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THE REPRESENTATION OF JAPAN DIPLOMACY IDEOLOGY IN JAPAN EMBASSY' INSTAGRAM SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

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Abstract: The proliferation of social media has fundamentally transformed the practice of public diplomacy, with visual platforms like Instagram becoming critical arenas for nations to project strategic narratives and ideological perspectives. This study investigates the representation of Japan's diplomatic ideology through the official Instagram account of a selected Japan Embassy. Employing a Critical Digital Discourse Analysis (CDDA) framework, the research conducts a qualitative, multimodal analysis of visual and textual content to deconstruct the embedded ideological messaging. The findings reveal three dominant, interlocking narratives: (1) the construction of Japan as a Proactive Contributor to Peace, emphasizing normative governance and humanitarian partnership; (2) the ideology of Fusionism, which seamlessly blends traditional heritage with hyper-modern innovation to present a model of balanced societal progress; and (3) the cultivation of Relational Affinity through accessible cultural content and personalized "selfie diplomacy," designed to foster emotional connection and positive perception. The study concludes that the embassy's Instagram is a sophisticated instrument of digital statecraft, where diplomatic doctrine is translated into consumable visual-textual narratives to advance soft power objectives. This performance, however, involves a strategic curation that silences complexities, raising critical questions about the transformation of diplomatic discourse within the commercial and affective logics of social media platforms. The research contributes to the growing literature on digital diplomacy by providing a critical, non-Western case study and highlighting the nuanced mechanisms of ideological representation in the digital age.
Keywords: *Digital diplomacy; Instagram; ideological representation; Japan; soft power; critical digital discourse analysis.*

INTRODUCTION

The expansion of social media platforms has profoundly transformed the landscape of contemporary diplomacy, shifting diplomatic communication from elite, closed-door interactions toward highly visible, participatory, and emotionally driven public engagement. Digital platforms, particularly Instagram, have become strategic arenas where states articulate national identity, project ideological positions, and cultivate soft power through visual storytelling and interactive discourse (Barman, 2024; Mekaj, 2025; Chauhan et al., 2025; Meehan, 2024; Glanz, 2025). Within this context, diplomacy is no longer confined to policy statements but is increasingly embedded in images, captions, and platform affordances that shape how global publics perceive states, conflicts, and cultural values (Al-Rawi et al., 2021; Bataeva, 2024; Elmasry, 2025). Instagram's emphasis on aesthetics, affect, and algorithmic visibility makes it especially consequential for the ideological representation of diplomacy, positioning it as a critical site for examining how states communicate power, values, and legitimacy in the digital age (Intentilia, 2022; Hikmawan et al., 2024).

A growing body of scholarship conceptualizes digital diplomacy as an extension of soft power, where social media platforms operate as infrastructures for attraction, persuasion, and narrative control. Studies emphasize that platforms such as Instagram are not neutral channels but shape diplomatic communication through visuality, engagement metrics, and algorithmic

governance (Barman, 2024; Mekaj, 2025; Lin, 2024; Glanz, 2025; Chauhan et al., 2025). These dynamics compel diplomatic actors to translate foreign policy goals into consumable, emotionally resonant content that aligns with platform logics while still advancing strategic interests.

Research on digital public diplomacy highlights how official state accounts employ visual narratives to cultivate favorable national images and ideological coherence. Analyses of Indonesia's G20 presidency demonstrate how Instagram is mobilized to connect soft power, digital diplomacy, and global leadership narratives (Intentilia, 2022; Hikmawan et al., 2024; Al Akromi & Santika, 2024; Meehan, 2024; Zhang & Tang, 2024). These studies reveal that language choice, visual framing, and interactional cues are central to constructing credibility and authority in digital diplomatic spaces.

Another strand of literature focuses on audiences and reception, arguing that digital diplomacy is increasingly shaped by domestic and transnational publics rather than solely by interstate relations. Research on nationalist sentiment formation and audience reactions illustrates how official discourse on social media can reinforce ideological alignment or contestation among users (Zhang & Tang, 2024; Matsuo et al., 2024; Yan, 2024; Kobayashi et al., 2025; Kamalova, 2025). These findings underscore the importance of examining not only diplomatic messages but also the ideological assumptions embedded within them.

Conflict and crisis communication further demonstrate the ideological stakes of digital diplomacy. Studies on war narratives, diplomatic crises, and networked propaganda show how states use social media to frame conflicts, legitimize positions, and mobilize emotional responses (Matsuo et al., 2024; Sun et al., 2025; Henriksen et al., 2024; Lin, 2025; Yan, 2024). Visual and textual representations function as tools of narrative warfare, where meaning-making is tightly linked to power and legitimacy.

