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Cultural and Brand Nationalism in Japan.

Supervisor
Ch. Prof. Toshio Miyake

Assistant supervisor
Ch. Prof. Sonia Favi

Graduand
Mattia Calissi
Matriculation Number: 861013

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要旨

グローバル環境には文化の流行と消費に対して新しい現象を現れている。そういう環境にはナショナリズムが中心的な役割を果たしている。文化交流が飛躍的に増えている状況のなかで、文化の定義と流行に関わっている。境界を設けるので、ナショナリズムは固定した異文化交流を表していて、国民国家が社会の基本的な単位を紹介している制度を生み出す。そういう普及した説論は世界の社会的や政治的な現象を説明するための要素のである。近年にはナショナリズムは変化して、グロバル化の経済的な印象に合わせて新しいかたちで現れている。とくに、政治的な利益と関係があるナショナルなブランドを作り出した。魅力のあるナショナルブランドが広報外交のためにもっとも大切なソフトパワーを手に入れるための計画に入って、世界中で国家が自分の立場を改善するためナショナル文化の固定したイメージを使い始めた。しかし、そういう現象は文化に対して先のナショナリズムの独占的な意見だけでなく、ナショナリズムそのものも、そしてその中に現れた差別も再現している。それで、ナション・ブランディングという現象に対しての理解を深めることは今の政治的、文化的、社会的などについての状況をもっと分かることだと思う。

二十一世紀からには日本の政府もナショナルブランドを作るために努力していた。二〇〇四年には政府が「知的財産推進計画」を出版して、アジアとアメリカとヨーロッパの日本発コンテンツ（アニメや漫画など）の成功に興味が深まって、コンテンツビジネスを振興するために新しい政策を立てた。その時から、「日本」のイメージをクールジャパン（かっこいい日本）に変化させはじめていた。日本政府はナショナルなイメージを作り直して確立した発想も新規な意見や現象を使って、海外の政治的勢力が増やすためクール・ジャパン政策を実行している。作り出した本質主義と関わっている国柄を表すため、国家と国家の固定した異文化交流と個人の参加を支援している。そういう方法は少数グループと混成の―ナショナルに合わせない―文化を認めなくて、時に差別待遇もしている。

本書は日本のナショナリズムの中に表している発想とその歴史的な変化を分析する。とくに日本のナション・ブランディング詳細に分析して、クール・ジャパンという現象の特徴と結果の理解を深めようとする。まず、第一章はナショナリズムの要素とその現象の変化を分析する。次に、第二章は明治時代から六十年代にかけての日本のナショナリズムを見て、どうやって「日本」と「日本人」の意見を作られたことについて話したいと思う。第三章は、七十と八十年代の「日本人論」と文化的なナショナリズムの本質主義と関わっている日本文化のイメージとその結果を検討する。最後に、第四章にはクール・ジャパン政策と関わっている現象について話したいと思う。

Contents

Introduction

In recent years, increasing globalization has brought to the fore new dynamics in the circulation and consumption of culture. New technological advancement in communication and transport created the conditions for further multicultural encounter. In the complex environment of a globalized cultural panorama, nationalism comes to play an important role in the definition, managing and circulation of culture. At the same time, in a period of great migratory movements and political issues related to them, nationalist discourse is on the rise in Europe and in the U.S.. The so-called 'migrant crisis' has spurred a surge in nationalist movements in Europe (Teitelbaum, 2015). In the U.S., the political line of president Donald Trump is clearly against immigration and for renewing a strong sense of national belonging. These phenomena clearly show that nationalism maintains an important role in the contemporary political and cultural panorama.

Nationalism is an ideological discourse, a particular "style of thought" that is imbued with specific political and economic interests (Greenfeld, 1992; Smith, 1996). It is ‹‹a political principle which maintains that similarity of culture is the basic social bond›› (Gellner, 1997, 4). It is an established discourse that has its roots in XVIIIth century Europe and is closely related with the creation of the modern idea of state (Smith, 1996; Kramer, 1997). Nationalism managed to resist the test of time and still represents an important phenomenon in the present. However, in order to maintain its importance, nationalism has to adapt to changing conditions. In a globalized environment it comes to represents a principle of organization that can give visibility to a specific cultural framework. By setting boundaries and expressing well-defined interests, nationalism portrays cross-cultural encounter as part of a system that considers the nation-state as the basic unit of society (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003; Iwabuchi, 2015). At the same time, it engenders the creation of an exclusive formulation of culture that contemporarily overshadows other, alternative, ideas about culture (Iwabuchi, 2015). Nationalism represents a part of the exercise of power in the present world. The pervasive characteristic of this ideological discourse makes it one of the key elements in the analysis of social, political and economic phenomena around the world. In recent years, nationalism underwent change and aligned with the economic logic of globalization (Aronczyk, 2013, 3). It started to be employed in the creation of national brands that could promote specific political and economic interests. The basic assumption behind this process is

that an attractive brand can foster a positive image of a country and consequently improve that country's political and economic influence around the globe (Van Ham, 2001; Aronczyk, 2013). Culture is deeply involved in this process. Creating an attractive national image means to select specific cultural elements or practices, connect them to the idea of a nation and then use it to represent a state in order to promote its interests in the global arena. However, not only does this phenomenon reproduce the exclusive formulation of culture of previous nationalism, it also helps maintaining nationalism and the discriminations often connected to it.

The case of Japanese nationalism is exemplificative of how nation branding has developed and what are the new dynamics expressed in it. Japanese political elites have been involved in systematic nation branding since the beginning of the Twenty-first century. In 2004 the Japanese government has officially started promoting the idea of a national brand (Daliot-Bul, 2009; Mitani, 2014). What has been defined as the "Cool Japan" policy represents an effort to reformulate national image by creating a mixture of old and new elements in nationalist discourse in order to align to a global trend of branding the nation and increase political influence abroad. Efforts in Japanese foreign policy have been focused on the creation of an attractive national brand for more than a decade and this trend shows no signs of slowing down. Japanese political elites fully embraced this new form of exerting political influence through the use of culture. The Cool Japan policy represents a good example of nation branding and of what its effects are.

Nation branding is a phenomenon that is deeply involved with the circulation of culture and international politics (Daliot-Bul, 2009; Aronczyk, 2013; Iwabuchi, 2015). As such, it represents an important part of the contemporary political and cultural environment. It fosters a specific view of culture that an individual engages with in everyday life. At the same time, it is also part of a trend in contemporary politics that influences the way power is expressed throughout the globe (Nye, 2007; Iwabuchi, 2015). Widening the understanding of this phenomenon is key to better understand contemporary political, cultural and social environment.

Nationalism has been analyzed in its constituting elements and formulations and in the historical development that brought it into being (Greenfeld, 1992; Smith, 1996; Kramer, 1997). Its exclusive characteristics and pervasiveness have also been addressed (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003). The case of Japanese nationalism too has been tackled by a number of

studies be it in a diachronic (Oguma, 2002; Doak, 2007) or synchronic (Yoshino, 1992; Befu, 2001) way. Recent works in matters of Nationalism have, instead, focused on its newly instituted branded form and, in the case of Japan, on the "Cool Japan" policy (Daliot-Bul, 2009; Aronczyk, 2013; Iwabuchi, 2015). The present work aims to continue in the wake of these works by providing a diachronic analysis of the development of Japanese nationalism and describing ideas and different formulations of it. In particular it aims at a better understanding of how nationalism developed into the new form of nation branding by analyzing Japanese nationalism. Tracing the harbingers of brand nationalism back to earlier formulations nationalism, the present work will attempt to give an overview of the process that brought nationalism to develop into its branded form. In so doing, it aims at highlighting the processes, phenomena and ideas formulated in earlier nationalist discourse that are reproduced in Japanese nation branding towards a better understanding of nationalism as a whole.

Structure of the Work

The first chapter of the present work will focus on nationalism in a broader sense. First the characteristics of nationalism, its constituting elements and the dynamics of its formulation will be analyzed. This form of ideological discourse will be presented in its construction of selective narratives and exclusive belonging that has managed to portray itself as a natural phenomenon (Smith, 1996; Kramer, 1997). Secondly, the analysis will move into the description of the development of this ideological discourse. In particular, the important framework of 'methodological nationalism' will be introduced in order to explain how the concept of the nation managed to foster a specific view of society and of cross-cultural encounter (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003). Moving on the grounds of this approach, the development of the phenomenon within the framework of increasing globalization will be analyzed. With the weakening of the state's authority and the blurring of boundaries induced by globalization nationalism managed to survive and restructured itself in order to maintain its importance. Last, the development of nationalism into its branded form and the effects that it created will be analyzed. Brand nationalism represents the new form of nationalist discourse and it operates by reproducing an exclusive and discriminatory elements of earlier

formulations of this ideological discourse while aligning to the increasing importance of the marketing-oriented logic of globalization (Aronczyk, 2013).

The second chapter will focus on Japanese nationalism from the Meiji period to the 1960s. First the development of nationalism in the Meiji period will be analyzed. During the Meiji period ideas of national distinctiveness were formulated that put the basis for later developments in nationalist discourse. At the center of attention at the time was the need to modernize the country and during this process the precedents of what will become later ideas of "Japaneseness" and of the Japanese nation were established (Doak, 2001; Oguma, 2002). The chapter then will continue its analysis with the formulation of nationalism in the Japanese empire. Exclusive formulations of national culture and belonging centered around ethnicity were developed and incorporated into imperial ideology. Two different theories about the "Japanese" were developed one that stressed a multi-ethnic origin, that was employed in justifying aggression in Asia, and one that portrayed them as a homogenous whole (Oguma, 2002). The analysis will continue with assessing the situation of nationalism after World War II. Intellectuals distanced themselves from wartime ideology. However, a recovery of some elements of wartime nationalism that were not so overtly connected to official ideology was enacted and the theory about the homogeneity of the "Japanese" was maintained (Doak, 2001; Oguma, 2002). At the same time, with the beginning of economic recovery the new formulation of developmental nationalism as a discourse to form aggregation was employed (Hein, 2008). The chapter will then show how forms of nationalism of the postwar period contributed to the creation of a new formulation of nationalist discourse, that of cultural nationalism, that constituted the next step in the development of Japanese nationalism. Before moving into the third chapter, however, an important ideological framework for the present analysis will be introduced: that of Occidentalism.

The third chapter will focus on the period of the 1970s and 1980s and in particular on cultural nationalism. First Japanese cultural nationalism under the form of *nihonjinron* (theory about the Japanese) and ideas expressed in it will be analyzed. Exclusivist ideas of Japanese culture were developed and included in an essentialist discourse over the uniqueness of the "Japanese" (Yoshino, 1992). After this overview, an analysis of the context in which *nihonjiron* was developed will be provided. In a period in which Japanese economy was knowing an extraordinary growth, *nihonjinron* was presented as the explanation of this success (Yoshino, 1992; Befu, 2001). The exclusive characteristics portrayed in *nihonijiron* were diffused and linked to practice in a mechanism in which cultural nationalism was

allegedly validated by economic success and economic success, in turn, was portrayed as being explained by cultural exceptionalism. Japanese cultural nationalism was embraced not only by a great deal of Japanese intellectuals but by foreigners as well. This phenomenon created a double structure of Orientalism and auto-Orientalism that contributed to the creation of a cultural hegemony (Befu, 2001). *Nihonjinron* was diffused through efforts of internationalization that helped shaping a particular image of "Japan". The chapter will conclude showing how *nihonjinron* represented an important precedent for nation branding as many of the processes that characterized the 1980s were important for the development of nationalism in the following years.

The fourth chapter will focus on Japanese nation branding. First, the conditions that brought nation branding to be considered by the Japanese political elite will be addressed. The 1990s economic downturn was a critical point for Japanese nationalism. The economic success that was at the base of the celebration of *nihonjinron* was no longer a suitable explanation for the support of nationalism (Iida, 2002). Political elites strived to find a way to better the position of the Japanese state in the international environment. At the same time, the increasing popularity of Japanese pop culture around the world provided a new opportunity to reshape national image (Iwabuchi, 2002; Mitani, 2014). It was the beginning of the "Cool Japan" policy that aimed at promoting Japanese political and economic interests worldwide. The chapter will then focus on the Japanese branding process analyzing the different elements contained in it. The Cool Japan policy a recovery of earlier cultural nationalism and the reproduction of an Occidentalist framework (Miyake, 2014; Iwabuchi, 2015). At the same time, the attractiveness of Japanese media culture was included in the newly formulated national image. These elements were employed to foster a specific view of Japanese culture that was sustained by a mechanism of advertisement, involvement of the private sector and participation of individuals. Following up on the precedent analysis, the last section of the chapter will focus on the effects of Japanese nation branding and attempts to offer a critical approach to it.

1. Nationalism: a discourse in constant development

Nationalism is a well-known discourse that shaped the political panorama since its gain in popularity during the nineteenth century. It is a phenomenon that, while ‹‹elud(ing) definite narratives›› (Kramer,1997, 545), proposes the view of an allegedly unique and homogenous ethnic group that is linked to a particular form of culture and lives in a well-defined territory. It engenders theories and practices of difference that distinguish the nation from an ever-shifting other. In the face of growing multicultural environments and the ability of transnational actors to cross and shape the national space, nationalism still represents a pervasive discourse and one that is frequently in the middle of international debate. The purpose of this chapter will be to provide an analysis of nationalism as a phenomenon in the wake of globalization processes. Once provided a basic overview of the constituting elements of nationalism as a discourse the analysis will then shift towards the developments that made it so pervasive and the transformations it underwent with the advent of globalization. Nationalism changed in the face of a strong acceleration of globalizing processes. By making use, once again, of some of the characteristics that allowed it to grow as a pervasive phenomenon, it developed a response that made it able to cope with challenges to its theoretic assumptions. The nation comes to be tossed into the sphere of economics and its image re-elaborated towards the creation of a brand image that could support the state's public diplomacy. The nation-state in an endeavor that brought it to develop ‹‹brands around reputations and attitudes in the same way smart companies do›› (van Ham, 2001, 4). Nationalism does not show to be in decline in a globalized world, as it was suggested in the 1990s in response to the growing displacement of its structures performed by global actors. It managed, instead, to cope with the change it was brought upon, and to bolster its influence once again into people's imagination of the global space.

1.1 Constituting Elements of Nationalism

For the present analysis it will be more useful to single out some of the elements that are considered to be constitutive of nationalism rather than attempt to give an all-encompassing definition of the phenomenon.

One of the major characteristics of nationalism as a discourse is what can be called a selective memory. It is common in nationalistic discourse to draw from what are considered by its theorists to be the model elements of culture and society and make them the foundation of national culture. These are often taken from history and, more precisely, from earlier civilizations considered to be the ancestors of the group. The culture of ‹‹the earliest, usually medieval, phases of a community's documented history›› (Smith, 1996, 450) becomes the model from which to select the elements that constitute a nation's "authentic" and "pure" culture. It is an attempt to create distinctiveness using the past as a proof of the genuine nature of the nation. First, a rediscovery of the past is enacted, then through what Anthony D. Smith defines as a 'phase of sifting' the selection of what is distinctive, indigenous and therefore "ours" takes place (Smith, 1996, 451). It is clear that the process of selection of cultural characteristics is crucial in the construction of nationalistic discourse. However, that alone is not enough to support the discourse and make it appealing for common people. There is the necessity to make what is unique a matter of belonging for individuals. It is in this moment that territorialization and ethnicity are highlighted. The idea of a specific territory that belongs to the nation creates a connection between the chosen cultural characteristics from the past and the present day geography of a place. It marks a crucial connection that sees the chosen group which resides in a particular territory as directly connected to the past features chosen earlier in the process of national formation. This link with the past, provided by territory, becomes an element of legitimation of the claims of uniqueness and authenticity of a particular group and form the elements necessary for it to become a community.

One further step in this direction is the link of ethnicity to particular territories (Smith, 1996,453). Ethnicity becomes the primary factor of adherence to a national community since it becomes what encompasses all of the features that were selected in the phase of sifting. The point of attention shifts from cultural traits to a human community in which people are participating in everyday life. This is a crucial step for the development and sustain of a national discourse as it becomes the rhetoric to be embraced by a community that, under allegedly ethnic ties, comes to be defined as a human population that shares ancestry, memories and a common culture linked to a physical territory (Smith, 1996, 447). It is in this way that cultural features that people perceive as part of their everyday lives are connected to a selective memory that constitutes the foundation of a nation. The shift from theory into practice, given by the exemplification through everyday socialization, aims to form a consensus around the national discourse while culture becomes the instrument trough which

to aim at a “pure”, allegedly better, form of community and, in a bigger scope, society that becomes a goal of the nation. In this project ‹‹culture began to serve both as a space in which to cultivate a national identity and as a weapon with which to safeguard it›› (Jusdanis, 1995, 36) since the project of a better and “pure” society that takes a particular form of identity as its core is, of course, threatened by many external factors.

Another aspect that constitute nationalistic discourse consists in the individuation of a peculiarity in contraposition to something or in the definition of an “other” to form a sense of belonging. In a few words: an oppositional structure. Defining the group and what makes it such is crucial in the attempt to create common ground between a population. Drawing on history, national consciousness is constructed in order to create what Peter Sahlins calls ‹‹the subjective experience of difference›› (Kramer, 1997, 526). This means that the difference stressed in nationalistic discourse is not objective and as such is open to interpretation. In particular, the characteristics that constitute the peculiarity or uniqueness of a given group are selected and can change over time. So while, in nationalism, ‹‹societies came to be regarded as unified wholes well distinguished from their neighbors›› (Jusdanis, 1995, 30) the unit of relevance is not by any means a well defined one. To claim that a national community is in its entirety devoid of internal differentiation, even though the theorists of nationalism believe in this as a goal, is a delusion that is proven wrong by participants in the nation project that may not share all of the convictions and ideas proposed in the discourse. With this in mind, cultural “othering” came to be a process of the utmost importance for nationalism. When changes in the socio-historical context shake the foundation of a previously defined national unit, the selection of a new relevant other could help revive national sentiment and validate other claims of uniqueness. Another point of relevance for the oppositional structure is the stress on the preservation of a distinct and valuable form of culture. The nation is called to play the role of protector of culture while, at the same time, culture preserves and grants the group a future (Jusdanis, 1995, 32). It is a circular discourse of self-legitimation. Moreover, by claiming to defend the group or the particular culture of the group, nationalistic thinking not only puts the interests of what is believed to be “our” side to the front but also defends them from external threats. Nationalism created a distinction over “us” and “them” focused on cultural difference ‹‹producing an alterity which contributed to build unity and identity›› (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2003, 581).

After the selection of a memory to be shared between a community and claiming that that particular group is distinct and unique in the face of cultural others, there is one more

important step to the construction of nationalism: the naturalization of the nation and its theoretical elements. In order to make the discourse more appealing and effective the constitutive parts of the argumentation are to be made not only solid but also difficult to be questioned. Once again practice becomes the focus of nationalism in the attempt to build a mechanism of authentication. The main strategy for naturalization is to make people feel to be part of the nation, that is to say, to focus on national socialization. While we have already seen that everyday socialization constitutes a process in which the elements presented as the core of the nation are to be demonstrated, it is still necessary to introduce the primary strategies by which this enactment of the nation is performed. National socialization consists in making people feel part of the nation through events or rituals or even the association of objects to the nation. In their analysis of nationalism and individual adherence to it, Henk Dekker, Darina Malová and Sander Hoogendorn (2003, 347) single out five positive national attitudes, ranging from a feeling of belonging to nationalism, in a cumulative hierarchy. They argue that an individual's national attitude is influenced by three factors. The first is ‹‹an individual's affective observation and experiences in one's country and with one's people›› (Dekker, Malová, Hoogendorn., 2003, 349). As pointed out earlier, the step that brings national discourse from theory into practice is of primary importance to the validation of the discourse. The second is ‹‹the processing of affective messages from others about one's country and people›› (Dekker, Malová, Hoogendorn, 2003, 349). Once again pointing out the distinction between one's own nation and "others" becomes a validating factor. Moreover, the recognition from an "outsider" of the nation further validates the claims of peculiarity and uniqueness of nationalism. The third step proposed by the three authors is the development of attitudes derived from early behavior. That is to say, the sum of an individual's emotional experiences of nationalism, its desires connected to a lifestyle and its participation in a national community. The most important process in this third step is national socialization. The authors argue that national rituals are emotional events that shape the individual's perception of itself and its surroundings and, at the same time, they link positive emotions to national symbols (Dekker, Malová, Hoogendorn, 2003, 351). It is by exploiting this emotional participation in socializing events that nationalism takes part in everyday life in an attempt to make itself be perceived as something common and shared between a community. Another step in the direction of naturalization is playing on the perceived difference. Since the perception of belonging to the national group is developed in a contrastive way, making use of the aforementioned oppositional structure, the confirmation of this aspect can also come from the individual's experience of difference. If the group is incline to consider certain

cultural traits as part of their characteristics trough the emotional affiliation of national socialization then it is also plausible that it can perceive other traits as not being part of their heritage. This, in turn, means that experience of contact with people outside the proposed group of the nation can make the perception of particularity stronger.

Nationalism depends on difference to validate its claims and particularly effective in this case is the dialectic between nations. If one group comes in contact with another's presentation of national characteristics then it will be easy to use national characteristics developed in their own place of origin and experienced throughout their lives as a tool of comparison. Making national socialization an individual's base form of evaluation for cultural and social matters is an effective strategy to foster nationalistic sentiments and make nationalism being perceived as a natural phenomenon. An example of this process is the use of national symbols in international sport competitions. In his analysis of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics Takeuchi Yukie (2016, 107) explains how national symbols were revitalized through publicizing and merchandizing products for the event. What is astonishing is that such symbols (i.e. the national flag (*hinomaru*), the national anthem and the white and red colors), that until 1958 were associated with the militarism of the war period and therefore not positively perceived by the population, could be proposed once again to the public as symbols of the nation (Takeuchi, 2016, 110). It can be argued that the sport event managed to create aggregation around those symbols trough the display of foreign nationalities and by portraying them as fixed entities. Calhoun defines this process as an effort to make the cultural assumptions of nationalism be perceived as ‹‹experientially primordial›› (Tai, 2003, 6). Selected elements and constructed nationalism are experienced as being primordial and part of an unchanging identity. The subtlety in making use of the perceived fixed identities lies in advancing the proposition that as the "other" is identified by specific characteristics and symbols so do "we". The Tokyo Olympics of 1964 were an example of how national socialization can help symbols become shared and perceived as part of an unchanging national culture. As a result, after the Olympics e *hinomaru* and the colors of red and white were successfully detached from their earlier negative militaristic image and survive to this day as symbols of the Japanese nation (Takeuchi, 2016, 130).

It has to be a point of attention, however, that not all individuals respond in the same way to nationalistic discourse. There may be different responses to national socialization and cultural othering. In his analysis of nationalism and cosmopolitanism Robert Audi (2009) argues that both phenomena apply in various domains of human life. One individual might

have national inclinations in matters of public safety or work policies but be cosmopolitan in other sectors (Audi, 2009, 376). This does not, however, mean that less alignment to nationalism necessarily brings about the failure of the naturalization attempt. As it will be explained below, the naturalization of the nation presents itself as solid also because of the presence of a national system, in which nations have become the basic units of social analysis.

There is one more aspect of nationalism that will be useful to point out for the present analysis: its ambivalent structure. Claims of national uniqueness necessarily create a form of pure culture that is to be pursued. In this process the inevitable confrontation with reality brings about a dynamic of never ending chase, caused by the presence of "elements of disturbance" in the national project. First it is the presence of an "other" that makes the coherence of national culture impossible (Kramer, 1997, 537). The presence of other cultural models and claims makes it so that the project of an ideal society cannot be fulfilled. Additionally, in being closely linked to ethnic claims, national project cannot ignore the presence of different people on its soil. In this sense, migration is another element that disrupts the isomorphism between people and nation and as such is often a point of attention in nationalistic discourse (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2003, 583). Secondly, cultural competition highlights an ambiguous behavior. On the one hand, national theorists borrows techniques and ideas that are perceived to be effective and useful, on the other they attempts to purify its culture from alien elements in their quest for purity (Smith, 1996, 458). As it should now be clear, nationalism in itself presents ambiguous elements in the face of its environment. Homi Bhabha and Erika Tai (quote) (2003, 7) underline how a nation is split between nationalist discourse and a performative element that destabilizes it. The nation is split in ambivalence between theory and practice and cannot stabilize. However, this should not necessarily be considered only as a point of weakness. While it is true that the ambiguous characteristic of some national behavior and theory can bring to contestation, it also allows nationalism to be a pervasive discourse that can fit into many contexts. Nationalism and its argumentation insert people into a mechanism of constant research for autonomy based on the inherent ambivalence. At the same time, however, this never ending process of theoretical acknowledgment makes it possible for the discourse to evolve its claims in always new ways to cope with change. This is an extremely important point of attention for the present analysis. Through the flexibility that its inherent ambiguity allows nationalism becomes one of the most resilient and pervasive discourses in modern history, one that can not only answer change but also is resilient to counterarguments.

Before tackling other aspects of studies on nationalism it needs to be noted that assumptions that nations and ethnic groups are primordial entities is no longer considered valid. Studies in which ethnic communities were presented to have formed in a distant past and to have existed through history while nations were reflection of them have been widely contested. Anthony D. Smith argues that this perspective fails to explain why particular ethnic communities emerge, change and dissolve (Smith, 1996, 446). Indeed, the idea that ethnicity is primordial and unchanging entities is nothing different than individuating human races, a concept that has been widely contested and even condemned. It is a shared idea in the field that ethnic groups are to be considered as historical units, whether they are creations to a specific political end or respond to a different logic is, however, a more difficult question (Smith, 1996, 446). It will not be the purpose of this work to inquire over which theory of ethnicity is more valid, it will suffice to avoid thinking of nationalism as the expression of primordial and unchanging ethnic communities and to focus instead of its ties with political and economic interests.

Two Major Approaches in Nationalism Studies

It is possible to divide studies in matter of nationalism into two major categories: one that sees nationalism in a cultural-based perspective, and one that sees it in political/strategic terms. The matter of contention here is whether in nation formation it is culture that influence politics or it is politics that influence culture.

The cultural-based perspective underlines that nations are formed through the use of culture and that it influences politics and society. In particular it claims nations are formed in connection with an ethnic base that forms a stabilizing factor in the selection and promotion of cultural elements considered to be at their core. Without a solid and well formed ethnic base forming national consciousness and cohesion is very difficult (Smith, 1996,447). This perspective points out the importance of cultural factors in national formation and in recent politics as well. What is more, it highlights how recent politics is connected to history and as such it needs to take into consideration previous political movements and cultural formations. For example, the idea that ethnicities and nations are created by a political effort alone is too simplistic (Smith, 1996, 448). It needs to be recognized that political, social and cultural factors cooperate in the formation of ethnicity and nations. Moreover, we need to take into

consideration that cultural history previous to modernity is a determining factor in the formation of nationalism. As stated previously, it is the selection of past cultural elements that constitutes the base for national formation. It would be too much to dispense those elements and focus only on the practicalities of politics and economics to explain nationalism.

The political/strategic perspective focuses, instead, on how nations are formed through historical and sociological processes that respond to specific political interests. Lloyd Kramer offers an effective study on different perspectives in the instrumental view of nationalism.[1] He starts with the idea that ‹‹nationalism reflected certain transitional, historical processes, but it also contributed decisively to the modernizing political, cultural, and social structures that helped to produce it›› (Kramer, 1997, 527). From this standpoint, the analysis proceeds to consider different historical studies in matter of nationalism that highlight different aspects of research. First, the author turns to Hans Kohn's *The idea of Nationalism: A Study in its Origins and Background* (1944) who describes nationalism as an intellectual response to the problems of integration and legitimacy in the transition to modernity in eighteenth-century. However, this perspective of the birth of nationalism fails to provide explanations of the cultural processes that made possible the diffusion of national ideas at the ground level. This is when other cultural studies came to the fore to explain how the transition from political project to daily lives of the people. One of such studies is Benedict Anderson's influential *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983). Kramer highlights how in Anderson's view the redefinition of identities was brought by cultural transformations that happened in concomitance with new technologies for distributing information (Kramer, 1997, 529). It was this new possibility to diffuse the theoretical assumptions of nationalism and make it visible to all people in a period in which social change brought about the formation of the state that made possible the solid foundation of nations. The analysis then turns to another explanation for the diffusion of nationalism: the idea that industrialization and capitalism were crucial to this process. Citing Gellner and Hobsbawm the author underlines how nationalism was instrumental to the formation of a more unified society with less conflict that favored economic aspects of industrial societies and of capitalism. There lies the idea that nationalism was further promoted to the benefit of an economic system. It is undeniable, seeing the applications of nationalism, that the discourse is involved in politics and economics. It is not, however, a sufficient argumentation

[1] For a more exhaustive explanation see Lloyd Kramer, 1997, "Historical Narratives and the Meaning of Nationalism", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (Jul. 1997), pp. 525-545.

to justify its creation, let alone its diffusion. Liah Greenfeld's *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (1992) stresses the social factor for the diffusion of nationalism. Greenfeld argues that nationalism is a phenomenon which ‹‹is determined not by the character of its elements, but by a certain organizing principle which makes these elements into unity and imparts to them a special significance›› (Greenfeld, 1992, 7). Greenfeld, thus, refers to nationalism as a form of political ideology (Greenfeld, 1992, 7). Her study focuses on the resentment of social groups who perceived a lack of social influence and on the perception that one's nation was inferior compared to others (Kramer, 1997, 531). Such feeling of inadequacy brought to the development of a ‹‹profound sense of insecurity and anxiety›› (Greenfeld, 1992, 15) that made those groups receptive to nationalist discourse. Therefore, Greenfeld's study stresses the importance of social factors over politic and economic ones and in particular it highlights how the need of social recognition is a driving factor in many cultural discourses of modernity. It is, indeed, necessary to consider also other driving forces when considering the diffusion and efficiency of a cultural-based discourse such as nationalism.

Moving forward on the line of Greenfeld's study there is one last element in Kramer's analysis that I would like to take into consideration: the political perspective for the creation of nationalism. Nationalism is often connected with the birth of new political units in history and in particular with the French revolution of 1789 and the modern idea of state. The idea of a sovereign people inserted into a new political unit that would be the expression of that people is deeply involved with the processes that constituted the pre-history of nationalism (Kramer, 1997, 531). Gellner (1997, 31) argues that theories about nationalism distinguish between two models of social organization: one agrarian that ‹‹do not indicate the limits of a political unit››, and another one in which participants are ‹‹linked to the political boundaries of the unit with which (the group) is identified››. The latter is the model in which nationalism finds its expression and, as a requirement, is connected to the politic boundaries of the state. The French revolution became the model through, or in contraposition to, which other nations were formed since it set the model for the modern conception of state. It can be argued that the political claims expressed in this process of state building created the modern conceptions of citizenship and nationality. However, it is not enough to explain why nationalism came to be the cultural discourse we all know.

The creation and diffusion of nationalism is linked to a series of factors that intersect forming a very rich and, sometimes, complex panorama. It would not suffice to embrace only one of the two perspectives proposed and it is clear that nationalism involves cultural, political and economic explanations. Nationalism as a discourse is made out of cultural theory and practice that is imbued with political significance and, in this sense, it represents an example of what Pierre Bordieu calls 'practice theory', i.e. ‹‹an intricate relationship between cultural practice and political economy›› (Tai, , 2003, 4). Combining elements of both perspectives is, therefore, the most productive way of looking at nationalism since it highlights different aspects of the discourse and of its constituting elements. Moreover, it is important to notice that neither perspective sees nationalism as a process detached from political interests. The aforementioned studies brings the understanding that it is common to consider nationalism as an ideological movement involved in politics. This aspect comes to gain more relevance into the present analysis of nationalism as the development that this phenomenon has gone through at the macro level throughout the second half of twentieth century and going into the twenty-first is considered.

1.2 A structure of nations in dialogue between each other: Methodological Nationalism

Nationalism since its beginning in the eighteenth century solidified its position as one of the more popular discourses of modernity. It became so pervasive that states came to be thought of as nation-states and the definition of foreign and of outsider are considered in terms of nationality. The nation came to be regarded as the unit of relevance in both domestic and foreign affairs and national socialization became part of state ceremonies and events all around the world (Gellner, 1997, 6; Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003, 579). This outstanding popularity has made nationalism one of the most pervasive ideological discourses of all times. It can be argued that this is due to some of the characteristics we considered before in our analysis. First of all, the efforts to make nationalism a perceived natural phenomenon bore their fruits. Nationalism spread to all levels of society and was part of the early socialization of an individual be it in state events or in education. In particular, the whole idea of "otherness" was constructed around national belonging and was promoted in schools at all levels of education. As stated before, early socialization plays a crucial role in an individual's perception of nationalism and the fact that new generations are educated to consider

nationalism the “norm” becomes an asset for the diffusion of nationalistic discourse. Secondly, the flexibility of nationalism made it able to cope with change and to partially reinvent itself in order to adapt to new socio-economic conditions. This proves to be a crucial aspect in the development and preservation of nationalism. Changes in the social or political environment often prove to be detrimental to cultural-based theories and nationalism is no exception. However, the ability to revisit and sometimes reinvent its cultural base and to adapt to new environments without losing sight of its claims proves to be a strong point of nationalist discourse and one that allowed it to become so pervasive.

The birth of new nations and the interaction between these, as well as the pervasive nature of nationalism, helped developing a system of nations that, in dialogue between each other, became the base for political, economical and social theory (Greenfeld, 1992, 6; Bauman, 2005, 209; Iwabuchi, 2015, 13). Along with this system, a new type of naturalization of the nation has been developed: what has been called ‘methodological nationalism’. Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller (2003, 567) define it as ‹‹the naturalization of the nation-state by the social sciences››. They argue that scholars sharing this orientation came to equate society with the nation-state perpetrating a hegemony of the nation that shaped much of the epistemology and the programs of social sciences. The system of nations managed to constitute itself as the “norm” on which some social theories came to be constructed. Wimmer and Schiller (2003) identify three variants of methodological nationalism. The first is to ignore the importance of nationalism for modern societies (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2003, 577). Nationalism holds power as it has become a very pervasive ideological discourse and it is involved in the main form of political organization of modernity: the nation-state. As such it is a contributing factor in both political and socio-economical developments and has to be taken into consideration when studying related phenomena. However, mainstream sociology focused on modern industrial nations as the basic unit of analysis and implicitly regarded society as corresponding to the nation-state, thus implementing the idea that nations are normal and should not be given particular attention when studying social phenomena. The nation became equivalent to society and ‹‹nation-state principles were so routinely structured into the foundational assumptions of theory that they vanished from sight›› (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2003, 579). The second variant taken into consideration by the authors is naturalization. The nation has come to be regarded as the “container model” of society in which to insert all the dynamics related to it. Moreover, the study of society was proposed as divided into national boundaries where the internal

dynamics of one nation-state were sufficient to the analysis. Foreign interactions between national units and cross border phenomena tended to be ignored and this resulted in the considerable loss of insight in social studies in an age in which globalization was becoming stronger and stronger. The third variant is territorial limitation. As the nation became the basic unit of consideration the boundaries of society came too to be considered as coinciding with the geographical and political boundaries of the nation-state. National narratives came to shape the social space to the point that barely any phenomenon outside the nation could be seen. Nationalism has been naturalized and proposed as being the norm so much that it became part of an even more pervasive system of classification and spacing in which the logic of society was subjected to the logic of the state. Methodological nationalism is only one definition of the phenomenon: other authors also elaborate on the problematic. Andreas Hepp and Nick Couldry discuss the implication of what they define as 'container thinking' in international media communication (Iwabuchi, 2015, 10). They argue that culture is involved in a mechanism of classification that makes it intrinsic to a binary relationship with the nation-state. Therefore, cultural phenomena and forms are believed to be representative of a nation and as such to be necessarily inserted into a rigid systemic logic. This is a hegemonic structure[2], in which nation thinking shapes what cultural forms are to be considered "normal" and what are instead to be disregarded, considered not relevant or even criticized. It is a form of indirect coercion in which what does not comply with belonging to fixed units of description is labeled as an exception, an irregularity or even flaw. Hepp and Couldry argue that culture in an age of growing globalization cannot be analyzed as pertaining only to rigid units of analysis and instead should be considered in terms of "cultural thickening" (Iwabuchi, 2015, 10). That is to say, that it needs to be recognized the importance of trans-local cultural processes, inserted in a logic of global connectivity, to which people align and that cannot be ascribed to a single national unit. The borders of "cultural thickenings" can go beyond territory and are not necessarily part of national culture. Methodological nationalism constituted a major characteristics of nationalism that remains relevant even after the transformations that the national form underwent with the acceleration of a worldwide phenomenon that constitutes one of the keywords of the last four decades: globalization.

[2] Hegemony: ‹‹a structurally and symbolically (albeit loosely) unified space wherein various material and non-material forces interact in a structurally coordinated manner›› Iida (2002, 6).

