

NMUN Japan 2016 : sustaining multilateralism, cross-cultural learning and domestic cooperative internationalism

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NMUN Japan 2016: Sustaining Multilateralism, Cross-cultural Learning and Domestic Cooperative Internationalism

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Abstract

NMUN Japan 2016 was held in Kobe against a backdrop of the re-examination of the value of traditional multilateralism under the Trump administration's new "America First" approach to foreign policy, a rising strain of populism around the world, and growing threats to the promotion of a culture of human rights and sustainable development. The conference offered students from diverse educational and national settings the opportunity to engage in collaborative learning and enhance their skills in international negotiations (Kaufman, 1998) and also strengthened their resolve to maintain the value of multilateralism. Beyond learning the rules of procedure of the committees of the centerpiece of global governance (Karns et al., 2015), the United Nations (UN), conference participants were exposed to Japan's contribution to the UN through its fervent quest for peace and disarmament, promotion of environmental sustainability and disaster risk reduction. As a delegation from Canada, the venue also offered my students a unique cross-cultural learning experience: in engaging with delegates from around the world and, of utmost significance, immersing themselves in Japanese culture. This paper reports on the NMUN Japan experience from a North American perspective by examining the dynamics of experiential learning, cross-cultural interactions among delegates and with the local culture, and how the conference used widespread media coverage in an effort to build new constituencies in Japan for multilateralism and cooperative internationalism, defined as "an orientation toward international affairs that stresses concern for others abroad with whom one should work toward common goals" (Rathbun et al., 2016, p. 125).

Key words: Model United Nations simulations, peace studies, negotiation, experiential learning, cross-cultural interactions

1. Introduction

There is broad agreement that experiential learning is a beneficial teaching tool in introducing students to the successes and even failures of international diplomacy (Sasley, 2010). As the world faces greater skepticism about the value of multilateralism it has become more critical to prepare contemporary students to become active global citizens. Experiential learning encompasses a broad range of activities including simulations, enactive learning or learning by doing through drama (Korosteleva, 2010), games, roleplays and lecturettes. Experiential learning is consistent with a student-focused learning paradigm (Barr & Tagg, 1995), which emphasizes the development of the essential skills of negotiations and enhanced knowledge of the evolving context within which states shape their foreign relations. As has been pointed out by Cusimano (2000, p. 79), experiential learning that is based on “discovery, inquiry, and participation is preferable to passive, lecture-based learning.” National Model United Nations (NMUN) is the premier experiential learning conference in the world, tracing its origins to the simulation of the League of Nations in 1927 (NMUN History, 2017), and offering delegates a learning platform to simulate the intricacies of the work diplomats do to find solutions to the challenges facing the global community. NMUN also contributes to delegates gaining an understanding of the foreign policy stances of a variety of states, and promotes the building of consensus to address global issues. When NMUN is held in a non-North American setting it opens delegates from Canada and the US to a rich learning experience where there is intermingling of diverse cultural and academic backgrounds. Participants enjoy an intense learning of the host country's cultural traits in addition to achieving the usual academic outcomes of engaging in experiential learning under the NMUN banner. A survey of NMUN attendees suggests that more than 90 percent of participants report attainment of the following learning outcomes: Increasing understanding of the complexities of international relations; Increasing knowledge of the functions, structure and limitations of the UN; Expanding knowledge of political, economic and social conditions in other countries; Teaching better understanding of the different perspectives on global issues (NMUN Annual Report 2014-2015, p. 2).

In a sense, NMUN inculcates the value of multilateralism to delegates at a time when its relevance is being questioned as populist politicians rise to the fore around the world. Its international conferences, which are held outside North America, offer delegates an opportunity to learn more about the host country's contribution to multilateralism and

also enjoy its cultural delights. NMUN Japan, hosted by Kobe City University of Foreign Studies (KCUFS) gave North American delegates a unique venue to learn about the host country's contribution to global governance and share in its UNESCO-recognized cultural attractions. While experiential learning in a foreign setting such as Japan must naturally focus on the learning process involving delegates, one must not forget the benefits of media coverage of the conference exposing the Japanese mass public positively toward the value of multilateralism and cooperative internationalism. Indeed a salient feature of the Kobe conference is the comprehensive media coverage – from national to local – of the conference. The Japanese media piggybacked on the conference coverage to raise the public's awareness of the 60th anniversary of Japan's membership of the UN and of the country's impressive contribution to multilateralism. In assessing the Kobe conference, one must look at the different levels at which delegates experienced learning: the individual level of skills and cross-cultural learning in a changing political sphere of skepticism about the UN and multilateralism; learning that is informed by the host state's specific contributions to global governance; and, the learning of the mass public in the host state by the presence of delegates engaged in role-playing as diplomats.

