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**"Normal Cool": Hard and Soft Power in Abe's Japan**

Panel: East Asian Hard and Soft Power

In recent years, Japan has become well known for its “Cool Japan” policy to centrally encourage domestic pride in and foreign consumption of Japanese products. “Cool Japan” is a national branding campaign, typically referred to as an exercise of “soft power.” Of what significance is it that “soft” power and “hard” power are ascending in Japan at the same time? Just as the Japanese government is sending “cute” young women overseas to conduct cultural diplomacy in Lolita costumes under the banner of coolness, the nation has also been taking concrete steps to become a “normal” military power.

In both cases, “hard power” in the form of military normalization and soft power in the form of “Cool Japan” are working to consolidate a feeling of Japaneseness. “Normal Japan” and “Cool Japan,” even if their policies and discourses do not reference one another directly, emanate from a state eager to promote national cohesiveness. This paper will examine “normal cool” in terms of whether the twin national narratives enable or inhibit democratic expression, artistic flows unhinged to the state, and conciliatory gestures toward Asian nations.