1.3 Globalization: the foreseen demise of nationalism . . .

The steady growth of globalization processes in the course of the twentieth century put nationalism in front of necessary change. In this environment of growing connections and foreign visibility the nation came to face a challenge to its survival. It was no longer possible to isolate the nation from others as the innovation of communication instruments and means of transport changed the dynamic of the circulation of culture as the environment constantly shifted (Bauman, 2005, 206). Moreover, in the face of global cultural and economic exchange the idea of the nation-state as the basic unit of society was confronted by the problematic aspect of the loss of sovereignty. Transnational actors came to the fore and acted on a daily basis without the restraints of national borders, thus bringing matters that were before considered of domain of the state out of its control (Martell, 2011, 224; Steger, 2016, 69). Despite the efforts to bring back state control over economic processes it had to be recognized that the new environment of worldwide connections had created an economical logic to which the local was no longer sufficient to provide for the needs of big corporations (Martell, 2011, 245). In fact it was a set of connected localities that provided better opportunities. The connections prompted by new communication technologies produced the diffusion and use of local culture in the global arena. The resulting mix and reconfiguration of the value of such local aspects of culture constituted what Roland Robertson (1995) calls 'glocalization'. A common universal form of culture was expressing and spreading particularity in the form of the local and this prompted new formulations of what were, before, cultural specific and particular phenomena. Aligning to this trend, the allegedly unique and particular form of culture that nationalism attempted to preserve was undergoing change and it was increasingly "contaminated" by the process of global mixing and reshaping of culture (Jusdanis, 119, 50, Steger, 2016, 83).

Another critical point for nationalism was that globalization produces bonds through which transnational communities arise. The idea that shared culture of different origin could unite people from across the globe could destabilize the claim of a united ethnic community that nationalism proposed (Jusdanis, 1995, 53; Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003, 584). Moreover, the multicultural aspect of transnational connection brought about what Ulrich Beck calls 'biographical globalization' (Beck, 1999, 96). An individual could align with cultural forms of different places around the globe and as such its sense of belonging would irremediably shift from a single local unit to a multitude of localities. Global multi-local

belonging could pose a threat to the one-dimensional ethnic community that constituted the chosen group of the nation. As the transnational phenomenon advanced, space entered, too, in the logic of a growing globalized environment. The plurality of localization highlighted by glocalization ‹‹removed the identity between spatial and social distance›› (Beck, 1999,128) thus transforming the idea of "border" making it more flexible. Nation-state borders could no longer constitute a filter for information and cultural fluxes. The exclusive characteristic of a national territory was jeopardized by the presence of external factors as the bond between the state and its territory seemed to become less and less clear as the state, as Held (1989) put it, became "overloaded" by external pressure (Martell, 2011, 224). Since nationalism made an effort to maintain the association of ethnic community and territory this blurring of borders was another critical element in the age of globalization. Nations were put to the test by glocalization, by the birth of more and more transnational communities and by spatial change brought about by globalization. It will not come as a surprise that, at the turn of the twenty-first century many advocated that nationalism would soon become less and less influential (Bauman, 2005, 209; Steger, 2016, 69). Even though previously ‹‹modern mainstream history was largely written as a history of particular nation-states›› (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2003, 580) it was increasingly clear that times were changing and nations were brought to a turning point.

. . . and its Response

Nationalism, however, pulled through the initial difficulties and was able to elaborate a response to the globalized world. As pointed out previously, the flexible characteristic of nationalist discourse acts as a strong point for its diffusion and for its capability to cope with change. It can be argued that nationalism was able to survive what were seen as detrimental conditions for its theoretical and practical apparatus thanks to the embracing of globalization itself. It would be useful, at this point, to look back to some of the elements that were singled out previously in the present analysis. First, the oppositional structure that constitutes one of the basic elements of nationalism, was reformulated to fit the multiplicity of foreign elements in the field. It was a move that made use of the already tested mechanism of solidifying the nation in opposition to an "other". This time, however, ‹‹the "other" who (was) made matter for the nation , (was) the amorphous figure of the global ›› (Aronczyk, 2013, 169). The global itself could become the incarnation of "foreigness" and it could be given any form fit to create

a positive response from the national community. Using a strategy that proved to be effective before, the role of relevant "other" for the nation shifted to create aggregation. This time, however, the shift produced an even more potent message of belonging, one that could be given validity in any environment. The nation shaped itself to be, once again, the defender of a unique form of culture against the whole world, but the argumentation was moved into a more abstract dimension than before. Nationalism came to focus even more on the oppositional structure reasserting its role as defender of the community and of its particular form of culture; a development that has been defined as "tribalism" (Bauman, 2005, 258). In the tentative to create identity and to define difference ‹‹a propension for eterogeneity can be substituted by a phobia of eterogeneity›› shifting from "national" inclusion to "national" exclusion (Bauman, 2005, 260). The nation remains the means of comparison and categorization. Secondly, a new level of naturalization was implemented: what can be called 'universalization'. Nations began to insert themselves in the globalized system acting in a way similar to transnational corporations. Nationalism became a discourse for the preservation of cultural traits that engaged in a dialogue with other local entities under the structure of globalized localities brought about by globalization. The assumption here was that ‹‹things characteristic of a nation or region need not be limited in value or meaning to the people of that region›› (Audi, 2009, 379). By shaping national culture as something having universal value, and not limited to internal use, nationalism reconfigured the image of the nation-state as a protector of valuable cultural assets. The nation became the expression of part of human culture that was presented to be useful for everyone and could be shared while retaining its uniqueness. This time, however, such uniqueness was validated by the role of the nation as keeper of a particular form of culture and not necessarily by the composition and the characteristics of the community it represented (Martell, 2011 250; Iwabuchi, 2015, 13). Thus, while the nation was still linked to its people and territory, it made a step towards self-authentication. As long as the cultural form constructed by nationalism stands the nation will have its claims validated. Moreover, as stated previously, the cultural elements that constitute national culture are chosen through a "phase of sifting" and as such can be modified or temporarily set aside to fit the needs of argumentation.

Another element to take into consideration for the analysis of nationalism in the global age is pride. Robert Audi (2009, 378) argues that pride is a variable to be taken into account in the analysis of nationalism in cultural globalization. He points out the ability of nationalist discourse to create aggregation around a certain form of culture and how through alignment to

this discourse people might be willing to defend it and to identify as part of a national community. It can be argued that nation-states strive to involve individuals in national socialization and encourage them to take part in a cross-cultural encounter with others under the flag of their nation (Iwabuchi, 2015, 13). With the turn to a globalized and interconnected world the system of nations in dialogue, that involved container thinking, was again reiterated and proposed as the basic unit of evaluation for cultural processes. Richard Wilk argues that in this renewed "inter-national" system ‹‹cultural difference is expressed and highlighted in "ways that are more widely intelligible" trough "universals and standards by which all cultural differences can be defined"›› (Iwabuchi, 2015, 12). Universal standards of evaluation were set to form a "structure of common difference" recurring a feature that Roland Robertson defines as part of the modern era: a strong shift to unicity (Iwabuchi, 2015,12). Bearing in mind this, it does not come as a surprise that the nation, being the foremost expression of unique culture, was able to survive the difficulties of a globalized world and to present itself, once more, as the basic unit of cultural evaluation.

With regard to methodological nationalism an interesting perspective is proposed by Koichi Iwabuchi (2015) who points out how national cultures need to be reconstructed to fit globalization processes. He argues that the nation could be redefined as a ‹‹globally shared cultural form through which local distinctiveness and differences are expressed to each other›› (Iwabuchi, 2015, 11). This idea is inserted into the environment of global circulation of culture in which local cultural products are shared and consumed all over the world. Recognizing that, in glocalization, it is ‹‹the nation (that) has been functioning as the most prominent local unit of cultural diversity›› (Iwabuchi, 2015, 13) the author proposes that it represents a possibility for better cultural exchange and cross-cultural understanding. This, however would mean to reconfigure the nation as the place of global cultural encounter expanding its cultural boundaries, much to the loss of some of the constituting elements of nationalism. The most problematic aspect of this development would be the abandonment of a unique well defined national culture accepting that it is going to change. As stated before, nationalism proposes the idea of the preservation of a pure form of culture as opposed to others. Accepting to change that would not only put a pillar of nationalism as a discourse at stake, but it could also threaten to disrupt the allegedly ethnic ties of the nation as they are deeply linked to the form of culture chosen to represent them. At the same time, accepting cultural features coming from outside the nation, while they can be adopted as long as they are beneficial to the nation itself, can bring change in the domestic environment. This in turn

means to dismantle the oppositional structure as it is been thought of so far and replace it. This would mean to jeopardize the whole identification process involved in nationalist discourse. The question of relevance here should be: can a cultural artifact that ‹‹depend(s) on difference›› (Kramer, 1997, 537) survive the loss of a rigid oppositional structure? As it will be explained later, recent trends in nationalist discourse produced a new, apparently softer, form of opposition. It still remains unclear if this would be a solution to container thinking and the rigidity of the nation-state system.

1.4 The Economic Logic of Globalization: a Shift towards a Competitive Nation

An important aspect of the globalized nation-state is its response to the economical logic of globalization. It was soon clear that the state needed to be involved with transnational corporations and that, in turn, this meant to implement policies to attempt and regulate foreign fluxes of capital and resources. Even though there was a considerable effort to harness the new economic possibilities, the state ultimately had to face the truth that it was not possible for it to act as a corporation given the constraints that state structure itself represented as the guarantees of territorial boundaries faded (Beck, 1999, 126; Martell, 2011, 228). Notwithstanding the limited amount of influence the state could have on these transnational flows, governments were quick to develop policies to exploit the advantages of such fast growing economic space. States competed to take benefit from the new economic background and the nation presented itself as a useful instrument for this end (Martell, 2011, 226; Steger, 2016, 71). Competitiveness was the name of the game as nations started to represent themselves as “profitable local markets” (Iwabuchi, 2015, 13). In an attempt to make the nation-state look as a profitable economic locality, national images were reconstructed as advertizing means for state interests in a variety of sectors. The market-driven logic of transnational corporations was transferred to the nation in a move that tossed nations and nationalism into the realm of economics. As global society came to be understood more and more as “market society”, neoliberalism and its capitalistic implications forced the nation-state to adopt a politic of marketization of the nation (Martell, 2011, 228). Ulrich Beck (1999, 142) sees the tendency to place everything under the logic of economics as an attempt to ‹‹put order in an otherwise seemingly incomprehensible and chaotic world››. This tendency to oversimplification of the globalized world affected the nation too, making it adapt to fit this

mono-causal economic logic. In this process the nation became the globalized actor of the state in what could be defined a paradoxical outcome. Nations overstepped the boundaries of the state they identified with, to become an advertising agent similar to those of transnational corporations. As it will be seen later in the present analysis, this move did not detach the nation from its cultural assumptions. Basic elements of nationalism are reiterated or re-elaborated in the wake of these changes. What has to be kept in mind is that nationalism still constitutes an exclusive and discriminatory discourse.

> Although intellectuals often see nationalism as a way to reconcile the need for modernization (science) and the need to protect national cultures (tradition), they eventually discover that the modernizing project ignores many of the "people" whom the state claims to represent. (Kramer, 1997, 541)

Even though nationalism has entered the simplistic economic logic of much of the globalization processes it still acts as an hegemonic discourse, both in the form of the more "traditional" argumentation of "the nation first" and of a "normal" system of nation-states. As such it promotes the idea of the nation as ‹‹the most meaningful cultural entity of collective identification›› (Iwabuchi, 2015, 17) and perpetrates a discrimination of minorities and of multicultural aspects that do not comply with national imperatives.

1.5 Nationalism in the Age of Soft Power: Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding

As mentioned above, with the strengthening of the logic of globalization the nation entered a period of change. It was a response to mutated geopolitical conditions and to new theories about, and applications of, economic, political and cultural power. The nation was involved in a competition for power and recognition and was restructured under the market-driven logic of economic globalization to enhance competitiveness (Martell, 2011, 228; Aronczyk, 2013, 3). The idea of making national image competitive and that striving for international recognition is useful for the state is deeply linked not only to economic conditions but also to new theories about power and foreign policy. Before tackling in what direction and how the nation-state changed its foreign approach at the turn of the century, it will be useful to mention a theory that deeply influenced not only nationalism but also diplomacy and state power exercise: that of soft power.

Soft Power and Public Diplomacy

In 1990 Joseph S. Nye published an influential article in which he analyzed how power was undergoing change in world politics. Basing his analysis on U.S foreign policy from the Second World War to the end of the twentieth century, he argued that new factors were becoming relevant for power exercise and that the source of power was likely to undergo change entering in the new century (Nye, 1990, 155). As the globalization brought about the interdependence of states and transnational corporations came to hold more and more economic resources, the dynamic of power shifted as military intervention. At the same time external rule were made more costly by social mobilization, technology diffusion and international politics. In this environment a new form of power that was ‹‹passing from the "capital-rich" to the "information rich" (was) rising›› (Nye, 1990, 164) one that took into consideration culture, transnational information fluxes and ideology. Recognizing that power is the ability to affect others towards one's ends the author stated that:

> Soft power is the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment. A country's soft power rests on its resources of culture, values and policies. (Nye, 2008, 94)

Globalization had been changing the dynamics through which power was exerted and new, more diversified ways of expressing it were on the rise. Nye argued that ‹‹politics (had) become a contest of competitive credibility›› (Nye, 2008, 100) in a world that suffered from what Herbert Simon calls the 'paradox of plenty' (Nye, 2008, 99). The overwhelming amount of information available created a difficulty to single out elements in the tide of images and relevant elements, therefore resulting in a lack of focus. This meant that nation-states began competing for visibility together with military or economic might. Soft power is about making one's own image the most credible and enticing in a world of growing options. In the context of a globalized world a soft power policy of making use of globally diffused culture can become a resource in building positive symbols and values for the nation. This represents an opportunity to leave the pack behind and become more visible in the international arena and, in a world where much is put under the logic of economics, more visibility means more opportunities .

Nye's concept of soft power has been widely accepted and put into use in many parts of the world. Starting with the U.S. politics of internationalization under the Bush administration after 9/11, Cool Britannia, Cool Japan and many more, media culture started to be considered as a resource for promoting national interests (Iwabuchi, 2015, 15). Soft power became international with the embracing of policies for its development by many countries and, in so doing, it inevitably underwent some changes from its original formulation. Nye argued that media culture is just one of the resources for the enhancement of national soft power. It has to be remembered that foreign policy and attractive democratic values are also needed for its success and must be implemented. However, in the internationalization of soft power, countries focused mainly on media and consumer culture sometimes even ignoring the other two elements. Main players in this endeavor ‹‹are more preoccupied with largely effortless pragmatic uses of media culture for the purpose of enhancing an international image and boosting the economy›› (Iwabuchi, 2015, 15). Soft power was understood as a way to advertise the nation abroad and make it more visible taking advantage of media culture. An interesting point in this development is how, once again, the allegedly monocausal logic of globalization is highlighted. The economic logic influenced soft power to make it an instrument of the marketization of culture or, in this case, of the nation. The new keyword in soft power policies became "branding", a process that deeply influenced nationalism and its applications. Soft power came to be part of public diplomacy all around the world in the promotion and circulation of media cultures that became central to the new process of nation branding (Iwabuchi, 2015, 16).

The state is urged to play a role in the production and management of a cultural specific image to present to the world. Public diplomacy is deeply involved in this political effort. It means to communicate not only with governments and institutions, but also with nongovernmental individuals and organizations. The crucial aspect of public diplomacy is ‹‹building long-term relationships that create an enabling environment for government policies›› (Nye, 2008, 101). It is the need of long-lasting recognition that shapes the efforts of both public diplomacy in general and nation branding in particular. This recognition makes the brand less vulnerable to changing international conditions and detached from governments. In this sense, the adoption of the nation as a symbol is fit for purpose. Nations are presented as natural, immemorial units of society and are, therefore, apt to take the role of long-lasting actors and points of reference for a particular state. Bearing this in mind, it will now be useful to look at what Nye (2008) calls the "three dimensions" of public diplomacy. It can be argued

that there is much in common between these three dimensions and the way nationalism presents its claims to the public. The first dimension is “daily communications”, involving explaining the content of diplomatic decisions and presenting it to the public on a daily basis. This move is much alike the transition from theory to practice in the rhetoric of nationalism. Part of what makes national culture be widely accepted is its visibility. By fostering involvement with the daily lives of people and their socialization, public diplomacy aims at public recognition. The second dimension is strategic communication. In this step a set of simple themes are developed and presented as crucial. Central themes, often the ones that are most effective in creating a positive response, are promoted while putting aside other aspects of the policy. Finally, the third is the development of lasting relationships with key individuals. Arguably, these relationships allow to produce a positive environment for governments and political action. Nationalism too have its form of long term insurance. By naturalizing its claims and constituting elements the nation is reiterated trough time thus enforcing a powerful mechanism of self-validation. In the same way, public diplomacy is the political instrument of the state for the creation of conditions that make its political action easier and more accepted.

Nation branding: a New Form of Nationalism

In the context of a globalized world image and reputation have become an asset to nation-states. In particular, the economic logic that is seen as encompassing all aspects of globalization deeply influenced national promotion in ways that are directly linked to branding in marketing terms (Aronczyk, 2013, 3). This link between the business centered logic of marketing and the public dimension shaped by nations is what is believed to constitute a profitable opportunity for nation-states in the global space. In the wake of the trend to exploit global market opportunities, nation-states embraced a marketing-driven logic of promotion that adopted branding, in the form adopted by international corporations, shaping their public diplomacy and international image. In the marketing of products, corporations recognized that the value of an effective communication and promotion strategy was crucial. In an environment flooded by seemingly indistinguishable items the company’s goods needed to be individualized and promoted in order to ‹‹stand out in the crowd›› (van Ham, 2001, 4). The chaos of possible choices brought the necessity to make one’s own

product be perceived as different and be spotted in the multiplicity. In the same way, states began adopting a policy of branding centered on their national culture to exert influence on both domestic and international markets.

Nation branding can be defined as follows:

> …the result of the interpenetration of commercial and public sector interests to communicate national priorities among domestic and international populations for a variety of interrelated purposes. (Aronczyk, 2013, 16)

From this definition Melissa Aronczyk (2013) inferred some important dimensions of nation branding. First, there is a "strategy of capital (re)generation" involved. The resources of private and public sectors are combined in this phenomenon in order to harness the opportunities of many different sectors, ranging from tourism, to foreign direct investment, to education in order to attract capital. Secondly, nation branding helps the state conveying an image of legitimacy an authority. Diplomacy has much to gain from branding the nation since it can make use of the resulting international image to manage the perception of the state abroad and, in so doing, avoid unfavorable events and produce instead favorable conditions for the state political action (Nye, 2008, 102). Third, nation branding serves a recursive function. A national image having an impact abroad can then influence domestic perception of the state and foster approval of its political action. It acts as a mechanism of legitimation that works well both abroad and domestically. Nation branding is the response of the political elite to a globalized context in which nations needed to compete for reputation and space of action. As such it is shaped as an answer not only to globalization but also to the economic response to it: neoliberalism. Freedom of market seems to be the slogan that drives much of the political actions nowadays. It does not come as a surprise, then, that the response to the need of international recognition as an instrument of soft power comes from economics as well. The extension of the brand to the nation is deeply linked to the recognition that to obtain influence in the political world in the present day, the nation-state needs to re-elaborate nationalism and make it fit for the market of culture. Branding, being a method for the presentation of unique qualities of a corporation, ‹‹started to be considered the most legitimate way to make the nation matter in a global context›› (Aronczyk, 2013, 30). This, however, required the reconfiguration of the nation and ‹‹the redemarcation of a "core" national culture›› (Iwabuchi, 2015, 16). In this sense, the reconfiguration of national image through branding changes nationalism making it reconstruct its narratives. Far from being a new

process, the reconstruction forces once again the constitutive elements of nationalism to act in shaping a new form of national culture following a trend that is well established in the history of nationalism.

As economic competition was highlighted by globalization, new structures for its development were born. First, territorial space came to be at the center of the debate of capital flow. In order to be attractive for the capital a territory needs to be fit for its circulation and offer opportunities to investors. In the effort to make their territory apt, nation-states shaped national space through the establishment of infrastructures for the accommodation of capital creating what David Harvey calls the 'spatial fix' of the capital (Aronczyk, 2013, 42). This process is much alike the one that public diplomacy engenders when it sets the scene for future political action. The "spatial fix" suggests that the formation of a structure apt to successive exploitation for one's ends is effective in a globalized setting and can bring advantages to transnational actors. Nation branding shares the same assumption: by trying to shape, through the exploitation of national image and media culture, national space into a more attractive evironment for investors and, at the same time, produce a positive effects in international politics. It can be argued that there are two systems involved in this process. The first being the system internal to the nation, in which space is shaped by political elites to offer economic opportunities. The second is the system of methodological nationalism that offers a broader framework of legitimation for the nation and indirectly creates a space in which the national culture can be managed, exchanged and evaluated on the market.

Space for branded nations was developed in response to the idea of competitiveness with which national culture came to be labeled. There are two major frameworks in which this process came to be implemented. The first is the influence of Michael Porter's *The Competitive Advantage of Nations* (1990). The author argued that at the end of the twentieth century comparative advantage between nations, that saw the physical and tangible resources be the means of comparison, was no longer tenable. Instead, it was necessary to ‹‹see national production not through the lens of comparison but through the lens of competition›› (Aronczyk, 2013, 44). Stressing the role of intellectual and financial resources Porter argued that the nation could become the space of competitive advantage by embracing the instrumentalist rules that govern economic institutions. In short, the nation was to be considered as an enterprise and its culture and distinctiveness to be managed in order to produce a competitive entity on the world's market. Moreover, he argued that the adoption of free-market strategies did not pose a threat to the stability of the nation. On the contrary, it

was an opportunity for the national framework to become stronger. National culture was to become no longer an external constraint but ‹‹a competitive dimension of national productivity›› (Aronczyk, 2013, 47). This idea exemplifies how the nation came to be regarded as more open to foreign elements. However, this does not mean that the nation renounced its distinctiveness. Rather, it has opened its borders to all foreign elements that do not challenge its constituting elements. Thus, in a world of competitive marketized nations ‹‹crossing national borders is encouraged … but in a nontrasgressive manner›› (Iwabuchi, 2015, 22). So far as cross-cultural encounter is beneficial to the nation and to its economy it is to be encouraged and desirable. Following Porter's ideas the nation started to be considered as a marketized unit of global advantage for states, one that produced an essentialized version of national culture and homogenized national space in order for it to be attractive and competitive in the logic of capitalism. The second influential framework that implemented this view is that of the World Economic Forum. Starting from the 1980s the organization began publishing the Global Competitiveness Reports (GCR) that filed a ranking of the nations with regard to their competitive elements[3]. In the 1990s the report started flanking the more tangible and quantifiable element, such as GDP, inflation and so on, to what they defined as a 'softer side of competitiveness' (Aronczyk, 2013, 50). It was constituted by cultural elements that formed an ‹‹intangible value›› measurable ‹‹on the basis of "attractiveness"›› (Aronczyk, 2013, 50). Thus, competitiveness led to attractiveness which was the form under which to evaluate the cultural appeal of a nation in relation with economy. An example of this is the Attractiveness Survey of Ernst and Young[4]. Since 2002 this multinational consultancy developed a method to measure a country attractiveness. The program claims, through the analysis of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) perspective of a country, to aim at ‹‹help(ing) public sector and business leaders to make economically sound strategy and policy decisions››.[5] The method used for these surveys consists in comparing the "real" attractiveness of FDI of a country and its "perceived" attractiveness which is ‹‹a combination of image, investors' confidence and the perception of a country's or area's ability to provide the most competitive benefits for FDI››.[6] The gap between reality and image created the idea that countries could develop their ideal attractiveness through careful planning. This, in turn, led to the development of a ranking system that inevitably saw some

[3] For Global Competitiveness Reports see: www.weforum.com ; in particular the latest GCR can be found here: https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-competitveness-report-2018
[4] For further information see www.ey.com .
[5] www.ey.com
[6] www.ey.com

countries as more advanced than others (Aronckzyk, 2013, 57). Branding makes use of these forms of economic ranking to create a strategy for cultural competitiveness. Therefore, it developed the idea that some forms of culture are more apt for the development of attractive characteristics and can be considered the best ones to create a successful brand. The practice ended up suggesting that ‹‹most advanced cultures demonstrated values of individualism and entrepreneurialism›› implicitly putting culture under the logic of an evolutionary model (Aronczyk, 2013, 56). Branding created a perception of economy as driven by particular forms of culture and identity and then proposed itself as the solution to the problems related to these. In this sense it ‹‹create(d) value by producing a form of knowledge that it requires for its own continuation›› (Aronczyk, 2013, 59).

An important aspect of branding to be taken in consideration for the present analysis is how competitiveness came to be naturalized as a pivotal characteristic of nations. Regarding competitiveness as a national objective common to all nations produced the effect of making the economic logic intrinsic in the nation and naturalized the assumption that the nation worked as a cultural economic unit. The step from the idea of a competitive nation to the implementation of attractive national image was short and the cooperation between the public and private sector in order to foster economic value became even more pervasive than before (Martell, 2011, 238).

Making the Nation a Global Brand

Nation branding, as a way to promote the nation in the same way a firm would do, is performed through a marketing strategy. Marketing a nation involves much of the know how needed to do the same for a company but it has some substantial differences. The moves needed to implement such policy have similarities to those used in public diplomacy and in theorizing nationalism while retaining the characteristics of a marketing strategy.

Melissa Aronczyk (2013, 68) describes the process of branding the nation through four phases. The first is the evaluation of perceptions of the nation both in domestic and foreign environments. In this phase the main instrument of action are public surveys as public opinion is the evaluative tool through which national image is processed. As it would be done in the advertising industry then the data obtained is put into a ranking system, the Nation Brand Index (NBI), in which international opinion forms the only input. The result is the starting point for the implementation of a national strategy that sees national identity as the main

target of action and as the core of all infrastructures. This first step works under the assumption that national image can directly influence the amount of FDI. The second phase is training. A consultant acts in a working party with public and private stakeholders in order to assist in the phase of projecting the national brand. Afterwards, the time aspect of nation branding is presented to the state willing to start the project. Nation branding is a long-term project and as such requires the presence of both public and private parties. Since governments are usually bound to change in matter of few years, the presence of the private sector makes it so that the project may go on with the next. Moreover, the cooperation between public and private sectors is recommended as it can bring good results (Martell, 2011, 238). The expertise of the private sectors is complemented by the legitimation provided by public structures and thus the effectiveness of the project is to be ensured by using a well established methodology backed up by the stability of the state in the eyes of the world. The third phase is identifying the "core idea" or the essential elements of the nation. This is the moment in which a process similar to the phase of sifting, that is peculiar of nationalism, is performed. It consists in the selection of elements considered to represent the "essence" of the nation and that will constitute the core of the branding strategy. These elements must have precise characteristics in order to be acceptable.

> . . . the identity cannot be so unique as to be outside the calculus of exchange; if its ultimate aim is to help its objects circulate as a viable commodity in the marketplace, it must remain rooted in a relational context of functional similarity or *standardization*. Moreover, the brand must simultaneously elicit *emotional* attachment, to "humanize the brand" – that is, inspire loyalty from its users – and be justifiable on a *rational* level, as the core of a strategy designed to generate political and economic capital. (Aronczyk, 2013, 75)

The core elements must allow national image to emerge over other nations while at the same time it should not be exclusionary and create too much division. National image is shaped so that it will be perceived as a distinct unit but one that is open to cultural exchange and to international opportunities. In this sense, it differs from original nationalist discourse since it does not lean on a "hard" oppositional structure that puts "we" against "them". Instead, difference is maintained but as an asset of the nation. The allegedly unique characteristics of the nation are an opportunity for all those who are willing to connect to the nation-state and exchange is encouraged as a form of cooperation. It has to be noted that this structure fosters an essentialized form of culture that is inserted into a system of nation-state interactions that responds to "container thinking". The resulting form of national culture comes to constitute a

standard through which all culture is to be evaluated. Moreover, ‹‹the presence of national structures that appear to ensure normalcy or peacebility›› (Aronczyk, 2013,76) gives more appeal on the international market. As such it is suggested that the nation renounce any overt form of conflict with third parties in order for the branding strategy to be more successful. Another point of interest for the present work is the emotional level of the brand. The creation of a positive sentiment towards the nation is one of the elements that fosters nationalism. As mentioned above, affective observation and experiences constitute an element of individual orientation towards the nation (Dekker, Malová, Hoogendorn, 2003). Therefore, it makes sense that nation branding, being similar to the theorization processes of previous nationalism, makes use of it. The last phase in nation branding is communicating and implementing the national brand. The objective is to make the brand visible and encourage individuals to share it and make it part of their own socialization. In this sense, it is much alike public diplomacy. It aims to distribute and make people participate into a structure that, with time, will shape the space to make the nation be perceived as positive and attractive. Active participation of individuals is what makes the brand survive and become more and more influential. Branding creates a new form of national socialization that makes the citizens themselves the media of the message (Aronczyk, 2013, 77). However, there is a critical dimension in the practice of brand nationalism. Since it depends so much on individuals that adopt, share and reproduce the framework of the nation the individual themselves can influence and interpret the brand and, possibly, change its meaning.

Nation branding is still an open field to be thoroughly tested. While many entered the competition to make the nation a successful brand only few can say that their efforts were efficient in creating one. Moreover, nation branding is not guaranteed to produce the result auspicated by its users. The consultants involved in nation branding themselves claim that in most cases the implementation of a brand strategy does not produce the expected results (Aronczyk, 2013, 80). While this can sometimes be connected to the approach that governments have towards nation branding and in the lack of results in the short term, it cannot be ruled out that nation branding might be not as effective as its creators present it to be. We must be reminded that a nation brand is obviously subject to a range of responses and as such the results are not guaranteed. However, nation branding affects national policy and fund allocations and as such it must be recognized that it has impact on a state politics and economy (Aronczyk, 2013,81). Nation branding represents a new formulation of nationalism that has effects in domestic and foreign environments. While it cannot be demonstrated that

its ends can ever be accomplished it engenders both an allocation of funds and efforts in internal ministries of many countries and a structure of discrimination that shapes the global space. If it represents just a use of soft power to create a new form of nationalism and perpetrate a structure of container thinking or it can have a positive effects on states willing to undertake the project still remains to be seen. We must be reminded however that it fosters a structure of global definition of "normal" cultural practice inserted in a particular form of political order and that ‹‹geopolitically driven cultural othering dies hard›› (Iwabuchi, 2015, 22).

1.6 The new nation and its consequences

Nation branding is changing the face of the nation. It can be argued that it represents a new discourse of nationalism in the age of globalization. By creating and promoting new national images it re-demarcates selective narratives and symbolic meaning of the nation prompting change in nationalist discourse. The branding process in this sense ‹‹acts as a parallel role to the reconstruction of (Anderson's) "imagined communities"›› (Iwabuchi, 2015, 18) redefining who belongs and what unique characteristics the nation has. It has to be kept in mind that nation branding creates boundaries that are ‹‹not easily permeated by alternative visions of either membership or autonomy›› (Aronczyk, 2013, 78). While the nation as a brand appears more open to foreign elements it does in fact create a new form of discrimination, one that is less visible than the previous. By creating a standard or "normal" form of culture it casts aside all different form of culture while validating a structure that sees the nation as the basic unit of society. Methodological nationalism becomes part of people's daily lives as cross-cultural encounters are understood as encounters between nations in a phenomenon that Michael Billig calls 'banal inter-nationalism' (Iwabuchi, 2015, 19). Individuals are inserted in this system by being recognized as part of a particular national community. Whoever does not claim national belonging is compelled to participate and align to it or is labeled as an exception or even anomalous. In this process, a structure of soft power enacts a coercion that can be traced back to a hegemonic intent. It is clear that ‹‹the nation continues to matter as a framework for claims of legitimacy, recognition, and rights in the contemporary context›› (Aronczyk, 2013, 81). Behind it, political and economic interests play out engendering a cultural policy that has much to do with essentialism. By creating a new form of essentialized national culture this form of nationalism inevitably creates new spaces of liminality,

excluding minorities and foreigners, not only in the global space but also in the domestic one (Iwabuchi, 2015, 20).

Nationalism found a way to cope with multicultural environments that might sometimes pose a challenge to its cultural assumptions. The strategy is to cleverly include cross-cultural encounter as part of nationalist discourse and encourage it under a well-defined system, thus shaping the direction in which multiculturality is to be managed. The public diplomacy of nationalism created a particular form of multicultural interaction that sees nations as the unit of analysis through which the world is to be explored and understood. In making a discourse that represents uniqueness and distinction the unit of analysis this process brings critical problems in the consideration of minorities and of such phenomena as diasporas and migration. This is an aspect we ought to take into consideration in contemporary times as these phenomena are likely to increase in number and dimension and states will likely see an increase in the presence of minorities on its territory. In the wake of this situation, nationalist discourse is growing more and more as a response to perceived external threats to the lives of nation-state citizens; a response towards an "other" that has even more various forms than before and is, as in previous nationalist discourse, constantly changing. We must be reminded that nationalism still engenders a distinction that, if possible, is even more popular than before in the wake of foreign elements being shared and consumed on a daily basis. If it will be able to develop as an answer to the growing problems of a globalized world is still to be seen. What is sure is that in order to do so it will have to address its discriminatory structure and make changes in its "unique" formulation of national culture.

2. Cultural Nationalism and its development in Japan: from the Meiji period to the 1960s

With the Meiji Restoration of 1868 nationalism started to be a central discourse with the opening of the country to international relations. As modernity shook the country the necessity for a "Japanese" identity resounded as a common theme between intellectuals, politician and bureaucrats. With the end of the nineteenth century and the opening of the twentieth ideas of national distinctiveness and of "Japan" regained importance. Different nationalist ideas circulated in the wartime Japanese state and many retained their value in the postwar period when they came to form a cultural background for the formation of Japanese nationalism and its later developments.

2.1 Meiji Japan and the quest for National Identity

The Meiji Restoration of 1868 was a moment of turbulent changes. Change occurred on the political, economical and social levels and, as prompted in other parts of the world by the growing dynamics of globalizing capitalism and imperialism, ideas of the nation and of national identity began circulating in Japan (Doak, 1997, 285) . In this historical moment Japanese thinkers and élite began articulating their own form of national culture and identity in the wake of modernization. The main question was how to cope with the instability and change that modernization was bringing. Moreover, the perception of a foreign hostile world that was enforcing a "cultural colonization" further contributed to the necessity of elaborating a response (Oguma, 2002, 10; Benner, 2006, 19). The challenge of competing with the capitalist core of imperializing nations was met by centering economic development around the state. In the attempt to reach a level of considerable industrialization and to shape the economy of the country in response to capitalistic standards bureaucrats and politics supported the implementation of a state-centered approach. Many, like the scholars of the *Mito* school, argued that the adequate response would be ‹‹to define a robust, distinctive national identity›› (Benner, 2006, 19). This, however, posed the difficulty of creating enough credibility and consensus around the state to make these policies effective. The creation of a nation, often imagined around an ethnic community, which could back the project of a modern state, was the preferred response to the problem (Wilson, 2002, 2; Benner, 2006, 23).

There was another field in which the creation of a national community was seen as a possible solution: that of coping with the profound social transformations that were unfolding all over the country. Changes in the mode of production set in motion by the necessity of the new economic system were putting a "strain" on society and influencing the lives of all the population (Maruyama, 1953, 15; Wilson, 2002, 5). The increasing importance of urban environments and the creation of industrial sectors were eroding the social system of Japan spreading uncertainty and pessimism. Japan was undergoing in few years transformations that happened all around the world in concomitance with industrialization first and the adoption of a capitalistic system later. In the face of similar social disruption, the creation of a renewed sense of belonging and identity was seen as a possible solution to instability. These two positions came to clash in the arena of identity formation creating a tension that George Wilson has defined as a tension between those who looked for a political solution to modernity and those who endeavored for the restoration of human dignity in the destabilizing social transformations (Doak, 1997, 286). This led to a conflict between supporters and opponents of the state that inaugurated a ‹‹destabilizing juncture in modern Japanese political discourse›› (Doak, 1997,287). The debate oscillated between matters of sovereignty and of loss of identity, as the state pushed for modernization and its opponents looked for a sense of belonging in alleged ethnic and historical origins. It was argued that the alignment with European and North American modes of production would irremediably lead to a loss of cultural authenticity (Iida, 2002, 14). In this sense, there was a profound sense of anxiety shared by all parties involved.