2. Experiential Learning in a Changing International Environment

MacEwan University is an undergraduate university located in Edmonton, the capital city of the Canadian province of Alberta. Six students from the Faculties of Arts and Science, Business and Nursing represented the Republic of Korea at the Kobe conference. Delegates were selected from the UN club, and had no knowledge of the Japanese language nor prior contact with Japanese culture, through travel to the country. All the delegates had attended the NMUN NY conference in 2016, and gained experience in public speaking, diplomatic negotiations, research on position papers, and overall leadership. The differing academic backgrounds of the delegates complemented their common membership in the UN club to spark a sharp interest in the academic benefits of experiential learning. For one thing, their active participation in learning new skills added to other pedagogical methods they have been exposed to in their academic environments. As well, the chance to immerse themselves in the host country's culture and challenge their assumptions and predispositions of Japan was a significant draw for the delegates.

The preparation for the Kobe conference by the delegation of MacEwan University

occurred in an international environment marked by rising populist strains in politics around the world: the Brexit vote in the U.K., growing strength of anti-EU, anti-globalization and anti-multilateralism parties in Europe, and the success of Donald Trump's America-First message in the 2016 US presidential election. Subsequently, reinforcing the new political mood, the new administration has proposed an unspecified reduction in funding for the UN and its agencies and a cap of 25% on US funding for peacekeeping operations (Nichols, 2017). There is also the occasional mention in the US media of voices pushing to defund and replace the UN. One US Republican congressman, Mike Rogers, has introduced a bill called the "American Sovereignty Restoration Act 2017" that seeks to terminate US membership of the UN and prohibits funding of UN agencies.

In the Asian theatre, the international environment was framed by geopolitical concerns around North Korea's missile tests, Japan's redefinition of its military's role, and the country's recovery from the Fukushima and Kumamoto earthquakes. The students also relished the great privilege of traveling to a city that has shown remarkable resilience after the devastating Great Hanshin Earthquake of 1995. Kobe, as the host city, also served as a unique venue to help delegates come to terms with Japan's contribution to disaster risk reduction, which was a conference committee topic. So, as delegates worked to model the work of diplomats in the real world of international relations, they had to take note of the contradictory forces that are driving the world toward multilateral solutions to global problems and those that prefer isolationist approaches and assertions of national interests and a retreat from multilateralism. In this experiential learning in Kobe, delegates had to recognize the context within which the simulation was taking place by being prepared both for the content of their committee topics and the wider developments that shape the activities of the UN.

In due recognition of the changing geopolitical realities in the Asian region, the delegates from MacEwan University had to familiarize themselves with issues around nuclear proliferation and North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missiles program. In fact, the head delegate was asked unexpectedly to give the Republic of Korea's perspective on the nuclear issue in the Security Council during the simulation. MacEwan University delegates also informed themselves of the host state's role in the UN, as well as the debate about its pacifist constitution and effective use of its self-defense force in a changing global environment. Furthermore, as a country with broad experience in

dealing with natural disasters, the delegates learned background information on Japan's efforts to make its communities resilient from disasters. In addition to the committee topics the delegates took time to learn about the sustainable development goals, and also kept abreast of unfolding developments in the US presidential election. Early assessment of the Trump triumph caused the delegates concern about the future of multilateralism and suggested a move to a more isolationist strain in US foreign policy, one that downplayed the value of collaborative multilateral approaches and emphasized the primacy of US national interest. However, the whole post-election rhetoric about Trump and his questioning of the value of multilateralism did not dissuade the delegates from focusing on the importance of the simulation experience in Kobe. It might even have galvanized them in viewing a successful conference as having a positive impact on their own learning process and in highlighting their dynamism and enthusiasm for cooperative internationalism with the mass public in Japan.