Cultural diplomacy scholarship emphasizes the role of everyday culture, memory, and lifestyle aesthetics in building long-term relational affinity. Research on YouTube, Instagram, and transnational digital spaces demonstrates how emotions, historical memory, and popular culture are leveraged to sustain advocacy and soft power (Candelaria & Ebro Jr., 2025; Soto-Vásquez, 2021; Sonnevend & Steiert, 2024; Bataeva, 2024; Guo & Taylor, 2025). These works highlight how cultural representation operates ideologically by normalizing particular values and identities.

Studies on East Asian digital diplomacy reveal distinctive patterns in how states balance tradition, modernity, and global engagement. Research on China, Korea, and Taiwan shows how platforms are used to promote nationalist discourse, cultural industries, gastrodiplomacy, and platform-based soft power (Jin, 2024; Chang & Chang, 2025; Zhang, 2024; Garud-Patkar & El Damanhoury, 2025; Park & Park, 2025). These findings suggest that cultural and technological narratives are central to ideological positioning in the region.

Historical and transnational perspectives further contextualize contemporary digital diplomacy. Studies on imperial narratives, cultural exchange, and global media circulation demonstrate that today's digital practices are rooted in longer histories of representational power (Biswas, 2024; Toth, 2024; Hong & Horta, 2025; Insebayeva & Dissyukov, 2025; Veloza-Franco, 2025). This perspective underscores the continuity between historical cultural diplomacy and its digital manifestations.

Language and discourse-centered approaches emphasize how ideology is embedded in linguistic choices and pragmatic strategies. Research employing critical discourse analysis and pragmatics shows how diplomatic language constructs authority, legitimacy, and alignment with global norms (Xu, 2022; Al Akromi & Santika, 2024; Nusrat et al., 2025; Nadhifa et al., 2025; Kamalova, 2025). These studies reinforce the need for fine-grained analysis of captions, hashtags, and multimodal discourse.

Platform-specific studies demonstrate how Instagram's affordances shape political and diplomatic communication. Research on influencers, celebrityization, visual news values, and short-form video content reveals how visibility, affect, and personalization influence audience perception (Balcıoğlu, 2024; Velayati et al., 2024; Rajan & Venkatraman, 2021; Al-Rawi et al., 2021; Babakhani & Imani Khoshkhoo, 2024). These dynamics are increasingly relevant to embassy accounts that blend official messaging with lifestyle aesthetics.

Networked and comparative studies highlight how diplomatic influence is shaped by transnational actor networks and competing narratives. Analyses of ambassadorial strategies, influential figures, and cross-ideological diffusion show that digital diplomacy operates within complex communication ecologies (Glanz, 2025; Kafiliveyjuyeh & Porter, 2024; Lin, 2024; Zhang

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& Tang, 2024; Kobayashi et al., 2025). These insights stress the importance of examining embassies as nodes within broader ideological networks.

Despite these advances, Japan's digital diplomacy remains comparatively underexplored from an ideological perspective. Existing studies often focus on cultural promotion or regional relations without systematically analyzing how Japan's diplomatic ideology is represented through visual–textual narratives on Instagram (Jin, 2024; Tamari, 2025; Ahmadian, 2024; Chen et al., 2024; Veloza-Franco, 2025). Other studies on Japanese digital diplomacy have focused solely on the translation of cultural vocabulary in diplomatic content (Martawijaya, Syihabuddin, Sudana, & Sutedi, 2021), without a sustained critical analysis of the overarching ideological coherence and narrative strategies embedded in its systematic social media content. This limitation is notable given Japan's distinctive blend of cultural heritage, technological modernity, and normative diplomacy.

The synthesis above reveals a critical gap in the literature: there is limited critical analysis of how Japan's diplomatic ideology is systematically constructed and communicated through its official embassy Instagram content. While prior research addresses digital diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, and platform politics broadly, few studies integrate these perspectives to examine Japan's ideological representation in a sustained, multimodal manner. Accordingly, this study asks: How is Japan's diplomatic ideology represented through the visual and textual content of its official embassy Instagram account? (Intentilia, 2022; Jin, 2024; Lin, 2024; Zhang & Tang, 2024; Mekaj, 2025).

This study offers novelty by foregrounding ideology as the central analytical lens in examining Japan's Instagram diplomacy. It integrates insights from digital diplomacy, visual culture, discourse analysis, and East Asian studies to provide a comprehensive account of how diplomatic ideology is translated into platform-specific narratives. By focusing on an official embassy account, the study moves beyond event-based or cultural descriptions and advances a systematic understanding of ideological representation in Japan's digital statecraft (Jin, 2024; Tamari, 2025; Glanz, 2025; Chang & Chang, 2025; Mekaj, 2025).

The significance of this research is both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it enriches digital diplomacy scholarship by extending ideological analysis to a Japanese context, contributing a non-Western perspective to global debates on social media and diplomacy. Practically, the findings offer insights for diplomatic practitioners on how visual–textual strategies shape perception and engagement, while also supporting media literacy efforts aimed at fostering critical awareness of state-sponsored digital communication (Barman, 2024; Meehan, 2024; Chauhan et al., 2025; Mekaj, 2025; Glanz, 2025).