Laura Hein (2008, 449) argues that the Japanese government followed a trend common to all Asian countries in the face of imperialism and that Japanese thinking elites constructed their approach regarding national identity around a basic question: ‹‹Is there something wrong with our modernity?››. As stated before, uncertainty or the feel of inadequacy and inferiority can often prompt the need of identification and the creation of a nationalist discourse. At the turn of the century the influential work of art historian Okakura Tenshin (1862 – 1913) *The Ideals of the East* (1903) upheld the notion of a unique Asian identity that was characterized by a principle of harmony (Iida, 2002, 16). It was the beginning of an idea of Asian culture as a countertendency to euro-american imperialism and the attempt to elevate the Japanese nation as its foremost representative. The Meiji period prompted a quest for cultural identity that would continue throughout the twentieth century

and would come to create the unique idea of "Japaneseness" that became the basis for further discourses on cultural nationalism.

Discourses about culture and "Japaneseness" in Meiji Japan

Even though the search for a "Japanese" identity rotated around culture it was not until later that this term would come to represent the main goal of the nation-building project. In the Meiji period, the keyword for intellectuals at the time was civilization (*bunmei*) which expressed the need to "civilize" (i.e. modernize) that was at the center of attention. The word reached the wider population through the creation of the slogan *bunmei kaika* (civilization and enlightenment) that was shared and proposed as an objective for the country (Tai, 2003, 8). The Meiji state was entering the international environment with the intent of modernizing the country by aligning to the standards set by hegemonic powers and thus achieving the model of "normal civilization" that they enforced. However, the perception that this alignment would not result in the reception of Japan as equal to other modern countries prompted the development of a specific approach to modernity. This specificity was to be found in the mixture of modern and pre-modern elements that would come to form the Japanese nation. The Meiji Constitution opening well exemplifies how pre-modern sources of legitimacy were included in national discourse:

> Having by virtues of glories of our Ancestors, ascended the Throne of a lineal succession unbroken for ages eternal; desiring to promote the welfare of, and to give the development to the moral and intellectual faculties of our beloved subjects . . . (Meiji Constitution, 1889; Benner, 2006, 25).

The stress on pre-modern elements to find a source of social cohesion is a common element in formulation of nationalism. In Meiji Japan the imperial house was made the symbol of pre-modern, traditional Japanese culture and proposed as the unifying element in the state quest for modernization. The idea of civilization itself became something more than just the modernization of society. For example, one of the founders of Keio University, Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901) proposed *bunmei* as a factor of extreme importance for people in Japan. For him civilization meant the creation of a nation and the achievement of independence in Japan against imperialist powers (Tai, 2003, 8). He fostered the idea that, to be able to stand up to the rest of the world and to be free of hegemonic oppression, Japan needed to form a

cultural and social unity. Central to the creation of a national unity was the identification of the group that the nation would come to represent and intellectuals strived to find a definition for the population of Japan.

Since a nation needs to be identified with a community, before shaping the nation the creation of the concept of the "Japanese" (*nihonjin*) was necessary. There were particular events that prompted discourses about *nihonjin* and how they would come to be defined. One of them was the creation of a unified language that was spread across all of the Japanese archipelago. The national language (*kokugo*) was developed from a particular Tokyo speech relegating all other linguistic variants to a marginal role (Tai, 2003, 10). It is important to remember that language, considered as part of culture, was one of the characteristics commonly thought to define a national community (Jusdanis, 1995, 30; Kramer, 1997, 526). Therefore, it can be argued that *kokugo* was created with the intent to unify the nation around a single form of communication. The process of portraying a single form of language and stressing its difference or uniqueness from another language or linguistic variant set an ideological boundary of the nation (Kramer, 1997, 526). This national identity, however, needed to be spread across the country and communicated to the people. It was through the newly established education system that *kokugo* and other ideas about national identity were spread to the wider public (Tai, 2003, 10). National identity was being constructed through the use of chosen elements of culture deemed to be useful to foster a new image of the "Japanese" nation following the model of European anthropological methodology (Oguma, 2002, 7). In matter of politics and international relations two major events helped shaping the image of a "Japanese" nation: the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904. The reason that war became central to the definition of "Japaneseness" can partly be found in conceptions of imperialist nationalism shared by Japanese thinking elites. The idea that Japan could develop alongside other hegemonic powers was hindered by the acknowledgment that it would never come to be fully accepted by its counterparts (Oguma, 2002, 11). Historical evidence of colonialism, constituted in the eyes of Japanese intellectuals by the experience of imperialism in south-east Asia, the unequal treaties imposed upon many East-Asian countries and most of all the precarious situation of China, showed that euro-american imperialism deemed no Asian country their equal (Benner, 29, 2006). The assumption that in order to make itself be acknowledged the Japanese state had to make use of the same strategy enforced by hegemonic powers began to be accepted by many. Fukuzawa Yukichi was one of them. He argued that in the face of imperialist self-interest, the Japanese

state should too join in order not to be crushed by it (Benner, 2006, 32). Following the ideas of Fukuzawa, Japanese intellectuals created a theory in which the Japanese state was to join imperialism to modernize without bending to the hegemony of imperialist powers. Japanese nationalism started embracing an ideology that would bring the state towards totalitarianism (Wilson, 2002, 2; Doak, 1997, 287).

This idea of nationalism as part of an imperialist modernization was first put into practice with the Sino-Japanese War (Iida, 2002, 16). The war not only signaled the effectiveness of the policies for modernization of the country but the Japanese state started to gain political status in the eyes of European nation-states. The most important aspect for our analysis, however, is how this event helped in the formation of a national character. Through public socialization the idea of the Japanese nation was spread among the public. Making use of the commemoration of soldiers fallen on the battlefield and the celebration of victory, the Meiji state was able to enlist the energies of its subjects to the cause (Mitani, 2011, 163). The war underlined an apparent contradiction in nationalist discourse of the period. If part of the intellectuals followed Okakura's idea of a collective Asian identity others focused, instead, on the formulation of a unique and separate form of identity. Liu Jianhui (2001) argues that the idea of national character of "Japan" was created in opposition to the Asian population, that after the defeat came to be considered as inferior. (Tai, 2003, 9). Thus, the creation of *nihonjin* presents one of the usual elements of national formation: a clear opposition to external populations. At the same time, however, the idea of an Asian identity that could resist euro-american imperialism persisted. This, was due to the coexistence of two different theories of the Japanese nation a 'mixed nation theory' and a 'homogenous nation theory' (Oguma, 2002, 15). The Meiji period represented a crucial moment in Japanese nationalist discourse; two different theories, one more inclusive the other more particularistic, cooperated in the creation of the national image. On the one hand, the idea of a broader Asian nation acted as a countertendency to euro-american imperialism (Iida, 2002, 17). On the other hand, the idea that modernization had set the Japanese apart from the rest of Asia led to the theorization of a unique ethnic community. The latter was created by selecting those positive characteristics that other Asian populations were lacking to the eyes of nationalists. The first Sino-Japanese war set in motion a mechanism of identity formation that would come to be used many times in the conceptualization of the strong ethnic nationalism of the world wars and beyond (Oguma, 2002, 15).

The Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905) confirmed the importance of similar events in the diffusion and consolidation of nationalism. The war inspired support of the wider public in the cities as showed by the riots that followed the war for the malcontent over the Treaty of Portsmouth (Mitani, 2011, 15). During these years, moreover, the newly developed concept of "citizen" (*kokumin*) came to be connected to the idea of Japanese national culture. With the turn of the century new conceptions of culture and a stronger stress on "Japan" and "the Japanese" came to be implemented.

2.2 Nationalism at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century

The first decades of the twentieth century were a busy period for nationalism. With the 1919 Treaty of Versailles the Japanese state was forced to give up most of its wartime gains in China and in the pacific, a resolution that was later confirmed in the Washington conference of 1921. This signaled to the Japanese political élite that imperialist powers did not consider the Japanese state as an equal. This historical experience of racial exclusion prompted the perceived necessity to create a distinct national identity that could play as a countertendency to imperialist subordination (Doak, 1997, 84). At the same time, however, the military victories that the country collected were empowering a sense of pride and legitimacy. In particular the victory over Russia in 1905, the consequent international recognition and the claims of Japan as having a leading role in Asia were important factors in the creation of a sense of uniqueness and national belonging. Once again, identification through opposition was the name of the game. Tomiyama Ichirō (1992) argues that modern Japanese identity was created through the observation and classification of "symptoms" of difference and similarities in colonized populations (Tai, 2003, 9). The oppositional structure of nationalism came to be one of the most important factors in the definition of identity and national culture for the Japanese as the country became more and more involved in a colonialist endeavor over Asia that would have its apex during the Second World War.

An interesting aspect of how Japanese national character was created is that, as Eiji Oguma (2002, 15) argued, there were two, contrasting, ways of defining Japanese ethnic origins and their alleged superiority. The first is to stress ethnic homogeneity and purity of the *nihonjin*, the second to emphasize the multi-ethnic origins of them. This ambiguous contrast in definition can be explained by political objectives in diverse situations. Ideas of uniqueness

were formulated under the influence of nationalist discourse as a countertendency to imperialism domination in Meiji years.. This represents the usual form of nationalist identification process, an alleged defense of the interests of the national community. The case of the multi-ethnic origin is, instead quite different. Oguma (2002 120), argues that, as colonial expansion became a goal of the Japanese state the justification for its enactment was given by the theory of mixed origins. Pursuing a ‹‹superficial universalism›› Japanese national theorists envisioned a family-state that included foreign Asian nations as adopted children of the empire in the name of an alleged common ancestry (Oguma, 2002, 118). In its expansionistic policy the Japanese empire attempted to revive "true" Asian identity under the control of its supposedly perfected form (the Japanese one), under the conviction that ‹‹any alien people could be converted into "Japanese"›› (Oguma, 2002, 113).

It is clear that nationalism in Japan followed the ambivalence and ambiguity that are typical of national formation. If in external projections of national image cultural "othering" and claims of superiority were deemed to be the most effective strategy, in domestic matters the points of contention and debate were different. The great social instability of the Meiji period was far from being solved and contention between the state and intellectuals who believed in the necessity of a policy to better the situation of the people was high. Drawing from Friedrich Meineke's (1862 - 1954) distinction between cultural nation and state nation, intellectuals, such as Takayama Chogyū (1871 - 1902) and Usui Jishō (1900 - 1991), developed the idea of the cultural nation, often represented by tradition, as opposed to the modernization proposed by the state (Doak, 2007, 13). The idea that the state was not doing enough for its population and was creating a structure of internal oppression led to the embrace of the cultural nation as an alternative mode of modernity. The difficult situation of the population led to riots such as the ones after the Russo-Japanese War for the perceived inability of the state to secure more benefits from the military victory or, again, the ones in 1918 following the growing price of rice during the War (Doak, 1997, 289). Social malcontent was evident in response to concerns over the quality of life and the perception that the state was not doing enough to free itself from the hegemony of imperialist powers.

Politics became involved in national formation spurring a debate that would characterize the years between the 1920s and 1930s. Civil society, as an expression of the bourgeoisie, was creating a consistent gap between the cities, expression of the new capitalist form of society, and the countryside that represented the traditional mode of social structure (Doak, 1997, 291). The question was whether capitalism was appropriate for Japan and many

who advocated for the uniqueness of the "Japanese" started looking at traditional rural social relation as ‹‹beautiful customs that were being destroyed by the introduction of capitalism and selfish individualism›› (Hein, 2008, 451). It was an attempt to link national unity to traditional and historical values that were selected in contrast to the disruption of social structures brought by modernity. The political left saw the matter of nationalism as one of crucial importance in the redefinition of Japanese society and for the directions that the state would take in the future. They expressed the need to be freed from the domination of either the imperialist powers or the oppressive Meiji state in order for the Japanese "nationality" to be free to form a "nation" with a state that represented it (Doak, 1997, 291).

One of the leading figures in this debate was the journalist and professor Ōyama Ikuo (1899-1955). He argued that civil society was constructed only around urban bourgeois identity and needed, instead, to be extended to ethnic national identity (Doak, 1997, 293). The idea to shape the nation and the ethnic community it represents in contrast to the capitalist and militarist modern state was shared by much of the political left in the first decades of the twentieth century. It can be argued that nationalism in Japan shaped itself as a response to the modernity advocated by European countries and to the problematic aspects it brought to the attention of intellectuals and politicians alike (Maruyama, 1953, 10; Wilson, 2002, 4; Benner, 2006, 9). It would not be enough, however, to reduce nationalism as a mere consequence of modernity. There was much at stake and nationalist discourse not only survived into completely different settings than before but it came to be associated with different political and economical interests over time. As, at the end of the 1920s, the state became increasingly involved in nationalist discourse the leftists enthusiasm over nationalism tended to fade (Doak, 1997, 295). Nevertheless, nationalist discourse and the tension between the state and the supporters of an ethnic people persisted.

2.3 The 1930s: ethnic and extreme nationalism

The 1930s was a critical period for the formation of nationalism in Japan. Iida Yumiko (2002, 21) argued that the 1930s were a period in which the links capable of making national hegemony a form of legitimacy for popular sentiments exhausted their efficacy. It was, therefore, necessary to find alternative ways to legitimate the claims of the empire in the eye of its subjects. It was mainly in this period and in war years that ideas of Japanese ethnicity

were formulated. After the often racial formulation of difference that was stressed during previous decades, a major shift in studies over identity and nationalism occurred. Instead of the strict term of biological "race", a broader, more cultural, sense of identity was highlighted: ethnicity. Efforts in nationalist discourse were put on emphasizing ethnicity as the base for social and national identity (Doak, 2001, 6). This road would bring to the idea of a multi-ethnic Japanese empire that, in the eyes of its theorists, encompassed all East Asia and supported Japanese aggression in East Asia (Oguma, 2002, 124). At the same time, the formulation of nationalism as a response to the perceived inadequacy of society brought extreme nationalism to the fore. Extreme nationalists diffused populist ideas of the necessity of a social reconstruction that was to be found in the ideal of an idyllic past and managed to influence the high spheres of imperial bureaucracy. These two forms of nationalism entwined in the formulation of the Japanese empire's rhetoric, which would then develop in the ideology of war years.

Ethnic Nationalism in the 1930s

Kevin M. Doak (2001) argues that two major developments shaped the debate over ethnic nationalism in the 1930s. The first is the shift towards an acceptance of nationalism by Marxists and consequently by a large part of the political left. Marxist theorists in Japan saw in the ethnic nation a ‹‹protean tool that could serve Marxist purposes as well as capitalist ones›› (Doak, 1997, 198). The contrast between what Marxist defined as the political state and the ethnic nation resounded of the 1920s distinction between nationalists and the state. They believed that ethnicity could be the key to foster proletarian unity against the oppression of capitalism. Therefore, this brought them to accept the policy of intervention in Asia that the Japanese empire was enacting during those years in the hope that it could bolster proletarian struggle against capitalist powers (Doak, 2001, 6). The second development is more relevant for the present analysis. It consists of a move, in matters of nationalism, from politics and law to cultural theories that encompassed many different disciplines. Starting with literature, ethnicity came to be at the center of the debate over identity and nationalism. There was a shift in social sciences towards what can be called cultural sciences (Doak,2001, 8). One notable example in literature is the Japan Romantic School, led by Yasuda Yojūrō (1910 – 1981), whose adherents drew from German romanticism to create a Japanese version of the "*Volk*" (*minzoku*), which could be equated to the ethnic nation. *Minzoku* became the

embodiment of a romantic ideal of identity that could reconcile the capitalistic modern structure of the Japanese state and the pull towards traditional culture (Doak, 1996, 96). Soon, other cultural theories of ethnicity were formulated and proposed. One of them is the stress on traditional rural culture produced by the work of Oka Masao (1898 - 1982) and Yanagita Kunio (1875 - 1962) who in 1925 had founded the journal *Minzoku*. In a turn against biological race, they implemented a view on ethnicity that focused on local rural culture. They believed that the answer to national unity was to be searched in traditional and popular "Japanese" culture. Tessa Morris Suzuki (1995) argued that the characteristics highlighted in that field at the time were not sufficient to sustain a sense of national unity. This led Yanagita to analyze traditional culture and enact a ‹‹description of the beliefs and practices which must be created›› (Tai, 2003, 11). Rather than simply defining ethnicity through the observation and analysis of rural Japanese traditions, then, Yanagita selected and re-elaborated traditional elements to create a new form of traditional culture shared between all inhabitants of the Japanese archipelago (Oguma, 2002, 189). Making use of this selective narrative, folklore studies participated in the debate over ethnicity and helped shape its concept as this was diffused to state policy and to the wider public. As it will be shown later, theories on ethnicity of the social sciences formed an influential theoretical framework that empowered the totalizing projects of the Japanese empire. Society was cast into the realm of ethnicity, while ethnicity was cast in the framework of the nation. Therefore, it can be argued that society came to be thought of as the ethnic nation. The isomorphism between the nation and society is a common move in the structure of methodological nationalism, one that came into being after the Second World War (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003, 580). It is clear by looking at the Japanese case that the preludes to this development were already present even earlier.

That of Yanagita and Oka is just one of the theories that influenced the thought on ethnicity in the 1930s. Another influential work is that of Takata Yasuma (1883 - 1972) who, at the lead of the Ethnic Research Institute, helped shaping the idea of a single East Asian community (Doak, 2001, 10). Takata shared the idea of reshaping society trough ethnic nationality which would have constituted the collective identity that Japanese scholars were striving to create. He theorized the notion of 'total society' (*kyōdō shakai*), which he saw as the union of social forces expressed in different environments (Doak, 2001, 11). An interesting point is how Takata argued that there was a clear distinction between the concept of "race" (*shuzoku*) and that of the ethnic nation (*minzoku*). Takata constructed his idea of ethnicity around a "subjective element" that he identified with a 'spirit' (*seishin*). This, in turn,

focused on traditional social consciousness (*minzoku seishin*) that he separated from the biological idea of race and created a concept of ethnic nationality that was ‹‹determined by consciousness rather than by natural blood››. (Doak, 2001, 17). However, he did not renounce the peculiar characteristics of ethnicity. While his move of rejecting biological race allowed him to theorize a broader form of ethnicity that was not bounded to state and was not necessarily connected to ethnic nationalism, it did not in fact bring him very far from the idea of biological race that he wanted to put aside. Behind Takata's notion of ethnicity it is easy to identify a broader definition of the concept of race, one that could encompass all of Asia under the idea of a multi-ethnic empire that was to rise as equal to world powers.

The essentialist idea that Asian populations shared the same natural characteristics, defined by the concept of an Asian race, and were therefore a single group, is not by any means far from the formulation of a well-defined and exclusive national community. It is important to notice that Takata and those who followed in his wake had particular difficulty in singling out which were the characteristics that Asian populations shared and that the only relevant link was constituted by a history of cultural exchange (Doak, 2001,30). It was the ambiguity inherent in the argumentation that made it applicable in many different contexts throughout East Asia. Takata created an influential framework that saw East Asian populations as part of the same ethnic nationality (*minzoku*) regardless of independent states (Doak, 2001, 16). This framework was then put into use by the empire in a way that perpetrated a particular social hierarchy that saw the Japanese state at the lead of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. In short, the idea of ethnic nationality created a flexible framework that could validate imperialist aggression by the Japanese empire and, at the same time, allowed for the use of biological race and of ethnic community in interchangeable ways. This underlines the ambiguous yet effective structure that this form of nationalism came to have when put into the service of a project of totalitarianism. Focusing the attention on ethnicity both created the effect of justifying imperial intervention in Asia and to ensure that ‹‹national boundary was kept ambivalent in the colonies›› (Tai, 2003, 13) where the colonized were thought of as being *nihonjin* but only when needed. They were taught Japanese language and instructed in a selected form of national culture while at the same time being perceived and treated as second class citizens who did not share the same rights. The concept of race and ethnicity were the theoretical foundation of the Japanese empire action in East Asia in a move that led to the naturalization of a particular form of political ideology. The perceived difference of an aggressive and racial policy was then cunningly normalized under the

pretense of a common ethnicity that was exploited to seek legitimacy to the eyes of the world powers. A cultural-based theory of identity became the theoretical structure of much of the empire rhetoric and fuelled a form of ethnic nationalism that would then be diffused throughout the Japanese territory. After the Second Sino-Japanese War of 1937, in the Japanese state ethno-national consciousness was widely spread at both institutional and popular level and the idea of Japanese nationhood was fully developed (Mitani, 2011, 163).

Extreme Nationalism in 1930s Japan

Another type of nationalism that gained ground in the 1920s and 1930s was an extreme formulation of it. The social transformation that modernity had brought upon the country still caused a process of erosion of social structures that highlighted the ‹‹instabilities in the structure of the national hegemony (which) were gradually magnified›› (Iida, 2002, 21). This instability led some to embrace an extreme form of nationalism to look for a renewed society and sense of identity often in contrast with the state. They perceived the solution to the problematic aspects of modern society in the renewal of an idyllic and mythic past where tradition was reformed under the ideal of a patriotic sense of belonging rooted in nativism and in a heroic sense of history (Large, 2006, 88). This feeling of revival of a “Japanese spirit” (*yamato seishin*) was shared also in the field of literature by authors such as Kawabata Yasunari (1899 - 1972), Shiga Naoya (1883 - 1971) and Yasuda Yojūrō who helped shaping the idea of the inadequacy of Japanese modernity though the use of a ‹‹language of loss›› (Tansman, 2002, 110).

This idea of loss of tradition and spirit and the consequent criticism upon society was shared by extreme nationalist movements in late Taishō and Shōwa years. Before giving an overview of the main characteristics of extreme nationalism in Japan during those years it is worth to notice that its expressions were highly differentiated. Therefore, extreme nationalism could be defined as a trend shared between different movements and ideological leaders. Stephen S. Large (2006) offered an interesting analysis of Japanese national extremism during prewar and wartime Japan. He argued that extreme nationalism between Japanese intellectuals moved outside of political boundaries as both leftist and rightist radicals embraced it in forms that often coincide. The main concern of these intellectuals was to highlight the necessity of a

reconstruction of society which could be performed only through the destruction of the present social forms.

It is worth to notice that these formulations of a new society were imbued with a sense of loss that transcended the political moment. The concern of nationalist extremist was to push for a new society through the destruction of social order ‹‹at the expense of anticipating what the building of a new order would specifically entail›› (Large, 2006, 95) thus creating a form of heroic violence whose only purpose was often the expression of social malcontent and identity loss. This rhetoric finds a similar formulation in the works of the Japanese Romantic School, founded in 1934 by Yasuda, and in the writings of the aforementioned literary authors. They believed, as did extreme nationalists, that the ideal of a new society was to be found in the unity and values of a lost past of "Japanese" tradition that often coincided with the formulation of an "authentic" and "pure" form of culture which could inspire a new sense of solidarity (Large, 2006, 95).

> These moments of immediacy and unity, offered up to counter the alienation and fragmentation of the modern individual, are images of liberating symbiosis between the individual and some large entity; they are touched by violence and inscribed by writers with no explicit political motivation . . . (Tansman, 2002, 111)

The idea of a new social order was therefore apolitical, since it could be embraced by both extreme leftists and extreme rightists, and accepted violence as a means. Apart from these two elements that were shared by literary authors, extremists found in a utopian formulation of national culture their ideal form of society. It can be argued that the formulation of this society reproduced structures that were not only common in earlier formulation of nationalism between Japanese intellectuals, but also of nationalist discourse formation in general. First, the formulation of this extreme form of nationalism considered the state, as the expression of the current social order, its opponent. The distinction between the cultural nation and the state was a central feature in Japanese nationalism from Meiji to postwar years (Doak, 2007, 14). Secondly, as stated before, extreme nationalists traced the boundaries of their ideal society by means of opposition to present social conditions rather than defining a process of building a new social order. This aspect reminds of the process of creating aggregation by means of differentiation that was highlighted in chapter 1. Therefore, it can be argued that extreme nationalism in 1920s and 1930s Japan presented itself as a formulation of identity that made use of previously expressed ideas of nationalist discourse, and made use of them to support a

violent expression of social anxiety even if they were aware that ‹‹morality might pull the other way›› (Audi, 2009, 369).

Even though extreme nationalism was an expression of apolitical social criticism, it played a role in the political agenda of the Japanese empire. At first, the movement characterized itself as being against the state and its adherent were mostly members of the middle and lower-middle class (Large, 2006, 92). However, the recognition of the popular appeal of this movement and the connection of part of the men in power ‹‹was decisive in turning Japanese nationalism into 'ultra nationalism'›› (Large, 2006, 103). Large (2006, 104) argues that the rhetoric of extreme nationalists was exploited by the imperial state in fostering a sense of patriotism and nationalist ideas that were crucial during the Second World War. It is evident that state-nationalism during war years was constituted by much more than mere state-centered ideas of nationalism. State nationalism was flanked by ideas of patriotic fervor formulated in extreme nationalism and would come to be backed by a nativist theory that came to be regarded as part of the idea of a Japanese nation under the control of the empire.

Wartime Ethnic Studies

The war years saw technocratic fascist ideas of a distinctive Japanese modernity be accompanied by the idea of an ethnic based Pan-Asian empire ‹‹based on Japanese uniqueness and a regional alignment consonant with it›› (Hein, 2008, 451). In this period, ethnological research came to be the next step in the normalization of the ethnic nation. The Second World War meant that the social sciences were put in front of the necessity to reshape their studies in order to support the Japanese state. From 1942, under the lead of the Ethnological Foundation, ethnologists started a number of field inquiries inside the territory of the Japanese archipelago aimed at defining the characteristics of the Japanese ethnic community in order to support the empire policy. A leading figure in this endeavor was Oka Masao (1898 - 1982) who introduced a ‹‹culturalist emphasis on organic "totality"›› (Doak, 2001, 22). His idea of a ethnic nation was clearly connected to Takata's work and emphasized the necessity to create a particular Japanese ethnology. With the foundation of the Ethnic Research Institute in 1943 and the appointment of Takata as the director, the direction of Japanese ethnological studies was to be the individuation of peculiar characteristics that helped shape a particular form of nationality.

However, the work of these ethnologists was put into use only in a limited set of situations inside the empire's policy (Doak, 2001, 24). The decline of the Japanese empire and the successive defeat by the hands of the U.S.A. limited the number of situations in which the theory could be put to the test. Nonetheless, the ethnologic work of these researchers had already produced effects in the field. Doak (2001, 25) argued that this new approach to ethnology had three major consequences. First, scholars were brought into the mission of Japanese imperialism in Asia. Secondly, the research contributed reinforcing the perceived importance of ethnic national identity and the idea of an Asian cultural difference from the hegemonic powers of Europe and North America. Thirdly, the scope of the analysis was brought outside Japanese territory bringing ethnologists to consider ethnological differences within the colonies. This meant that ethnic differences among the "Japanese" were not considered by these studies. These developments would become important in the definition of a Japanese identity and nationality in postwar years as the stress on ethnicity did not fade with the end of the war.

2.4 Nationalism in Postwar Japan

The defeat came in a moment in which Japan was already in dire conditions. The difficult period of the end of the war had brought the country on the brim of exhaustion and resources were scarce (Fiori, 2011, 19). Under this problematic situation the population had to face the dismantling of the Japanese empire and of its rhetoric. In the aftermath of the war, the only option considered was to dissociate from the defeated ideology of the totalitarian empire and to try and salvage the situation under the occupation trough a focus on economy (Garon, 2002, 110). In matters of nationalism this was a critical moment. The theories that were developed under the Japanese empire had now to face the censure and purges enacted by the office of the Supreme Commander of Allied Powers (SCAP). At the same time, the modernity promoted by the empire was proven as a failure and theories that were associated with it were consequently deemed inadequate. Nonetheless, some of the ideas that were developed in the war period managed to survive; in particular the idea of ethnicity as formulated during the war years (Doak, 2001, 33). With nationalist discourses being on the rise, the idea of an ethnic nation developed under the Japanese empire regained visibility and status. Another approach to nationalism was to stress the importance of civil participation. Maruyama Masao (1914 – 1996) developed a line of thought that became influential and shaped the direction of

Japanese discourse on modernity (Koschmann, 1988, 507). At the same time, the postwar period was characterized by a form of developmental nationalism that stressed the importance of bringing the country back to a stable economy. This inaugurated a trend that, under favorable geopolitical conditions, would bring Japan to become one of the leading economies in the world.

The Postwar Resurgence of Ethnic Nationalism

Postwar Japan was a crucible of ideas for nationalism. In the wake of the defeat, efforts to reinstate a sense of belonging and identity were deemed necessary by most of the intellectuals and politicians (Tai, 2003, 13). The malcontent over the new Japanese state under the control of the SCAP developed into a search for an alternative. The return to what was perceived as a synonym of imperialist hegemonic oppression by the hands of foreigners spurred the necessity to create a nation and a nationalist discourse that were seen as the countertendency. It was a return to the tension between the state and the nation that characterized much of the nationalist debate in Meiji yeas and in the 1920s. However, it needs to be noted that in the period between the 1945 to 1952 there was no true Japanese state and as such the position of ethnic nationalism gained strength (Doak, 2007, 204). At the same time, the SCAP tried to create a new form of nationalism around the occupied state that stressed the importance of civic models based on liberal democratic ideas that supported progressism (Doak, 1997, 300). The tension between these two forms of nationalism brought Japanese intellectuals to look for an alternative to the civic models proposed by the occupiers that, more often than not, was found in the idea of a ‹‹peace-loving homogenous state›› (Oguma, 2002, 299).

The defeat did little to tamper wartime ethnologists ideas of an ethnic nation and the stark separation from the empire and all related to it that characterized these years did not affect ethnicity and theories about it (Doak, 2001, 33). This is mainly due to two developments. The first is that wartime ethnic nationalism was thought of as a discourse of “race” rather than one of ethnicity. By discounting the role of ethnicity in the definition of the Japanese empire and focusing instead on the ‹‹generic racial hatred among Japanese for other people›› (Doak, 2001, 4) during the empire, Japanese intellectuals operated a recovery of the ethnic nation and put it at the heart of their idea of a new Japan. Moreover, discourses over ethnicity were often considered to be part of the realm of culture and therefore were deemed

detached from the military and the totalitarianism it represented. This was an idea shared also by the occupiers. In fact, the second development regards the SCAP. While the occupying forces were operating a censure of all wartime ideology deemed to be dangerous for potentially sustain a return to totalitarianism, and were attempting to erase the social ideologies of the militarist state, ethnicity remained untouched. This was because SCAP believed that the war was caused by "top-down" militarism, not by cultural theories such as the ones regarding ethnicity (Doak, 2007, 204). While leading figures of the wartime Ethnic Research Institute were purged, others continued to pursue action in the direction that the institute had set in previous years. Intellectuals such as Watsuji Tetsurō (1889 – 1960) and Shinmei Masamichi (1898 - 1984) developed a new formulation of ethnicity that helped it become the basis for the ideal of society during occupation years and in the following period. In 1949 Shinmei, who cooperated to ethnological research during the war, wrote *Theory of Historical Minzoku* (*Shiteki Minzoku Riron*) in which he claimed that *minzoku* (ethnicity) was to be considered as the essence of society and therefore was not dependent on the state (Doak, 2007, 254). This opened the road for a restoration of ethnicity as the base for a nation that was to be the countertendency to the occupation. This time, however, the stress was no longer on a wide definition of ethnicity, previously portrayed by ideas of a multi-national empire, but on a particularistic sense of uniqueness (Oguma, 2002, 316). The loss of the multicultural idea of the empire produced a trend to consider matters of ethnicity towards the definition of a mono-ethnic nation (Doak, 2001, 35).

Involved in this new national formation was also the external gaze of the occupiers. It , can be argued that American social sciences were involved in the creation of an idea of "normalcy" that circulated in Japan as well as around the world. Influential works such as Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) helped create the idea of Japanese culture as unique and U.S. culture as normative, stressing the perceived difference of Japanese culture from the hegemonic North American power (Tai, 2003, 13). This inaugurated a trend that shaped much of the theories of uniqueness of the Japanese (*nihonjinron*) discourse of later years. As many of the pre-1945 cultural theories were re-appropriated, a new conception of the Japanese ethnic nation as the expression of a unique form of culture and identity was developed. With the international scene growing accustomed with the rhetoric of liberation from colonial power in the 1950s, the idea that the Japanese ethnic nation would become the tool of liberation from foreign-imposed hegemony spread even more (Doak, 1997, 303).

Rethinking Nationalism: Maruyama Masao and modernity in Japan

While ethnic nationalism was taking root once again another view of Japanese nationalism was being theorized. In the aftermath of the war, Maruyama Masao became one of the leading scholars in shaping the discourse over modernity in Japan (Koschmann, 1988, 507). At the same time, his theory of Japanese nationalism helped introduce some of the ideas that would resound in later formulations of nationalism.

Maruyama saw Japanese nationalism as an ‹‹extremely unique›› case (Maruyama, 1953, 5). While he thought that Asian forms of nationalism developed as a popular force claiming independence from euro-american imperialism, he also saw Japanese nationalism as a different case. First of all, Maruyama argued that the Japanese state constituted an unique case in the way it managed to embrace the material civilization (*busshitsu bunmei*) that was brought by foreign powers (Maruyama, 1953, 12). To him the Japanese state was the only one that managed to embrace modernization and successfully develop into a modern nation-state. At the same time, however, Maruyama recognized that the extreme speed at which the Japanese state managed to modernize put a “strain” on or “deformed” (*hizumi*) society as a whole (Maruyama, 1953, 15). This idea of a strain or a deformity in Japanese modernization process was one that was shared by many and helped shaping the idea of Japanese modernity as “deformed” or sometimes even “wrong” (Hein, 2008, 449). Maruyama argued that the embrace of modernization played a major role in the diffusion of nationalism and in particular in its change of ultra-nationalism under the Japanese empire (Maruyama, 1953, 16). Japanese empire’s ideology was diffused trough the Meiji system of education effectively enforcing an ideological education (*ideorogi kyōiku*) enforcing ideas such as the love for one’s country and place of origin and the idea of the nation as a family led by the Emperor (Maruyama, 1953, 18). It is interesting to notice that many of these ideas were re-elaborated in the postwar period. Many, such as Tsuda Sōkichi (1873 – 1961) and Watsuji Tetsurō, argued that the imperial household should be considered as the symbol of national unity and that wartime ideology misinterpreted its significance (Oguma, 2002, 305). Moreover, as it will be explained later, the idea of the state as a family persisted after the war and was extended to other levels of society as well (Yoshino, 1992, 65).

Another point of Maruyama's analysis is the different phase of development that he saw in Japanese nationalism. He argued that, unlike in other Asian countries, Japanese nationalism already went through the whole cycle of rise, maturity and fall (Maruyama, 1953, 8). To him the Japanese empire represented both culmination and fall of nationalism as formulated in response to European nationalism. This, in turn, meant that Japanese nationalism had reached a point of stagnation. Maruyama saw in wartime nationalism the example of a modernity gone wrong and most of all one that lost sight of democracy and popular participation (Maruyama, 1953, 17). To him, direct participation of the individual to political activity was the key to go past wartime ideology and bring forth a modern subjectivity that could finally give way to pluralism (Koschmann, 1988, 512). According to Maruyama, nationalism held the potential (*senzai*) to solve the problematic aspects of postwar Japanese state (Maruyama, 1953, 26). This potential could be expressed through active political participation of the individuals and would be realized into a new 'sense of mission' (*shimeikan*) that would enforce democracy in countertendency to the experience of failure that was the Japanese empire (Maruyama, 1953, 27). Maruyama believed it necessary to get rid of the premodern form of social determinism in which he saw coercion exerted through the masquerading of tradition as a natural force well exemplified by the experience of Empire ideology (Koschmann, 1988, 518).

With his analysis of nationalism Maruyama helped shaping much of the discourse over nationalism of his contemporaries and beyond. Many of the themes he wrote about became a common presence in ideological discourse of Japanese intellectuals. First, the condemnation of wartime ideology was shared between all intellectuals in postwar years (Koschmann, 1988, 521; Oguma, 2002, 308; Iida, 2002, 5). Secondly, the stress on the "uniqueness" of the Japanese state situation resounded in postwar Japan ideological discourse and deeply influenced nationalism in its formulation of the later years entwining with the idea of Japan as a mono-ethnic homogenous nation (Yoshino, 1992, 7; Oguma, 2002, 316; Hein , 2008, 448). Third, as it will be showed later, the call for a new sense of mission came to be shared by economists, who also formulated a similar idea as a response to the grave situation of Japanese economy after the war.

Economic Nationalism

Another element that contributed to the diffusion of nationalism was its use in economic theories. The defeat had reinstated a sense of anxiety in Japanese intellectuals that gave renewed strength to the idea that Japanese modernity was inadequate. The failure of the empire was blamed on its policies and, more precisely, on its deformed idea of modernity (Hein, 2008, 453). Conversely, this brought to light the opportunities of the postwar period to transform economic institutions towards a new modernity. In the climate of reconstruction that followed the defeat, a form of developmental nationalism was implemented (Hein, 2008, 454). By drawing on previous ideas of sacrifice for the nation the new economic agenda involved intervention on public savings, high labor production and an overall focus on state-centered action on economy. Although early years of the reconstruction were difficult and saw some failures to revive the economy (Fiori, 2010, 27) , a group of economists, that established its prominent position during the war, proposed a strategy that would prove effective. At the same time the rise of corporate capitalism in the 1960s brought new conditions on the population that deeply influenced discourses over identity and nationalism. Before describing postwar developmental nationalism and Japan's economic turn, however, it would be useful to look at some of the premises of ideas of economic development related to nationalism in prewar Japan.