The preparation for the Kobe conference went beyond mere acquisition of background knowledge to the MacEwan University UN club organizing “Mini-MUNs” or practice experiential learning sessions where the club members learned by doing and involved a great deal of affirmation, peer feedback, debriefing and reflection on assigned topics. The Mini-MUNs are critical in giving students confidence in public speaking, developing their knowledge of the rules of procedure and building transferable skills for future academic endeavors. Since students do not receive academic credit for their participation, it takes a great deal of commitment and peer support for the Mini-MUNs to achieve their desired purpose. While understanding the simulation rules and wider political changes happening in the world were important, delegates were also attuned to the imperative of attending a conference in an unfamiliar cultural environment. The delegation exhibited diversity not only in terms of differing academic backgrounds but also in ethnicity composition, reflecting Canada’s multicultural essence. It included a Korean Canadian, African Canadian, Turkish Canadian, and the rest European-Canadian in heritage. Nothing in the area of specific cultural training was undertaken for the trip to Japan, but delegates were encouraged to learn a few Japanese phrases for casual interactions with the host students outside the conference setting. The thinking behind this was to allow the students the flexibility to use their communication and life skills to deal with the demands and challenges of a new cultural context.

3. From Edmonton to Kobe: Experiential learning in a cross-cultural context

Using a model developed by James McCaffrey (1986) to allow individuals to develop the skills to be independently effective in another culture, I look at how the MacEwan University delegation coped with the steep learning curve of attending a Model UN in a different culture. The delegates had to come to terms with managing transitions, which addresses “those skills and techniques that can be used to help assess and manage expectations, to reflect on the culture which one is leaving, to deal with any unfinished business (emotional as well as financial), and to develop a practical, concrete strategy for entering another culture (i.e., the first day or week or several weeks in-country).” (McCaffrey, p. 166). As the delegation boarded its Japan Airlines (JAL) flight the transition to Japanese culture began instantaneously with the hospitality of the flight crew to the unexpected envelope of cash that awaited each customer when an unexpected weather event led to landing at Kansai airport instead of Itami airport in Osaka. The customer-first mentality of JAL was a sharp divergence from the treatment one experiences with North American carriers, and a small example of Japanese soft power, an attractive quality that caught the attention of the delegation. In addition, the transition from North America to Japan was eased by the KCUFS volunteers who met the delegation at the new airport to ease any initial cultural shock from lack of facility in the Japanese language. Interestingly, the language barrier for fully interacting with all aspects of Japanese society was not an issue for the conference itself, as all communication was conducted in English. This created an English language bubble at the conference for North American delegates, a situation that helped with coping with the cultural requirements of a new country. The use of English, which is a standard NMUN condition for participation, gave North-America-based institutions a communication advantage over local and non-English speaking delegates, but it also provided local students a substantive avenue to put their English speaking and writing competencies to the test. Remarkably, it was an advantage that the North American delegates did not lord over the local delegates, as my delegates and many English-speaking ones made a special effort to engage in active listening and non-verbal communication with their Japanese counterparts. Getting into an unconscious stereotyping of Japanese and Asian students, a couple of my delegates reported that many Japanese delegates were reticent to communicate their ideas forcefully, were self-conscious and conformist as opposed to the self-direction and free-wheeling approach of their North American counterparts. During committee and caucus sessions my delegates pursued active listening through strategies such as

paraphrasing, summarizing, restating, reflecting feelings (McCaffrey, p. 167) and used non-verbal communication approaches such as the reading of facial expressions, hand gestures, body language, and use of proximity (McCaffrey, p. 167).

During discussions on working papers, English-speaking delegates also made an effort to incorporate the ideas of their Japanese counterparts in the final documents. Having local students serve on conference staff, including Sachiho Tani as Secretary-General also served as a model for local students in terms of coming out of their comfort zones and communicating their ideas and experiences in a conference setting.

