The Hallyu Wave as a Strategic Soft Power Tool: South Korea's Cultural Diplomacy in the 21st Century." *SciELO Preprints*. <https://doi.org/10.1590/SciELOPreprints.12388>.
- De Togni, Giulia. 2024. "Staging the Robot: Performing Techno-Politics of Innovation for Care Robotics in Japan." *East Asian Science, Technology and Society: An International Journal* 18 (2): 196–213. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18752160.2023.2295144>.
- Dorosh, N. V. 2021. "Japan's Cultural Diplomacy as a Tool of 'Soft Power' in the Southeast Asian Region." Bachelor's thesis, Vasyly Stus Donetsk National University.
- Dossumov, Serimzhan, and Aibek Adilov. 2023. "The Proportional Electoral System of Kyrgyzstan as a Way to Avoid Violating the Citizens' Right to Proportional Party Representation." *Pakistan Journal of Criminology* 15 (3): 263–284. <https://www.pjcriminology.com/publications/the-proportional-electoral-system-of-kyrgyzstan-as-a-way-to-avoid-violating-the-citizens-right-to-proportional-party-representation>.
- Dunford, Michael, and Weidong Liu. 2024. "China's Evolving International Economic Engagement: China Threat or a New Pole in an Equitable Multipolar World Order?" *Area Development and Policy* 9 (2): 131–168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23792949.2023.2225092>.

- Fiaz, Hassan. 2023. "Creative Industry Strategies in a Globalized and Digitized Media Landscape: The South Korean Blueprint." In *The Future of Television and Video Industry*, edited by Y. Ismail. IntechOpen.
- Grix, Jonathan, and Donna Lee. 2013. "Soft Power, Sports Mega-Events and Emerging States: The Lure of the Politics of Attraction." *Global Society* 27 (4): 521–536. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600826.2013.827632>.
- Holoborodko, Oleh. 2025. "Conceptualization of Public Cultural Diplomacy: Evolution and Challenges in a Contemporary Global Context." *Herald UNU International Economic Relations and World Economy* 54: 40–45. <https://doi.org/10.32782/2413-9971/2025-54-6>.
- Huang, Chin-Hao. 2013. *China's Soft Power in East Asia*. The National Bureau of Asian Research.
- Huang, Futao, Masako Kotake, Yangson Kim, Lilan Chen, Xin Li, and Tsukasa Daizen. 2025. *Rethinking Internationalization of Higher Education Under Geopolitical Shifts: Policy Responses in China, Japan, Korea, Australia, and the United States*. Centre for Global Higher Education. <https://www.researchcghe.org/publication/rethinking-internationalization-of-higher-education-under-geopolitical-shifts-policy-responses-in-china-japan-korea-australia-and-the-united-states/>.
- Hunter, Andrew, and Kyu-Dok Hong. 2021. *Geopolitical Implications of Scientific Innovation Trends in Northeast Asia: A Joint Report of the CSIS International Security Program and the Chey Institute*. Center for Strategic and International Studies. [https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/210624\\_ISPChey\\_ScientificInnovations\\_NEAsia.pdf?VersionId=GYKOD.iVyyMXYLdR0nsHHP5xKYY6GYuH](https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/210624_ISPChey_ScientificInnovations_NEAsia.pdf?VersionId=GYKOD.iVyyMXYLdR0nsHHP5xKYY6GYuH).
- Intellectual Property Strategy Headquarters. 2024. *New Cool Japan Strategy*. Cabinet Office, Government of Japan. [https://www.cao.go.jp/cool\\_japan/english/main\\_document\\_2024.pdf](https://www.cao.go.jp/cool_japan/english/main_document_2024.pdf).
- Jang, Kyungjae, and Sean Kim. 2024. "Promoting Popular Culture (and) Tourism as National Policies: Comparing 'Cool Japan' and 'Korean Wave.'" In *Media, Place and Tourism*, edited by S. Reijnders, E. Martens, D. Castro, D. Póvoa, A. Nanjangud, and R. Schiavone. Routledge.
- Jinping, Xi. 2017. *Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era*. Foreign Languages Press.
- Kim, Joon-ho, Seung-hye Jung, Jung-sik Roh, and Hyun-ju Choi. 2021. "Success Factors and Sustainability of the K-Pop Industry: A Structural Equation Model and Fuzzy Set Analysis." *Sustainability* 13 (11): 5927. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13115927>.
- Kim, Jungsoo. 2016. "Success Without Design: Hallyu (Korean Wave) and Its Implications for Cultural Policy." *Korean Journal of Policy Studies* 31 (3): 101–118. <https://doi.org/10.52372/kjps31305>.