Economic development was at the center of attention since Meiji years when the state-set imperative of modernization signaled the beginning of substantial economic reforms (Garon, 2002, 100). The threat of a weak economy in the face of imperial colonialism was made clear by the situation of neighboring states, such as China, and the government ordered the implementation of a saving system aimed at replenishing state capital. This system proved to be effective thanks to the creation of a ‹‹distinctive relationship between savings-promotion and the national interest›› (Garon, 2002, 101). By exploiting patriotic feelings the state aimed at increasing savings much to the benefit of its policies. The interesting aspect of this event is that this enforced the idea that the people should make sacrifices for the good of the nation (Garon, 2002, 101). This outcome was the result of exploiting not only a national sentiment spurred by the sense of inferiority in economics when compared to imperialist hegemonic powers - which could not ensure adherence to the project alone - but also internal ties of local communities. The most important moment in this development was the introduction by Home Ministry member Inoue Tomoichi (1871 - 1919) of local savings associations in order to spread the idea that saving was for the good of the community as well as for the good of the nation (Garon, 2002, 103). By placing the institutes of saving under the control of local

magistrates, the government ensured that a form of social control was implemented. With the idea of benefit for the community being at the center of the people's attention individuals were prompted to save and if they did not they faced the malcontent of neighbors and local magistrates. This ensured that the idea of sacrifice and thrift was perceived as ‹‹an act that advanced the good of the community›› (Garon, 2002, 103). This element had an important role in wartime economy as well as in later developments of economy. At the same time, it can be argued that it created a precedent for the idea of "Japanese" people as inherently sober and hardworking.

Another important premise for developmental economic nationalism in postwar Japan was the debate over economy of two groups of Marxist scholars during the late 1920s and going into the 1930s: *Kōza* and *Rōnō*. Their debate over Japanese economy introduced the idea that capitalism was an expression of the deformed modernity that the country was living. *Kōza* scholars argued that Japanese capitalism was deformed because Japan had experienced an incomplete emergence from feudalism (Hein, 2008, 452). Arguing that rural social traditions were not the solution that more conservative intellectuals believed, they introduced the idea that modern society in Japan was warped and affected by an incomplete development of capitalism. In reaction to that, Japan had to become an example of a new form of "unique" capitalism, one that could bolster a return to a lost cultural tradition, under the imperialist state (Iida, 2002, 24). By contrast, *Rōnō* scholars believed that the problem was the distortions caused by capitalism. In the eyes of these thinkers, although capitalism produced different conditions according to the place it was introduced into, ‹‹these were simply variants of a single - and flawed - theme›› (Hein, 2008,452). Similarly to the *Kōza* group, they believed that the Japanese state was to focus on a state-centered approach to development. However, they condemned fascism under the empire that made use of monopoly-capitalism and stressed how this formulation of economy was the utmost representation of a flawed capitalist modernity. Implicit in this debate was the contrast between a technocratic imperialist state that strived to reach what was seen as a complete form of capitalist economy and those who, in countertendency, believed that that kind of economy was not to be pursued. *Kōza* economists are believed to have bested their opponents and to have implemented a view of the special case of Japanese modernity that was held throughout the war and in years after it (Hein, 2008, 453). An interesting point is how, after the reformulation of rural culture as a unique characteristic by the work of the Ethnic Research Institute, some *Kōza* scholars did recast their argumentation in a more conservative direction accepting the Japanese form of

rural community as an expression of a broader Japanese “unicity”(Hein, 2008, 453). This development shows how ideas of uniqueness were shared in different fields as well as across different political and ideological positions and underlines the pervasiveness of the social construction of uniqueness under the discourse of nationalism.

The failure of the empire and the consequent dismantling of its ideologies meant that Marxist intellectuals saw their reputation enhanced after the defeat since most of them opposed the Empire’s ideals (Oguma, 2002, 308). This, in turn, brought *Rōnō* figures to play a central role in the reconstruction of the country. Ideas of developmental nationalism brought new economic reforms and ideas of how to structure the new Japanese state. Economic nationalism persisted and was reinstated together with some wartime practices as the means of recovery for the Japanese state. This development can be seen in Finance Minister Kurusu Takeo’s (1895 – 1966) address to the public in which he claimed that ‹‹the problem with wartime . . . campaigns was their ends, not their means›› (Garon, 2002, 110). It is clear that, as it happened with the ethnic nation, in economic nationalism too the condemnation of wartime ideologies did not result in the abandonment of all practices. Moreover, the efforts to bring the country to a level of economic growth that could support it in an international environment overshadowed the political direction of those efforts (Garon, 2002, 110). The idea that the postwar state needed to become a more egalitarian one and that ethnicity could become the basis was shared by many of those who endeavored for a new Japanese state (Doak, 1997, 300) . However, the difficulties of coping with the occupiers general disagreement with political movements that could empower communism and the belief that the country needed a sound economy before it needed a political alignment convinced many to postpone matters of politics until later years (Hein, 2008, 454). The reconstruction of the economy was guided, then, by an acceptance of capitalism as the necessary evil to put the country back on track and salvage the desperate socio-economical situation in which it versed. In this climate three pillars of economic action were proposed as the solution (Hein, 2008, 454). The first was to grant high wages to the population in the hope of fuelling domestic spending. The second was to set high labor productivity as an objective. The third was to stress the emphasis on a peace-based economy. The latter would come to be a key factor in the country economic success as it eliminated military spending from the equation for the Japanese state allowing for more funds to be allocated elsewhere. It is important to notice that these directives were implemented upon the specific idea that the population hard work and saving were necessary for economic recovery. This was clearly shown by the rhetoric

employed by saving associations that implied that the population's effort would lead to national salvation (Garon, 2002, 112). Thus a precise rhetoric of self-sacrifice and diligence was made to be part of the Japanese national character as it could bolster economic activity and ultimately be beneficial for the state economic objectives.

The three directives laid the foundation for developmental nationalism in the following years which lead to the country's economical recovery and stabilization as one of the top economies in the world. Although at first the efforts of the economists seemed to have failed, a new event in the geopolitical panorama in East Asia became the opportunity for the reprise of Japanese economy: the Korean war of 1950. The United States needed a strategic base in East Asia and Japan was a perfect match. A territory close enough to the contested area and that was already under the control and occupation of the U.S. military provided them with the perfect opportunity (Fiori, 2010, 27). This came to play an important role for the Japanese state too as the production of supplies and the necessary products was given by the U.S. to Japanese companies given the tactical advantage in logistics and in the low cost of labor (Fiori, 2010, 27). The U.S. foreign investment was the spark that lit the recovery of Japanese economy as all major sectors benefited from the war. By 1951 Japanese export had grown three times in volume in comparison to previous years and in the period between 1951 and 1953 60% of it had to do with the Korean war (Fiori, 2010, 28). Under these circumstances the system of labor and of welfare that was introduced in previous years thrived and the economic policy of *Rōnō* scholars helped the country in achieving an extraordinary economic growth over the next three decades (Hein, 2008, 454). The success obtained by developmental nationalism consolidated its position in Japanese politics but with the rise of a dominant rightist party, the Liberal-Democratic Party (LPD), the political ideas of leftists would never participate in its success.

Economic growth did not stop after the Korean war. Japan was now on the road to become one of the strongest economies in the world. Fiori (2010, 44) argues that Japan's extraordinary economic growth was brought about by the conjucture of both domestic and international factors. First, in the 1950s and 60s economy all around the world was experiencing a period of growth after the war. World economy showed a growth of 5% per year and the volume of international commerce grew three times than before (Fiori, 2010, 44). Secondly, the absence of military spending in Japan allowed for more funds to be allocated in different sectors, notably mechanics and electronics , that fuelled even more growth for the

country (Fiori, 2010, 44). Third, the favorable change of the Yen on the Dollar maintained until 1970 created a favorable condition for export which contributed greatly to the economy.

The fourth factor is composed of different elements of domestic economy. These were a reaction to the new capitalist economy that was empowering corporations. Corporate capitalism introduced new technologies and fuelled a major increase in production which contributed to the creation of what Iida (2002, 154) calls ‹‹a new mode of social hegemony››. The democratic process in 1960s Japan was led by the rise of mass society in which an economic-based sense of democracy diffused ideas of national cohesion. The political line of Ikeda Hayato (1899 – 1965), prime minister from 1960 to 1964, promoted an "official ideology" of rapid economic growth and tried to foster a sense of optimism in the population (Iida, 2002, 115). Since the political left did not manage to form a strategy or even a sound party during that period, the mode of developmental civic nationalism easily prevailed. At the same time, the rise of a new class of entrepreneurs that renewed Japanese industry and their choice of accepting risks to promote further growth consolidated corporate capitalism.

In addition to that, banks could now grant good loans to companies in need thanks to the growth in public savings. Individuals could now save more and this trend continued up to the first years of the 1970s when an individual was expected on average to be able to save up to 20% of his salary (Fiori, 2010, 45). These factors in concomitance with higher education, and thus higher qualifications for the workforce, produced the favorable conditions that brought Japan's economy to grow to become one of the strongest economies in the world, second only to the U.S. (Fiori, 2010, 46). All this economic growth was supported by the state that approached matters in economy directly. Benefiting from this trends in economy, developmental nationalism grew to be supported by intellectuals even more than before. This was a phenomenon that started with the first political elections after the war. The LDP, which consolidated its position in power in 1955, advanced a political idea that saw in the entwinement of politics, business, and bureaucracy one of its pillars (Fiori, 2010, 37). The party maintained presence to power until the 1990s becoming de facto the sole actor in Japanese politics and relegating the political left to an often disorganized opposition that held little influence. Given the dire situation of their political influence, leftists developed a rhetoric of return to traditions and to a "spiritual" sense of culture that often made of ethnicity its basis.

2.5 1950s and 1960s discourse on nationalism

With the country on a steady course to economic success and a perceptible improvement of social conditions, the 1950s signaled the success of nationalism both in developmental and in ethnic terms. The growing confidence in a renewed economy and the perceived necessity to reformulate Japan's state and free it from U.S. influence brought ethnic nationalism to become the center of a "romantic" expression of leftist political ideas (Iida, 2002, 115). A critical moment in the consolidation of nationalism was the revision of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty of 1960. The riots that followed showed the clear antagonism of the people towards the imperialist policy of the United States in Asia and to the role of Japan as the supporter of U.S. military activities (Doak, 1997, 304). This prompted a new wave of anti-imperialist sentiment that further consolidated the position of ethnic nationalism. Nationalism was seen once again as the countertendency to imperialism and a rhetoric of liberation was employed by both the political left and the political right. This sentiments were consolidated also by the anti-Vietnam War moment. One of its leaders, Oda Makoto, ‹‹argued that the Japanese were "guilty of complicity in the war and must oppose . . . lest be coopted by the state"›› (Doak, 1997, 305) clearly signaling the opposition to the state compliance to U.S. imperialist policy. Well established ideas of the nation as the necessary base for a new state unity resounded in the argumentations against U.S. influence, while the concept of 'dependent colonialism' as formulated by Kubokawa Tsurujirō (1903 – 1974) and Inoue Kiyoshi (1913 – 2001) resounded once again the idea of internal colonialism of earlier years (Doak, 2007, 256).

In this context, the ethnic nation could be exploited to make use of culture and tradition to contrast North American hegemony and came to be identified with the idea of society that many intellectuals, in both the political left and the political right, shared. An important part of this process is how ethnic nationalism came to be regarded as a concept separate from politics. As stated before, ethnicity had already been detached from the state during immediate postwar years resulting in a recovery of many wartime theories on the ethnic nation. With the growth of a new mass society and corporate capitalism, ethnicity came to be understood as a cultural theory separated from the state and from politics (Doak, 2007, 262). Ideas over ethnicity were now inserted in a broader discourse over national distinctiveness that sought to define the characteristics of Japan and to present them to the world. This was a development that came in concomitance with a sense of renewed meaning

of nationalism as, in response to the new economic system and the success of Japanese economy, internationalization grew. One theory in particular influenced a renewed interest in matter of distinctiveness. In 1960 economist and sociologist W. W. Rostow (1916 – 2003) wrote *The Stages of Economic Growth* in which he argued for a single path of development for all economies in the convergence on the U.S. model (Hein, 2008, 455). This theory was a response to the Cold War climate of those years and presented modernization theory and free market capitalism as the core concepts for the analysis. What is relevant for Japan is that Rostow argued that Japan was rapidly achieving a normal capitalist modernity and thus was to be commended as a model of development for other nations, in countertendency to the models presented by the Soviet Union and China (Iida, 2002, 117). This study was welcomed in Japan as it eliminated the idea of Japanese modernity as deformed (Hein, 2008, 455). Interestingly the insertion in a "normal" state of development did not damage the formulation of theories of uniqueness. Ideas of "Japaneseness" and of the Japanese ethnic nation remained virtually untouched. However, with the change in international politics in the 1970s, ideas of uniqueness would become the center of the theory of uniqueness of the Japanese (*nihonjiron*) and would gain an even more important role in the definition of Japanese nationalism.

2.6 Cultural Nationalism and its Development

As early as 1946 the idea that ethnicity could become the foundation of the new Japanese state was already circulating. The strategy enacted in early works to reinstate the nation are useful to understand how the problem of ethnicity and of nationalism were confronted in postwar Japan. The first move was to separate the idea of an ethnic nation and nationalism from the empire. As stated before, this had to do with the condemnation of the empire, its racial discrimination and its "wrong" idea of modernity, while it maintained the value of the ethnic nation and the possibilities of nationalism. At the same time, Japanese historians such as Wakamori Tarō (1915 – 1977) developed the idea that the national identity promoted by the Japanese state was superficial (Doak, 2001, 33). In the eyes of these historians both wartime Japanese intellectuals and the occupiers held true a flawed conception of Japanese culture that stemmed from the state appropriation of culture. Instead, they argued that it was necessary to focus on the "authentic" Japanese culture expressed in the ethnic nation (Oguma, 2002, 316). This implied the separation of a distinct form of culture, indentified in the ethnic characteristics of the national group, and claim its authenticity.

The creation of this form of culture had much to do with a trend in nationalist discourse that Anthony D. Smith calls the "purification of culture" (Smith, 1996, 448). Claiming that true, authentic Japanese culture was expressed by the ethnic nation required the selection and refinement of particular cultural traits that would come to constitute the new national culture. It is a move common to most nationalism in their construction phase. Another element in the separation from the empire and towards a rejuvenation of ethnic culture was one involved with language. Language had been a very important element in nation building and colonization since Meiji years (Tai, 2003, 10). The idea that all subjects had to align with the use of national language (*kokugo*) much drew from the concept of a unified nationality on the Japanese archipelago and then in the colonies. After the war, national language still maintained its role as one of the elements in play in the formation of a nation. However, in order to put as much distance as possible from the totalitarian experience, but maintain many of the studies conducted in those years, new *kanji* (Chinese characters) compounds were assigned to previous terminology so that it could be used without reminding its origin (Doak, 2001, 33). Given a visually renewed terminology and having its importance in matters of identity reinstated, ethnicity became one of the pillars for the formation of postwar nationalism.

A second move in reinstating nationalism was to align to an international trend of liberation from colonial oppression. The geopolitical condition in which more and more countries claimed independence after World War Two influenced Japanese intellectuals as well as many others in East Asia. In Japan the focus of this phenomenon was the occupation, as postwar political processes were directed towards issues of the U.S.-Japan relationship (Iida, 2002, 72). The defeat was a traumatic event. The failure of the ideology that led the empire towards an imperialist policy over Asia left both the will to put distance between the empire's ideology and the perceived necessity to make sure that an event such as the defeat would never come back again (Uemura, 2012, 109). Moreover, leftist intellectuals, such as Inoue Kiyoshi and Oda Makoto (1932 - 2007), felt that the country had been cast back in the same conditions that opened the Meiji period: a country under the hegemonic influence of foreign imperialist powers that oppressed its people (Doak, 1997, 304). The idea of the state as the oppressor of the people led to the development of the idea that the U.S. occupation had brought a form of internal colonialism in which the nation was hostage of its own state (Doak, 1997, 305). The idea of a revolutionary aspect of the nation in contrast with the establishment is, as mentioned before, one that is shared by many modernist theories about nationalism and

that strongly reminds of the conditions in which nations were formed in eighteenth century Europe (Greenfeld, 1992, 15; Kramer, 1997, 531). It does not come as a surprise, then, that in Japanese history there are multiple occurrences of such a phenomenon, in Meiji Japan first and in the aftermath of World War Two after.

A third move in postwar formulation of nationalism was to reinstate pre-industrial society as the model in which national culture is to be found. The rapidly changing social and economic conditions led leftists, Marxists and liberals to resort to "romantic" expressions of political ideas (Iida, 2002, 115). Their perceived inability to formulate effective policies in matters of socio-economics, a field that came increasingly under the control of the right since the half of the 1950s (Fiori, 2010, 30), led them to elaborate an ideal society that came increasingly to align with ideas of uniqueness of Japanese tradition and with a spiritual longing in the face of growing anxiety of the newly established consumer's society. One of the more striking examples of this trend is the work of Umehara Takeshi who in 1960 developed a theory of emotions (*kanjō ron*) in which he stated that the problem of Japanese modernity had been the widespread acceptance of foreign forms of culture much to the loss of Japanese cultural traits that needed to be rediscovered (Iida, 2002, 144). Highlighting traditional forms of Buddhism and Shintō as the source of a "true" Japanese culture he advocated a return to the "spirit of Japan" (Iida, 2002, 144). Umehara's thought, well exemplifies how the idea of a deformed or inadequate modernity, as formulated by Maruyama, mingled with the perceived inability to produce a political response by the political left. Umehara inaugurated a trend to make traditional culture at the center of a cultural revival that could counter the sense of loss deriving from what was perceived, especially to the political left, as increasingly alienating conditions.

Another element in this development was to highlight the characteristics of rural society, drawn mostly from late Edo and Meiji social structures, in order to single out the characteristics that constituted Japanese ethnicity. The works of Yanagita Kunio and Kamishima Jirō (1918 – 1998) were the main reference point for these claims. The success of their work resulted in a recovery of the operation of sifting of cultural characteristics, as operated by Yanagita in the 1930s, that would come to constitute ideas of ethnic nationalism often masquerading it with the term "folklore" (Doak, 2007, 256). Japanese thinkers claimed that industrial capitalistic society had broken apart traditional social structures and was threatening to make the "essence" of Japanese culture be forgotten. This aligns with what Yoshino Kosaku (1992, 39) calls a 'holistic approach' to nationalism. By claiming that the

members of the Japanese nation shared a common "soul" or "essence", to be found in ethnicity and in the traditional rural society of earlier times, Japanese leftist intellectuals were shaping the problem of identity under the idea of allegedly unique characteristics, thus enforcing a view on the ethnic nation that focused on defining uniqueness. Moreover, the aforementioned intervention of American cultural anthropology helped shaping "Japanese" culture as an exception to the norm empowering a discourse of pride in uniqueness and exceptionalism that was to be exploited in countertendency to the U.S. imperialist hegemony (Tai, 2003, 13; Hein, 2008, 456). In postwar Japan the idea that the "essence" of Japanese culture could be found in traditional rural social organization led to a theorization of Japanese society as one of implicit communal ties and in which group socialization was a central aspect (Yoshino, 1992, 73).

The social institution that was considered to best represented this idea was that of the traditional family (Yoshino, 1992, 75). It is worth to notice that emphasis on family had been embraced by both leftists and the political right. Emphasis on the communal ties and on the value of family had been inserted in a document over the moral guidelines for the nation of the Ikeda administration, published in 1965 entitled *Image of the ideal Japanese* (*Kitai sareru ningen* zō) (Iida, 2002, 118). Thus, in the attempt to create a distinctive Japanese form of society, Japanese postwar intellectuals performed an ‹‹extension or reproduction of the organizational and ideological constitutive principles of the family into the other levels of society›› (Yoshino, 1992, 65). This trend would continue into the twentieth century becoming especially relevant in *nihonjinron*, spreading the idea of Japanese society as defined by peer group socialization, introverted character and harmonious relationships (Befu, 2001, 21). Ethnic nationalism was constructed as the response for the perceived necessity of a recoup of the losses of the war period and for the liberation of foreign oppression. Its construction, however, started from studies that were in collusion with imperial rule and were later reinstated since their ties with the totalitarian state was not so evident or was cunningly erased. Ethnicity became the focus of theories of nationalism because it could represent the traditional mode of life of a past in which Japan was seen as independent from foreign imperialist hegemony and free from the perceived alienation that capitalism was causing. Additionally, it was perceived as a form of uniqueness that could bring the Japanese under the flag of a single community. The fact that this community was created on a construction of rural social life was not deemed relevant by most, who were more interested in the positive effects that ethnic nationalism could have for their sociopolitical aspirations of creating a new

post-imperial Japanese state (Doak, 2001, 38). What leftist intellectuals did not foresee was that the political right and the state too would come to benefit from this formulation of a unique Japan and would come to exploit it. Ethnic nationalism was constituting the base on which much of the nationalist discourse of the following years would be constructed, be it supported by the political left or the political right. It came to entwine with other formulation of nationalism creating a new nationalist discourse that was shared also outside the political sphere and permeated all levels of society.

2.7 The ideological framework of essentialism: Orientalism, Occidentalism and auto-Orientalism

For the present analysis it will be useful to introduce an ideological framework that comes to be of central importance for the discourse over Japanese cultural nationalism: that of Orientalism, Occidentalism and auto-Orientalism. Orientalism is about a ‹‹style of thought based on the distinction of "the Orient" and "the Occident"›› which historically empowered a hegemonic dominance of imperialist countries (Said, 1979, 2). The discourse over cultural nationalism in Japan accepted the idea that U.S. culture, and on a broader scale what they defined as "western" one, was "normative" (Tai, 2003, 13). This structure of thought holds true the view that "Orient" and "Occident" or "East" and "West" are essentially (i.e. naturally) different and can be inscribed in what Sakai Naoki (1997,17) calls a culturalism ‹‹in which culture and nation are obstinately reified and essentialized››. Highlighting the "normative", and thus allegedly superior, "Western" culture was a pattern that empowered much of the colonialist and imperialist policy of European powers and the U.S.. It is part of a process of definition of the world that Fernando Coronil (1944 – 2011) calls 'Occidentalism' in which the essentialized category of the "West" is considered to be the center around which all cultural representations are created (Coronil, 1996, 57). It is important to notice that Coronil (1996, 56) considers Occidentalism ‹‹not as the reverse of Orientalism but its condition of possibility››. It is, therefore, by making use of this structure of thought which identifies a cultural center through which to label what is "normal" or even "right" that essentialism is engendered. Dividing the world into fixed categories the idea of "West", or "Occident" is ‹‹configured as a cumulative intersection of its modern paradigms: universalist, rational, scientific, etc›› (Miyake, 2014, 32). Conversely, the "East" or "Orient" is defined through the use of opposite attributes: traditional, irrational, emotive, etc (Miyake, 2014, 32).

At the same time, Orientalism is supported by the acceptance of an Occidentalist framework by those who are described as subordinate to the essentialized category of the "West". The experience of imperialist oppression and exclusion from the production of knowledge and the exercise of power led to the formulation of an ideological discourse that could empower the position of subordinated cultures. In so doing, however, the ideological framework they wanted to shed was simply reiterated. As a response to the essentialist framework of Occientalism "Japan" came to be defined with equally well-defined and essentialist category (Sakai, 1997; Miyake, 2014, 126). Japanese scholars began emphasize the unique "essence" of Japan and to formulate the idea of an "authentic Japanese culture" as a countertendency to the idea of a "West" (Iida, 2002, 199). This idea of a pure "Japaneseness", however, ‹‹has gone hand in hand with the acceptance of significant "Western" influence›› (Iwabuchi, 2002, 55). Under the focus on "uniqueness" the debate around Japanese culture became an interplay between positions of cultural power and liminality where an Orientalist image of "Japan" entwined with an 'auto-Orientalist' representation led by Japanese intellectuals within the framework of Occidentalism of euro-american powers (Iwabuchi, 2002; Miyake, 2014).

Cultural nationalism in Japan was deeply influenced by this ideological framework. The process of national formation in Japan was influenced by euro-american imperialism since the Meiji period. Japanese intellectuals voluntarily chose to position Japanese identity within the ideological framework proposed by euro-american powers (Iida, 2002, 4; Oguma, 2002, 11). By so doing, they reiterated the ideological framework of Occidentalism in an attempt to construct Japanese national culture as a vigorous and unique form of culture capable of standing its ground in the international arena. This process was a constant in the development of nationalism in Japan. Postwar years confirmed this trend. Ethnic nationalism was proposed once again as a response to the perceived necessity of a national identity (Doak, 2001, 31). At the same time, Maruyama's (1953) idea of the Japanese state as a "unique" case further confirmed the search for a place for the Japanese state in the hierarchy engendered by euro-american hegemony. The following years were a crucible in which all these ideas came to mingle towards a more comprehensive formulation of Japanese "uniqueness" and nationalist discourse. In the wake of the new social transformations that were taking place during the 1960s, the formulation of national identity started to focus more and more on Japanese economic success (Iida, 2002, 7). However, it did so by reiterating the ideological framework of Occidentalism. It is important to remember that the self-image of a group ‹‹is not the product of any particular individual, but is something shared by the majority›› (Oguma,

2002, xxxi). It can be argued that Occidentalism was that “something” that was shared between both foreign and indigenous and was crucial in the development of cultural nationalism both in Japan and in other parts of the world.

3. Cultural Nationalism in the 1970s and 1980s: *Nihonjinron* and the Business of Identity

Cultural nationalism in Japan developed from a debate over national identity that, as stated previously, continued throughout different social and economic conditions. The 1960s signaled a moment of change in discourses over nationalism in Japan. New economic conditions brought about by the country's economic success and changes in the structure of society prompted intellectuals into a search for a ‹‹lost unity within nature›› (Iida, 2002, 24) which often resulted in an embrace of theories about the Japanese ethnic nation, folklore, traditions and, in general, an appeal for a need of spirituality that was lost in the modernization process. As internationalization grew, theories about the "Japanese" and their uniqueness became more and more represented (Oguma, 2002, 319). The socio-economic conditions of the 1970s and the success of Japanese economy brought new elements into the rhetoric of previous years towards a more pervasive discourse over the uniqueness of the Japanese (Hein, 2008, 448). At the same time, past ideas such as the homogeneity of the Japanese nation persisted (Park, 2016, 14). This discourse has been labeled in different ways through many disciplines. *Nihon bunkaron* (theory on Japanese culture), *nihon shakairon* (theory on Japanese society) and *nihonron* (theory on the Japanese) are just some of the labels used but the most used is *nihonjinron* (literally "theories about the Japanese") (Befu, 2001, 2).

This chapter will start by analyzing *nihonjinron* as a discourse of national identity. Having delineated the main elements of *nihonjinron* the analysis will then proceed in showing the context that contributed to the creation of this particular form of cultural nationalism. Then, an analysis of *nihonjinron* and its implications for the development of cultural nationalism in the twenty-first century will be provided.

3.1 Elements of *nihonjinron*

Nihonjinron contains elements of previous theories over national identity (Yoshino, 1992, 24; Tai, 2003, 13). It can be argued, therefore, that it represents a development in cultural nationalism that brought theories of different origin in time and discipline under a single discourse and made use of them to foster a particular form of "Japanese" identity. It will be the purpose of this section to analyze such different elements.

Ethnicity

Ethnic nationalism had an important role in the formation of *nihonjinron*. The elaboration of a particular theory on "Japanese uniqueness" in the 1970s and 1980s operated a recovery of ideas about Japanese ethnicity as formulated since the Meiji period and separated them from politics and the state (Doak, 2007, 262). The works of intellectuals such as Takayama, Yanagita, Wakamori and Takata and the wartime Ethnic Research Group were the starting point for the definition of ethnicity in *nihonjinron* (Doak, 2001, 38). As stated before, the idea that Japan had to have its own cultural identity, be it in response to a looming imperialist hegemony or to the uncertainty of modernization, persisted in postwar years. Ideas of uniqueness were put into the definition of a homogenous Japanese ethnic nation that was to represent the "essence" of Japan (Doak, 2001, 35; Oguma, 2002, 316). The "essence" or "spirit" was to be found in the recovery of rural tradition and traditional social structures, often formulated as in, or at least influenced by, the work of Yanagita and his students (Befu, 2001, 17).

The Japanese ethnic nation was structured around characteristics that were accurately selected from the past. A mechanism of opposition between the Japanese and other east Asian countries populations had constituted an important part in wartime ethnic studies (Doak, 2001; Oguma, 2002; Tai, 2003). Pan-Asianism, however, did not persist in postwar years and Japanese postwar intellectuals turned to the idea of a mono-ethnic nation (Oguma, 2002, 298; Doak, 2007, 521). Intellectual discourse in postwar years was shaped as an inward-looking process (Uemura, 2012, 106). It was this process of focusing on the domestic situation that brought about an even stronger focus on uniqueness than before. Japanese culture came to be regarded as an exclusive Japanese property and claims of homogeneity of Japanese society were stressed in the concept of a mono-ethnic society (*tan'itsu minzoku kokka*) (Oguma, 2002, 316; Tai, 2003, 13). This definition was, on the other hand, not devoid of an idea of belonging as shaped in opposition to a perceived "otherness" that was, more often than not, identified with euro-american powers and in particular with the U.S. (Iida, 2002, 8).

As the Japanese state recovered from the dire early postwar situation and obtained political independence, ideas of a distinct mono-ethnic society did not fade. With economic success and the beginning of internationalization uniqueness of "Japan" was to become

connected with a sense of pride and optimism. This optimism was further renewed by the confirmation, after the country overcame the early 1970s "shocks", of the Japanese economic system (Iida, 2002, 186). As it will be shown later, this would be the beginning of wide international recognition of the Japanese economic model which was portrayed as being based on the Japanese's unique form of culture (Yoshino, 1992, 119; Hein, 2008, 448). At the same time, the idea of "otherness" was maintained and expanded. The relevant other on which the opposition was to stress uniqueness of the Japanese became, even more pervasively than before, the essentialized concept of "West" of which the U.S. were exemplificative in the eyes of *nihonjinron* scholars (Befu, 2001, 74).

During the postwar period Japanese ethnicity came to be defined as something distinct from both the state and race (Doak, 2007, 246). Postwar intellectuals were unanimous in the condemnation of wartime racism and made an effort to separate the concept of ethnicity from that of race. However, it can be argued that it was merely a shift towards a new form of 'racial' distinction. Starting from Benedict Anderson's concept of the nation as an 'imagined community' Yoshino Kosaku (1992, 17) argued that races too are socially constructed and that they continued to exist in discourse when somebody indicated a ‹‹difference that seem to be immutable››. Japanese ethnicity was constructed in *nihonjinron* on the basis of distinctive and allegedly natural characteristics (Befu, 2001; Doak, 1997, 309). As such, it can be argued that it was a reformulation of the concept of race in cultural and not biological terms. This definition of ethnicity as a "cultural race" was proposed in *nihonjinron* as a crucial part in the explanation of "Japanese uniqueness".

A comparative perspective of culture, either in a broad sense or focusing on specific cultural features, was adopted on the basis of ethnocentric homogeneity (Befu, 2001, 67). Ethnicity became the ground on which further theorization of Japanese distinctiveness could be formulated. The ethnic nation was formulated as a homogenous Japanese society in which one cultural ideology was not only dominant but unchallenged by any different formulation (Yoshino, 1992, 142). In the context of the socio-economic transformations of the 1970s cultural nationalism in Japan became a discourse that ‹‹erase(d) internal differences and homogenize(d) 'Japan' vis-à-vis an assumed other›› (Iida, 2002, 189). Through a naturalization of the ethnic nation, ethnicity became the basis of a new cultural discourse over Japanese distinctiveness in which the Japanese nation was defined by its homogeneity granted by an allegedly ‹‹coterminousness of geography, race, language and culture››. (Befu, 2001, 71).

Origin

Some of the arguments of nihonjinron stemmed from theories on the origin of the "Japanese". These theories belonged to different fields of study and disciplines – such as biological anthropology, cultural history and archeology – that in Japan were often directly connected with ethnic history and studies on the origins of the Japanese, and that similarly contributed to the formulation of ideas of Japanese uniqueness. (Befu, 2001, 41). As stated above, in fact, in the formulation of a nation a selective memory of the past is often involved (Smith, 1996). Ideas about Japan's past had been at the center of cultural theories in Japan even before the Meiji period (Oguma, 2002, 158), and ideas of uniqueness were advanced by tracing the origins of the Japanese in different respects, i.e. in linguistic, biological or geographical sense.

One of the most influential antecedents of *nihonjinron* was Watsuji Tetsurō's *Fūdo* (Climate and Culture, 1935). Watsuji argued that the peculiar characteristics of the Japanese were determined by their sharing the same geographical and climatic background. To him human existence was both social and individual and at the same time both historical and climatic (Bernier, 2006, 85). An example of his argumentation is his theory about the influence that the "monsoon" type of climate would have had on Japanese people. According to Watsuji, the humid climate of Japan resolved in a open style of architecture which in turn resulted in less privacy and in a general orientation of the Japanese towards collectiveness (Befu, 2001, 18). His idea of the role of climatic influence was accepted by many *nihonjinron* scholars. Works such as *Fūdo* introduced some of the notions that were crucial to *nihonjinron* arguments such as group-orientedness, a sense of harmony with nature and the endurance of the Japanese (Befu, 2001, 17). Watsuji introduced the idea that ‹‹geo-cultural categories (could) begin to serve as ethical categories to the extent that the ethnic-national identity (was) taken to be the ground of science›› (Sakai, 1991, 177). One of such scientific applications can be found in the work of Gotō Tetsuhiko (1948 - 2007). In his analysis in the 1980s of the Japanese management system, he argued that wet rice cultivation, privileged by monsoon ecology, was the historical root of the group-orientation of the Japanese and for their propensity to hard work, perseverance and industry (Befu, 2001, 25). The socio-historically rooted practice of rice cultivation was deemed responsible for an inherent inclination to cooperation of the Japanese and helped shaping the idea of an allegedly hard-working society.

It can be argued that characteristics such as hard-working and loyalty were re-elaborations of the wartime and postwar concepts of "thrift" which was proposed as a "distinctive" Japanese trait (Garon, 2002, 114). This argument became part of the portrait of the "Japanese" that was vastly shared by the business elite, mainly in the 1980s, who traced the origin of their hard working characteristic to traditional Japanese rural society (Yoshino, 1992, 71; Befu, 2001, 25). Theories about the origins of the Japanese were, therefore, deeply involved in the creation of *nihonjinron* and cultural nationalism in general in Japan. One particular aspect of this process, however, is how history is involved. Iida Yumiko (2002, 189) argued that 1970s and 1980s *nihonjinron*, contrary to previous studies on Japanese uniqueness, engendered ‹‹a process in which the notions of culture and society are dehistoricized and dematerialized››.

A recovery of the past and a selection of elements are part of the process of national formation and Japanese cultural nationalism was no exception. Theories on the Japanese ethnic nationality were influenced by a reading of the past and a selection of specific elements of it. Claims that the "true" form of Japanese culture were to be found in the imperial system, the rural community of the Edo period or again in the traditional form of religion, Shintō, were common in postwar studies claiming Japanese uniqueness (Yoshino, 1992; Oguma, 2002; Iida, 2002). *Nihonjinron* presented itself as a continuation and re-elaboration of such studies in a new context. However, the sense of belonging to a 'historical nation' was already taken for granted in *nihonjinron* (Yoshino, 192, 36). Since earlier studies on ethnic nationalism had already gone through the phase of recovery of Japan's ancient past it was no longer necessary for *nihonjinron* scholars to go over it again. This, however, did not mean that references to the historical past were absent: they were shared throughout *nihonjinron* literature, in which reference to preeminent historical figures was widespread (Befu, 2001, 33). However, history was never fully explained and historical figures were, instead, often separated from their context in order to make them be perceived as symbols rather than persons (Befu, 2001, 32). This was part of a strategy shared between *nihonjinron* works in which propositions were often stated in universal terms (Befu, 2001, 79). It can be argued that *nihonjinron* engendered a naturalization of Japanese uniqueness by making its assumptions be perceived as observed facts rather than proposing them as a newly formulated theory. Making use of declarative statements and quoting a vast array of works on the subject of "Japaneseness" and ethnic *nihonjinron*, writers aimed to present a constructed form of Japanese identity an make it be perceived as natural and unquestionable (Befu, 2001,79).