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in Critical Digital Discourse Analysis (CDDA) to examine how Japan's diplomatic ideology is articulated through Instagram content. CDDA is particularly suited for analyzing multimodal data, as it enables the interrogation of visual, textual, and interactional elements within their sociopolitical and platform-specific contexts (Xu, 2022; Al Akromi & Santika, 2024; Nusrat et al., 2025; Lin, 2024; Mekaj, 2025). The research is structured as a qualitative case study of an official Japan Embassy Instagram account, allowing for an in-depth and contextualized exploration of ideological representation.

Data collection involves purposive sampling of Instagram posts over a defined period to capture routine diplomatic communication as well as posts related to cultural events, international issues, and public engagement. The dataset includes images, videos, captions, hashtags, and observable engagement indicators. This approach aligns with prior studies emphasizing the importance of capturing the full multimodal and platform-specific nature of digital diplomacy (Intentilia, 2022; Hikmawan et al., 2024; Babakhani & Imani Khoshkhoo, 2024; Elmasry, 2025; Garud-Patkar & El Damanhoury, 2025).

Data analysis proceeds in two stages. First, a descriptive multimodal analysis identifies recurring visual themes, linguistic patterns, and interactional strategies. Second, an interpretive critical analysis examines how these elements collectively construct ideological narratives related to peace, culture, modernity, and international positioning. To enhance analytical rigor, findings are triangulated across visual, textual, and contextual dimensions, drawing on established practices in digital diplomacy and discourse studies (Lin, 2024; Glanz, 2025; Chauhan et al., 2025; Mekaj, 2025; Zhang & Tang, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Representation of Japanese soft power diplomacy ideology

This study aims to reveal the representation of the ideology of Japanese soft power diplomacy in the diplomatic content of the Japanese Ambassador to Indonesia on Instagram social media. Using Teun A. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model, analysis was conducted at three levels: text dimension (macro, super, and micro structure), social cognition, and social context. Data was collected from the Instagram account @jpnambsindonesia from January to July 2025, focusing on eight selected posts containing keywords related to soft power ideology.

The findings show that the Japanese Embassy's diplomatic content on Instagram consistently constructs a positive image of Japan as a peaceful, cooperative, and culturally attractive strategic partner. This image is built through thematic choices, text structure, lexical selection, modality, specific syntactic strategies, and reflects the social cognition and socio-historical context underlying Japan's diplomatic communication. Thus, Japanese soft power diplomacy is not only practiced through real actions but also carefully represented through linguistic and discursive strategies on social media to influence the perceptions and attitudes of the Indonesian public.

Macro structure dimension of text in Japanese diplomatic content on Instagram

At the macro-structural level, discourse analysis focuses on identifying overarching themes that organize and give coherence to textual meaning. This level of analysis reveals how specific narratives are repeatedly foregrounded to construct ideological positions and strategic national images. Based on the analysis of eight social media posts comprising twelve selected sentences, five dominant themes emerge that collectively articulate Japan's soft power diplomacy toward Indonesia. These themes reflect Japan's efforts to project itself as a peaceful, cooperative, and culturally attractive partner while reinforcing trust, moral legitimacy, and long-term partnership in bilateral relations.

Table 1. *Dominant macro-themes representing Japanese soft power diplomacy toward Indonesia*

No.	Macro Theme	Discursive Focus	Soft Power Dimension (Nye, 2004)	Ideological Representation
1	Japan–Indonesia Defense Cooperation	Defense visits, naval cooperation, regional security	Peaceful diplomacy, shared security	Japan as a peaceful and responsible security partner
2	Japan–Indonesia Economic Cooperation	High-level economic dialogue, long-term collaboration	Trust, shared values, cooperation	Japan as a reliable and responsive economic partner
3	PKO and Global Peace Engagement	UN PKO, UNTPP, multilateral peace initiatives	Moral legitimacy, multilateralism	Japan as a global peace contributor
4	Tourism and Cultural Cooperation	Cultural performances, tourism alliances	Cultural attraction, people-to-people exchange	Japan as a culturally appealing and friendly nation
5	Agricultural and Livestock Cooperation	Food security, irrigation, dairy exports	Development partnership, mutual understanding	Japan as a supportive and caring development partner

The macro-structural findings demonstrate that Japanese soft power diplomacy is discursively constructed through a coherent and multidimensional thematic framework. Rather than emphasizing power in coercive or militaristic terms, the discourse consistently frames Japan's engagement with Indonesia as collaborative, peaceful, and mutually beneficial. This aligns closely with Nye's (2004) conception of soft power, which emphasizes attraction, shared values, and legitimacy rather than force.