In the day-to-day cross-cultural interaction with Japanese society, my delegates commented positively on the courtesy and humility of the people of Japan, the ubiquity of vending machines for a variety of products, the relative cleanliness of Kobe and other Japanese cities, and the fast and efficient *Shinkansen*. The cultural tour of UNESCO world heritage sites in Kyoto and Hiroshima allowed the delegation to see the useful blend of modernity and tradition, and the healthy balance of nature and economic development. In *Miyajima*, an Island near Hiroshima, the beauty of the country was provided by the floating Torii and the *Itsukushima* shrine. Canadian delegates enjoyed the presence of maple trees in their brilliant fall red colors, and also sampled the delicious *momiji* cakes while navigating the streets with the area deer. Japanese society, for North American visitors, exuded what seemed like a profound sense of the people paying attention to detail or what has been described as a state of mindfulness that is “ingrained into the culture for centuries” (Powell, 2017).

In Hiroshima, at the Peace Memorial Park, Japan's place as the only country to experience the dreadful atomic bomb attack was an effective reminder to delegates on the urgency of disarmament. The impact of the bomb on the city and the ongoing pursuit of an agenda for peace and disarmament became the focal point of the address of *Hibakusha* to the delegates. Delegates were also reminded that President Obama had toured the same park during his historic visit on May 27, 2016, a couple of months before NMUN Japan. In Kyoto, delegates were impressed with the visit to see the *Kiyomizu-dera* temple, and followed the guides in observing temple practices. As delegates observed their surroundings and adapted to ambiguous situations, they gained more confidence once the cultural tours ended and the simulation started. Life in Kobe was not as complicated as many delegates expected, partly due to the support offered

by local peers, and by delegates adapting appropriate behavior in performing daily routine transactions such as visiting restaurants in the city, using the transportation system, and initiating conversations with locals. In terms of general observation of Japanese culture, using the terminology of Shalom Schwartz's theory of values, the Japanese seem to treasure "tradition values" of deference to established, familial, cultural, and religious norms and practices (Rathbun et al, p. 127). Furthermore, unlike the cultural backgrounds that North American delegates are familiar with, the Japanese also embrace the "conservation values" of self-restraint, social stability, resistance to change, and deference to established traditions and cultural dictates (Rathburn et al, p. 217).

4. Experiential learning of a host state's commitment to multilateralism

A benefit of having Japan host NMUN is for delegates from North America to learn more about the country's commitment to global governance, specifically its stellar record of support for the goals of the UN as a member for 60 years. As noted earlier, experiential learning involves not just taking on the role of diplomats but also gaining useful insights on the host state's role in the world by listening to local perspectives at conference sessions and from applying knowledge derived from pre-conference resources. Amidst the populist rhetoric around the world, and Japan's own redefinition of its "pacifist image" to allow its Self Defense Force to pursue missions for "collective self defense," the country remains a steadfast supporter of the UN and multilateralism. As a middle power (Seoya, 2013) with a limiting post-war constitution, the UN has been an arena for advancing Japanese soft power values. While it is covered by the US security blanket, Japan's worldview shares many commonalities with neutral states in the sense of "promoting soft power in international relations and of favoring non-violent means of conflict resolution" (Goetschel, p. 316).

Japan joined the UN in 1956 as its 80th member, and has been a sustained supporter of the organization in pushing a culture of peace and being a crucial actor in the development of new norms and being a major financial contributor to the work of the complex facets of the UN's mission. The country has served numerous times as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, and been a strong advocate of Security Council reform as a member of the G4 along with Brazil, Germany and India. In keeping with its commitment to peace, Japan enacted in 1992 an Act on Cooperation for UN peacekeeping that establishes the basis for its involvement in UN peacekeeping,

international humanitarian relief operations and international election monitoring. This law has allowed Japan to be involved in peacekeeping operations, including missions in Haiti, South Sudan, Cambodia, and Timor Leste. Given the changing nature of post-Cold War UN peace operations from inter-state to intra-state conflicts, Japan addressed some of the flaws of the 1992 Act to make its forces have a more robust capability through the *kaketsuke-keigo* (“Coming to the aid of a geographically distinct unit or personnel under attack”) (Katsumata, 2017).