Nihonjinron works often stressed the importance of Japanese origins in their formulation of Japanese uniqueness. This, however, was often done by ‹‹reducing and distorting a heterogenous and diachronic past into a caricature of its complexity›› (Iida, 2002, 189). This cultural theory stressed the importance of a reevaluation of the roots of Japanese culture and placed them into a dimension outside history clearly employing a strategy of naturalization. At this point, it is important to remember that nationalism is not determined by the elements highlighted by its rhetoric but, as Greenfeld (1992, 7) argued, ‹‹by a certain organizing principle which makes these elements into unity and imparts to them a special significance››. *Nihonjinron* as a cultural nationalist discourse was involved in the promotion of the specific political and economic interests of the Japanese state (Befu, 2001, 66; Yoshino, 1992, 142). Under this assumption, therefore, it can be argued that the observation that in *nihonjinron* the historicist perspective was given less weight signals a shift in purpose. It can be argued that this signals a change in cultural nationalism that is symptomatic of the socio-economic conditions of Japan during those years. As it will be shown below, contemporary to this shift the “symbolic boundary” or opposition gained importance becoming the central element for the theory of Japanese uniqueness (Yoshino, 1992, 59).

Difference

Nationalism in Japan relied on opposition to constitute claims of distinctiveness. As stated before, opposition is one of the key factors in the construction of national identity and involves the identification of an “other”. This relevant “other” shifts through time. During the Edo period, and arguably even in earlier times, the “other” of Japan was China (Oguma, 2002, 158). However, since the Meiji period and the official opening of the country to the outside the relevant “other” shifted to the imperialist powers of Europe and North America (Oguma, 2002; Iida, 2002; Shibasaki, 2015, 10) . The idea that Japanese were different from “westerners” and that national identity had to be shaped in response to imperialist hegemony was part of nationalist discourse in Japan in the empire years as well as in postwar years. Early postwar years saw this cultural “othering” being focused on the SCAP and the U.S.. With the economic recovery of the 1960s and the mutating international conditions of the 1970s this trend did not fade. On the contrary, if possible the opposition was stressed in even more.

The idea of Japanese culture as "unique" in contrast with the "normative" U.S. culture persisted in the 1970s. In its representation of a "universal" direction of development, towards a U.S.-modeled modernity, modernization theory further reinforced the binary opposition between the essentialized category of the "West" and the rest of the world, or the "non-West" (Sakai, 1988, 476). Works such as Rostow's *The Stages of Economic Growth* (1960) were part of a trend that made of the binary couple "Japan" and the "West", usually represented by the U.S., the basis for much of the cultural theories of *nihonjinron* (Hein, 2008, 455). Proof of this relevance of the US as the "other" for Japanese *nihonjinron* writers is that comparison to other Asian cultures is often virtually absent in their works (Tai, 2003, 13). As economic growth produced an unprecedented degree of internationalization, the Japanese state started adopting a more outward-oriented stance (Uemura, 2012, 110). This, in turn, increased the importance of opposition as an instrument for the creation of national identity. However, it did so in a way that encouraged the use of a structure that had much to do with an auto-Orientalist definition of "Japan". *Nihonjinron* as a discourse, even if it strived for uniqueness and autonomy, accepted the idea that U.S. culture, and on a broader scale what they defined as "western" one, was "normative" or "normal" (Miyoshi and Harootunian, 1988, 391; Tai, 2003; Hein, 2008). As such, it inserted the discourse about Japanese identity into the framework of Occidentalism. *Nihonjinron* writers elaborated on the concept of Japanese uniqueness under the idea that it could overcome the "West" that in their perception perpetrated an oppressive hegemony over the country and in response to international pressure deriving from the dynamics of globalization (Tai, 2003, 14). Moreover, they did so empowered by a climate of renewed optimism fuelled by Japanese economic success and increasing international visibility (Iida, 2002, 7).

Nihonjinron writers adopted a specific method for the definition of difference. They proceeded to enact a comparison between Japanese cultural elements and similar or related elements in "western" culture (Yoshino, 1998; Befu, 2001). What it is interesting is the selection of elements that are compared. In *nihonjinron* writings reference elements for comparison are always emic concepts, well known to the Japanese reading public, and that can therefore create an apparent proof for the claims of the theory (Befu, 2001, 73). Language, contemporary customs and everyday life socialization were some of the examples of these emic concepts used in *nihonjinron* writings. However, instead of analyzing them in diachronic terms and in their development, *nihonjinron* intellectuals preferred to make them appear as natural and universal much in the same way as they did with historical prominent figures.

Moreover, the, sometimes evident, internal heterogeneity that was present in many of these elements ‹‹(did) not fundamentally challenge the belief in essential Japanese homogeneity›› (Lie, 2001, 51). Instances of internal variation were considered only as surface manifestations and as such dismissed as exceptions. This aspect is well exemplified by a passage in the conclusion of Nakane Chie's book *Japanese Society* (1970):

> It is Japanese nature to accept change with little resistance and, indeed, to welcome and value change; but a superficial change of outlook, as facile as changes in fashion, has not in the slightest effect in the firm persistence of the basic nature and core of personal relations and group dynamics. (Nakane, 1973, 153)

It appears clear that *nihonjinron* aimed at spreading a particular vision of national identity which involved a construction that, making use of historical selection, opposition , and naturalization, was common to most forms of nationalism. In particular, the opposition it engendered was often complicit with Japan's national interests, which saw the U.S. as the most important economic and cultural competitor (Befu, 2001, 6).

The importance of the U.S. as a "relevant other" in *nihonjinron* writings can be found in the work of Etō Jun (1932 – 1999). In his 1967 work *Seijuku to sōshitsu* (Maturation and Forfeiture) he saw the attainment of modernity as a process of maturation which implied the recovery of a strong state (Iida, 2002, 191). His later works showed a shift towards a more overt nationalist tone dictated by the idea that in Japan the strong nation-state, necessary to attain modernity, was not able to develop because of the postwar U.S. occupation. His 1987 work *Nichibei Sensō wa Owatte Inai* (The US-Japan War is Not Over) is exemplificative of this anti-American sentiment. The US was held responsible for the failure of postwar Japan in producing a strong-nation state that empowered a "fake" and "superficial" character of Japan from the 1970s onward (Iida, 2002, 192). Etō underwent a change that is exemplificative of how *nihonjinron* discourse changed arguments over national identity in Japan. The earlier romantic tone of a maturation of the nation into its perfected form under the state aligns, as stated above, with similar tendencies in those years by other authors of the recovery of a Japanese "authenticity" (Doak, 2001; Oguma, 2002; Iida, 2002). With the 1970s Etō's perspective changes into a spiteful attitude towards politics which he sees as symptomatic of the U.S. influence over Japan and focuses on the difference between the U.S. and the "authentic" Japan he theorized in earlier years (Iida, 2002, 192). In this sense, it can be argued that Etō's work can be aligned, even if not in the direction of the Japanese state, with the trend of *nihonjinron* works to focus on difference rather than on the creation of a historical nation.

Difference was a central aspect in the argumentation of *nihonjinron*. The essentialized category of the "West" and, more specifically, the U.S. were selected as the "other" with which to compare. It has been highlighted how the selection of a relevant other was linked with national interests. It is not, however, clear why culture, as a tool to claim distinctiveness, was so much at the center of attention in those years. In his analysis of Watsuji's work, Sakai Naoki (1991, 161) argued that in the definition of difference culture was used as an excuse not to think of the uneasiness derived from the existing situation. It is clear that Sakai saw in Watsuji's philosophical approach to Japanese distinctiveness the expression of a form of anxiety in modernity. Another interesting aspect in the formulation of difference in *nihonjinron* was that it was used only when beneficial to claims of distinctiveness. John Lie (2001, 152) argued that *nihonjinron* writers often lacked a comparative perspective. This, appears to be in contrast with the overt use of comparison made in other works. It can be argued, however, that as long as distinction was functional for claims of uniqueness it was exploited, or even exacerbated, while in the case of a possible counterargument and evidence of it such data was purposely left out of the analysis. The definition of "otherness" in *nihonjinron* was formulated as a response to specific socio-cultural conditions and to the confrontation with a heterogeneous other making use of an essentialized category of difference (Befu, 2001; Iida, 2002).

Group

One of the elements often highlighted in *nihonjinron* works was the group-oriented nature of the "Japanese" (Befu, 2001, 20). Often the group-oriented characteristic of the Japanese was put in comparison with the "Western" mode of social organization which was identified with individualism (Iida, 2002, 165).

This characteristic was often explained by making reference to rural peasant traditions and the recovery of what was perceived to be the traditional social structure of Japan. As stated above, the recovery of rural tradition in *nihonjinron* works was influenced by Yanagita's work and by that of his followers (Morris-Suzuki, 1995; Befu, 2001; Oguma, 2002). Thus, it would be more correct to state that the idea of groupism in *nihonjinron* was formulated on the basis of a construction of rural tradition. This construction of Japanese folklore ‹‹had a particular bearing on the characteristics of cultural nationalism in Japan››

(Yoshino, 1992, 63). It became the ground on which group-orientation was made one of the distinctive characteristics of the "Japanese", as opposed to an alleged individualism of the U.S. or European countries (Yoshino, 1992, 13). Theories about groupism often made use of the diffusion of wet rice cultivation in Japan as an argument. The idea that the communal ties of traditional Japanese culture had developed under the conditions of rice cultivation, which required a high degree of cooperation, was embraced by *nihonjinron* writers (Befu, 2001, 21). Therefore, the Japanese were considered to be group oriented by tradition. The influence of Watsuji's *Fūdo* (1935), in which he located in the monsoon type of climate the origin of corporacy, can be traced in studies about the Japanese social group of authors such as Iwasaki (1980) and Kenmochi (1978) and resounded in many others (Befu, 2001, 21).

Group-orientation was then extended to the sphere of business corporations where it was proposed as a crucial aspect of Japanese-style business and as one of the strong points that allowed it to become so successful. This was exemplified by works from both Japanese and non-Japanese intellectuals. In his *Nihonteki teiei* (Japanese Style Management and Culture) 1983, Gotō Tetsuhiko argued that Japanese management system derived from unique characteristics of the "Japanese", one of which was groupism (Befu, 2001, 24). Volpi's *Giappone delle Meraviglie* (Japan of Wonders, 2015) is an example of how this process still is active. Volpi (2015, 87) stated that Japanese organization of industries on the basis of a vertical structure reminding of their traditional social structure was at the base of 1960s and 1970s Japanese economic success.

Aside from the stress on rural tradition, another important factor in the definition of Japanese society as group-oriented is that of the extension of the family (*ie*) to all social organization. Yoshino Kosaku (1992, 64) argued that this extension of the structure of the *ie* to different levels of society was a phenomenon traceable to the Meiji restoration. During those years, the necessity to create aggregation around the state prompted the tentative to reproduce the structure of the *ie*, familiar to its subjects, to the new nation-state. The rural population that was living the new reality of an urban industrialized society needed new norms and patterns for social interactions. However, Yoshino (1992, 67) argued that given the fast pace in which modernization happened in the Japanese state there simply was not enough time to develop new forms of them. Later, familism was extended to the level of the intermediate group, which comprehended business companies and slogans promoting "enterprise-as-family" became especially prominent during the 1930s and the war (Yoshino, 1992, 68). The traditional structure of the *ie* was, then, brought into modern type of social

organizations in order to make them work for the vast majority of the population which was of rural origin. Drawing from this phenomenon, *nihonjinron* writers naturalized familism as one of the characteristics peculiar to "Japanese" social relations (Befu, 2001, 20).

A noteworthy example of how groupism was proposed as an "essential" characteristic of Japanese society in *nihonjinron* is Nakane Chie's work *Japanese Society* (1970). She provided an explanation of the Japanese group based on four criteria. The first was the notion of 'frame' which could be a locality, an institution or a relationship which binds individuals into a group (Nakane, 1973, 1). It represented the criterion that set the boundary of the group. The group was presented as a binary couple with the individual clearly implying that one precedes the other in importance (Yoshino, 1992, 92). This dichotomy inevitably led to the assumption that, since the "western" mode of society was supposedly based on individualism by contrast "Japanese" society had to be represented by group orientation. The second criterion was the vertical relationships which, she argued, were at the base of the Japanese social system and in which junior-senior relationship was predominant (Nakane, 1973, 3). In her view, vertical relationships in the group were based on the simpler interaction between individuals which in turn were supposedly governed by an emotional dependence, which Doi Takeo (1920 – 2009) called *amae* (Befu, 2001, 22). The third criterion was an exclusivity of membership. Nakane highlighted how the Japanese group core was usually formed of few individuals and that big groups tended to divide in intra-group factions (Nakane, 1973, 52). She argued that individuals belonged to a core group that constituted their frame and their unit of evaluation and which was difficult to change. However, this rigidity and non permeability of the core group was balanced by the flexibility of roles of individuals within the group. Nakane argued that there were no clearly differentiated roles between peers and that this constituted an asset for such organizations as business companies (Nakane, 1973, 83). Nakane's idea of a society based on group socialization and vertical relations was further elaborated in other works not only in domestic literature. An example is given by Joy Hendry's *Understanding Japanese Society* (1987, 92) in which she clearly states that ‹‹there is no doubt that hierarchical differences affect interaction between Japanese people in their everyday lives››. It can be argued that Nakane's model of *tate shakai* (vertical society) was pivotal in the elaboration of ideas of group and vertical socialization in *nihonjinron* (Yoshino, 1992, 143; Befu, 2001,21) .

The definition of group in *nihonjinron* was therefore a complex one. It was constituted by elements of climate and territory, a process of extension of the traditional structure of the

family to different levels of society and by social interactions which the Japanese could recognize in their daily lives. Not only was groupism considered as a characteristic of Japanese social behavior, but it implied the idea that the Japanese were all part of a higher level of group: that of the nation (Yoshino, 1992, 65) . The extension of the organizational principles of the family did not occur only at the intermediate level (e.g. business enterprises) but, as stated above for the case of the Meiji state, it also occurred at the level of the state (Yoshino, 1992; Oguma, 2002). Given this extension of familism to higher social institutions and the embrace of the establishment of developmental nationalism first and cultural nationalism later, it can be argued that nationality itself became an extension of the family (Lie, 2001, 144). It is important to notice that, as it was done with other elements of *nihonjinron*, group-orientation was considered to be a natural characteristic of the "Japanese" and that they were considered ‹‹to regard ranking rather than stratification as an organizational principle›› (Nakane, 1973, 147). This image of a group-oriented society was part of a formulation of national distinctiveness which was promoted as a natural unit of aggregation for all the "Japanese" and the "Japanese" only. However, the concept of who the "Japanese" were was not explained if not through singling out some supposedly unique characteristics, often linked to a construction of culture in the discourse of *nihonjinron*.

Spirit

Calls for independence and national distinctiveness were often connected to the recovery of a "true" culture expression of an "essence" or "spirit" (Smith, 1996; Kramer, 1997). The sense of loss of authenticity and the need for a recovery of a lost past were common in discourses over national identity in Japan even before the Meiji period. A noteworthy example is the *kokugaku* (National Learning school) led by scholars such as Kamo no Mabuchi (1697 – 1796) and Motoori Norinaga (1730 – 1801) (Befu, 2001; Oguma, 2002). At the turn of the nineteenth century these scholars argued for a return to "true" Japanese culture in contrast with Chinese neo-Confucianism influence over culture in the Japanese state at the time (Oguma, 2002, 158). They enacted a recovery of the imperial system as an indigenous institution and reinstated concepts such as *mono no aware* (melancholic empathy with nature) and *yamato-gokoro* (ethos) in order to recreate an indigenous "pure" form of culture (Befu, 2001, 124).

The work of the *kokugaku* influenced later works and concepts advanced by their idea of national distinctiveness were used in nationalist discourse by Japanese intellectuals even in postwar years. In 1935, Watsuji defined the "spirit" specific to Japan as the manifestation of a particular "national consciousness" (*kokuminteki jikaku*) which he saw as a form of consciousness of the community (Bernier, 2006, 91). The use of of the terms *kokoro*, *seishin* or *damashii* by Watsuji before and by other authors, such as Tanikawa Tetzuzō (1895 – 1989), Karaki Junzō (1904 – 1980), Masahisa Goi (1916 – 1980) later, clearly signaled the diffusion of such terminology and of the idea of a "spirit" of Japan (Befu, 2001, 32).

The search for authenticity and of a "true" form of culture could be attributed to an anxiety deriving from the disappointment over the existing situation and linked to modernity (Sakai, 1991, 161). As stated above, modernization in Japan was often described as a process which caused the disruption of the social structure and in which urbanization and industrialization suddenly changed the life of the population (Maruyama, 1953; Wilson, 2002; Oguma, 2002). John Lie (2001, 127) argued that together with the erosion of rural community in the war years its spiritual overlay faded too. He continued by highlighting how the Meiji state showed little interest in religious practices of the people and focused instead on the perceived necessity of modernizing the country. During prewar and wartime years, the recovery of the "spirit" was enacted through the embrace of state shintō. Postwar years, as analyzed above, saw the condemnation of wartime institutions, and state shintō was no exception. Therefore, postwar Japan increasingly came to be characterized both by religious diversity and anomie (Lie, 2001, 128). This could be one of the reasons for which calls for a return to a "spirit" or "heart" of Japanese culture are so common in *nihonjinron* literature. One of the features of *nihonjiron* is to make use of common affective sentiments to create a sense of aggregation to Japanese nationality (Tai,2003, 17). With the profound social transformations and the widespread sense of anomie of the postwar period, ‹‹the organic image of culture (was) . . .appealing because it offer(ed) a way of counteracting fears of social disintegration›› (Morris-Suzuki, 1995, 772). Therefore, calls for spirituality and a harmonic relationship with nature publicized by *nihonjinron* writers made concepts such as *kokoro*, *seishin* or *damashii* spread in popular consciousness in Japan where they were offered as a solution to nostalgic feelings in a modernized Japan (Befu, 2001, 33).

An example of the perspective of *nihonjinron* on spirituality was provided by Umehara Takeshi. As previously stated, in the 1960s Umehara had developed his *kanjō ron* (theory of emotions) in which he advocated a return to Japanese traditional spirituality in the form of a

recovery of Buddhism and Shintō (Iida, 2002, 144). His theory was in line with previous formulations of a return to the spirit of "Japan" which in the 1960s were developed in a sense of nostalgia well exemplified by the call for a return to *furusato* that started in those years (Lie, 2001, 127). With the increasing internationalization of Japan, Umehara's work clearly showed a change towards comparative culturalism which saw the priority of explaining to the selected relevant other, identified with the U.S., the "unique Japanese spirit" (Iida, 2002, 189). It is important to notice that this comparative perspective took for granted not only the existence of a "Japanese spirit" but the fact that all the Japanese were described by it. In his 1984 work *Gendai nihon o kangaeru* (Thinking Contemporary Japan) Umehara aims at explaining to "westerners" the unique spiritual culture of Japan. In the conclusion Umehara stated:

> For the West, Japan is still an enigma. It appears as a combination of mystery and rationality… The things they want to know are: how have the Japanese succeeded in modernizing in such a short time, and in what direction will Japan head in the future. [. . .] However, they do not understand the relation between Japanese traditional culture and modernization . . .Can we not create a theory that explains both Japanese modernization and the mysteries of the Japanese arts? (Umehara, 1984; Iida, 2002, 190)

This statement clearly showed some features of *nihonjinron*. First, the inherent naturalization of "mystery" as a characteristic of the Japanese often connected to a sense of election, in that only natives could understand it (Befu, 2001, 67). Secondly, Japanese culture was proposed in ambivalent terms. A mixture of modernity and "spirit" in which objectifiable modernity, accessible to all, was accompanied by the exclusive characteristic of a "mystery", which in *nihonjinron* was considered to be accessible only to the Japanese (Yoshino, 1992, 90). Third, the two elements, an accessible modernity and an exclusive spirituality, were considered to be inextricably linked. The stress on contrast in claims of a distinctive "spirit" can be found also in the works of other authors. One of them was Ueyama Shumpei (1921 – 2012), who in his works considered the origin positive and negative aspects of industrial civilization to be located in "Western" cultural heritage (Morris-Suzuki, 1995, 772). Ueyama continued by lamenting a loss of "spirituality" in Japan which was to be recovered in order to reinstate true Japanese culture (Morris-Suzuki, 1995, 773).

The recovery of a lost spirituality or "essence" of Japan was enacted in *nihonjinron* by drawing from previously compiled works on national distinctiveness (Yoshino, 1992; Iida, 2002; Tai, 2003). However, it was articulated with renewed vigor as a response to changing

socio-cultural conditions determined by the new dynamics of internationalization and consumerism which took Japan by storm in the 1970s and 1980s.

3.2 The context of *nihonjinron*

The 1970s signaled a moment of change for Japanese nationalism. The "Nixon shock" with the opening of foreign relations between China and the U.S. and the protectionist stance of the U.S. towards Japanese products, which culminated in the abolition of the gold standard for the dollar and the appreciation of the yen, tended to worsen U.S.-Japan economic relations (Fiori, 2010, 131). The "oil shock" of 1973 further aggravated the situation to the extent that ‹‹many felt that the country's economic survival was seriously jeopardized›› (Iida, 2002, 164). However, the country's reaction to these external factors and the success in economic recovery after these conditions prompted a new wave of optimism and of national pride. By 1978 Japanese society showed a high degree of nationalist sentiment (Park, 2016, 15). Nationalism was about to change its form due to changing conditions in the domestic and international environments.

One of the elements that influenced a shift in the focus of nationalism in 1970s Japan was a political one. During the 1950s and continuing in the 1960s the LPD had consolidated its position in power and was able to develop its political agenda virtually without any opposition (Fiori, 2010, 34). Satisfaction of economic growth produced support to the LPD to preserve the stability of everyday life (Lie, 2001, 149). However, with the 1970s the party came to face a new problematic aspect in the erosion of the original conservative electorate of rural areas which represented a step back for the LDP (Fiori, 2010, 137). At the same time, the rise of a new information-based society and the slower pace of economic growth constituted the loss of a workable LDP political ideology which was based around the idea of a "good middle-class life" (Iida, 2002, 168). Facing these conditions, politics decided to change course and abandon the previous idea of developmental nationalism towards a more cultural-based explanation of Japan's economic strength (Iida, 2002, 165; Uemura, 2012, 113). Doak (2007, 160) argued that given the stable conditions of politics in the 1970s, due to the widespread idea of a democratic middle-class society and to the recession of open anti-state protest, a cultural theory was able to return as a viable expression of nationalism. In this context, *nihonjinron*, as a cultural form of nationalism, could develop in the eyes of the state as a substitute of previous forms of developmental nationalism. This particular form of

nationalism further highlighted culture as a central aspect of its assumptions. To understand why cultural nationalism became the preferred expression of nationalist discourse in those years it is necessary to look at the international conditions of increasing globalization and the rise of the market logic and to domestic transformation of society into a mass, information-driven society.

Internationalization and *nihonjinron*

The move by the U.S. in 1971 to reopen relationships with China acted as a warn sign for the Japanese government. In the face of new geopolitical conditions, they faced the need to change the international policy of the country surged. The Japanese government, in 1972, immediately started diplomatic relations with China and opened commerce between the two countries (Fiori, 2010, 132). Thanks to the increasing volume of international commerce and Japanese exports the country was able to recover from the initial economic difficulties of the 1970s (Volpi, 2015, 91). With the clear stance of competition adopted by the U.S. and the increase in importance of international commerce the government became increasingly aware of the need to improve the Japanese image abroad; a process which culminated in ‹‹demands for Japan's cultural autonomy in the world›› (Iida, 2002, 165). Internationalization had prompted a process of national identification to answer the dynamics of an increasing globalization which could no longer be ignored (Park, 2016, 15). The confrontation with new cultures caused a renewed interest in self-identification under the process of 'glocalization' in which local culture became increasingly involved with new cultural realities (Befu, 2001, 82). The preferred mode of self-identification was to make use of theories of cultural uniqueness (i.e. *nihonjinron*). Japanese government participated in the diffusion of *nihonjinron* abroad and in domestic propaganda because of a new conjuncture between political and economic forces in the wake of the globalizing world. A national goal was set to promote Japanese economy, culture and, implicitly, political interests in the arena of the globalizing world (Iida, 2002, 167; Uemura, 2012, 113).

In this setting, *nihonjinron* came to play an extremely important role. The Japanese government started a process that would bring to the 1980s Ohira cabinet's idea of a new 'age of culture' (*bunka no jidai*) (Uemura, 2012, 123). Under these circumstances, *nihonjinron*, being proposed as a prescription of behavior, implicitly sustained the government and

corporate establishment. Thus, *nihonjinron* came to enforce a form of apparently de-politicized propaganda (Befu, 2001, 81). Transnational corporations, now reorganized under the new form of *keiretsu*, started to be involved in a process that made out of the nation an instrument to create economic advantage (Cazdyn, 1995, 136). New international conditions had made politics more interested in cooperation with the budding corporate capital. Moreover, the growing government involvement with the *keiretsu* supported the newly established political line of neo-conservativism which became an important factor in the dissemination of cultural ideas of national distinctiveness (Iida, 2002, 170).

Internationalization continued rising throughout the second half of the 1970s and into the 1980s as a clear signal that globalization was advancing all around the world. The 1980s constituted a moment of further elaboration of the tenets of *nihonjinron*. The arguments of *nihonjinron* began to change gradually by highlighting the transferable or "universal" aspects of Japanese culture in tandem with particularistic formulations of it (Yoshino, 1992, 91). Once again, international factors caused this development. One of the main factors behind maintaining particularistic formulations of Japanese culture was the deterioration of U.S. - Japan relations. The economic success of the Japanese state was starting to become at the center of attention in both Europe and North America. The idea that the unique cultural characteristics described by *nihonjinron* explained the high-speed growth of previous years resonated between economists and politicians (Miyoshi and Harootunian, 1988, 389; Yoshino, 1992; Hein, 2008).

In the U.S., in particular, the idea of Chalmers Johnson (1931 – 2010) that Japanese uniqueness was located in its political economy empowered the conviction that Japan was becoming dangerous and that it was waging an economic war against the U.S.A. (Hein, 2008, 459). In the face of this hostile stance of the U.S. *nihonjinron* writers ‹‹began to nurture nationalist-exclusionist inclined arguments that made stringent demands for Japan's cultural autonomy in the world›› (Iida, 2002, 165). At the same time, however, a boost in popularity of Japanese culture around the world caused the formulation of optimistic ideas of Japanese culture as a model for the rest of the world (Yoshino, 1992, 92). It was the beginning of a focus on internationalization and of the more systematic creation of Japanese national image.

While Japanese-style business was proposed as a model for others to follow, culture too began to be considered as an important factor in internationalization. Moving into the 1980s, Japanese political elites started working on internationalization by focusing more on

culture. The political administration under prime minister Ōhira Masayoshi (1910 – 1980) was the first to directly address this topic. In order to promote internationalization, Ōhira's Cabinet established a Research Group for the Age of Culture (*Bunka no jidai kenkyū grūpu*), whose primary purpose was to facilitate cross-cultural exchange (Uemura, 2012, 116). Internationalization (*kokusaika*) was the keyword used to express the goal of the research, a concept that would be at the center of attention in the following years. Even after Ōhira's death in 1980, his administration kept working on the line of previous work. Nagatomi Yūichirō's (1934 – 2013) work *Kindai o koete* (Overcoming Modernity, 1983) represents the summary of Ohira's cabinet work (Iida, 2002, 166; Uemura, 2012, 114). The focus was on the possibilities of culture in an internationalized world in an attempt to foster cultural exchange and promote "Japanese" culture.

It can be argued that *kokusaika* was ‹‹used to promote a particularistic Japanese identity›› and one that was deeply linked with the structural framework of Occidentalism, Orientalism and auto-Orientalism (Cazdyn, 1995, 142). At the same time, it is important to notice that the focus was on an exchange of "national" culture. One of the objectives of the Ōhira administration was to lead a multitude of individual efforts towards a single goal: that of a "national direction" that could foster growth, progress and stability for Japanese society (Uemura, 2012, 113). Thus, cultural exchange was promoted as an exchange between "national" cultures. An interesting aspect of the discourse about the uniqueness of Japanese culture and the government's stance about it is how technological advancement and economic success were exploited to corroborate *nihonjiron*'s claims. Japanese technological excellence was portrayed as an extension of cultural exceptionalism (Nagita, 1988, 411). One of the points expressed in the work of the Research Group for the Age of Culture was that Japanese culture needed to be connected to products in order to give it more visibility (Uemura, 2012, 116). It can be argued that the formulation of Japanese culture diffused by *nihonjiron* first, and shared by the government after, made use of Japanese economy and technological achievement's success to foster Japanese national identity while silencing dissenters and alternative formulations of culture (Miyoshi and Harootunian,1988, 391).

The following Japanese governments did not abandon Ōhira's cabinet policy. The administration of Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro (1982 – 1987), for example, maintained governmental support to cultural exceptionalism and to internationalization. Nakasone's first diet address clearly stated an interest for internationalization:

> I want to refocus our system to emphasize the training of "sympathetic hearts" and the training of internationalists who love their country and are willing to work hard for its development. (Nakasone, 1980; Cazdyn, 1995, 153)

Eric Cazdyn (1995, 153) argued that under the guise of internationalist Nakasone meant to highlight a "real Japanese" and that, for Japanese political elites, international was homologous to the essentialized category of the "West". Internationalization became one of the imperatives of the new administration under the guise of an exchange of supposedly different and unique cultures in which Japanese culture was defined by the propositions of *nihonjinron* (Sakai, 1988; Yoshino, 1992). This tendency was clearly shown in many different areas.

An example is the scholastic reform promoted in 1984 by Nakasone. The reform claimed to have as a main objective to emphasize national pride with a strong emphasis on internationalization (Fiori, 2010, 140). Internationalization signaled a moment of rebirth for cultural theories of uniqueness in Japan. *Nihonjinron* was promoted both as an instrument for promoting national image and as a discourse which empowered the new politico-economic agenda of the government and of growing transnational corporations. In this sense, Befu (2001, 66) argued that *nihonjinron* became a form of "ideological hegemony" which ‹‹attempt(ed) to control rather than merely describe reality››.

Nihonjinron in consumerism

As internationalization spread, so did a change in society, associated with a new logic of consumption, that changed the life of the population. Already in the 1960s the development and spread of information technologies, such as the television, changed the way in which culture circulated and ‹‹provided a new forum for national consciousness about desirable lifestyles and values›› (Stalker, 2018, 6721). The most striking example was the success of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics broadcast on the whole Japanese territory (Takeuchi, 2016, 133). With the second half of the 1960s the "myth of the middle class" in which everyone was to be granted a stable salary, a home and welfare under the guidance of a stable government that worked for the improvement of society, began to be exemplified by the construction of commercial urbanities (Iida, 2002, 175). Moving into the 1970s the steady introduction of radio and the television in an increasing number of houses granted an enormous reach to

advertising and cultural promotion. At the same time, economic success was being sustained by new technological products, such as cameras, electronics and hi-tech goods, whose production culminated in the 1980s and constituted the launch of a craze for consumer goods (Volpi, 2015, 91).

It is important to notice that while the media made possible the diffusion of a culture of consumption possible, it did so by importing international messages (Lie, 2001, 58). Cultural images from the United States, from European countries and from other parts of the world entered the domestic market creating a mixture of cultural traits under the guise of consumer goods. Tokyo became the newly established capital of pop culture in which all those symbols were proposed in advertisements and on the shelves of stores. A striking example of how internationalization influenced pop culture in Japan was Tanaka Yasuo's fictional work *Nantonaku Kuristaru* (Somehow, Crystal, 1981). In this literary work, the description of Tokyo is operated trough the consumer-centered lifestyle of the young generations quoting brands of commodities or the best places where to buy them. At the same time, a connection of such products to the most fashionable places such as Roppongi, Ginza and many more is operated. The material life described in *Nantonaku kurisutaru* is a striking representation of how international influence in culture produced new objects of consumption.

It is interesting to note that, under the influence of foreign consumer goods and names a re-exoticization of Japanese culture is enacted (Field, 1988, 555). In a subculture of consumerism, which made of the search for new fashionable goods its defining practice, new flashy foreign names became the norm. This, in turn, meant that Japanese names sounded almost as foreign, if not more than the foreign words themselves. It can be argued that the image of consumerism and fashion enacted in *Nantonaku kurisutaru* reiterates the idea of Japanese culture as defined in contrast with the foreign and as particularistic (Field, 1988, 559). The 1980s represented a period in which foreign commodities entered Japanese society with more vigor than ever. Skov (1995, 176) called this phenomenon the development of a 'boom-based society' in which ‹‹advertising designs, fashion colors, styles of consumer goods ha(d) been replaced regularly with new forms of them››. In the 1970s and 1980s consumerism spread and promoted images of a mixture of local and international culture in line with the trends of internationalization that were at the center of attention of business and political elites alike.

The spreading dynamics of an information-based consumerist society and the stability of Japanese economy empowered a surge in cultural nationalism under the guise of *nihonjinron* (Stalker, 2018, 6983). As stated above, cultural theories of uniqueness were proposed as a response to international conditions. Proposing a positive, particularistic image of Japan to the world was one of the objectives of Ōhira's and Nakasone's cabinets (Fiori, 2010; Uemura, 2012). It is important to remember that although popular culture *per se* is not nationalist it can be exploited to define cultural citizenship and popular nationality (Lie, 2001, 57). As such, the Japanese government in connivance with transnational corporations strived to make use of *nihonjinron* to foster an allegedly "unique" form of national identity which could empower a particular form of society (Cazdyn, 1995, 154). It was the inauguration of the concept that cultural identity could be beneficial to economic and political interests in the globalized arena which later developed into the idea that ‹‹national identity (was) one of the most valuable products transnational corporations (could) sell›› (Cazdyn, 1995, 135). *Nihonjinron* was so overtly backed by the institutions because of its potential.

An interesting development of this phenomenon was how *nihonjinron* came to be part of the consumer society. The particularistic image of Japanese "uniqueness" came to be connected with consumerism when *nihonjinron* was diffused in many forms throughout different areas, from political propaganda to business culture to magazines and television programmes (Befu, 2001, 46). *Nihonjinron* writers produced books and materials for the wide public which started to entwine with the newly established consumer-based economy. Everyday occurrences and news often connected with international trends in culture were given an explanation by using *nihonjinron* (Yoshino, 1992, 8). Cultural particularism became the proposed explanation for phenomena ranging from business activities to daily lives, and *nihonjinron* literature effectively shaped as a form of consumer good accessible to everyone (Befu, 2001, 62). *Nihonjinron* aligned with consumer culture influenced by international fashions and cultural traits which prompted the desire to define a self-identification. It can be argued that *nihonjinron* was formed by two separate elements: one rooted in material consumption and one abstract which constituted the basis for theories of uniqueness (Yoshino, 1992; Befu, 2001). As a phenomenon built on and reiterated by individual consumption *nihonjinron* was diffused under the forms of popularized literature. Therefore, *nihonjinron* came to be connected with the logic of the market and exploiting geoeconomic and geopolitical processes produced a form of cultural particularism which could be desired and fashionable (Befu, 2001, 64). However, the basis of its tenets were to be found in what

Yoshino (1992, 83) calls ‘underlying culture’. This form of culture is an abstract, non-objectified form of culture which was believed to be at the base of every form of Japanese particularism. Japanese “unique” culture was understood as a holistic form of culture, one that did not change over time and expressed a particular form of “Japan” which was embraced by a good part of all strata of the population (Iida, 2002, 189).

Nihonjinron was deeply linked to the dynamics of consumerism as a form of diffusion and used individual participation to its theory to foster the idea of an allegedly “unique” and “everlasting” form of social culture (Yoshino, 1995, 93). This development highlighted how increasing globalization and internationalization prompted a process of identity definition which was processed through the framework of Occidentalism and methodological nationalism. *Nihonjinron* writers tended to exaggerate the difference between the essentialized categories of “Japan” and the “West” , in particular between North American culture and Japanese culture, interpreting material aspects in terms of Japanese cultural traits (Iida, 2002, 8). At the same time, difference was clearly stated through reference to nationality. The political declination of *nihonjinron* discourse aimed at creating a positive “national” image and spreading it abroad (Yoshino, 1992; Befu, 2001; Uemura, 2012).