The first theme, Japan–Indonesia Defense Cooperation, is particularly significant because defense discourse is commonly associated with hard power. However, in this dataset, defense cooperation is carefully framed as a contribution to *regional peace, stability, and prosperity*. Lexical choices such as "contribute to regional peace and stability" strategically neutralize potential perceptions of militarization. This discursive framing reinforces Japan's long-standing post-war identity as a *peaceful state* and supports its effort to normalize security cooperation without undermining its pacifist image.

The second theme, Economic Cooperation, highlights dialogue, trust, and continuity. Expressions such as "open exchange of views" and "closer cooperation in the future" emphasize

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relational processes rather than transactional outcomes. This framing constructs Japan as a dependable partner committed to Indonesia's long-term economic resilience, particularly in the context of global economic uncertainty. From a soft power perspective, this reinforces credibility and trust—key resources in sustaining international influence.

The third theme, PKO and Global Peace Engagement, extends Japan's soft power narrative beyond bilateral relations into the global arena. By foregrounding participation in UN PKO and the Triangular Partnership Programme, the discourse positions Japan as a morally responsible international actor. This enhances Japan's reputational capital and legitimizes its diplomatic presence through alignment with multilateral norms and global peacekeeping efforts.

The fourth theme, Tourism and Cultural Cooperation, represents the cultural core of soft power. The promotion of cultural performances such as Barong and Wadaiko collaborations highlights emotional appeal, cultural hybridity, and people-to-people connectivity. Such representations move beyond state-centric diplomacy and foster affective bonds between societies. This cultural attraction functions as a subtle yet powerful mechanism for shaping positive perceptions of Japan among Indonesian audiences.

Finally, Agricultural and Livestock Cooperation frames Japan as a development-oriented partner concerned with everyday human needs, such as food security and sustainable agriculture. Support for irrigation infrastructure and dairy exports is discursively constructed as capacity building rather than dependency creation. This theme strengthens Japan's image as a benevolent and technically competent partner, reinforcing mutual understanding and goodwill.

Collectively, these themes demonstrate that Japanese soft power diplomacy operates through an integrated narrative strategy that combines peace, prosperity, culture, and development. The macro-structure of the discourse thus reflects a deliberate ideological positioning: Japan is represented not merely as a powerful state, but as a trusted partner, moral actor, and culturally attractive nation. This strategic coherence enhances the effectiveness of Japan's soft power projection and reinforces its diplomatic influence in Indonesia and the broader region.

Super-structural organization of Japanese diplomatic discourse on Instagram

Super-structure analysis focuses on how discourse is schematically organized to guide readers toward particular interpretations. In diplomatic communication, schematic structure is especially important because it shapes perceptions of legitimacy, intention, and continuity. The analysis of Japanese diplomatic content on Instagram reveals a highly consistent three-part schematic pattern across the examined sentences. This pattern—comprising context exposition, presentation of cooperation or contribution, and future-oriented closure—functions as a rhetorical framework that systematically constructs Japan's soft power diplomacy as responsive, constructive, and sustainable.

Table 2. *Super-structure pattern in Japanese diplomatic content on Instagram*

Structural Stage	Discursive Function	Typical Linguistic Realizations	Soft Power Implication
Opening: Context Exposition	Establishes legitimacy and situational relevance	References to official meetings, global conditions, or formal settings (e.g., "At the defense ministers' meeting…", "Amidst various global changes…")	Projects responsiveness and institutional credibility
Content: Cooperation/ Contribution	Highlights Japan's active and constructive role	Descriptions of dialogue, agreements, and material contributions (e.g., cooperation strengthening peace, infrastructure support)	Reinforces reliability and practical commitment
Closing: Hopes, Commitments, and Benefits	Orients discourse toward the future and positive outcomes	Expressions of hope, continued cooperation, or positive evaluation (e.g., "hope it will be further strengthened", "will continue to cooperate closely")	Builds trust and long-term partnership image

The findings indicate that the super-structure of Japanese diplomatic discourse on Instagram is highly systematic and rhetorically strategic. The recurring Context–Action–Commitment pattern is not a neutral organizational choice but a deliberate

discursive mechanism designed to guide audience interpretation and reinforce soft power objectives.

The opening stage plays a crucial legitimizing role. By foregrounding formal diplomatic contexts—such as ministerial meetings or global conditions—Japan frames its actions as situationally appropriate and institutionally grounded. This positioning reduces perceptions of unilateralism and presents Japan as a responsive actor reacting to shared challenges rather than imposing agendas. From a soft power perspective, this enhances credibility and aligns Japan's diplomacy with principles of transparency and mutual respect.