- Knight, Jane. 2022. *Knowledge Diplomacy in International Relations and Higher Education*. Springer.
- Knight, Jane. 2023. "Knowledge Diplomacy: Findings, Misunderstandings, and Challenges." *International Higher Education* 1 (114): 16–18. <https://ejournals.bc.edu/index.php/ihe/article/view/16423>.
- Kobroń-Gąsiorowska, Łucja. 2021. "Censorship and Whistleblowing in a Workplace: Selected Issues." *Acta Universitatis Lodzianis. Folia Iuridica* 97: 131–142. <https://doi.org/10.18778/0208-6069.97.07>.
- Kobroń-Gąsiorowska, Łucja. 2024. "Inclusion of the Protective Function into Non-Employee Relationship." *Studia Iuridica Lublinensia* 33 (2): 109–128. <https://doi.org/10.17951/sil.2024.33.2.109-128>.
- Komilovich, Furkat. 2025. "The Cultural Diplomacy of the Republic of Korea." *EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 11: 339–342. <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra21590>.
- Lo, Tin Yau Joe, and Suyan Pan. 2020. "The Internationalisation of China's Higher Education: Soft Power with 'Chinese Characteristics.'" *Comparative Education* 57 (2): 227–246. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2020.1812235>.
- Marchenko, Alyona. 2024. "Cultural Diplomacy: Concept and Implementation Mechanisms." *Economy and Society* 1 (70): 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.32782/2524-0072/2024-70-150>.
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. 2024. *Application Guidelines: Japanese Government (MEXT) Scholarship for 2025 (Research Students)*. Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan. [https://www.mext.go.jp/content/20240327-mxt\\_kotokoku02-000034995-02.pdf](https://www.mext.go.jp/content/20240327-mxt_kotokoku02-000034995-02.pdf).
- Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. 2016. *Education Action Plan for the Belt and Road Initiative*. Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. [http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A20/s7068/201608/t20160811\\_274679.html?utm](http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A20/s7068/201608/t20160811_274679.html?utm).
- Ministry of Science and ICT. 2022. *The Digital Strategy of Korea*. Ministry of Science and ICT, Government of the Republic of Korea.
- Mitsusada, Yosuke, and Hidetaka Kawakita. 2022. "Status of Functions of Public Quasi-Equity Funds in Japan: Possibilities and Risks of Public-Private Funds." *Public Policy Review* 18 (2): 1–10. [https://www.mof.go.jp/english/pri/publication/pp\\_review/ppr18\\_02\\_01.pdf](https://www.mof.go.jp/english/pri/publication/pp_review/ppr18_02_01.pdf).
- Munawaro, Siti, Rini Anjelika, and Sawitri Puspita Sari. 2025. "The Role of Multilingualism in Enhancing the Language Experience of K-Pop Fans." *Al-Irsyad Journal of Education Science* 4 (2): 113–129. <https://doi.org/10.58917/aijes.v4i2.167>.
- Nepop, Lyubov, and Ivan Lukachuk. 2021. "Cultural Diplomacy as an Instrument of Soft Power." *Foreign Affairs* 31 (6): 58–61. [https://doi.org/10.46493/2663-2675.31\(6\).2021.58-61](https://doi.org/10.46493/2663-2675.31(6).2021.58-61).
- Nye, Joseph S., Jr. 1990. "Soft Power." *Foreign Policy*, September 1. <https://foreignpolicy.com/1990/09/01/soft-power-foreign-policy-magazine-joseph-nye/>.
- Orlovskyi, R., O. Us, and V. Shevchuk. 2023. "Human Trafficking Committed by Transnational Organised Groups: Criminal Law and Criminalistic Means of