Both these two developments can be considered as part of what Fredrick Jameson (1991, 54) called ‘cognitive mapping’. New global realities presented themselves as inaccessible to the individual. As such, this prompted a process in which individuals tried to formulate new figures through which to express themselves in a symbolic way (Jameson, 1988, 356). It can be argued that, *nihonjinron* presented a form of cultural identity to which individuals could align in the wake of new social transformations (Yoshino, 1992; Befu, 2001; Iida, 2002). Asada Akira (1988, 631) argued that Japan in the 1980s was undergoing a change towards an ‘infantile capitalism’ in which individuals were involved in ‹‹games of differentiation››. Individuals could align to cultural categories and theories simply by being exposed to them on a vast scale through advertisement, consumption and obtaining information by the media (Asada, 1988, 631). *Nihonjinron* was diffused to all levels of society through a pervasive form of literature and media contents (Befu, 2001, 46). Therefore, *nihonjinron* had a fair amount of visibility and consumption in Japanese society in the 1970s and 1980s. It was exactly this pervasive exposure to *nihonjinron* tenets that prompted an acceptance of Japanese social culture in a positive way ‹‹resulting in nationalistic sentiment which stressed the strengths of Japanese cultural distinctiveness›› (Yoshino, 1992, 141).

The business discourse of *nihonjinron*

Business corporations played a pivotal role in the diffusion of *nihonjinron* both abroad and in domestic settings. Theories on cultural particularism accelerated in the 1970s and 1980s thanks to a conjuncture of internationalization and consumerism which created a setting apt for the diffusion of ideas of uniqueness. Numerous publications of *nihonjinron* were written by businessmen who embraced the idea of a "unique Japan" (Befu, 2001, 55). The reason why *nihonjinron* was so popular in the field of business could be found in two main factors. First, the economic conditions of the 1970s prompted a reaction in the attempt to explain economic success in cultural terms (Iida, 2002, 164). Secondly, internationalization involved business corporations directly, especially with the boost in export of the 1980s, and businessmen were exposed to cross-cultural situations in dealing with commercial exchanges (Yoshino, 1992, 102). As stated before, two stances towards Japan, which had developed following its economic success, helped shaping the discourse about cultural uniqueness: the hostility and tendency to protectionism against Japan, exemplified by the words *Japan bashing*, and the idea of "Japan as a model" for worldwide economy (Miyoshi and Harootunian, 1988; Yoshino, 1992; Volpi, 2015, 93).

Reactions to these two stances was pivotal in determining the role of business corporations in diffusing *nihonjinron*. An example of how businessmen reacted to the hostility towards Japanese economy was the work of LDP politician Ishihara Shintarō and Sony CEO Morita Akio (1921 – 1999) '*No' to Ieru Nihon* (The Japan that can say 'No', 1989). Ishihara and Morita argued that Japan had risen to economic success thanks to a superior production method, education system and high-technology. They also argued that what the "Americans" were annoyed by was that ‹‹an Oriental country is about to supplant them in some major fields›› (Ishihara and Morita, 1989, 30). Japanese business elites were clearly backing *nihonjinron* claims of uniqueness in the face of international criticism. Positive views of Japanese economic strength and optimism towards the future of the country were also really important in ensuring the popularity of *nihonjinron* (Yoshino, 1992; Befu, 2001). Economic success had galvanized the attention of different fields. In particular, emphasis on internationalization from politics in the 1980s further strengthened the idea of businessmen as *kokusai-jin* (internationalists) which were the first to come in contact with the foreign and had the responsibility to present Japan to the word (Yoshino, 1992, 102).

An example is Prime Minister Nakasone's politics which showed the desire to strengthen a liberal nationalism that would have highlighted Japan's strengths as well as showed a great appreciation of other cultures (Doak, 2007, 211). Economic success had launched Japan at the center of worldwide attention and as such it empowered not only cultural theories about the country but a political line which stressed the importance of Japan's role in the world. This external orientation of Japanese politics and business was fuelled also by the acceptance and reproduction of *nihonjinron* abroad. The idea that Japanese economic success was due to cultural characteristics that were intrinsic in Japanese underlying culture, such as group orientation spread both in domestic and foreign environments (Befu,2001, 24). Works such as Ezra Vogel's *Japan as Number One* (1979) , in which he argued that Japan had succeeded thanks to its revision of traditional institutions, gave rise to ideas such as that Japanese industrial organization was strong because of Japanese cultural traits such as groupism or the loyalty of employees (Iida, 2002, 187). *Nihonjinron* was shaped by the international gaze and, given the surging interest in Japanese economic success, business became one of the major fields for the reproduction and, at times, theorization of *nihonjinron*.

Businessmen were at the center of a discourse over uniqueness which saw Japanese economic success as its proof. Yoshino (1992, 97) argued that businessmen were the group in which *nihonjinron* was most diffused and that they showed, more often than not, active concern with it. The amount of *nihonjinron* literature concerned with business or matters related to it and the active participation of many in the business sector indicated that businessmen were involved not only in the consumption, but also in the reproduction and production of such literature (Yoshino, 1992, 116; Befu, 2001, 23). As such, it can be argued that businessmen were acting as intellectuals of *nihonjinron*. Edward Shils (1910 – 1995) argued that intellectuals could be divided into 'productive intellectuals'(who develop new ideas), 'reproductive intellectuals' (who diffuse and re-elaborate ideas) and 'consumer intellectuals' (who receive such ideas) (Shils, 1972, 22). In the case of *nihonjinron*, businessmen both diffused and produced new ideas about Japanese uniqueness, as exemplified by the case of Morita. Japanese businessmen could therefore be inscribed in all three categories: some of them were only consumers but other reproduced or even produced ideas included in *nihonjinron* (Yoshino, 1992, 123).

It is important to note that in his analysis of *nihonjinron* Yoshino (1992, 124) found that business elites were regarded as more "value-free" than other thinking elites. As such

they were considered the preferred mode of intellectual influence on society. However, it can be argued that business elites were not as "value-free" as they looked to the public. It is important to remember that intellectuals involved in nationalism often see it as ‹‹a rhetorical device that is required to further their specific interests›› (Booyer and Lomniz, 2005, 112). In the case of Japanese business elites it must be kept in mind that transnational corporations and the political agenda of the government acted in connivance with one another empowered by the economic success of the country (Cazdyn, 1995; Befu, 2001; Uemura, 2012). *Nihonjinron* was performed by business elites as a nationalist discourse in concomitance with an emerging globalizing context and engendered new dynamics of nationalist discourse and its implications.

3.3 Cultural Nationalism and its developments

Nihonjinron represented a development for nationalism in Japan. It became a new mode to express national identity and uniqueness through the use of ideas about a homogenized culture disseminated throughout society (Iida, 2002, 174). Contrary to what happened before, solidarity around the national project was not constructed around national symbols such as the national flag, anthem and monuments. Such symbols were reinstated with the occurrence of the Tokyo Olympics of 1964 but still maintained a controversial aspect (Takeuchi, 2016, 133). The controversy of using symbols often linked to the wartime past generally prevented them to become truly realized in the project of national socialization (Befu, 2001, 100). What became the symbolic element of cultural nationalism in 1970s and 1980s Japan was *nihonjinron* in its consumerist version, whose claims further empowered a way to express national uniqueness through the use of holistic culture (Yoshino, 1992, 84). The reciprocal relation between the 'top-down' forces of capital and technology and the 'bottom-up' input of popular culture progressively eroded the distinction between high culture and low culture in an attempt to reduce them to a homogenized form of national culture (Iida, 2002, 200).

At the same time, internationalization played an important role not only in the definition but also in the diffusion of the ideas of *nihonjinron* (Sakai, 1988; Yoshino, 1992; Iida, 2002). The globalizing international arena proved to be a test for the particular form of cultural identity that *nihonjinron* engendered. The Japanese government and transnational corporations were able to spread an image of Japan based on its economic success and that

identified it as a manufacturer of hi-tech and, at the same time, perpetrated an exotic orientalist image (Yoshino, 1992, 121). The three focal points of internationalization, cultural exchange and economic miracle worked to enforce cultural nationalism as a project of homogenized society (Cazdyn, 1995, 154). While economic success granted visibility abroad, attempts to spread a homogenous "Japan" resonated in domestic politics especially in the 1980s. Ōhira's cabinet blueprint *Kindai wo koete* proposed a solution to the problematic aspects of a capitalist society under the form of peculiar Japanese cultural attributes (Uemura, 2012, 116). Nakasone Yasuhiro's political line openly advocated an alignment with the creation of a Japanese identity and an internationalization based on a set form of Japanese culture (Cazdyn, 1995; Iida, 2002, 188).

Cultural nationalism in the 1980s in Japan knew a shift towards a stronger emphasis on opposition as a mechanism of identity definition. Opposition as a mechanism of national discourse was well known in earlier years too. In particular, the postwar period was characterized by a redefinition of "Japan" in the face of the occupiers and of a "normative" form of culture in the U.S. (Doak, 2001; Iida, 2002; Tai, 2003). Lie (2001, 154) saw in the external gaze of the U.S. and its definition of Japan as an "exception" the reason why definition of "Japaneseness" were often unclear to most of the people. *Nihonjinron* discourse drew from definitions of identity that were created as a response to this scheme of opposition between the "normal" and the "exception" and whose only possibility in the face of an ideological hegemony was to cast "Japaneseness" even further into the exception (Lie, 2001; Sakai, 1988). As such, claims of cultural uniqueness were created as a mechanism of auto-orientalist definition behind which loomed ‹‹an obstinate essentialization of the "West"›› (Sakai, 1997, 17). The international attention to Japanese economic success and the criticism of the modern age, often seen as a consequence of imperialist hegemony, demonstrated that in *nihonjinron* "Japan" is still strongly defined by assuming an essentialized "West" as a reference point (Iida, 2002, 171). Formulations of a homogenous Japan played right into the container structure of methodological nationalism. Because the idea of "Japan" was that of a homogeneous society, other countries were more often than not considered under the same assumption (Lie, 2001, 35).

This idea of nations as homogenous units was further exacerbated in the 1980s due to increasing globalization. In the growing mixture of different cultural elements an easy, immediate categorization gained appeal due to the apparent confusion. *Nihonjinron*, and the essentialized version of methodological nationalism it contained, gained popularity as away to

categorize the world in the face of anxiety brought about by several decades of changes in the social structure (Hein, 2008, 458). It is important to notice that the assumption that all countries are homogenous implied the idea that the people of those countries were too. Lie (2001, 145) argued that the category of 'peoplehood', identified in Japanese by the suffix *jin* (person), in its cultural particularistic formulation is ‹‹permanent and homogeneous››. *Nihonjinron* as a dominant ideology in 1970s and 1980s Japan enforced the view in which nationals shared a single descent, which outsiders could not be part of, often expressed by the use of the term *nihonjin no chi* (Japanese blood) (Yoshino, 1992, 86). However, Yoshino (1992) argued that this category of "Japaneseness" through blood was inconsistent in its application. In the face of phenotypically indistinguishable foreigners the knowledge of an individual's background was fundamental in the categorization as appertaining or not to "the Japanese". This showed that *nihonjin no chi* was part of a categorization of a socially determined form of race (Yoshino, 1992, 88). Moreover, *nihonjinron* participated in a definition of the world as constituted of homogenized nationalities which were not only exclusionary but also unequal (Sakai, 1988, 479; 1997, 154). The acceptance of the framework of Occidentalism also included the idea of ranking cultures along a ‹‹unilineal scale of progress›› (Lie, 2001, 36). After all, *nihonjinron* did not come so far from wartime definition of Japanese culture as the leading culture of Asia, but which suffered the idea of an inherent superiority of a hegemonic and imperialist euro-american culture.

Changes in cultural nationalism: a prelude to nation branding

Cultural nationalism discourse in the 1980s signaled some of the changes that were fundamental in the development of cultural nationalism into its branded form of the twenty-first century. First, the marketization of culture due to the alliance between the government and transnational corporations led to the formulation of the idea that national image could be managed in order to gain economic and political benefit (Cazdyn, 1995; Uemura, 2012). Although the promotion of *nihonjinron* in works intended for foreigners in order to understand the nationalist version of Japan prompted positive and negative responses abroad, it still managed to improve the visibility of the country. Proof was the good amount of literature written about *nihonjinron* by foreigners (Yoshino, 1992; Befu, 2001). It is true, however, that visibility was given mostly by the country economic success and not cultural nationalist theories about Japan which, instead, followed the craze for a

"Japanese-style economy" (Iida, 2002, 164). The link with transnational corporations and the use of the dynamics of a consumerist mass society to spread nationalist ideas was, however, a novelty and one that would continue in later years (Cazdyn, 1995, 145).

The second change was the development of a widely publicized form of national discourse both in the form of official governmental activities and in the promotion of nationalist ideas through the mass media. It was a development that brought nationalist discourse closer to a method of exercise of power which we have already mentioned as *public diplomacy* (Nye, 2008). *Nihonjinron* literature could be regarded as a consumer goods and as such it proposed nationalist discourse publicizing it on a mass scale (Befu, 2001, 62). Therefore, it was proposed in domestic politics as a unifying message not through compulsion or imposition from the top-bottom but through the diffusion of the message in people's everyday life. In politics public diplomacy is defined by Nye (2008, 95) as ‹‹an instrument that governments use to mobilize (cultural) resources to communicate with and attract the publics of other countries››. As such, it can be argued that *nihonjinron* was a form of public diplomacy in the sense that it spread a particular kind of culture, based on the alleged uniqueness of "Japan", by connecting it with the popularity of the phenomenon of Japanese economic success (Yoshino, 1992; Iida, 2002).

The third change in cultural nationalism was performed especially during the 1980s. It was the management of opposition to generate adhesion to the national project without excluding the possibility to conciliate internationalist globalization with it. As stated above, *nihonjinron* engendered a distinction between well defined national cultures (Sakai, 1997; Lie, 2001). This process was strikingly similar to 'container thinking' which expressed internationalization as an encounter of set nation-states and their homogenous culture (Iwabuchi, 2015, 11). The naturalization of the nation, in this case of a homogenous form of holistic culture, ‹‹produced the container model of society that encompasse(d) a culture, a polity, an economy and a bounded social group›› (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller, 2003, 579). The 1980s signaled the beginning of the Japanese state activity abroad to build the image of Japan as a leader in international aid and humanitarian efforts (Uemura, 2012, 117). It was an effort to build Japanese image in the direction of public diplomacy and in what later would come to be known as 'soft power'.

In many ways *nihonjinron* anticipated later developments in nationalism. It was linked to a form of diffusion of nationalist discourse that exploited the new conditions

brought about by globalization and by the cooperation between transnational corporations and the political elites (Cazdyn, 1995). It is important to remember that in so doing *nihonjinron* shrouded popular cultural multiethnicity by perpetrating the image of a monoethnic homogenous country (Lie, 2001, 80). The pervasive characteristic of *nihonjinron* made it be accepted by a considerable part of the population even because of the lack of an alternative worldview in the same cultural arena (Befu, 2001, 103). It can be argued that *nihonjinron* exploited a newly created social space to attempt to produce a form of cultural hegemony (Befu, 2001, 81). This was an important development for nationalist discourse and one that would have an effect on later formulations of it. *Nihonjinron* was deeply involved in the creation of a cultural image based on the optimism and dynamics of an extraordinary economic success (Iida, 2002, 7). Japanese economic success culminated in the 1980s with the stable growth of economy and the leading role in important industrial sectors such as hi-tech products and vehicles (Fiori, 2010, 134). However, when the "economic miracle" came crushing down with the bubble economy (*baburu keiki*) at the beginning of the 1990s, the tenets of *nihonjinron* suffered a great deal and cultural analyses tended to fade (Hein, 2008, 460).

4. New forms of nationalism: from cultural to brand nationalism

The 1990s represented a critical moment for Japanese nationalism. Economic crisis hit the country as a consequence of a mechanism that was set in motion with the 1985 Plaza accords (Iida, 2002, 215). The economic bubble made prices grow so fast that it was impossible for Japanese economy to keep up. It was a critical moment for both economy and politics with the LPD struggling to maintain its position and under the necessity to form, for the first time in decades, a political alliance with the opposition (Fiori, 2010). The economic crisis delivered a blow to the self-confidence of Japanese economic and political elite that was build around economic success of the previous years (Matsui, 2014, 83). Established views on political and sociocultural systems were endangered as well as their main validating factor waned (Iida, 2002, 210). It became increasingly clear that the celebratory stance of Japanese economic success could no longer be employed in a theoretical apparatus that sustained ideas of uniqueness and values that had their roots in the 1980s cultural nationalism. Deprived of their explanations for success and of the validity of the previously established ideological framework Japanese political and economic elites realized, now more than ever, what a globalized world meant. Bauman (2005, 26) argued that in a globalized world the agent was subject to forces that expose its vulnerability and the instability of its situation. This was true especially in concomitance with the absence of a framework or a structure that could give a sense of order. The chaotic and indeterminate character of globalized space hit hard on a system that had lost its most powerful form of determination. In nationalism, too, the effects of an acceleration in globalization put a strain on previous discourse. Cultural nationalism in the 1980s had as its main validating factor and alleged proof the economic success of the country (Yoshino, 1992; Befu, 2001). With the economic downturn cultural nationalist discourse knew a phase of crisis and it seemed that it would progressively disappear (Hein, 2008, 460). However, after a short period of silence, nationalist theorists started again to give voice to new theories.

4.1 The reprise of nationalism

Nationalist discourse had to adapt in order to address the changes that the new decade had brought. In particular, it faced the necessity to give an answer to the new globalized reality. The nation was proposed as the means to put order in a chaotic environment and reconstitute a unit to which individuals could align. At the same time, nationalist explanations aimed at addressing the fragmentation of the subject in the new globalized reality (Iida, 2002, 245).

The ideas of an influent politician of the time, Ozawa Ichirō, represent an example of how the recovery of the nation was enacted in the political environment. In 1993 he left the LDP and published his book *Nihon kaizō keikaku* (Blueprint for a New Japan) in which he stated that "Japan" would need to act as a "normal country" (Doak, 2007, 269). The project was aimed at creating a new form of aggregation around the state and help it recover from the economic crisis. Ozawa pointed at the necessity for the Japanese state to become a "normal" nation. Normalcy was defined through two main criteria. The first was the active participation of the Japanese state to the international community to shoulder part of the responsibilities that were considered as "normal" in that environment (Ozawa, 1994, 94). The second was to cooperate with other nations in their effort to build a prosperous life for their people (Ozawa, 1994, 95). Ozawa's idea of a "normal nation" was deeply linked with the ideological framework of methodological nationalism. Regarding the international environment as one in which almost only the nation as a unit of distinction was clearly a way to align to this framework (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003). At the same time, the project had as a constituting factor the importance of the individual citizen. It was a clear hint towards a politics for the implementation of welfare. The emphasis on welfare was part of the political climate in those years as a response to the globalized environment (Martell, 2011, 224). Nevertheless, putting so much emphasis on the individual was symptomatic of another, and more subtly expressed, objective of Ozawa's blueprint. It was an attempt to constitute a new form of social participation to the nation and engender a form of civic nationalism that could constitute the organizing factor in response to the uncertainty of the international environment (Doak, 2007, 270). Ozawa structured his book as a response to a sense of anxiety and to the "strain" that Japanese society was living due to the economic crisis (Ozawa, 1994, 155). In so doing, he reproduced the established view of "Japan" as an inadequate or controversial entity that had been discussed with the postwar period (Hein, 2008). Moreover, it did so by aligning once again with the framework of Occidentalism. Ozawa clearly took as an example the U.S. and Europe as what to be considered as a "normal" nation. This idea of normalcy showed how Japanese intellectuals were still influenced by the auto-Orientalist stance that was present in

nihonjinron even after the theoretical assumptions of cultural nationalism were less considered than before (Yoshino, 1992; Iwabuchi, 2002). Ozawa's work acted a recovery of the nation as a means of aggregation and put more emphasis than before on the individual. It represented a political stance towards the recovery of nationalism as an important aggregating factor. This trend resounded in other formulations of nationalism at the time as well.

Other theorists too participated in the reprise of nationalist discourse in the 1990s. A new group of theorists of nationalism joined the debate over the nation in those years. Insisting that the all-encompassing market logic and the conditions of a globalized world were creating a disruption in the individual they portrayed the nation as the element that could create aggregation. These 'neo-nationalists' promoted a new idea of the nation as a remedy for the disruption of the individual (Iida, 2002, 252). Authors such as Fujioka Nobukatsu and Katō Norihiro advocated the necessity of a recovery of elements of previous nationalism that could help rebuild the shattered "Japanese" identity. An example of their activity was the institution in 1996 by Fujioka of the Society for History Textbooks Reform *Atarashii rekishi o tsukurukai*. The group was created to reinvigorate patriotic sentiments and acted through the revision and publication of history textbooks. They attempted to reverse what they saw as a "masochistic" view of history and promote nationalism to the youth so as to better their moral fabric (Nishino, 2010, 98). They were critics of what they believed were excessive concessions by Japanese authorities to apologize for wartime aggression. Moreover, they saw patriotic sentiment as the key to repair the disrupted link between the subject and society (Iida, 2002, 245). Stricter control and discipline were the methods that they advocated in order to enhance the level of academic ability of the students and to educate them to "love Japan" (Sugimoto, 2010, 155). The *Tsukurukai* aligned with Ozawa's idea of a "normalcy" that made the nation an extremely important means of aggregation. It was a return to the perceived necessity of a strong national unity to answer new global conditions. It is important to notice, however, that in their recovery of nationalism these theorists engendered also a recovery of previously established ideas of nationalist discourse. Neo-nationalism attempted to rehabilitate a hegemonic social order that had been previously represented by *nihonjinron* (Iida, 2002, 250). Nishino (2010, 108) argued that in history textbooks presented by the *Tsukurukai* the categories employed and ideas expressed remained the same of the ones that were employed in previous formulations of nationalist discourse. Cultural nationalism, even if it was often not directly employed as before, was still an influential framework in the 1990s and maintained its importance into the new millennium (Yoshino, 1992; Iwabuchi, 2002).

However, formulations of nationalism started portraying new elements that were formulated in response to the 1990s economic crisis and to the change in the Japanese state's position in the globalized environment.

In the new discourses about nationalism the nation was shaped as a principle to which the individual could align. It was proposed as a means to give order in the chaotic environment of the globalized reality. In so doing the revival of ideas that were part of previous cultural nationalism and the recovery of a "spiritual community" was enacted (Iida, 2002, 253). Moreover members of the political elite attempted to create a new mechanism of participation in which the individual could feel as part of the nation. It was an attempt to build a civic-nationalism that could make the Japanese state a globally recognized country (Doak, 2007, 271). This constituted an important precedent for brand nationalism. However, symbols needed to be portrayed as effective to create alignment (Bauman, 2005, 208). As such new explanations to sustain the national project were necessary. The Japanese political elite struggled to find suitable explanations that could assume the role of previous economic success. Moreover, the prolonged dire situation of the economic crisis was further aggravated in the new millennium by the rise of other Asian economies, notably China and India, which started to gain more and more international recognition (Fiori, 2010; Revelant, 2015). With the turn of the millennium, the focus would shift on popular culture as a means to enhance national image engendering ‹‹a narcissistic discourse on the global spread of Japanese popular culture›› (Iwabuchi, 2015, 26).

The New Cultural Explanation of nationalism

With the beginning of the Twenty-first century Japanese political elites started recognizing the growing popularity of Japanese popular cultural products abroad. This success was brought about by the new dynamics of the globalized market of culture.

With the acceleration of globalization the unprecedented availability of cultural products and visibility of cultural practices made possible the creation of a transnational space of cultural consumption. Since the 1980s Japanese technological products had known increasing diffusion around the globe (Iwabuchi, 2002; Volpi, 2015). At the same time, Japanese media culture, represented by comics and cartoons started knowing diffusion mainly in Asia. These products shared a "culturally odorless" characteristic that was believed to be

the key to their success. Iwabuchi (2002, 27) defined 'cultural odor' as ‹‹the way in which cultural features of a country of origin and images or ideas of its national, in most cases stereotyped, way of life are associated *positively* with a particular product in the consumption process››. Japanese media culture products did not express these ideas of cultural belonging in an overt way. Instead, a "softening" of bodily, racial and ethnic characteristics was performed in them (Iwabuchi, 2002, 28). It was exactly this absence of specific sense of national belonging that was believed to be at the base of Japanese media culture success. An increase in global cultural flows engendered a process in which foreign cultural products were appropriated and consumed in a wide range of different contexts (Iwabuchi, 2002, 35). The disappearance of any specific sense of belonging of these products made their circulation easy and gave boost to their popularity. At the same time, is also facilitated a process of indigenization of Japanese cultural products. Transnational corporations acted to diffuse such cultural products since it was beneficial to their marketing strategy and created new opportunities in foreign markets (Iwabuchi, 2002; Steger, 2016). At the beginning of the Twenty-first century, the popularity of Japanese media culture was blooming and its effectiveness to bring "made in Japan" products on the global market came to be recognized by the Japanese political elite (Iwabuchi, 2002; Matsui, 2014). It was the beginning of a process that brought these culturally odorless products to be reconnected with a specific national sense of belonging.

The beginning of nation branding

As stated in the first chapter, the acceleration of globalization represented a moment of change for nationalism. Global interconnection institutionalized a new kind of particularism (Robertson, 1995, 38). In the face of extreme fluidity of culture and of information the necessity to delimitate space to give order engendered a tribalism in which belonging and exclusion were articulated (Bauman, 2005, 250). Nationalism played into this framework and proposed the nation as the keeper of tradition and pure, unaltered, culture. However, accepting the role of the nation articulated in this manner meant to willingly ignore the potential expressed in the formulation of new, hybrid forms of culture (Iwabuchi, 2002, 39). This was exactly what happened with Japanese media culture. The influence of Nye's soft power theory about the change in the exercise of power and the recognition of the importance in international politics to convey an attractive national image brought national theorists to look

for new possibilities to portray the nation in a positive, and more effective way. Japanese political elites were no exception. In particular it was the visibility and popularity of Japanese media culture that provided the perfect opportunity for the creation of a new national strategy. In 2002 Douglas McGray published an influential article about Japanese cultural power in the world. Defining it as 'Japanese Cool' McGray (2002, 47) argued that Japanese pop-culture was creating a new kind of "cultural" power that could boost the country to become even more influent than it was in the 1980s. The article clearly portrayed the Japanese state as a cultural superpower that ‹‹possess(ed) a vast reserve of potential soft power›› (McGray, 2002, 54). This potential "reserve" of soft power exactly the kind of opportunity that Japanese political elites were looking for to reinvent Japanese national image and prompted a wide scope of reactions.

As a reaction to McGray's article Japanese political elites started to discuss a new version of nationalism. The "Japan Cool" thesis began circulating and was included in texts such as *Nihonhatsu aitto kakumei ajia ni hirogaru japan kūru* (IT Revolution from Japan: Japan Cool Spreading over Asia, Okuno, 2004) and *Nihon no poppu powā: sekai o kaeru contentsu no jitsuzō* (Japan's Pop Power: the True Image of Contents that Change the World, Nakamura and Onouchi, 2006) and many others (Matsui, 2014, 84). Behind this interest in Japan Cool was the idea that it could be useful for the implementation of a cultural diplomacy that could empower Japanese political position abroad. Japanese political elite recognized the potential of pop-culture products in a moment in which other means of obtaining political influence and economic power were at dire straits (Matsui, 2014, 93). The 1990s economic downturn and the consequent disruption of established cultural nationalism left a void in formulations of nationalist discourse. The global dissemination of animation and computer games represented an opportunity to create a renewed national image that could be beneficial to foreign policy and domestic formulations of nationalism. However, in order to be able to harness this opportunity it was necessary to confer a specific Japanese character to these cultural products (Iwabuchi, 2002, 31). Thus, a form of culture that had been previously stigmatized and dismissed as of scarce relevance became, instead, a pillar in the formulation of the new trend of a branded form of nationalism to which Japanese political elite strived to align (Matsui, 2014, 92). A new political line that openly promoted Japanese media culture as an important part of Japanese "national" culture started being implemented. In 2002 the Japanese government started working on a new national policy based on intellectual property focusing, in particular, on the popularity of anime and manga. Prime Minister Koizumi

Jun'ichirō (2001 – 2006) and his cabinet started promoting a line in which Japan was to be considered as an intellectual property-based nation (Daliot-Bul, 2009, 251). The "Cool Japan" campaign represented the nation branding campaign the government employed in order to obtain soft power. Japanese pop-culture started to be part of an effort to redefine national image and produce an effective national brand to foster Japanese economic and political influence over the world (Miyake, 2015, 104). At the beginning of the Twenty-first century the idea of a national brand as constructed in the same way companies do began circulating (Aronczyk, 2013, 4). The discussion on the necessity to restructure the nation as a competitive unit of cultural exchange was widespread as the dynamics of globalization brought established views of the nation-state were in crisis (Martell, 2011; Aronczyk, 2013; Steger, 2016). Following this trend, the Japanese government was looking for a new spearhead to promote its political and economic goals abroad. The popularity of Japanese media contents proved to be a viable alternative in the attempt to brand the nation.

Structure of the Chapter and Methodology

The present chapter will focus on Japanese nation branding in the hope to provide an overview of the branding process and to discuss ideas and phenomena expressed in it. In describing the procedure employed by nation branding consultants Aronczyk (2013, 68) proposes four different phases of the branding process: evaluation (of national image), training, identification (of the core idea), and implementation/communication (or living the brand). The next part of the chapter will focus on these four phases in order to portray Japanese nation branding the processes and ideas contained in it. First with evaluation the analysis will focus on the formulation of national image at the beginning of the branding process in order to establish which were the elements that were present in it. Second, the analysis will focus on the process that brought the brand into being with the creation of specific agencies for the national brand and with the diffusion of the branding action to existing ministries and government agencies. Third, the core idea behind the branding process and ideas connected to it will be analyzed. Last, the new forms of participatory culture will be analyzed in order to provide an idea of how the Japanese national brand works and what mechanisms it engendered in individual participation.

4.2 Evaluation

The first step to establish a national brand is the evaluation of the perceptions of the nation by both foreign and domestic audiences and of the elements of the current national identity (Aronczyk, 2013,69). In the case at hand, both the perception of and the elements constituting Japanese national identity at the beginning of the Twenty-first century were deeply influenced by three major factors: *nihonjinron*, previous internationalization programs and the 1990s re-evaluation of media cultural goods. In earlier formulations of cultural nationalism economic explanation represented the validating factor for nationalist discourse. Already in the 1990s the image of Japan as a strong economy had been undermined (Iida, 2002, 209; Hein, 2008, 460). However, many of the elements that constituted the image of Japanese economy abroad retained their appeal, and the Japanese state still maintained worldwide economic influence (Iwabuchi, 2002, 23). Moreover, Japanese cultural image had gained in popularity in the 1990s and was showing signs of growth thanks to the increase in Japanese pop-culture consumption especially under the guise of anime and manga (Daliot-Bul, 2009, 250; Lee, 2012; Matsui, 2014). In this climate, ideas of national distinctiveness were articulated around a mixture of new and old cultural elements which came to form Japanese national image at the beginning of the 2000s.

Influence of established cultural nationalism

Although *nihonjinron* was mainly a phenomenon of the 1970s and 1980s, ideas expressed in it still maintained influence in formulation of Japanese identity. First of all, the focus of the contrastive dynamics between "Orient" and "Occident", or "East" and "West", maintained its importance in the Twenty-first century (Miyake, 2014, 131). However, there has been a change in how this structure influenced formulations of Japanese national identity. Iwabuchi (2015, 51) argued that it was no longer possible for Japanese discourse on national identity to effectively use the power of the ‹‹Orientalist gaze for the affirmation of Japan's high, an unique, international standing››. Nevertheless, new, more subtle ways of exploiting national image were employed. It will not be the purpose of this section to go through all of the ideas formulated in *nihonjinron* which continued in later national cultural formulations. It will suffice to give a few examples of how previous formulations of cultural nationalism

influenced Japanese national image in the 2000s to show how *nihonjinron* influenced the creation of the Japanese national brand.

As stated in the previous chapter, *nihonjinron* helped in the construction of Japanese international image through the use of different media, ranging from literature, to business practice and consumer goods (Befu, 2001; Yoshino, 1992). An example is how Japanese technology played an important role in the diffusion of Japanese culture abroad. The image of Japanese enterprises as leaders in hi-tech and robotics was widespread in the 1980s (Fiori, 2010; Volpi, 2015). This image persisted in the 1990s and into the Twenty-first century (Šabanović, 2014, 343). Transnational corporations based on Japanese soil were still held in high regard around the world (Iwabuchi, 2002; Volpi, 2015). Big corporations such as Mitsubishi, Toyota, Sony and many more maintained their role as part of a hi-tech national image and contributed to maintain it. Another idea that resounded in the 2000s cultural nationalism is that of Japanese national culture as one of immemorial tradition. *Nihonjinron* had promoted a de-historicizing image of Japanese culture and society and had connected it with the idea of "true" Japanese culture (Yoshino, 1992; Iida, 2002; Oguma, 2002). Traditional culture concepts and practices came to exercise an influence in cultural expression of a globalized society and maintained it in the Twenty-first century stressing their influence to the present day (Shibasaki, 2015, 274). Notable examples were the continuation of cultural events based around the tea ceremony or martial arts, images that still maintain their role in the imaginary of Japanese culture around the world (Kōkami, 2015; Iwabuchi, 2015). Traditional culture maintained its importance in conveying national image also during the branding process (Tanigawa, 2016, 47).

Both the image of hi-tech and traditional Japanese culture, as emphasized in *nihonjinron*, came to play a role in the formulation of Japanese national image. The image of a technologically advanced country working for future innovation was paired with the extreme focus on traditional culture and its "essence" in a way that constituted an oxymoron. Miyake (2014, 124) argued that the portrayal of "Japan" as a contradictory reality followed the logic of a double Orientalist stance which engendered a specific form of geocultural order. On the one hand, an Orientalism that cast the country back into an unidentified past as a symbol of immemorial tradition. On the other, a techno-Orientalism that positioned Japanese society into a far away future. Both of these stances pushed the idea of "Japan" into a distant dimension so that it cannot challenge the established position of Euro-American hegemony (Miyake, 2015, 99). The duplicity of a technologically advanced, but extremely traditional,

nation and the ideological framework behind it continued to hold influence into the 2000s. An example is how, often, technological products were presented as the continuation of tradition. Šabanović (2014, 345) argued that Japanese robotic products were often associated with traditional arts and crafts in order to make them be perceived as a continuation of existing cultural practices. At the same time, she highlighted that robots were created by referencing culturally specific notions and often represented the recursion of core cultural models (Šabanović, 2014, 346). Technology appeared to be still deeply connected with cultural theories and in particular with those proposed by the establishment. Much as in *nihonjinron*, traditional culture was presented to be an essential part of contemporary Japanese culture and influence fields such as technology and lifestyle. The Japanese National Tourist Organization (JNTO) website shows how this double face of Japan was accepted and diffused. The main page of visitJapan-europe.jnto.og.jp clearly states: ‹‹Japan: Where Tradition Meets the Future›› and the website offers a video tour of Japan showcasing examples of traditional culture and technological advancement.[7] It is important to notice that this definition of a traditional "essence" was presented as something shared between many different elements of Japanese culture which normally would not have much to do with one another. From sushi, to robots, to artwork and anime the stress was on an essential attractiveness common to all aspects of Japanese culture (Daliot-Bul, 2009, 252). It can be argued that this was a repetition of the cultural explanation advocated by *nihonjinron* in earlier years when business activity, cultural differences and practices and were attributed to the same particularistic cultural explanation (Yoshino, 1992; Befu, 2001; Iida, 2002).

Other ideas of national distinctiveness as portrayed in *nihonjinron* were maintained into the 2000s. The image of Japan as a country of immemorial tradition where nature is respected was maintained. Moreover, the link between new and old forms of culture was stressed in the formulation of an all-encompassing definition of Japanese national culture. Harmony, hospitality and the ability to absorb the best out of other cultures and reinvent it in a specific "Japanese" manner were defined as characteristics of Japanese society (Daliot-Bul, 2009). It can be argued that earlier formulations of cultural nationalism, represented by selected elements that were adopted from the past of nationalist discourse, left a mark in Japanese national image and, as it will be shown later, were included in the construction of Japanese national brand. It is important to remember, however, that these elements were the

[7] Link to the main page: https://visitjapan-europe.jnto.go.jp/en

expression of a particular, and often essentialist, idea of culture which entwined with political interest (Tanikawa, 2016, 50).

From international to global

Internationalization programs and efforts from earlier administrations in the 1980s also constituted an important precedent for the development of national image in the Twenty-first century. As stated in the previous chapter, internationalization (*kokusaika*) was an important part of the political agenda in the 1980s. Prime ministers Ōhira and Nakasone clearly advocated for internationalization in an attempt to promote Japanese national image abroad (Iida, 2002; Fiori, 2010; Uemura, 2012). Uemura (2012, 117) argued that internationalization efforts in the 1980s and the beginning of international humanitarian aid programs could be interpreted as the prodromes of the soft power policies of the following years. It was an alignment to the trend to consider national space as a valuable resource in the competition for FDI, trade and tourism (Aronczyk, 2013, 3). Soft power became the center of attention in the 2000s amidst the further acceleration of globalization (Daliot-Bul, 2008, 248; Iwabuchi, 2015, 14). In this context, the focus shifted from the keyword international (*kokusai*) to global (*gurōbaru*) (Iwabuchi,2015, 50).