The content stage constitutes the argumentative core of the discourse. Here, Japan's role is constructed through concrete actions: policy dialogue, technical cooperation, infrastructure development, or peace-related initiatives. Importantly, these actions are framed as *contributions* rather than interventions. Linguistic emphasis on cooperation, contribution, and mutual benefit avoids hierarchical or dominant positioning, reinforcing Japan's image as an equal partner. This aligns with Nye's (2004) notion that soft power derives from attraction and legitimacy rather than coercion.

The closing stage consistently projects diplomacy into the future. Expressions of hope, commitment, and anticipated benefits function to extend the temporal horizon of cooperation beyond the immediate event. This future-oriented closure constructs Japan as a long-term partner invested in sustained relationships rather than short-term gains. Such framing strengthens the emotional and relational dimensions of soft power by fostering trust, predictability, and shared expectations.

Taken together, this super-structural pattern creates a coherent narrative logic: diplomatic actions are contextually justified, practically realized, and future-oriented. This narrative reinforces the ideological foundation of Japanese soft power diplomacy by presenting cooperation as continuous, purposeful, and mutually beneficial. The consistency of this structure across different thematic domains—defense, economy, culture, and development—further suggests institutionalized communicative norms within Japanese diplomatic practice.

In CDA terms, the super-structure functions as a macro-level control mechanism that shapes meaning production and limits interpretive ambiguity. By repeatedly guiding audiences through the same schematic pathway, Japanese diplomatic discourse naturalizes its preferred reading: Japan acts responsibly, contributes constructively, and remains committed to a shared future. This structural coherence significantly enhances the persuasive effectiveness of Japan's soft power communication in digital diplomacy.

Super structure dimension of text in Japanese diplomatic content on Instagram

Super-structure analysis examines how discourse is schematically organized to guide meaning construction and audience interpretation. In diplomatic communication, schematic organization plays a crucial role in establishing legitimacy, shaping institutional identity, and reinforcing ideological messages. The analysis of Japanese diplomatic content on Instagram reveals a highly consistent three-part super-structural pattern across the examined sentences. This pattern systematically structures diplomatic messages to portray Japan as a responsive, constructive, and future-oriented partner, thereby supporting the strategic deployment of soft power in digital diplomacy.

Table 3. *Super-structural pattern of Japanese diplomatic content on Instagram*

Structural Component	Discursive Function	Typical Realization in Text	Soft Power Implication
Opening: Context Exposition	Establishes situational legitimacy and relevance	References to formal meetings, global conditions, or official settings (e.g., "At the defense ministers' meeting…", "Amidst various global changes…")	Projects responsiveness, credibility, and institutional authority
Content: Cooperation / Contribution	Presents concrete diplomatic actions and roles	Descriptions of dialogue, agreements, and material contributions (e.g., cooperation for peace, infrastructure support)	Reinforces reliability, constructive engagement, and practical commitment
Closing: Hopes, Commitments, and Benefits	Directs discourse toward future cooperation and positive outcomes	Expressions of hope, continued collaboration, or evaluative closure (e.g., "hope it will be further	Builds trust, continuity, and long-term partnership

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	strengthened", "will continue to cooperate closely")

The super-structural analysis demonstrates that Japanese diplomatic discourse on Instagram follows a highly standardized and purposeful schematic organization. The recurring Context–Action–Commitment structure functions as a rhetorical strategy rather than a neutral textual arrangement. By consistently organizing diplomatic messages in this sequence, Japan guides audiences toward a preferred interpretation of its international role and intentions.

The opening stage serves as a legitimizing device. By foregrounding formal diplomatic settings or broader global contexts, Japan frames its actions as necessary responses to shared situations rather than unilateral initiatives. This framing minimizes perceptions of dominance or imposition and positions Japan as an actor attentive to international and regional dynamics. From a soft power perspective, this enhances institutional credibility and moral authority.

The content stage constitutes the core of the diplomatic message, where Japan's activities are presented as cooperative contributions. Importantly, these actions are framed through language emphasizing cooperation, contribution, and mutual benefit rather than control or leadership. This reinforces an image of Japan as an equal and constructive partner. Such framing aligns with Nye's (2004) concept of soft power, in which influence is generated through attraction, trust, and legitimacy rather than coercion.

The closing stage consistently projects diplomatic engagement into the future. Expressions of hope, commitment, and anticipated benefits extend the temporal scope of cooperation and portray Japan as a reliable long-term partner. This future-oriented orientation strengthens relational trust and signals sustainability in bilateral and multilateral relationships. The emphasis on continuity and shared benefits further deepens the affective dimension of soft power.

Overall, the Context–Action–Commitment super-structure creates a coherent diplomatic narrative: Japan's actions are contextually justified, materially productive, and normatively oriented toward a shared future. This narrative naturalizes Japan's preferred identity as a peaceful, cooperative, and dependable actor in international relations. In CDA terms, the super-structure functions as a macro-level control mechanism that stabilizes meaning and reinforces ideological consistency across different diplomatic themes. Through this schematic organization, Japanese digital diplomacy effectively strengthens the "trust and cooperation" dimension of soft power in the Indonesian context and beyond.