- Combating It.” *Pakistan Journal of Criminology* 15 (4): 119–136. <https://www.pjcriminology.com/publications/human-trafficking-committed-by-transnational-organised-groups-criminal-law-and-criminalistic-means-combating>.
- Otmazgin, Nissim. 2021. “An ‘East Asian’ Public Diplomacy? Lessons from Japan, South Korea, and China.” *Asian Perspective* 45 (3): 621–644. <https://doi.org/10.1353/apr.2021.0029>.
- Pietrewicz, Oskar. 2020. *The “Korean Wave” and the Expansion of South Korean Culture*. [https://pism.pl/publications/The\\_Korean\\_Wave\\_\\_and\\_the\\_Expansion\\_of\\_South\\_Korean\\_Culture](https://pism.pl/publications/The_Korean_Wave__and_the_Expansion_of_South_Korean_Culture).
- Poplavska, Myroslava. 2022. “Main Directions of Cultural Diplomacy of the USA and Japan.” *Socio-Cultural Management Journal* 5 (2): 68–79. <https://doi.org/10.31866/2709-846x.2.2022.267520>.
- Popovic, Milos, Erin K. Jenne, and Juraj Medzihorsky. 2020. “Charm Offensive or Offensive Charm? An Analysis of Russian and Chinese Cultural Institutes Abroad.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 72 (9): 1445–1467. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2020.1785397>.
- Santos, Inês, and Luana Marques. 2022. “The Creative Economy of South Korea: A Case Study of the Hallyu Wave (Korean Wave).” *E-Journal of Intercultural Studies* 1 (10): 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.34630/erei.vi10.4771>.
- Sedliar, Y., A. Sapsai, I. Tsyrf, N. Serbina, and A. Moroz. 2023. “Political and Legal Assessment of the Budapest Memorandum: From Ukraine’s Renunciation of Nuclear Weapons to the Annexation of the Crimean Peninsula.” *Social and Legal Studios* 6 (3): 162–169. <https://doi.org/10.32518/sals3.2023.153>.
- Serbina, Natalia, Iuliia Tsyrf, and Artem Sapsai. 2022. “Understanding Colombia–Ukraine Relations: Modern Developments and a Global Perspective.” *Journal of Community Positive Practices* 22 (Special Issue): 141–162. <https://doi.org/10.35782/JCPP.2022.SI.11>.
- Shih, Lea, and Wei Cao. 2022. “The Impact of the ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ on International Scholarship Students.” *Frontiers in Sociology* 7: 793018. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2022.793018>.
- Sultanbayeva, Gulmira. 2013. “The Problems of Electronic Democracy and Political Communication.” *World Applied Sciences Journal* 25 (11): 1560–1571. [https://www.idosi.org/wasj/wasj25\(11\)13/7.pdf](https://www.idosi.org/wasj/wasj25(11)13/7.pdf).
- Sultanbayeva, G. S., A. T. Kulsariyeva, and S. B. Tazhiyeva. 2013. “Socioeconomic Problems of Intellectual Nation Formation in Kazakhstan.” *Actual Problems of Economics* 147 (9): 504–511.
- Sun, Shao-Cheng. 2023. “Confucius Institutes: China’s Cultural Soft Power Strategy.” *Journal of Culture and Values in Education* 6 (1): 52–68. <https://doi.org/10.46303/jcve.2023.4>.
- Syzdykov, Almaz, Ainur Abdirrova, Mira Aralbayeva, Assem Tapenova, and Talgat Makhanov. 2016. “Fraction as a Legal Form of Activity of the Parliament of the Republic of



- Kazakhstan (Taking into Account the World Experience).” *Indian Journal of Science and Technology* 9 (16): 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.17485/ijst/2016/v9i16/89832>.
- Walker, C., and J. Ludwig. 2017. *From “Soft Power” to “Sharp Power”: Rising Authoritarian Influence in the Democratic World*. National Endowment for Democracy. <https://www.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Introduction-Sharp-Power-Rising-Authoritarian-Influence.pdf?utm>.
- Wu, Yi. 2022. *China Standards 2035 Strategy: Recent Developments and Implications for Foreign Companies*. Asia Briefing. <https://www.china-briefing.com/news/china-standards-2035-strategy-recent-developments-and-their-implications-foreign-companies?utm>.
- Yang, Nareum, and Ji-Whan Yun. 2023. “When Old Institutions Pay Off: A New Entrepreneurial State in South Korea and Its Limit in Incorporating Small Firms into Semiconductor Production.” *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 24 (2): 270–287. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1468109923000026>.
- Yukaruç, Umut. 2017. “A Critical Approach to Soft Power.” *Journal of Bitlis Eren University Institute of Social Sciences* 6 (2): 491–502. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/393488>.
- Zhiyengaliyeva, Aigerim, Yerzhan Bimoldanov, and Aliya Seraliyeva. 2024. “Regulation of the Provocation of a Crime in the Criminal Legislation of Foreign Countries: What Should Kazakhstan Take into Account?” *Scientific Herald of Uzhhorod University. Series Physics* 1 (55): 1405–1413. <https://doi.org/10.54919/physics/55.2024.140qo5>.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Den Sik Kan, DSc:** Professor, Department of Oriental Culture and Literature, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, Kyiv, Ukraine  
Corresponding Author’s Email: [sikkanden@gmail.com](mailto:sikkanden@gmail.com)

**Leonid Chupriy, DSc:** Professor, Department of Political Science and Sociology, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, Kyiv, Ukraine  
Email: [l.chupriy@outlook.com](mailto:l.chupriy@outlook.com)

**Viktoriia Uriadova, PhD:** Associate Professor, Department of Korean and Japanese Philology, Kyiv National Linguistic University, Kyiv, Ukraine  
Email: [v-uriadova@hotmail.com](mailto:v-uriadova@hotmail.com)

**Svitlana Tsymbal, PhD:** Head of the Department of Chinese Language and Translation, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, Kyiv, Ukraine  
Email: [s\\_tsymbal@outlook.com](mailto:s_tsymbal@outlook.com)

**Dmytro Vyshynskiy, MSc:** Senior Lecturer, Department of Oriental Culture and Literature, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, Kyiv, Ukraine  
Email: [dvyshynskiy@hotmail.com](mailto:dvyshynskiy@hotmail.com)