The idea to train internationalists who could foster national image was at the center of Ohira's and Nakasone's international policy (Cazdyn, 1995; Fiori, 2010; Uemura, 2012). This project was implemented through a series of programs that involved a variety of areas ranging from tourism, to business, to education. The promotion of a cultural understanding of Japan through business was common in the 1980s (Yoshino, 1992,122; Befu, 2001). In education, too, international programs to promote Japanese culture were implemented. A notable example was the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program whose objectives were reformulated as ‹‹the advancement of international exchange […] and the promotion of mutual understanding between Japan and other nations›› (Cazdyn, 1995, 139). It is important to notice that the JET program is still active nowadays and promotes "inter-national" cultural exchange. These internationalization programs were reformulated under the new keyword of globalization. With the acceleration of globalization further attention was given to information shared and ideas promoted within these programs, all while further accentuating the participatory element in them (Uemura, 2012,143).

Increasing globalization meant that sharing information became crucial in the development of national image (van Ham, 2001; Aronczyk, 2013). At the same time, the globalized environment became more complex to decipher as flows of capital, people and media accelerated (Iwabuchi, 2015, 50). This complexity, added to the instability of Japanese economy, contributed to the diffusion of a sense of instability (*fuantei*) (Uemura, 2012, 136). As stated in chapter one, the response to the ever-shifting figure of the global was to promote the nation as a keeper of national culture and promote cultural exchange through the framework of 'container thinking' (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003; Iwabuchi, 2015). Internationalization programs played an important role in this development. Cultural exchange was, once again, proposed as exchange between national cultures in an attempt to put order in the complexity of a globalized world. The idea of a Japanese nation was constructed through elements of established cultural nationalism and promoted with both public diplomacy and international exchange programs. It was the confirmation of what Zigmunt Bauman (1925 – 2017) called the 'politics of certainty' that is the social confirmation of the choice in the face of a plurality of possible models (Bauman, 2005, 212). Globalization further exacerbated the need for a clear categorization of the world. In matters of nationalism this development emphasized the "universal" characteristic of national culture. Methodological nationalism essentialized national culture and made it the preferred means of comparison of cultural differences (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003; Iwabuchi, 2015). As a response to increasing globalization, national cultures were normalized and proposed as positive units that represented positive cultural traits that could be useful to everyone. This, in turn, emphasized the importance of public diplomacy as a tool to portray the nation in a positive way (Nye, 2008). The national brand idea was clearly constructed with this ideological framework in mind (Aronczyk, 2013, 5; Iwabuchi, 2015, 13).

Pop-Culture as a Source of Coolness

Another element that came to form Japanese national image at the beginning of the 2000s was the increasing international popularity of Japanese media culture. With the 1980s, the significance of Japanese culture on the international scene began attracting wider attention (Iwabuchi, 2002, 23). Increasing globalization also meant an increasing circulation of and visibility for Japanese popular culture. Although increasing popularity of Japanese anime and

manga was already recognized in the 1990s, it was with the 2000s that Japanese culture started to be considered increasingly involved with the popular in a way that was not even considered before (McLelland, 2017, 6). Japanese media culture produced a significant effect on national image.

With the 2000s it became increasingly clear that Japanese popular culture could play a significant role in the formulation of nationalism and national image (Park, 2016, 17). Moreover, McGray's article produced an acceleration in the recognition of Japanese media culture as significant. The impact of Japanese media culture on the global cultural environment started to be recognized by the Japanese government (Matsui, 2014, 84). "Cool Japan" became the new catchphrase of the moment and Japanese national image started to be influenced by the circulation and popularity of media cultures. It is important to notice that many of such pop-culture products actually knew diffusion and popularity thanks to their addressing cultural elements and themes often disapproved by authority figures (McLelland, 2017, 6). The transformation of Japanese media products into valuable national cultural assets was not possible on the basis of just preexisting works that were often in contrast with ideas proposed by the government and poorly considered by political elites (Matsui, 2014, 92). Only the realization that they could convey a sense of "distinctiveness" of Japanese culture did make them participate in the formulation of national image (Iwabuchi, 2002, 30). Japanese media culture contained elements of Japanese everyday life and produced the involuntary effect of conveying them to the world. It was the focus on exploiting such characteristic that later made them become part of a strategy to enhance the Japanese state's soft power (Iwabuchi, 2010, 90).

Defining Japanese National Image at the Beginning of the Branding Process

Japanese national image at the beginning of the branding process was influenced by earlier formulations of national distinctiveness. This process showed how nationalism changed through the years but maintained its theoretical foundations. Cultural specific distinctiveness was still being conveyed through ideas formulated in *nihonjinron*. Melissa Aronczyk (2013, 69) indicated that the evaluation of existing national image was usually conducted by making reference to public opinion interviews and surveys. It makes sense, then, that *nihonjinron* ideas were deeply involved in the creation of Japanese national brand. *Nihonjinron* itself was

a form of intellectual hegemony which was diffused to all levels of Japanese society (Yoshino, 1992; Befu, 2001). With the 2000s internationalization kept being promoted as an exchange between national cultures and was promoted through cultural exchange programs. Container thinking engendered a renewed focus on difference as a validating argument even if it did so by masquerading it as cross-cultural exchange and promoted cooperation (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003; Iwabuchi, 2015). At the same time, an increase in global pop-culture consumption highlighted how Japanese national image could be influenced by media cultures and especially by contents such as anime and manga which were knowing unprecedented diffusion not only in Asia but also in America and Europe (Iwabuchi, 2002; Lee, 2012; McLelland, 2017). Japanese national image was undergoing change in the 2000s. A mixture of old and new elements cooperated in the formulation of a "Japanese Cool" that was going to be formulated and diffused later as composed of pop-culture, hi-tech and traditional culture (Kōkami, 2015, 18).

4.3 Training

The second step in nation branding is that of the creation of a working party to implement the national brand (Aronczyk, 2013, 72). According to Aronczyk (2013, 73) nation branding consultants stated that the efforts to create a sound and effective national brand cannot fall only into the hands of the government. In the case of Japanese national brand this factor was expressed in the creation of different agencies with specific purposes under the control of governmental ministries. Since 2002 Japanese political elite started paying attention to the possibilities of what McGray (2002, 48) defined as 'Japanese cool' and to the advantages of making use of the popularity of Japanese media culture abroad (Matsui, 2014, 82; Daliot-Bul, 2009, 248; Iwabuchi, 2015, 28). The following years saw efforts towards the definition of the Japanese nation as based upon intellectual property. It was a crucial moment in the construction of Japanese national brand.

"Japan" as an Intellectual Property-Based Nation

Prime minister Koizumi's administration made efforts to boost the importance of intellectual property for the Japanese state. The publication of the Intellectual Property Strategy Outline (*Chiteki zaisan senryaku taikō*) in 2002 signaled the beginning of this phenomenon (Daliot-Bul, 2009; Matsui, 2014). Recognizing the importance of harnessing the potential of Japanese media culture the government strived for making it part of its national strategy. In 2003 Koizumi addressed directly popular cultural products in an official meeting for the first time (Matsui, 2014, 86). From this moment onward Japanese ministries strived to create a national strategy based upon intellectual property.

It can be argued that the focus on intellectual property was a move towards accepting that Japanese enterprises and media culture held influence over how national image could be conveyed. Behind this move was the idea that popular and good quality products were a source of soft power (Uemura, 2012, 27). Therefore, private involvement in the form of international enterprises and media culture producers were deemed to be the key to produce an effective brand for the nation. As stated before, in the 1980s transnational corporations were involved in spreading particularistic formulations of Japanese culture around the world (Yoshino, 1992; Cazdyn, 1995). With the 1990s economic downturn this phenomenon did not end. On the contrary, big corporations maintained their visibility and reputation. In the face of increasing globalization transnational corporations gained influence and economic power in that they came to be the major economy force in operation (Martell, 2011, 226). This, in turn, meant that the state needed to shape its economy in order to make it attractive for the capital (Aronczyk, 2013; Steger, 2016). The Japanese state was no exception. However, the focus, this time, was not on Japanese economic competitiveness, an aspect that, in the wake of the failure of the bubble economy, was exposed to much uncertainty in domestic and foreign perception (Daliot-Bul, 2009, 251). It was the recognition that products from Japanese corporations could represent the ideal of a "Japanese" way of living that made them attractive for the new brand program (Iwabuchi, 2002; 2015; Uemura, 2012) .

The Intellectual Property Strategy was, however, mainly meant to harness the potential of pop-culture products and media contents to promote national image (Daliot-Bul, 2009, 250; Matsui, 2014, 86). In 2004, the publication of the Intellectual Property Strategic Program (*Chiteki zaisan suishin keikaku*) highlighted the new direction of the branding project. The document had a whole section dedicated to the regulation of "content business" in which different aspects of media cultures were tackled. The beginning of the section stated:

> The media contents of our country (films, music, anime, videogames and so on…) are being received positively throughout the world. However, until now it cannot be said that the parties involved have made combined efforts for the promotion of content business under a *common idea*. […] Content business […] is not just expected to become an attractive factor for the economy of our country but also to play a major role in the *improvement of our country's image (i.e. soft power) and to become an important sector in the development of the national strategy*. (Intellectual Property Strategy Headquarters, 2004, 78)[8]

Koizumi's cabinet believed that Japanese media culture was to be considered a central aspect in the development of Japanese national image and consequently of Japanese national brand. It is important to notice that the promotion of content business was believed to be implemented under a "common" direction. It can be argued that this was an explicit move towards state intervention into cultural production processes (Daliot-Bul, 2009, 249). It became increasingly clear that state involvement in cultural production was connected to specific interests to foster national image and, moreover, to portray a "specific" type of culture and propose it through an official "cultural policy" (Iwabuchi, 2015, 35). Moreover, this cultural policy moved in the direction of creating a national brand that could represent "Japan" to the eyes of the world. Highlighting that Japan was going to become an intellectual property-based nation was part of an effort to reproduce and further enhance a "specific" Japanese national image and to bring it under governmental control (Daliot-Bul, 2009; Iwabuchi, 2015). This national image, as analyzed in the previous section, was build on past cultural nationalism assumptions and the new, successful elements of Japanese media culture.

A joint action in different fields

The promotion of a national image that can increase a country's soft power is a joint effort of many agencies that operate in different sectors (Uemura, 2012, 31; Aronczyk, 2013, 73). The construction of Japanese national brand followed this course by extending its branding process into different areas. Various ministries and newly built agencies connected to them were involved in the branding process and in the consequent spreading of the national brand. Notable examples are the involvement of the Ministry of Economy Trade and Industry (METI) and of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) in the branding process (Daliot-Bul,

[8] My translation. Emphasis added.

2009; Uemura, 2012; Matsui, 2014; Iwabuchi, 2015). The focus on intellectual resources brought about a process in which the newly built national brand integrated political and economic objectives under the catchphrase of Cool Japan (Iwabuchi, 2015, 26).

The Japanese government embraced the idea that the exportation of media cultures could bring economic benefit (Iwabuchi, 2015, 29). It can be argued, however, that this decision was taken in concomitance with a specific political position. The 2004 Intellectual Property Strategy Program reported that media culture industry contributed only to less than 2% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Intellectual Property Strategy Headquarters, 2004, 78). Nevertheless, political action to improve this situation was taken. In 2001 a new division for the regulation of media and content industry under the control of METI had already been implemented (Matsui, 2014, 87). This division was further developed in the following years and started focusing on creating a unity in this industry (Matsui, 2014, 88). It can be argued that the Koizumi administration purposely pushed in the direction of supporting governmental control over the media content industry (Daliot-Bul, 2009; Matsui, 2014). As stated before, the lack of viable alternatives in a period of economic crisis was a main driving factor behind this choice.

Efforts for promoting content business as a vital part of Japanese economy continued in the next years. METI cooperated with the Japan Business Federation (JBF), which represents Japanese big corporations, in order to make entertainment companies be accepted into the organization (Matsui, 2014, 88). It was a move made in order to make Japanese content industry be recognized and further integrate it into the Japanese economic system. From that moment on, Cool Japan became part of the Japanese economic strategy. In 2010 METI established the Cool Japan promotion office with the purpose to let the charm of Japanese culture be spread to the world (Iwabuchi, 2015, 29). It became increasingly clear that content industries, later renamed creative industries, were becoming more and more integrated into Japanese economic policies (Uemura, 2012, 30). In 2013 METI established the Cool Japan Fund (*Kūru japan kikō*) with the purpose of spreading "Japanese" culture as a whole to the world. The main page of the Cool Japan Fund website clearly states that its purpose is to foster demand for Japanese products and services which represent the "attractiveness of Japan"[9]. The project distinguishes between four different areas: media and content, food and services, fashion and lifestyle and inbound (i.e. FDI). This diversity of

[9] https://www.cj-fund.co.jp

products and services is symptomatic of how Cool Japan policy was spread to many different areas that could be useful for the construction of the national brand. It can be argued that the Cool Japan policy was implemented by operating in two major areas. The first is content business or media cultures. The visibility that anime, manga and other pop cultural products brought was recognized and exploited for the creation of the national brand (Daliot-Bul, 2009; Iwabuchi, 2015; Park, 2016). The second was the area of lifestyle-based business. The Cool Japan brand promoted a specific "Japanese" lifestyle, which included elements of traditional culture, food, fashion and technology, that was proposed as embodying the values of the Japanese nation and believed to enhance national attractiveness (Daliot-Bul, 2009; Uemura, 2012; McLelland, 2017). Established views of culture were reiterated and exploited in the creation of Japanese national brand. Areas such as food culture and practices such as the tea ceremony, which already had appeal abroad, were particularly fit for the task and were selected for the creation of an attractive brand (Tanigawa, 2016, 48). The Japanese national brand was constructed so as to convey a particularistic cultural image which was allegedly connected to a specific lifestyle and to commodities. These commodities were then spread by the activities of transnational corporations. The cultural image portrayed in Japanese national brand was applied to different sectors from business to cultural programs.

Another ministry that was deeply involved in the creation of the national brand was MOFA. In foreign politics the national brand was created as an instrument of cultural diplomacy. In 2004 the ministry integrated two sections, one dedicated to cultural diplomacy and the other to international cultural exchange, into the Public Diplomacy Department (*Kōhō bunka gaikō bu*) in alignment with the new governmental directives (Iwabuchi, 2015, 29). It must be remembered that nation branding is a communication strategy that aims at fostering an attractive national message or image (Aronczyk, 2013, 16). Therefore, international relations and foreign policy are key to its implementation. As early as the branding process was implemented, MOFA took the role of main communicator abroad of the new national brand. The idea to convey was that Japanese national image had been vital to the country's economy and social system. However, after the 1990s economic downturn and the consequent crisis, that same image was creating negative perceptions of the Japanese state abroad and needed to be changed (Mstsui, 2014, 89). The focus, this time, was on Japan's potential resources (i.e. cultural products). In 2006 MOFA adopted "pop-culture diplomacy" as its main tool for promoting the Japanese state abroad (Iwabuchi, 2015, 29). At the same time, a series of exchange programs and cultural initiatives to promote Japanese culture abroad were

implemented. A notable example was Asō Tarō's (at the time the Minister of Foreign Affairs) effort to promote pop-culture events. The International Manga Awards, established in 2007, well exemplified how Asō believed in the positive effect that Japanese media content could have on national image.[10] In the following years, MOFA continued to support the use of popular Japanese media to foster national image and create an effective national brand. In 2008 the ministry made use of well known manga and anime character Doraemon to portray Japanese media culture as part of its public diplomacy. The anime character was nominated Cultural Ambassador of anime (Matsui, 2014, 90; Miyake, 2014, 137). MOFA kept increasing its efforts to make use of creative industries to foster Japanese image. The efforts comprised sponsoring international exhibitions, conferences and personalities connected to Japanese creative industries (Daliot-Bul, 2009, 255).

Another important element in public diplomacy was the promotion of cultural exchange programs (Uemura, 2012, 30). Exchange programs were promoted on the trace of previous internationalization attempts but incorporated the newly built national brand. Many of those programs continue to be active at the moment. Looking at MOFA's website the section on public diplomacy clearly displays an interest in promoting culture and related activities. The section's introduction states that culture has become an important sector for the country's foreign policy on par with politics and economy and its relevance has been increasing.[11] It also underlines the importance of cultural exchange between people of different cultural backgrounds in order to build a relationship of trust (*shinrai*) between different countries and people. MOFA contributed to the creation and diffusion of the Japanese national brand and continues to make it part of its public diplomacy efforts. The Japanese national brand, however, was implemented also in other areas.

One of the areas in which the national brand was exploited was tourism. The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) created in 2002 the Visit Japan Campaign also known as *Yōkoso Japan* (Matsui, 2014, 90). This campaign is exemplificative of how public and private sectors were involved in the creation of Japanese national brand. Aronczyk (2013, 72) argued that nation branding consultants saw private sector involvement as key in the branding process. The Visit Japan Campaign saw the cooperation of governmental tourism operations, such as the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO),

[10] The International Manga Awards continues to be an event sponsored by MOFA. Link to the event page: https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/culture/exchange/pop/manga/index.html
[11] https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/culture/koryu/index.html

and private enterprises such as airline companies, hotels and travel agencies.[12] It was representative of how state involvement with transnational enterprises was one of the preferred practices to invigorate the state's economy (Cazdyn, 1995; Martell, 2011; Aronczyk, 2013). The Japanese national brand also participated in the creation of an attractive image for tourists by fostering national image and culture through the presentation of traditions, food, pop-culture and other areas involved in the branding process. An interesting development was how national brand and culture were involved in the support and promotion of smaller localities. In 2006 MLIT conducted a research on the possibility of using anime to foster international tourism to smaller regions (Matsui, 2014, 91). Similar practices were brought out in different areas on the Japanese territory where anime characters were used in the promotion of local tourism. A notable example was the use of characters from the anime *Girls und Panzer* (*Gāruzu ando pantsā*) for the 2013 Ibaraki prefecture governor's election and the subsequent use of the same characters as mascot in the promotion of the region (Sudō, 2016, 150). Another one was represented by the many different mascot of sport events in Japan. Some of the latest were the use of Pikachu and Astroboy (*Tetsuwan Atomu*) as icons for the candidacy of Japan as hosting the 2016 Olympics (Miyake, 2014, 137) and the more recently spoiled mascots for the 2020 Olympics *Miraitowa* and *Someity*.[13] The use of anime characters for the promotion of products, services or tourism became widespread with governmental recognition of the increasing importance of Japanese media culture (Miyake, 2014; Matsui, 2014). Japanese media culture continues to play an important role in the promotion of national image today. The report about Cool Japan policy of METI clearly shows how anime characters were used as part of the Japan Localization and Promotion Program (J-LOP) which aims to promote local Japanese media contents. Anime characters are first selected, connected to a specific locality and then used in promoting that given locality to the world (METI, 2018, 11). The initiative is a project of the Visual Industries Promotion Organization which was founded in 2005 to promote Japanese content business and combines the directives of government policies with private companies.[14]

Japanese nation branding involved a wide range of different areas. Public diplomacy, tourism and business were notable examples. Education too was involved. The Ministry of Education promoted exchange programs that could foster cross-cultural exchange and give more visibility to Japanese culture around the world (Uemura, 2012, 31). The aforementioned

[12] JNTO: https://us.jnto.go.jp/press/press_item.php?past=0&prid=11
[13] Official mascots for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics: https://tokyo2020.org/en/special/mascot/
[14] Link to VIPO website: https://www.vipo.or.jp/en/about/

JET program was one of such efforts (Cazdyn, 1995). The incredible variety of areas involved and the widespread characteristic of the branding program was a testimony to how the Japanese national brand was envisioned and constructed as a cross-sectorial effort (Daliot-Bul, 2009, 254). Uemura (2012, 31) argued that a necessary characteristic for the success of a project towards the attainment of soft power was the pervasive nature of its construction. In other words, to be effective a national brand must be a joint effort of public and private sector encompassing a variety of different areas useful for the diffusion of the national brand (Aronczyk, 2013).

4. 4 Identifying the "Core Idea"

The third step in nation branding is that of identifying the "core idea" that will become the main point of argumentation and develop a strategy around it (Aronczyk, 2013, 75). In the case of the Japanese national brand it can be argued that this "core" was represented by a particularistic form of national culture (Daliot-Bul, 2009; Iwabuchi, 2015). In a previous section of this chapter the influence of previously established cultural nationalism on Japanese national image in the Twenty-first century was analyzed. It can be argued that the "core idea" of the Cool Japan branding project was represented by an essentialized view of culture that much had to do with previous cultural nationalism (Daliot-Bul, 2009, 260). In other words, ‹‹the process of brand identity is one of essentialism›› (Aronczyk, 2013, 75). The Japanese national brand portrayed the image of "Japan" as a nation whose culture encompassed all aspects of society in a unified "cultural sphere" of defined attributes and rigid boundaries (Sudō, 2016, 157). Although this cultural sphere was proposed as a rigid entity, whose limits were identified with those of the nation, the values that it represented were portrayed as universal and some that could be shared by anyone (Audi, 2009; Iwabuchi, 2015). Universalization, as stated before, was the new process of naturalization that involved the nation in a globalized environment. The Japanese national brand followed this direction by portraying the core idea of a distinctive and particularistic national culture, therefore exclusive in formulation, as part of a universal set of values good for all the "peoples" (i.e. nations) of the world. The core idea of "Japanese" culture was then spread to different areas and diffused to the wider public. The following sections aim to represent a rapid overview of the ideas

included in this cultural "core", many of which have already been tackled in different forms in the previous analysis.

The construction of the "Other" in Cool Japan: a "Harmonious" Relationship

The demarcation of a cultural core necessarily engendered the construction of boundaries and of the idea of otherness. In the Japanese national brand established views of otherness were united with a new form of it.

The first element that constituted otherness in Cool Japan was the definition of a "relevant other". Bearing in mind the influence of previous cultural nationalism on the new Japanese brand, it can be argued that the previously established relevant other was maintained in the new formulation of nationalism. In *nihonjinron* much of the discussion on otherness was build around the essentialized idea of the "West" (Yoshino, 1992; Befu, 2001; Iida, 2002). Cool Japan did not free itself of that influence. The formulation of a new national brand was arguably a response to the popularity of Japanese cultural products in foreign markets. Although in Asia Japanese media culture and consumer technology popularity was already established in the 1980s, it was only with the success of Japanese media culture in the U.S. and in Europe that the government chose to fully embrace Cool Japan (Iwabuchi, 2015, 27). This was symptomatic of the reproduction of a specific ideological framework, that of a renewed auto-Orientalist view that defined "Japaneseness" through the idea of a "Western" gaze (Miyake, 2014, 137) . Thus, even if *nihonjinron* in its most evident expression was passed it still managed to influence ideas contained in the newly established national brand.

Another important element of established views on otherness in the formulation of the Japanese national brand was methodological nationalism. The idea that the world was to be considered as divided in nations and that culture must have followed that trend was visible in the formulation of Cool Japan policies. Cross-cultural encounters were encouraged as an exchange among "national" cultures (Iwabuchi, 2015). The rhetoric of nation branding reproduced the idea of the nation as an integral and homogenous unit that, in matters of cultural exchange, dialogued with other similarly constructed national entities (Aronczyk, 2013, 78). This was true not only in matters of public diplomacy, where the exchange between nations was and still is promoted, but also in other areas as exemplified by the

involvement of different agencies in the branding process. Exchange programs, cultural events and so on contributed not only to the creation of a "specific" form of culture but to the reiteration of a nation-based confrontation and cooperation (Iwabuchi, 2015, 20).

The novelty in the formulation of opposition was represented by the idea that national culture could represent a set of universal values which could be shared with others. The branding process had as an objective the construction of a more attractive and positive national image. As such, it needed to produce symbols that were distinctive, as it was done with national image before, but that could be shared and embraced also by people outside the boundaries of the nation (Aronczyk, 2013, 75). The Japanese national brand often expressed this aspect through putting particular attention to internationalization and promoting the understanding of "Japanese" culture around the world. The focus had changed from earlier formulations of internationalization in which the focus was on to explain the allegedly "unique" and "inaccessible" characteristics of Japanese culture (Yoshino, 1992, Befu, 2001). The branding process, instead, aimed at the creation of an influential national message that could be shared by all and consequently produce soft power (Daliot-Bul, 2009, 258). In this sense, the branding project was constructed as functioning as a joint effort between people from all over the world, fostering national culture from inside and outside the nation (Uemura, 2012, 142). This aspect was implemented by highlighting how hospitality and consideration towards others was one of the traditional features of Japanese society. JNTO-run website japanmeetings.org has as a purpose that of proposing Japanese facilities as location for business meetings and events. In the website section "Why Japan" reasons are proposed ranging from Japanese technological advancement, to the natural features of Japanese territory and the link between a rich tradition and innovation. One of such paragraphs reads:

> Traditional Japanese hospitality is deeply rooted in a culture of courtesy and consideration of others, especially towards visitors. Hospitality remains a key part of Japanese culture today and certainly applies to the meetings and events industry.[15]

That hospitality, driven by a sense of harmony as a basic principle of "Japanese" culture, was one of the characteristics shared by the "Japanese" was an assumption that was diffused by *nihonjinron* in earlier years (Lie, 2001; Befu, 2001; Sugimoto, 2010). This is an example of how earlier formulations of cultural nationalism were instrumental in the creation of the Japanese national brand. Moreover, it is important to notice how this cultural assumption was

[15] https://www.japanmeetings.org/why-japan/reason-to-choose-japan/

linked to a different field, that of business meetings. In a strategic communication maneuver, traditional culture became a validating factor for the field of business practice. Presenting allegedly unique aspects of national culture as valuable assets for people outside the nation was part of the branding process.

In the passage from internationalism to globalism the representation of foreigners remained key to define the boundaries of national culture (Iwabuchi, 2015, 61). This, in turn helped maintaining a formulation of the other that considered the nation as the basic and "normal" unit of social and cultural distinction and promoted a harmonious relationship between nationalities.

From Tradition to the Future

The construction of the new national brand started from the assessment of existing national image. As stated previously, this was build around established views of Japanese culture and, as such, the idea of traditional culture was involved. Because of its established status, traditional culture was an effective and easy to co-opt asset in national promotion (Tanikawa, 2016, 48). The Japanese government, therefore, acted to reproduce successful images of traditional culture into their branding process. Traditional culture was exploited as a validating factor for new forms of culture, notably pop and media culture, which were portrayed as all sharing a link with Japanese tradition that, in a way, ensured their authenticity (Iwabuchi, 2010, 428). Culture, in a particularistic formulation, was used as a link for different areas such as ethnicity, aesthetics, citizenship, economy, progress and more (Daliot-Bul, 2009, 261). It can be argued that in the construction of national image there were two major topics that were overtly presented as a continuation of a particularistic formulation of Japanese cultural tradition: technology and pop-culture.

Technology for the Future

The economic success of 1980s Japan was exemplified by technological innovations that influenced worldwide ideas about hi-tech, electronics and robotics (Fiori, 2010; Volpi, 2015). The 1990s brought widespread pessimism in Japanese society about economic difficulties

(Sugimoto, 2010; Matsui, 2014). However, the image of the country as a high-tech producer and a leader in such areas as robotics was maintained. At the same time, the link between traditional culture and technology that was established with previous cultural nationalism was maintained too. This resulted in the celebration of Japanese technological innovation as a continuation of the country's specificity in culture (Iwabuchi, 2010; Šabanović, 2014). The national branding process exploited the promotion of technological advancement. Traditional culture, however, was involved in the promotion of such technology too. A striking example of the presentation of technological advancement in connection with traditional roots was the 2005 event in which a robot named HRP-2 was portrayed in the act of dancing the Japanese folk dance of *aizu bandaisan* together with a human performer (Šabanović, 2014, 350). The same robot was then involved in other traditional art activities such as martial arts. This arguably signaled an attempt to create the image of a continuation of tradition into new cultural forms. At the same time, however, it represented the efforts to portray robotics in a positive way, and one that could be well received by the public, through the association with familiar cultural forms (Šabanović, 2014, 351). The implicit message was that Japanese technological innovation could be seen as a continuation of traditional values under a new form. As it has been argued previously, the image of Japan was constructed on the controversy of a country of immemorial tradition but extremely technological (Miyake, 2014). In this portrayal, the idea of a rich traditional and "unique" Japanese culture was exploited as a means to set the ideological foundation for future growth and development .

Pop-culture as strictly "Japanese"

Japanese pop-culture started to be at the center of attention for the promotion of national image after the success it obtained in domestic and international environments. Japanese pop-culture started to be recognized by the government as a cultural form that was knowing increasing popularity abroad and that no other country could imitate (METI, 2018, 3). Trying to exploit the popularity of such products became one of the objectives in constructing the image of the nation. In particular it was necessary to bring pop-cultural products out of the "cultural odorless" (*mukokuseki*) atmosphere, that they were usually associated with, and input a more decidedly "Japanese" character into them (Iwabuchi, 2002, 31). This was a tentative to connect such cultural products to a specific lifestyle that represented a

particularistic view of "Japanese" culture. Selected traditional cultural values were brought into the mix in order to try and portray a well defined image of Japanese society. It is important to notice that connection with traditional culture engendered political implications (Tanikawa, 2016, 50). It was the view of Japanese culture promoted by the political elite that was employed in imbuing media culture with a new cultural odor, which consisted in widely disseminated images of national culture (Iwabuchi, 2002; Daliot-Bul, 2009). Governmental associations and ministries backed efforts to promote Japanese media culture abroad and, at the same time, exploit it in domestic environments such as the promotion of tourism (METI, 2018, 3). All these efforts contributed to a specific cultural planning and one that showed that anime, manga and pop-culture products could become part of a specific "cultural sphere" (Sudō, 2016, 157). This cultural sphere was created on the basis of established national culture and exploited in the promotion of an all-encompassing cultural "essence" that could be traced in many different fields. With this background established, Japanese pop-culture and new forms of art or crafts became embodiment of the culture of the future, but one that had deep roots into the image of a "traditional" past. Pop-culture was portrayed as the new form of expression of a well-established Japanese culture in a reassuring move that Cool Japan still represented the same, and familiar to all audiences, cultural tradition (Daliot-Bul, 2009, 254).

Peacekeeping and resilience

A peace-loving nation

In her analysis of nation branding Aronczyk (2013, 76) argued that two of the most common ideas included in nation brand strategies are "normalcy" and "peacefulness". While the idea of normalcy can be said to have been articulated through the new representation of the other, within national boundaries and promoting cooperation, the highlight on peace was part of a different argumentation in the Japanese national brand. The idea of "Japan" as a peace-loving and homogenous nation was already diffused in postwar years mainly to set a contrast with the militarist past of the Japanese Empire (Oguma, 2002, 299). The image of a peaceful "Japan" was maintained in the branding process and contributed to the creation of a positive image of the country. The message of the president of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Kitaoka Shinichi is exemplificative of how this image was maintained:

> For Japan, it is critical to keep peace, stability and prosperity of the world. These are the core elements of Japan's national interest, and that is why international cooperation is essential for Japan to its very existence. (Kitaoka, 2018)[16]

The Japanese government supported the image of Japan as a peaceful country which promoted cooperation between nations. This was not only an alignment to a trend in international politics but also useful in the promotion of the national brand and to foster a positive national image (Van Ham, 2001; Aronczyk, 2013). This effort to promote peace was, however, opposite to the recent efforts to modify the constitution in order for Japan to have its own military, a matter that had been under discussion since the institution of the Self Defense Forces (*jieitai*) (Sugimoto, 2010, 229). Japan's current approach, supported by Prime Minister Abe, has been centered on the objective to defeat aggression as quickly as possible before it enters Japanese territory (Heginbotham and Samuels, 2018). It is clear how this matter represented a controversial move for a country that portrays itself as peace-loving. Nevertheless, the nation branding process chose to retain the image of a peace-loving country for its effectiveness in portraying the Japanese state positively in international politics.

Resilience

Another important theme in the formulation of Japanese national brand was what can be defined as resilience. In 2011 the devastation of the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami and the following incident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant left many parts of the country in a dire situation. The disaster sparked a profound sense of solidarity around the world (Uemura, 2012, 39). In the following years, a new image was added to the national brand. It was the image of "Japan" as a nation whose endurance and strong social cooperation could overcome dire situations and of the country as a leader in disaster prevention and intervention. Part of the Japanese government effort in humanitarian aid was centered around help prevent natural disaster providing expertise ‹‹based on its experiences››.[17] In matters of nation branding the 2011 natural disaster was the beginning of a rhetoric of the "reconstruction" (*fukkō*) that could represent the resilience and endurance of Japanese society (Uemura, 2012, 45). As stated in chapter 2, thrift, endurance and a profound sense of duty

[16] Link to the message: https://www.jica.go.jp/english/about/president/index.html
[17] JICA: https://www.jica.go.jp/activities/issues/disaster/index.html

were characteristics that helped shaping the image of the "Japanese" in cultural nationalism (Garon, 2002). In this sense, it can be argued that this representation was renewed with the formulation of national image in the branding process. Moreover, this sense of "survivalism" was employed in political propaganda to promote the rebuilding of areas hit by the nuclear accident (Sudō, 2016, 160). The Japanese government introduced this concept as a form of ideology that could foster efforts from the population to the rebuilding as well as try to create consensus around the nation (Sudō, 2016, 160). Uemura (2012, 196) argued that *fukkō* could represent a strong concept for obtaining soft power as long as it was portrayed as a value that could be shared and interpreted by anyone. This idea aligned to the promotion of the universal characteristic of national culture which proved useful in the diffusion of the national message. The Japanese government strived to portray the Japanese state as a leader in humanitarian efforts around the world and portraying the country as an example of endurance and disaster prevention.

4.5 Living the Brand

A fundamental part of the branding process is that it must be constructed as a "comprehensive strategy" (Aronczyk, 2013, 77). That is to say, that the active participation of national subjects is key to the success of the national brand. The state reshaped its cultural apparatus as if it were an advertisement section of a company. As such, the importance of "customer" (citizens) satisfaction became key to the success of its initiatives (van Ham, 2001, 6). People were invited to act as cultural ambassadors: to use the national brand in their everyday life and share it with others. This, in turn, encouraged them to confirm a sense of belonging to a particular nation (Iwabuchi, 2015, 18). Governments started to publicize the national brand through support to cultural activities, hosting events and promoting a specific cultural image (Daliot-Bul, 2009; Matsui, 2014; Iwabuchi, 2015). At the same time, the new globalized form of cultural consumption engendered a mechanism of participatory culture in which producers and consumers came to occupy a single role. The rise of international fandom produced a new form of consumption in which fans not only diffused specific media cultures, but also created new formulations of them (Iwabuchi, 2002; Lee, 2012). This also happened through 'transculturation' in which ‹‹the asymmetrical encounter of various cultures result(ed) in the transformation of an existing cultural artifact and the creation of a new style››

(Iwabuchi, 2002, 40). In this globalized, and culturally hybrid, environment the state came to occupy the role of a ‹‹regulatory cultural planning apparatus›› that exerted control over a specific form of national culture and acted to preserve it (Daliot-Bul, 2009, 249). The Japanese national brand was proposed exactly as a national image that embodied a particularistic "core" culture which was connected to specific cultural characteristics. This process was enacted on the line of previous internationalization efforts. A notable example was Prime Minister Nakasone's policy of participatory internationalists (*kokusaijin*) in the 1980s (Cazdyn, 1995; Dalio-tBul, 2009). Participatory culture came to be at the center of the branding project. Cool Japan was created to be shared and diffused by the individuals. The creation of a specific brand identity, however, was never only internally (i.e. domestically) or externally (i.e. internationally) created but always comprised both dimensions (Aronczyk, 2013, 77).

Events

The easier way to make individuals engage with the brand was to diffuse it in public spaces so as to increase the visibility of the selected symbols. In particular public events, such as sport competitions, international conferences and exhibitions proved to be apt for the diffusion of the national brand. As previously stated in chapter 1, national socialization was one of the most effective means for the diffusion of nationalist discourse. The Japanese government enacted a national brand advertising strategy through giving official sponsorship and support to cultural practices and events (Daliot-Bul, 2009, 255).