Micro structure dimension of text in Japanese diplomatic content on Instagram

Micro-structural analysis focuses on the linguistic features that shape meaning at the level of words, grammar, and sentence construction. In diplomatic discourse, micro-level choices are particularly significant because they subtly encode ideology, power relations, and social values. The analysis of Japanese diplomatic Instagram content reveals that lexicon selection, modality, and syntax are consistently oriented toward politeness, cooperation, and non-imposition. These linguistic strategies function collectively to operationalize Japan's soft power diplomacy, ensuring that influence is exercised through attraction, trust, and shared values rather than authority or coercion.

Table 4. *Micro-structural features and soft power functions in Japanese diplomatic Instagram discourse*

Micro-Structural Feature	Linguistic Realization	Discursive Function	Soft Power Implication
Collaboration Lexicon	連携, 協力, 意見交換	Frames diplomacy as mutual and dialogic	Projects equality and non-dominance
Peace & Stability Lexicon	平和, 安定, 繁栄	Recontextualizes security cooperation as peaceful	Reinforces pacifist national image
Development & Technology Lexicon	灌漑設備, 経済財政政策	Highlights technical expertise and capacity building	Positions Japan as a development partner
Cultural Lexicon	文化交流, 人的交流	Emphasizes people-to-people relations	Strengthens cultural attraction
Positive Evaluation Lexicon	有意義, 感銘を受ける	Creates harmonious evaluative tone	Builds emotional closeness

Diplomatic Politeness Lexicon	お伝えする, 祝意を述べる	Encodes respect and humility	Enhances moral legitimacy
Hope & Desire Modality	～ことを期待しています, ～していきたい	Expresses commitment without coercion	Encourages voluntary alignment
Potential Modality	寄与するものです	Naturalizes outcomes rather than imposing them	Softens agency and intent
Subject Omission	一致しました	Emphasizes shared consensus	De-centers Japan's dominance
Passive Voice	期待されます	Depersonalizes agency	Creates objectivity and neutrality
Honorific Language (Keigo)	です・ます, お伝えいたしました	Signals cultural respect	Converts politeness into soft power
Nominalization	意見交換	Formalizes actions	Abstracts agency and responsibility
Topic–Comment Structure	日インドネシア間の連携強化は…	Frames issues as shared topics	Encourages collective orientation

The micro-structural analysis demonstrates that Japanese diplomatic discourse on Instagram is carefully engineered through linguistic choices that systematically align with soft power ideology. At the lexical level, the dominance of collaboration, peace, development, and cultural lexicons constructs a diplomatic narrative grounded in cooperation and mutual benefit. Rather than foregrounding authority or strategic dominance, Japan positions itself as an equal partner engaged in shared problem-solving. This lexical strategy directly supports Nye's (2004) concept of soft power, in which attraction and legitimacy replace coercion.

Modality further reinforces this ideological orientation. The prevalence of hope, desire, and potential modalities allows Japan to express commitment and intention without imposing obligation. Such modalities present diplomatic cooperation as a voluntary and natural progression, thereby preserving the partner's agency. Importantly, the consistent use of polite and evaluative modalities enhances emotional rapport and interpersonal trust—key affective components of successful soft power projection.

Syntactically, the frequent omission of subjects and use of passive constructions minimizes the visibility of Japan as a unilateral actor. By foregrounding actions and outcomes rather than agents, the discourse creates an impression of collective agreement and shared responsibility. This aligns with Japanese cultural preferences for indirectness and harmony, while simultaneously serving diplomatic objectives by reducing perceptions of asymmetrical power.

The extensive use of Keigo (honorific language) is particularly significant. Beyond grammatical politeness, Keigo functions ideologically as a marker of moral conduct, respect, and humility. In diplomatic contexts, these values become sources of moral attraction, transforming cultural norms into instruments of influence. Similarly, nominalization and topic–comment structures formalize diplomatic actions and present them as shared concerns rather than unilateral initiatives, reinforcing consensus-building as the dominant diplomatic model.

When interpreted through the lens of social cognition, these micro-level linguistic strategies reflect deeply embedded beliefs and mental models. Japan conceptualizes itself as a *cooperative power* operating within a fragile global environment that requires dialogue, stability, and collective responses. This worldview is rooted in post-war pacifist ideology and institutionalized through diplomatic communication practices. Consequently, the language choices observed are not merely stylistic but are manifestations of a coherent ideological framework that sustains Japan's identity as a peaceful, responsible, and trustworthy international actor.

In sum, the micro-structural features of Japanese diplomatic Instagram discourse function as subtle yet powerful mechanisms for enacting soft power. Through lexicon, modality, and syntax, Japan consistently communicates attraction, legitimacy, and partnership—demonstrating how ideology is reproduced not through overt statements, but through carefully managed linguistic detail.