Japan has seen profound contributions from individual Japanese diplomats such as Sadako Ogata, who was UN High Commissioner for Refugees from 1991-2000 and co-chaired the Commission on Human Security with Amartya Sen. In her opening remarks on the 60-Year relationship between the UN and Japan at NMUN Japan, Kaoru Nemoto, Director of the UN Information Centre in Tokyo, pointed to Madam Ogata’s significant contributions and her role in building a new youth constituency for interest in the UN and global issues through her work in the growth of model UNs in Japan.

As noted previously, Japan has also made impact in the area of the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction, a topic that was the focus of a panel discussion at NMUN Japan. Delegates visited the Earthquake Memorial Museum in Kobe. Japan hosted both the second and third UN conferences on Disaster Risk Reduction, leading to the Hyogo Framework for Action in 2005 and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. On security matters, Japan has contributed to the reconstruction of Afghanistan and participated in counter-piracy efforts off the coast of Somalia. Japan's UN role has been most effective in pushing soft power ideas that focuses on the betterment of the lives of vulnerable individuals around the world. This is the hallmark of Japan's human-centered approach, which has been promoted in many UN forums, and included support for Universal Health Coverage. Fumio Kishida, Japan's Foreign Minister has noted, “Sustainable development cannot take place without building societies and nations through the protection and empowerment of individuals” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013). The human-centered approach, and human security in general, is reflected in Japan's support for Africa’s sustainable development agenda as reflected in the policy ideas that flowed from TICAD VI, the first time the conference was held on the African continent.

It is instructive to note that at the level of the state, Japan has hit above its weight with

its UN involvement, but anecdotal comments reported at NMUN Japan sessions suggest that the mass Japanese public still exhibits attitudes that are insular and not consistent with the state-level record. This is where the experiential exercise undertaken in Kobe had an additional purpose of reaching out to the mass public to embrace Japan's place in the wider world and cooperative internationalism. NMUN Japan used widespread media coverage to convey to the wider public the value of the work that the UN does, and the role of experiential learning in building the ethos of global citizenship. The media also used the event as a piggyback to highlight the 60 years of Japanese active role in the UN. Unlike previous NMUN international conferences, the media coverage in Japan was expansive, which suggests genuine pride at the opportunity to host this international gathering and to spread the word about internationalism and Japan's role in the UN. Lori Zenuk-Nishide, one of the conference organizers, notes that there were 27 articles in local and national newspapers, coverage was also provided by local and national NHK TV stations, Radio Kansai and an assortment of free media and sub media. The Kobe City administration astutely allowed one of the committee sessions to be held in City Hall thereby giving conference deliberations further exposure to the mass public.

5. Experiential learning and Cooperative Internationalism in Japan

While the benefits of experiential learning are rightfully focused on the benefits that accrue to participants, it is also useful to mention that NMUN Japan organizers had a broader purpose of sharing the value of multilateralism to the mass public, who tend to be relatively uninformed about global issues and do not follow the details of what actual diplomats do in the UN. Given Japan's long engagement with the UN by successive post-war governments in promoting its values, as well as involvement by Japanese civil society on the disarmament file, it is not unreasonable to assert that there is a strong basis of support for universalism and international cooperation in the country.

Research on the attitudes of the mass public on foreign policy in the US (Rathbun et al., 2016) organizes on the dimensions of cooperative internationalism, militant internationalism and isolationism. This research is applicable to the mass public in Japan that NMUN Japan sought to reach with the wide media coverage of the conference. The reinforcement and promotion of an orientation of cooperative internationalism in a period of growing populism is one that the organizers hoped to

achieve. Cooperative internationalism emphasizes a positive sum or win-win view of international relations. It emphasizes global solidarity and an inclusive identity that is required in the Japanese context for a segment of its population to deal with its perceived insularity and difficulties in accommodating to global imperatives – for instance, the country's low acceptance rates for refugees in a world of growing refugee flows. In using the NMUN Japan to reach the mass public, it contributed in a small way to promoting support for multilateralism, international institutions, global citizenship, international collaboration and other dimensions of cooperative internationalism, although the extent of its success remains to be established.