Some events were specifically dedicated to the promotion of Japanese pop and media culture that, as stated before, came to be an important part of the national brand. An example was the institution by the government in 2007 of the Japan International Contents Festival (now commonly called "CoFesta") (Matsui, 2014, 88). The festival was a project designed to ‹‹enhance the promotional capabilities of Japan's "distinctive" […] content (anime, music, film etc.) […] and content-related industries (fashion, design etc.)››.[18] The event is still going on today on an annual basis. Another example of how pop-culture was promoted was the institution in 2003 of the World Cosplay Summit. The popularity of the practice of cosplay (a word created from a mixture of costume and play) in domestic and international environments

[18]Link to the event's website: https://www.cofesta.go.jp/pc/

brought MOFA to back this initiative in order to attract wide audiences (Matsui, 2014, 89). The event aimed at publicizing Japanese pop-culture. However, it did so by portraying a specific cultural exchange and by implying the specific cultural belonging of the practice. The program was composed by a preliminary phase, in which 20 different "nations" were involved with local events. It can be argued that this event promoted internationalization through the exchange of specific cultural "containers" identified with national cultures. After the preliminary phase was completed, the final phase of the competition was held in Nagoya to determine the victor. The interesting part is how Nagoya gained the appellative of "Holy Land of Cosplay" and in turn "Japan" was described as the "Holy Land of Manga".[19] This represented an example of how a cultural practice could be co-opted in the formulation of a specific national narrative. By portraying the practice to be specific of Japanese society MOFA was not only trying to enhance national visibility abroad but also attempting to portray it as part of a specific form of culture. Governmental sponsorship of popular cultural practices was part of the project of promoting national image and greatly contributed to the diffusion of the national brand (Daliot-Bul, 2009; Iwabuchi, 2015).

Another important part of national socialization were sport events. In particular the Olympics played an important role in the diffusion of nationalist discourse. The 1964 Tokyo Summer Olympics represented an important moment in the reinstatement of previous national symbols (Takeuchi, 2016). Moreover, the event represented the first time a sport event was broadcasted on the radio and TV in a widespread manner. It represented an important precedent in national socialization and an example of how the display of national symbols in popular public events could leave a good impression on the population and consequently foster nationalist discourse (Takeuchi, 2016, 121).

Sport events in the age of brand nationalism still employ the same mechanism to foster the national brand. The 2020 Tokyo Olympics represents an important event in the continuation of the branding effort. The advertisement of the event reproduces some of the cultural elements involved in the formulation of the Japanese national brand. An interesting aspect is how the link with the 1964 Olympics is portrayed as an important legacy for the city of Tokyo and for the country in general. The venue of the event has been divided into a "Heritage Zone", that is to represent the past via a celebration of the 1964 Olympics, and the

[19] The promotion of the Cosplay Summit still makes use of this termonology. An example is well visible on the event's website: http://www.worldcosplaysummit.jp/en/about/

"Tokyo Bay Zone", which is to symbolize the future of the city.[20] Once again the theme of the past/tradition as a foundation for the future/innovation is proposed. Another element that symbolizes cultural ideas contained in the formulation of the national brand is the mascot for the 2020 Olympics. It not only signals the importance of pop-culture in the formulation of Japanese national image but also symbolize the idea of "Japan" as a country that looks at the future. The name of the mascot "Miraitowa", a synthesis of the words for future (*mirai*) and eternity (*towa*) in Japanese, is portrayed as exemplifying "hope" for the people of the world.[21] Another example of how the 2020 Tokyo Olympics are included in a plan to diffuse the branded national image is the TV program "Tokyo Eye 2020" broadcasted on NHK World. The program has as a purpose to promote tourism in the city and portray the best spots for a wide range of activities.[22] In doing so, however, the program reproduces the cultural assumptions contained in the national brand. From asserting the "unique" characteristics of traditional crafts to portray the city as a beacon of light for the future, each episode goes through tourism spots and activities and links them to the specific view on Japanese culture. Moreover, the program always involve the participation of a co-host, usually a foreigner, that walks through the city to discover it. This is one again symptomatic of how the participation of foreigners is an important validating factor for the national brand and the cultural form expressed in it (Iwabuchi, 2015, 61). The program reproduces a form of tourism that is encouraged by the government-backed nationalist view on culture: people of foreign "nationality" that discover the specific characteristics of Japanese society and culture.

Mass Media

Mass media constituted one of the main means of diffusion of cultural nationalism in the past (Befu, 2001). Needless to say, it retains its importance in the diffusion of the national brand. Selected TV programs are still part of an effort to convey specific views on culture and society and often operate through a reproduction of a specific view of cultural difference. Some programs portray cultural difference so as to re-demarcate difference and the concept of the "other" ‹‹so as to subtly turn an intensifying multicultural situation into a multinational spectacle›› (Iwabuchi, 2015, 62). At the same time, the rise of a new mechanism of cultural

[20] Link to the official Tokyo Olympics website: https://tokyo2020.org/en/games/venue/
[21] Official Mascot of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics: https://tokyo2020.org/en/special/mascot/
[22] Link to the program page: https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/tv/tokyoeye2020/about.html

consumption via the internet has further intensified the importance of products and services as marketizable units of culture that constitute a new element in the business of global culture exchange.

One of the programs that set this trend in motion was *Koko ga hen da yo Nihonjin* (That's weird, Japanese people!) a talk show broadcasted from 1998 to 2002. During the program foreigners were prompted to give their view on Japanese sociocultural matters, more often than not in a negative way, and "Japanese" counterparts engaged in the confutation of the foreigner's points. The program was aimed at creating a discussion but it did so by creating an exaggerated and simplified comparison of national cultures (Iwabuchi, 2015, 63). The participation of foreigners to this kind of program gave further recognition to the management of cultural difference through nationality and indirectly gave confirmation to a particular view on Japanese culture making it exclusive. Therefore, this kind of participation reproduced the earlier formulation of Japanese culture as "unique" and difficult to understand for foreigners (Yoshino, 1992; Iwabuchi, 2002; Miyake, 2014). Even with the changes brought by the branding process, foreign participation in this kind of TV programs still contributed to the confirmation of specific views about Japanese culture. A notable example is the program Cool Japan broadcasted in Japanese on NHK BS and in English on NHK World. The program shapes itself as a confrontation with foreigners on what is perceived to be cool about Japanese culture. The assumption is that the definition of cool in Japanese culture is shaped by foreigners (Kōkami, 2015, 12). The description of the program states that culture that is taken for granted by the "Japanese" is perceived as cool or trendy by foreigners.[23] It can be argued that this program reproduces cultural exchange between specific cultural "containers" (i.e. nationalities) and represents an example of how cross-cultural exchange is promoted inside the framework of brand nationalism. In his book about Cool Japan, Kōkami Shōji (2015), the host of the program, clearly states in multiple occasions that cultural confrontation is about "national" cultures. Moreover, the participation of foreigners acts as a validating factor for specific views about Japanese culture. Kōkami (2015, 15) argues that when one gets to know one's country through the eyes of a foreigner it gets to know his country better and ultimately attains a better understanding of himself. Thus, individual identity is connected to national identity and is supported by an established, and essentialist, cultural framework which is then validated by an external gaze.

[23] Description of what is Cool Japan on the NHK website: https://www6.nhk.or.jp/cooljapan/en/about/

This cultural framework is employed also in other media. In particular, with the rise of online communities and growing importance of the internet in the circulation of culture the Japanese national brand started being employed in different ways. METI recognized the importance of online communities and argued for further showcasing of the national brand on social media (METI, 2012, 10). While the ministry established its own social media profiles other subsidiary organizations or independent companies acted through the internet to promote Japanese culture in its branded form. An example of Japanese brand being diffused by a private company is Tokyo Otaku Mode. The description of the company on its website reads:

> Tokyo Otaku Mode™ (TOM) shares with the world the latest Japanese pop culture news through its Facebook page […] and sells products related to Japanese anime, manga, games, music, and fashion through its website [...] TOM strives to be the fastest source for delivering world-famous Japanese pop culture content around the globe. [24]

The organization operates through social media to diffuse Japanese culture, mostly in its pop and media form, but also acts as a seller of Japanese goods. It represents how the link between cultural diffusion and consumption has become subtle. Another notable example of Japanese culture diffusion by a private company is Tastemade. It is an entertainment company which is involved in the diffusion of cultural products and experiences all over the world and works as an online community. The website of the company states that its purpose is to inspire people through entertainment, experiences and authentic products.[25] Both companies were mentioned in the report on Cool Japan as part of the initiatives to share Japanese culture around the world (METI, 2018) . Both companies acted through social media to advertise their products and, in so doing, gave visibility to national culture. Individuals can come in contact with the branded form of national culture in their everyday interactions on the internet. I so doing they are not only exposed to the message but can also become consumers of goods connected to that kind of publicity or share on their private profiles the information. This development is symptomatic of how the diffusion of culture has become more and more involved with consumption of products and experiences (Lee, 2012; Aronczyk, 2013; Iwabuchi, 2015). Particular versions of identity and a system of recognition that sees the nation as a structuring unit has become the basis of the global economic network (Aronczyk, 2013, 59). As such,

[24] https://otakumode.com/about
[25] https://www.tastemade.com/about

consumption has become a way in which individuals engage with culture, be it in domestic or in international environments.

Foreign-based participation

Not all consumption requires that a product be bought. Another important form of cultural diffusion is the creation of communities of fans that can also be outside the conventional boundaries of the nation. One of such phenomena is the creation of online communities that engage with Japanese culture through its pop-culture products, notably anime and manga. 'Fansubbing' (literally subtitles made by fans) and 'scanlation'(a combination of "scanning" and "translation") have become increasingly popular phenomena (Lee, 2012. 131). These phenomena represent fan-made products that are then circulated and made available to the wide public online. Remixed material represented by cultural products, that would normally enter the market via import and distribution through specific industries, are being made readily available by social media video-sharing sites, therefore bypassing more "conventional" distribution channels (McLelland, 2017, 8). This represents both a problem and an opportunity for the internationalization of culture. The problematic aspect is that by making these products available for free online fans produce copyright infringement and international distribution industries are damaged by this process (Lee, 2012; McLelland, 2017). At the same time, however, this phenomenon also represents an opportunity in that individuals actively engage with culture and related products voluntarily and as such produce a considerable amount of advertisement and increase the visibility of cultural products without the need for companies to act (Iwabuchi, 2010; Lee, 2012; McLelland, 2017). The popularity of Japanese media cultures is strictly connected to fan participation in online communities. Fan-driven activities widen the repertory of cultural content online and, moreover, do it for free. In so doing, fans foster cultural globalization from the bottom up ‹‹blur(ring) the boundary between consumption and production›› (Lee, 2012, 132).

The phenomenon of fan-driven cultural diffusion was deeply connected with the rise of what Lee (2012) calls 'participatory consumers'; individuals take up the role of cultural intermediaries but do so by being involved in both production and consumption of cultural products. The growing importance of the internet and the development of digital technologies has helped fans to ‹‹tak(e) over most of (the) tasks that used to be performed by professional

cultural intermediaries›› (Lee, 2012, 136). Fans have taken an active role in the diffusion of cultural products (McLelland, 2017,8). It is not always clear, however, if this diffusion of culture is beneficial to national image. While it is true that Japanese national image benefited from this phenomenon the image transferred is not always the one that is constructed in the branding process. The Japanese national brand capitalized on consumer trends (Daliot-Bul, 2009, 257). Japanese national image is reproduced by media entrepreneurs and fans who, via the consumption of pop-culture products, reproduce the image of Japanese culture. However, the elements that are selected by fans not always align with the idea of culture that Japanese government wants to convey. Cool Japan has different faces as it becomes interpreted by different people. What is considered "cool" by fans often includes ascpects of the culture that are different and disapproved by authority figures (McLelland, 2017, 6). Overt sexuality, often on childlike characters, or extreme violence are notable example of this (McLelland, 2017; Miller, 2017). This is certainly an issue in the branding of Japanese culture, and one that exposes a critical aspect of nation branding itself. As it will be argued later, national image can escape the control of the authorities since is driven by individuals and external forces.

Different forms of participation

Active participation of individuals is what makes a nation branding strategy effective (Aronczyk, 2013, 77). Through participatory forms of cultural consumption the way of thinking nationality becomes ‹‹internalized and pervasive›› (Iwabuchi, 2010, 93). Established views of national culture are shared and reproduced by individuals and this, according to brand consultants, represents a critical aspect in the success or failure of a brand strategy (Aronczyk, 2013). It can be argued that there are three different forms of participation involved in nation branding. This section will be structured as an overview of those forms of participation.

The first form of participation is one that was established in previous forms of cultural nationalism. Nationalist discourse was diffused to different levels of society via the use of different media ranging from literature, to mass media to practices. *Nihonjinron* represents an important precedent for this phenomenon (Yoshino, 1992, Befu, 2001). Through this diffusion of nationalist discourse a category of what Laura Miller (2017, 58) calls 'cultural

gatekeepers'. Cultural gatekeepers are people that sustain the idea of established, and often essentialized, views of Japanese culture and act as advocates of such formulation of culture. This form of participation sees the creation of active members of a community that align with an idea of culture as proposed by cultural nationalism and act as an alleged "living proof" of such particularistic formulation of culture. This form of participation is still in action in the branded form of Japanese cultural nationalism. Cultural gatekeepers ‹‹promote specific aspects of Cool Japan and exclude the importance or diminish the impact of what might be controversial aspects in them›› (Miller, 2017, 58). Often, these individuals operate without making distinction between the essentialized view of culture proposed by cultural and brand nationalism and cultural practices that they have been in contact with throughout their life. This is due to the effectiveness of a cultural hegemony that aims at bringing every cultural formulation under the same, essential ideological framework (Daliot-Bul, 2009; Iwabuchi, 2015). This ideological framework often operates through the idea of normalcy. National culture comes to be regarded as the "normal" form of culture and one that allegedly represents society in its exclusivist formulation (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003; Iwabuchi, 2015). If "normal" cultural exchange is to be regarded as the one presented in nationalist discourse it is easy to see how people might come to endorse it and participate actively in the attempt to maintain a local form of culture that they were induced to think about as part of a wider national culture.

The second form of participation is that of what may be called as passive participation. In the diffusion of nationalist discourse *banal internationalism* encourages a particular kind of encounter through events and products (Iwabuchi, 2010; 2015). Brand nationalism engenders a "spectacle" of the national that diffuses national image and specific views on national culture to the wider public. In so doing, they create an ideological framework in which the individual is immersed. This, in turn, means that often individuals reproduce that ideological framework without even noticing. Some may become cultural gatekeepers and willingly reproduce the given ideological framework (Miller, 2017). Others, instead, engage less in national culture and reproduce it through passive participation. Kitada Akihiro (2005, 17) argues that young generations express a sense of uneasiness towards life that often translates in them not expressing support, rejection or giving thought to the belonging to a particular nation. Instead, they engage in cultivating their personal interests without giving form to a particular sense of belonging. A passage of an interview with actor Kubotsuka Yōsuke about the film *Go* (2001) is exemplificative of this phenomenon:

> I don't know much about my country […] I don't feel pride nor it believe I'm a patriot […], I just think that loving one's country of origin is a *normal* thing to do. Only at events such as the Olympics or the World Cup do I cry out "Japan!" "Japan!". (Go Fuck'n Special Issue, 2001; Kitada, 2005, 17)[26]

This behavior, while not directly addressing matters of national culture and belonging, can bolster the reproduction of the ideological framework of nationalism. The individual inserts itself involuntarily in an established mechanism that manages difference through the use of the national category and reproduces specific views of culture. It is true that without engaging in a confrontation there is no possible realization of the individual, and of the nation as well (Kitada, 2005, 17). However, passively engaging with events and ideas that are part of a specific ideology and using established categories to express oneself, even without fully understanding them, reproduces a specific ideology. As such, it can be argued that passive engagement with brand nationalism is a form of participation as well. It is important to remember that cultural and brand nationalism develop a mechanism that aims at rendering ineffective other ideas or theories about culture (Iwabuchi, 2015). As such, a passive attitude towards matters of nationalism and the ideology connected to it can easily result in the reproduction, even if faintly, of that given ideology.

The third form of participation is that of cultural consumers. As stated in the previous section, a great number of fans abroad engage in Japanese media culture. This trend is deeply linked with the dissemination of national image and constitutes a key form of participation in the Japanese national brand (Iwabuchi, 2010; Lee, 2012). The rising importance of the internet as a powerful tool for the diffusion of media cultures played a pivotal role in the appearance of new forms of participation. Online interaction constituted fertile ground for socially and culturally constructed groups that form communities that then can also act via offline activities. Fans form "brand communities" ‹‹rooted in shared experience, enthusiasm and emotion in relation to a particular brand, product, or activity›› (Lee, 2012, 132). Thus, the activity of such those communities create further reach for cultural products involved in the branding process and can contribute to the diffusion of specific views about cultural forms they engage with.

Different forms of participation of the individuals might express different forms of participation in different situations. From being an active cultural gatekeeper towards a

[26] Translation mine, emphasis added.

specific cultural matter to passively participate to events or spectacles or again engaging in the diffusion of culture via their hobby or consumption via the internet.

4.6 A critical approach to Japanese nation branding

The Dark Side of Pop-culture in Cool Japan

The effectiveness of nation branding is not yet confirmed. The branding process is not guaranteed to succeed and it represents a practice that has been proved failing in many cases (Aronczyk, 2013). Cool Japan represents the branded form of Japanese nationalism and as such is exposed to the same risks. The Japanese government engaged in the production of an attractive national image and proposed a particularistic view of culture as its core element. To do so it co-opted the increasing popularity of Japanese media culture and proposed it as one of the main elements to corroborate their claims. However, Japanese media and cultural industries and creators are often skeptical of the effectiveness of the Cool Japan policy and of the branding effort it implied (Iwabuchi, 2015, 31). They consider the idea that the popularity of Japanese products is linked to the popularity of the Japanese culture, and of the Japanese state in a sense, as a pretty naïve way of thinking (Uemura, 2012, 31). There is no guarantee that an individual who engages with cultural forms such as anime and manga will also be interested in engaging with the specific form of culture that the government wants to propose with the Cool Japan policy. Moreover, government agencies cannot hope to control or manage cultural production completely as it can be part of an individual's form of expression. It is important to remember that responses to the branded form of national image can vary as they represent the individual's idea (Aronczyk, 2013, 81). Thus, imagery exploited by Cool Japan can often express subversive and anti-establishment ideas (Daliot-Bul, 2009, 262). At the same time, the manner in which fans access Japanese material, what material they choose to access and how they use it ‹‹are open to controversy›› (McLelland, 2017, 6). First it must be recognized that ideas expressed in Japanese content products often do not align at all with the image that the Japanese government wants to convey. Secondly, the contents of can be considered as inappropriate for certain audience or address topics that can be viewed negatively, ranging from violence to explicit sexuality. On this particular aspect of Japanese media contents a new kind of 'Japan bashing' is being created around the idea that anime and

manga can be harmful for youth audiences (McLelland, 2017, 7). The image of Japanese culture that has been conveyed to the world by media products is not always positive. It is clear how this trend could have negative effects on the Cool Japan policy.

Effects of Japanese nation branding

The choice of Japanese nation branding to make use of the popularity of Japanese pop-culture in order to improve the visibility and effectiveness of national image showed how nation branding can be a volatile effort. Whether or not Cool Japan is going to be effective remains still to be seen. However, it cannot be said that nation branding did not have any effects. First, nation branding engendered a process that made government ministries assume an active role in promoting the national brand. The Cool Japan policy moved material institutionalizations and fiscal funding and advanced the understanding of the usefulness of culture in matters of public diplomacy (Iwabuchi, 2015, 30). Moreover, the Japan Brand strategy is significant for understanding the contemporary economic and political climate (Daliot-Bul, 2009, 261). Efforts to find a new suitable explanation for nationalism are linked to the perceived necessity to assert the position of the Japanese state in the system of globalized nation-states. The rising economic power of the Chinese and South Korean states represent a challenge for what had been Japanese supremacy in east Asia (Sugimoto, 2010, 247; Revelant, 2015, 53). Moreover the use of soft power by the two countries can cause a relative decline of Japanese presence in the international community (Iwabuchi, 2015, 36). At the same time, the country cannot rely anymore on its strong economy to be the distinguishing factor in the international environment since the image of a strong and solid Japanese economy has been tampered by the economic crisis in the 1990s (Hein, 2008, 460; Revelant, 2015, 56). Therefore, it can be argued that Japanese nation branding was developed as a response to increasing uncertainty in global politics as well as a means to foster a specific cultural ideology via the use of public diplomacy. Moreover, in so doing the Japanese government purposely tried to overcome the historically constituted problematic of relationships with other Asian nations (Iwabuchi, 2002, 53). The memory of the Second World War and the subsequent “anti-Japanese” sentiment it created still constitute a critical point in the implementation of an effective public diplomacy. The Japanese state struggles to find a solution and often holds a particularly counterproductive stance for public diplomacy in negating , partially or not, the Japanese state

responsibility for its war crimes (Sugimoto, 2010, 111). This point remains a major problem for the development of a truly effective public diplomacy in the east Asian region and one that hinders the efforts made in nation branding (Iwabuchi, 2015, 30).

In promoting the new national image the Japanese government enacted a reproduction of the ideological framework of previous cultural nationalism and of methodological nationalism. An essentialized and particularistic idea of culture was proposed as the cultural base for the branding effort. The portray of Japanese pop-culture as cultural capital and the consequent introduction in government policies was based on the idea that they could express an essentialized sense of "Japaneseness" (Miyake, 2015, 103). Even if support for this particularistic idea of culture was expressed in a more subtle way than it was in *nihonjinron*, and claims of ethnic nationalism are on the wane in favor of a civic form of nationalism (Doak, 2007, 271), the same ideological framework is employed. In fact, Occidentalism still maintains its important role as part of the idea of culture proposed in Japanese nation branding (Miyake, 2015; Iwabuchi, 2015). The construction of otherness and the cultural characteristics employed still maintain active a self-Orientalist image of Japanese society. Moreover, they do so by overtly employing the category of the national and thus propose a specific form of cultural encounter (Iwabuchi, 2015). Two ideological frameworks entwine and sustain each other in the formulation of an essentialist and nationalist idea of culture. On the one side an auto-Orientalist view of Japanese culture engenders an exclusivist form of culture by portraying Japanese culture as homogenous and based on an ancient tradition (Yoshino, 1998; Befu, 2001; Miyake, 2015). On the other a "container" division of the world into nations that come to be equated to society and tries to make irrelevant the question of who is excluded by this framework (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003; Iwabuchi, 2015, 37). The cooperation of these two framework create an idea of culture and cultural exchange that ‹‹favor an unthinking isomorphism and (create) new forms of exclusion and marginalization›› (Aronczyk, 2013, 169). Brand nationalism elides notions of diversity that do not align with the established framework of methodological nationalism and excludes the role of cultural minorities and hybrid forms of culture (Daliot-Bul, 2009, 262; Iwabuchi, 2015, 38). The idea of "Japaneseness" and that of "foreign" or "other" as exemplified by the nation are two rigid categories that leave no space for anything in between or for internal variation. These two exclusive and homogenous categories represent the result of the new form of nationalism and of the effective double-faced framework that it used to build its narrative.

Conclusion

The Cool Japan policy represents the Japanese government's effort to produce an attractive national brand. Japanese political elites chose to follow a global trend that saw in nation branding an effective tool for the promotion of national image for increasing benefits coming from public diplomacy. In so doing, however, they reproduced a specific ideological framework. Nation branding engenders an idea of the world where the concept of the "foreign" or, in a broader sense, "otherness" can only be represented by a national and exclusive formulation (Aronczyk, 2013; Iwabuchi, 2015). It creates a form of seemingly "pacific" cultural hegemony that implies discrimination and exclusion of cultural forms that do not align with the boundaries set by nationalist discourse. States compete for soft power and influence in the global arena and nationalist discourse is the preferred method to exercise public diplomacy to this end. Nationalism managed to adapt to the new globalized environment and adopted the rising importance of the economic logic around the world to propose itself as a form of marketing of culture that can bring benefit to political institutions (Van Ham, 2001; Nye, 2007). In the competition for soft power matters of identity are addressed in an exclusivist way. Moreover, they conceal this contest for power under the guise of inter-national cooperation. Exceptionalism and the projection of images of uniqueness of a specific population constitute the background for public calls for national unity in the name of progress. What reveals the political and economic interests embedded in this process is the exclusion of any cultural form that might endanger the idea of the nation-state as the unit to understand the world. Or, again, the attempts to bring that cultural form under the framework of national culture. Minorities or individuals that do not align with the national are dismissed and not taken into consideration or presented as part of the officially proposed cultural sphere, while multiculturalism and hybrid forms of culture are set aside and concealed (Daliot-Bul, 2009; Iwabuchi, 2015). At the same time, migrations flows challenge this construction of the national framework since they create spaces of interconnection outside what is considered to be the "normal" format of exchange (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003). The recent phenomenon of migrants coming from Africa into Europe well represents how the national framework is put under test by migration. The preferred response is a recent surge in nationalistic sentiment backed by support of far right and nationalist movements that portray the phenomenon as a "disaster" or even an "invasion" (Teitelbaum, 2015, 1). Nation branding represents a new form of nationalism that, making use of its flexible formulation, attempts to

bring multiculturalism under control while fostering its validity as a discourse. Notwithstanding doubts about its effectiveness and the contradictions that it can engender, nationalism in its branded form is likely to continue to represent an important part of contemporary politics.

Japanese nation branding and Multiculturalism

Nation branding in Japan has been embraced thoroughly by political elites. The Cool Japan strategy engenders a process in which previous cultural nationalism is reinvented under the guise of an exportable national identity that can foster public diplomacy. The influence of ideas formulated in *nihonjinron* still occupies an important role (Miyake, 2015; Iwabuchi, 2015). The new policy of Cool Japan attempts to create a cultural sphere which aims at incorporating all forms of culture. In this sense, Japanese nation branding signals a repetition of the creation of a cultural hegemony that had its earlier formulation in *nihonjinron* (Befu, 2001). The formulation of a monolithic and unchanging form of culture inevitably incites exclusion of different cultures inside the state. Minorities inside Japanese territory that were discriminated against in the past are still exposed to attempts by the government to ignore their existence (Lie, 2001; Sugimoto, 2010; Iwabuchi, 2015). Instead of giving the right amount of attention to the issue of minority groups and multiculturalism within the Japanese territory, the focus is put onto a global mechanism of cooperation between established forms of difference. This, in turn, helps portraying Japanese society as a homogenous whole and reiterates the ideological structure of nationalism as an exclusionary force. However, different forms of culture do exist. Cultural variation inside Japanese society is well known and has been studied for quite some time (Sugimoto, 2010). At the same time, new forms of hybrid culture are being created in a multicultural, and increasingly globalized space.

Multiculturalism finds its way into the debate over culture also in a different way than just the promotion of a nation to nation exchange. The globalized space of cultural consumption well exemplifies how cultural products circulate freely and create new forms of culture. Cultural consumers are becoming more and more involved in the production of culture as well (Lee, 2012; McLelland, 2017). Be it in media cultures, art, fashion and in many other areas, individual participation to different cultural forms promotes cultural hybridization and creates new forms and practices connected to them. Big metropolises and

urban areas represents an important context of cultural interactions where a multiplicity of cultural forms meets and is subject to consumption and production that ‹‹cannot be easily grasped by a container model of the nation›› (Iwabuchi, 2015, 53). It represents the possibility to create new formulations of culture that move outside the rigid boundaries of national culture. Tokyo can be taken as an example of how multiculturalism is taking place. In such a densely inhabited city culture is irremediably subject to a transformation. At the same time, online communities operate to blur the borders of established cultural forms and transform them via phenomena such as fan-made productions and debates over culture. A notable example are fansubbing and scanlation of Japanese anime and manga which spurred a thriving debate not only online (Lee, 2012; McLelland, 2017). The mingling and hybridization of different forms of culture represent the other half of a globalized space of cultural consumption. They represent the opposite of national culture. National culture attempts to preserve a specific form of culture, a construction of selected elements, and portrays it as rooted in a rich historical tradition (Smith, 1996). New cultural forms are in the making and constantly change as they strive to find new concepts and ideas to make theirs. It is important to remember that human culture has always been influenced by external and internal variation. This is how culture grows and develops.

Different Forms of Power in competition

States compete for power in the global arena. Focusing on nation branding, the present work moved into the realm of soft power. However, soft power alone does not guarantee success in bolstering a state position in international politics. In fact Nye (1990; 2008) argues that soft power enhances a state hard power but is rarely enough by itself to obtain political influence. It is the combination of hard power, be it economic or military, and soft power that create positive effects on a state's political influence. Nationalism is a useful discourse in the implementation of soft power policies. In fact, the branded form of that discourse is the result of an attention towards public diplomacy in recent years (Aronczyk, 2013). Trying to obtain soft power, however, is often more difficult than it seems. Hard power can often lead to the creation of a contradictory image to what is proposed through soft power. Moreover, negative perception of some elements connected with national image can hinder the attainment of objectives in public diplomacy. An easy example of contradiction between soft and hard

power can be given by the insistence of the Japanese government in portraying the Japanese nation as a peace-loving country while in domestic political debate about changing the constitution and reinstating the army are still ongoing (Sugimoto, 2010). Another example of how soft power can contain contradictory images is the portrayal of the "Japanese" as having a particular link with nature and caring for the environment whereas continuing to support whaling, an extremely criticized and unpopular practice. These are just a few examples of the contradictions that a soft power policy might engender.

Recently a new form of power has come into the mix to create an even more difficult environment for soft power. Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig (2017, 1) define as 'sharp power' a new form of exercising power that can greatly damage a state's soft power. Sharp power refers to ‹‹the deceptive use of information for hostile purposes›› (Nye, 2018, 2). The practice of conducting cyber attacks to other state's databases or the use of espionage to obtain critical information in creating strategic advantages have been at the center of a debate over how power is being exerted around the world. Information is crucial for soft power since it is a way to obtain power without having to use coercion (Nye, 1990). However, when information is managed and distorted in order to limit the choice of the subject it can cross the line into coercion. Soft power aims at creating trust towards institutions and to specific goals by portraying positive information about them. Moving on this ground, sharp power aims at managing information so as to exploit the process of soft power in order to obtain specific results. This can greatly influence the results of a state's policy in soft power especially since is extremely difficult to distinguish between soft and sharp power (Nye, 2018, 3). It can be argued that sharp power is the new method of "hard" power action. Since hard power lives a moment in which it cannot be used without negative consequences enforcing economic bans and sanctions and stimulating interventionist stances in the international community, governments are now starting to adopt methods that blur the boundary between hard and soft power (Walker and Ludwig, 2017, 1). The coexistence of these forms of power delineates a system that can easily bring to contradictory stances. States may push for hard, soft or sharp power according to the necessity of the moment. However, this comes at a cost. Soft power has been enhanced as one of the main factors in international politics in recent times. States are more and more involved in the creation of an effective public diplomacy (Nye, 2007; Aronczyk, 2013). With the entrance on the stage of sharp power the international environment becomes more complex and the relation between different forms of power needs to be managed with even more attention than before.

Japanese Exercise of Power in the Global Arena

The position of the Japanese state in the international system has changed over the years. The country had lost its hard power source with the defeat in World War Two (Uemura, 2012, 106). However, the economic growth of the following decades brought economic power back into the hands of the Japanese state. Moving forward, the economic crisis of the 1990s left the country with less hard power than before. Japanese political elite started the nation branding process in order to increase the state soft power. Japan is currently in a phase in which soft power is at the center of attention of the government. Both the Soft Power 30 index and the Nation Branding Index (NBI) see the Japanese state as occupying a stable position around the 5th and 6th place respectively in terms of soft power attained and of efficacy of the national brand; signals of improvement in those areas are clearly visible.[27] This is representative of the efforts that were put behind nation branding in recent years. Public diplomacy has been used to obviate the problematic aspects of international policy, notably the question of responsibility for the aggression during World War Two (Sugimoto, 2010; Iwabuchi, 2015). At the same time, however, the political panorama in East Asia and in institutions such as ASEAN reveals that the Japanese state is struggling to cope with the growth of China, India and South Korea which have come to gain more and more power in recent years (Revelant, 2015). The competition in the field of soft power has become fiercer especially with China and South Korea starting to promote their own national brand (Iwabuchi, 2015). With the effectiveness of the national brand still uncertain and the rise of new competitors the Japanese state needs to find a way to renew its way to assert power in the global arena. While efforts to sustain soft power strategies are likely to continue - and to further increase according to Soft Power 30 index and NBI - other forms of power might be addressed as well. The return to hard power is advocated by Prime Minister Abe to revise the constitution in order to let Japan have its own regular army, a matter that has been discussed for more than ten years now (Sugimoto, 2010; Sudō, 2016). Whether or not the Japanese army will be reinstated remains to be seen, although political action in that direction has been at the center of attention in recent years. The Japanese national brand and the idea of "Japan cool", however are here to stay and still represent an important part of Japanese public diplomacy.

[27] Soft Power 30 Index: https://softpower30.com/ ; The Nation branding Index is currently released by Ipsos and created by Simon Anholt. The 2018 results can be found here: https://www.ipsos.com/en/germany-retains-top-nation-brand-ranking-us-out-top-five-again

Possible Responses to Discriminatory Nationalism

Nation branding still moves within the influence of the double framework of essentialism and Occidentalism. National culture is more often than not linked to an essentialist idea of culture based on the construction of an immemorial tradition (Smith, 1996). Due to its formulation, national culture is exclusive and discriminatory and still maintains its validity even when political boundaries are made uncertain by globalization (Bauman, 2005; Martell, 2011). This also means that nationalist discourse retains its appeal as a way to maintain those boundaries, even if only in a discursive formation. Finding a solution to the problematic aspect of discrimination in nationalism can be a really hard task. Due to its pervasiveness the nation-state framework is difficult to argue against and recent years saw an increase of nationalist movements. It can be argued that the first matter to be addressed is that of essentialism. Exclusion and discrimination are often based upon the idea of an essence of national culture expressed through selected elements of cultural tradition. A second important point to be kept in mind is that nationalist discourse attempts to construct a cultural hegemony. Culture and cross-cultural encounter are portrayed as an encounter of selected cultural forms. To tackle these problematic aspects requires an action on more than one front.

A possible response to the problematic of essentialism would be that to contextualize nationalist discourse. By linking nationalism to its historical development it becomes possible to expose the fact that elements portrayed in it are part of an ideological "construction" (Smith, 1996; Kramer, 1997). Contextualizing nationalism as a discourse with a precise historical development could help shed light on the mechanism employed to create ideas expressed in it. This, in turn, could help exposing the essentialist ideas involved in national culture. However, replacing an essentialist idea of national culture with an historically-rooted one is easier said than done. In order to make it possible change in education to all levels is necessary. The action of the *Tsukurukai* has been exemplificative of how nationalism still maintains a strong presence in education. Japanese history textbooks have been criticized for their view of history that contains many ideas formulated in previous nationalist discourses (Nishino, 2010). Nevertheless, the process of substituting textbooks in Japanese school remains a tough one. That is also because of the practice of employing only a few books authorized by the government through the ministry of education. Addressing matters of

essentialism in the classroom can be a suitable response to its widespread application and it is desirable that efforts in this direction be made.

A second move in tackling the problem of discriminatory nationalism could be to give visibility to new forms of culture that move outside the boundaries of national culture. As previously stated nationalism now operates by exerting a cultural hegemony. Transculturation and new practices that mingle different cultures represent a challenge to this framework. Making these new cultural practices more visible also means to expose the rigidity of the national culture system. They represent an alternative to national culture and, therefore, open the space for a critical approach to it. Cultural consumers on the internet and in urban spaces constantly operate in the transformation of culture (Iwabuchi, 2015; McLelland, 2017). As new cultural practices are created they constantly erode the monopoly of the national and can represent an alternative that exposed the ever-shifting nature of culture. That being said, nationalist discourse attempts to conceal and dismiss such practices or even to portray them as part of an all-encompassing national culture (Daliot-Bul, 2009; Iwabuchi, 2015). As such, the impact of these new forms of culture is greatly reduced. Nevertheless, just the simple act of interacting with these forms of culture, even if just for curiosity, can represent another element to shed light on the mechanism behind national culture and its exclusive formulation.

A third element that could represent an important element in tackling the problematic of a discriminatory national culture concerns the individual. As stated previously in the present work, individual participation has become, now more than ever, an important part of public diplomacy and brand nationalism (Iwabuchi, 2010; Aronczyk, 2013). Nation branding itself strives to co-opt individual participation towards the acceptance of a specific idea of culture and the improvement of national image for political and economic interests. It has to be recognized that individual participation can represent an asset for nationalist discourse. Be it as a cultural gatekeeper or just as a passive participant the individual's behavior has an impact on the reiteration of the specific cultural framework embedded in cultural and brand nationalism. However, the opposite is also true. Nation branding has been exposed as a practice that is vulnerable to individual interpretation (Aronczyk, 2013). As such the individual's idea about nationalism can have an impact on its diffusion and on the effectiveness of its new banded form. Distancing from an essentialist view of culture and shedding light on the discriminatory effects of nationalist discourse is possible and individual's opinion matters in tackling these problematic aspects of nationalism. Brand nationalism changed the way nationalist discourse is formulated and created a new form of

participation. In the end, the individual's active engagement in matters of culture and discrimination represents the best way to tackle essentialism and discrimination. Nationalist discourse will continue to retain its importance in the near future, whether or not it will continue to do so for long, however, remains to be seen.

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