Social cognition in Japanese diplomatic discourse on Instagram

Social cognition analysis explores the shared mental frameworks that guide discourse

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production, including perceptions, beliefs, values, mental models, and ideology. In diplomatic communication, these cognitive structures mediate between social context and linguistic choices, shaping how states represent themselves and their partners. The analysis of Japanese diplomatic content on Instagram reveals a coherent and stable cognitive schema that underpins the micro- and macro-structural features identified earlier. This schema reflects Japan's self-positioning as a cooperative, peaceful, and culturally sensitive actor, particularly in its diplomatic engagement with Indonesia.

Table 4. *Social cognition frameworks underlying Japanese diplomatic instagram discourse*

Cognitive Dimension	Core Assumptions	Discursive Manifestation	Ideological Function
Perception	Indonesia is an equal strategic partner; regional stability is a shared objective	Frequent use of relational terms (日インドネシア間), emphasis on dialogue and cultural exchange	Normalizes equality and partnership
Belief	Diplomacy is most effective through two-way dialogue and peaceful contribution	Lexical focus on cooperation, exchange, and mutual benefit	Reinforces trust-based diplomacy
Social Values	Politeness, harmony, stability, indirectness	Consistent use of Keigo, non-imposing modality, avoidance of confrontational language	Converts cultural norms into moral authority
Mental Models	Japan as a "cooperative power"; diplomacy as consensus-building	Subject omission, passive constructions, collective framing	De-centers dominance and leadership claims
Ideology	Soft power diplomacy; pacifism and non-aggressiveness	Emphasis on peace, development, cultural attraction	Sustains Japan's post-war international identity

The social cognition analysis reveals that Japanese diplomatic discourse on Instagram is grounded in a well-defined and internally coherent set of shared beliefs and mental models. These cognitive frameworks function as the invisible architecture that shapes linguistic choices and discourse organization across macro-, super-, and micro-structural levels.

At the perceptual level, Japan consistently conceptualizes Indonesia as an equal strategic partner rather than a subordinate or passive recipient of policy. This perception is discursively realized through relational framing (e.g., 日インドネシア間) and repeated emphasis on dialogue and cultural exchange. Such framing constructs diplomacy as a horizontal relationship, which is essential for sustaining attraction and legitimacy in soft power diplomacy.

Belief systems further reinforce this orientation. The strong belief in dialogue-based diplomacy and peaceful contribution explains the dominance of cooperative lexicons and non-imposing modalities identified at the micro level. Diplomacy is cognitively framed not as a competitive arena but as a communicative process aimed at mutual understanding. This belief structure legitimizes Japan's preference for persuasion over pressure.

Social values play a central role in translating cognition into language. Core Japanese values—politeness, harmony, stability, and indirectness—are not merely cultural traits but strategic diplomatic resources. Through Keigo, evaluative politeness, and avoidance of confrontational expressions, these values are embedded into diplomatic discourse, enhancing Japan's moral appeal and reinforcing its credibility as a respectful and responsible partner.

The identified mental models further clarify Japan's self-representation. By modeling itself as a "cooperative power", Japan avoids the discursive markers of leadership or dominance often associated with hard power. Diplomatic meetings are cognitively framed as spaces for consensus-building rather than arenas for asserting national interests. This explains the frequent use of syntactic strategies that obscure agency and foreground collective outcomes.

Finally, these cognitive elements converge in a coherent ideology of soft power diplomacy, deeply rooted in Japan's post-war pacifist identity under Article 9 of the Constitution. The emphasis on peace, cultural appeal, and non-aggressiveness reflects institutionalized caution in international relations. Consequently, the linguistic strategies observed are not stylistic choices but ideological enactments that reproduce Japan's preferred international identity.

In sum, social cognition provides the explanatory link between discourse and ideology. The polite, cooperative, and non-imposing language of Japanese diplomatic Instagram content reflects deeply embedded cognitive structures that sustain Japan's soft power strategy and shape how it seeks influence in the contemporary digital diplomatic arena.

Social context of Japanese diplomatic discourse on Instagram

Discourse is never produced in a social vacuum; it is shaped by institutional roles, power relations, cultural norms, and historical trajectories. In the case of Japanese diplomatic content on Instagram, the discourse is embedded within a complex social context that combines formal state diplomacy with the affordances of a public digital platform. This context significantly influences how messages are formulated, what identities are foregrounded, and how power and cooperation are discursively negotiated. The analysis below maps the key social, political, and historical dimensions that structure the production and reception of Japan's digital diplomatic discourse.

