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## Point-Counterpoint: U.S.-Japanese Exchanges

### American Professors say: Cultural Gap Exists Between U.S. and Japan

by Philip G. Altbach & William Cummings

The failure of the U.S.-Japanese summit earlier this year shows that cultural diplomacy, or better yet, cultural understanding, is needed as a key underpinning for all relationships between the two countries.

Considerable ignorance persists. Just look at the media images of one country concerning the other. The Japanese public sees a colossal misunderstanding of American society and American reality portrayed even by the highest-ranking officials. Racial and ethnic stereotypes are endemic. Few in Japan have a clear understanding of the complexity of American culture and society. Similarly, Americans are woefully ignorant of Japan.

We need to rethink a half-century of cultural and educational contacts and programs. We need, on both sides, to develop a set of cultural relations that will improve basic understanding of two complex cultures so that policy can be made on the firm base of knowledge, and so that public opinion in both countries is well informed. As relations between Japan and the United States grow more complex, the need for more knowledge and understanding is great.

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### A Japanese Professor says: Why Single Out Japan?

by Masako Miyake

Is the imbalance in educational exchanges between the U.S. and Japan as significant a problem as professors Altbach and Cummings state? Do the figures have some sort of special cultural importance?

As a practitioner in the field of international educational exchange, I feel the statement, "There are fewer than 2,000 American students in Japan, while some 40,000 Japanese study in the U.S." needs closer examination and deserves a more detailed explanation in order to avoid further misunderstanding.

Last March, a survey of American students in Japan was published by the Laurasian Institution. This study was made possible through the support of the U.S. Information Service (USIS), Tokyo, and presented interesting data for a five-year period starting in 1989. However, the report does not discuss U.S. students within the framework of the total foreign student population in Japan.

The following chart indicates the total number of overseas students in comparison with U.S. students. The top figures are provided by the Japanese Ministry of Education, while the shaded figures are from the Laurasian report. The increase/decrease com-

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There is an impressive knowledge base. Most Japanese students study English, although few have an opportunity to use it, and fewer still have the ability to speak it with any fluency. There is a considerable amount of literature concerning both countries—social science studies abound and small groups of academics in each country know a good deal. Many books are translated.

There are also significant imbalances in this knowledge base. For example, few Americans study Japanese—only about 27,000 at the secondary level and 46,000 in college. There are fewer than 2,000 American students in Japan, while some 40,000 Japanese study in the United States. Two thousand different books are translated annually from English into Japanese, while only 50 are translated from Japanese into English. There has been significant progress, but there is also a long way to go.

During the 1980s, as Japan's "economic bubble" developed, several new

initiatives were launched, including the Education Ministry's plans to host 100,000 students by the year 2000, and the plans of groups like the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science to sponsor foreign researchers in Japanese laboratories. The argument was made that Japan should take these steps as a payback for the benefits it had received in the past from the U.S. Fulbright program and other bina-tional opportunities.

These Japanese initiatives were open to young Americans, but relatively few responded. Gradually, students from other nationalities, especially Chinese and Southeast Asians, and recently Russians, participated. One reaction is to wonder whether there is anything more that can be done to make studying in Japan more attractive to Americans.

The answer is yes. At the university level, more active international exchange offices and better housing arrangements for foreign students would be helpful. The Education Min-

istry could ease accreditation rules for U.S. universities in Japan, and develop more flexible terms for foreign researchers. The Foreign Affairs Ministry could ease visa regulations.

There are also many measures worth considering in the United States. High school social studies courses should show adequate recognition of the changing world economy and of Asia's contribution, both past and present, to world civilization. Japanese language should be as available in high schools as French or Italian. Language requirements should be strengthened at the university level.

All of this will become possible if America's leaders say that culture is as important as mathematics and economics, and that Asian culture deserves as much consideration as the European tradition. ■

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**Why Single Out Japan?**

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**Foreign Students in Japan**

Year	89-90	90-91	91-92	92-93	93-94
Total overseas students in Japan	31,251	41,347 [32.3%]	45,066 [9.0%]	48,561 [7.8%]	52,405 [7.9%]
Ratio of U.S. Students	4.9%	4.7%	4.7%	4.1%	3.5%
U.S. Students in Japan	1,532	1,959 [27.8%]	2,120 [8.2%]	2,013 [-5.0%]	1,834 [-3.9%]
(graduate students) (245)		(280) [14.3%]	(301) [7.5%]	(350) [16.3%]	(364) [4.0%]
(undergraduates) (1,250)		(1,634) [30.7%]	(1,769) [8.3%]	(1,611) [-8.9%]	(1,423) [-11.7%]

pared to the previous year is indicated in brackets. In the past five years, the total number of overseas students in Japan has increased by 68%, whereas the number of U.S. students increased by only 20%, with a 49% increase in graduate students and 14% in undergraduates.

Where does the issue of U.S. students in Japan fit in the larger picture of U.S. students abroad? According to *Open Doors* published by the Institute of International Education, from 1989-90 to 1991-92, there was only a 0.6% increase in the overall number of U.S. students abroad. In this same pe-

riod, however, the number of U.S. students in Japan increased by 38%, a truly phenomenal leap. It can certainly be said that in 1991-92, there was a "study in Japan" boom in the U.S.

Compare the ratio of U.S. students against the total overseas student enrollment in selected European host countries in the same time frame. In 1991, France hosted 136,015 students, of whom 2.6% were American. In 1989, Germany hosted 91,712 foreign students, of whom 4.5% were American. In 1992, the U.K. hosted 92,125 students, 5.5% of whom were American. These figures are provided by the respective governments and reported in *Open Doors 1992-1993*.

The Japanese government reported 1,245 Americans with student visas in Japanese universities as of May 1, 1992. This figure does not include students at branch campuses of U.S. universities, nor anyone with a visa status other than "student." Accordingly, this figure is about 2/5 less than that given in the Laurasian report.

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