Table 6. S*ocial contextual factors shaping Japanese diplomatic Instagram discourse*

Contextual Dimension	Key Characteristics	Discursive Effects	Soft Power Function
Social Setting & Participants	Formal diplomatic events communicated via public social media	Hybrid tone: official yet accessible	Broadens diplomatic reach and legitimacy
Power Relations	Japan holds greater economic and technological capacity	Emphasis on partnership and multilateralism	Minimizes hierarchy and power asymmetry
Social Norms	Politeness, humility (謙遜), harmony (和)	Indirect expressions, keigo usage	Converts cultural norms into attraction
Socio-Political Macro Context	Regional instability, economic uncertainty, strategic importance of Indonesia	Contextual framing (e.g., "amidst global changes")	Presents diplomacy as responsive and necessary
Historical & Cultural Influences	Post-war pacifism, long-term cooperation, soft power strategy	Peace-oriented framing and cultural promotion	Sustains Japan's peaceful international identity

The social context analysis demonstrates that Japanese diplomatic discourse on Instagram is strategically shaped by the intersection of institutional diplomacy and digital public communication. The social setting and participants necessitate a discourse that simultaneously adheres to diplomatic protocol and engages a broad, non-specialist audience. As a result, the language employed is formal yet inclusive, allowing Japan to communicate state-level diplomacy while maintaining public transparency and approachability.

Power relations are particularly salient in this context. Although Japan possesses significant economic and technological advantages, the discourse consistently avoids hierarchical or patronizing language. By emphasizing mutuality and partnership, Japan discursively neutralizes power asymmetry and positions itself as one participant within a multilateral network. This strategy aligns with soft power principles, as influence is exercised through legitimacy and consent rather than dominance.

Cultural and social norms further condition discourse production. The pervasive use of Keigo, indirect expressions, and evaluative politeness reflects deeply embedded Japanese values of humility and harmony. These norms function as both cultural markers and diplomatic resources, enabling Japan to project moral credibility and respect for its partners. In this way, cultural practices are transformed into instruments of symbolic power.

At the macro socio-political level, the discourse explicitly situates diplomatic actions within contemporary geopolitical challenges, such as regional instability and economic uncertainty. References to "global changes" frame Japan's initiatives as timely and necessary responses to shared challenges, thereby legitimizing its diplomatic engagement and enhancing its relevance to both governmental and public audiences.

Historical and cultural influences provide a crucial backdrop to this discourse. Japan's post–World War II pacifist identity necessitates the careful framing of even defense-related cooperation as contributions to peace and stability. Furthermore, the long-standing history of Japan–Indonesia relations—rooted in development

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assistance, investment, and people-to-people exchange—enables the repeated invocation of partnership without appearing opportunistic. Finally, the institutionalized soft power nation strategy, including the promotion of culture and values, directly informs the aesthetic and thematic choices of diplomatic communication on Instagram.

In sum, the social context shapes not only what is said but how it is said. Japanese diplomatic discourse on Instagram emerges as a socially and historically situated practice that carefully balances power, culture, and public visibility. This contextual embeddedness allows Japan to sustain a credible and attractive international identity while effectively advancing its soft power objectives in the digital era.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Japanese diplomatic content on Instagram is a carefully structured and ideologically coherent form of digital diplomacy that systematically operationalizes soft power. Through macro-, super-, and micro-structural analysis, the discourse consistently constructs Japan as a peaceful, cooperative, and trustworthy partner. The dominant themes of defense, economic cooperation, peacekeeping, culture, and development are framed not as assertions of power but as contributions to shared regional and global goals. This thematic framing reinforces Japan's post-war pacifist identity and aligns with Nye's concept of soft power, in which influence is achieved through attraction, legitimacy, and shared values rather than coercion.

At the linguistic level, the study reveals that lexical choice, modality, and syntax play a central role in translating ideology into discourse. The use of cooperative and peace-oriented lexicons, non-imposing and hopeful modalities, subject omission, passive constructions, and honorific language collectively produces a diplomatic tone that emphasizes consensus, respect, and long-term partnership. These micro-structural strategies are not merely stylistic preferences but are grounded in shared social cognition, including beliefs in dialogue-based diplomacy, cultural values of harmony and politeness, and mental models that position Japan as a "cooperative power." As a result, language functions as a strategic resource for shaping perceptions and managing power relations in the digital diplomatic sphere.

Finally, the analysis highlights the importance of social and historical context in understanding digital diplomatic discourse. Japanese diplomatic communication on Instagram is shaped by the hybrid context of formal state diplomacy and public social media, contemporary geopolitical conditions in Asia, long-standing Japan–Indonesia relations, and Japan's post-war pacifist ideology. These contextual factors constrain and enable specific discursive choices, ensuring that diplomatic messages remain legitimate, culturally resonant, and publicly accessible. Overall, this study contributes to critical discourse analysis and international relations scholarship by demonstrating how soft power is enacted through everyday linguistic practices in social media diplomacy, offering insights into how states negotiate influence and identity in an increasingly digital international environment.

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