Since Shinzo Abe took office, Japan has been an active player on the world scene. Abe has enhanced diplomatic outreach to Africa and other developing countries to bolster Tokyo's quest to gain a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. He is also making efforts to gain public support for changes to Japan's post-war pacifist constitution to check China's territorial ambitions and rising power. Abe's government has reinterpreted Article 9 as follows: "If an armed attack against a foreign country that is in close relationship with Japan threatens Japan's security, Japan's limited exercise of the right of collective self defense will not violate Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan." This has led to concerns that Abe's approach risks abandoning cooperative internationalism in favor of militant internationalism. Abe's government rejects this assessment, and the label "positive pacifism" has been applied to the policy of "Proactive Contribution to Peace based on the principle of international cooperation" (Kamiya, 2014). Rathbun et al (2016) quoting Jon Hurwitz and Mark Peffley (1987, p. 1107) point out that militant internationalism assumes "an assertive, militant foreign-policy posture through military strength and... by a desire for a more flexible and accommodating stance through negotiations." There is a segment of the Japanese public that wants Abe to advance militant internationalism over cooperative internationalism as a way to deter China as well as North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile provocations.

In contrast to both cooperative internationalism and militant internationalism, believers in isolationism oppose multilateral entanglements and military engagements while endorsing a nationalist unilateralism. In the US many assumed the Trump America First foreign policy would translate into isolationism, but the early days of the new administration does not suggest complete rejection of multilateralism, although Trump

favors the use of multilateral institutions to advance American interests. There is fear that the US would revert to a time in the mid-1990s when Republican control of both houses of Congress led to an anti-engagement stance on cooperative internationalism, including the withholding of back dues to the UN, reduction in foreign aid, and cut in allocation to the international affairs budget (Clark et al., 2000). Japan appears to have an interesting situation in that many supporters of pacifism oppose militarism and military entanglements but are supportive of multilateralism. Japan's mass public does not endorse the beliefs of isolationism but it suffers from a problem of insularity. There is a demonstrable record in the UN of burden sharing by the Japanese in terms of financial contributions to meet the challenges of global governance, but there is also resistance to large-scale integration of foreign ideas and people into the country, a stance that has limited its potential in advancing its soft power and making greater impact in multilateral institutions. This is why an event such as NMUN in a host country such as Japan assumes a larger significance in terms not only of cross-cultural learning for local students but in using the media to show why multilateralism matters for a more inclusive and less insular Japan. The coverage by the national broadcaster (NHK) indicates a desire to reach the mass public with the message that young Japanese are building the foundation for sustained Japanese involvement with the UN and also effectively using English as the lingua franca in a conference setting.

One thing that is apparent from the experiential learning and the effort to use NMUN Japan to promote cooperative internationalism is that a way out of a sense of insularity for Japan is for English to be taught to a greater degree and its use encouraged as a means to foster linkages with the parts of the world that use it as a means of global communication. Inability to communicate effectively in English could hamper Japan's future assertion of its values in many parts of the world. Japanese delegates who used a global lingua franca in a conference that obliged them to communicate in a foreign language on domestic soil sent a subtle message to the mass public about opening their arms to the world and being conscious about other ways of living and global issues. North American delegates – Canadian and American – in turn discovered the value of learning foreign languages, as efforts to say a few words in Japanese were warmly appreciated by their Japanese hosts. The linguistic challenge became clear in the setting of Kobe City Hall when most of the distinguished Japanese audience had to rely on simultaneous interpretation to follow the simulation, and clapped enthusiastically when one of the delegates said a few words in Japanese.

6. Conclusion

Pedagogically, NMUN Japan provided delegates with the educational outcomes one would expect in a high-value experiential learning conference. Students were not passive participants as they typically experience in a traditional lecture format that is used in many academic institutions. They were actively building consensus through the protracted process of negotiations and learning the benefits of cooperative group work to deal with challenging problems such as strategies to build resilient societies after natural disasters and approaches to address nuclear proliferation. Experiential learning in an international setting lets students take control of the learning process when serving as diplomatic representatives of their assigned states, and allows them to bring the perspectives of those states to negotiate solutions to global problems in a setting of intense cross-cultural learning. NMUN Japan did not disappoint in terms of having students play the role of diplomats, and assert the significance of cooperative internationalism, while developing a deep appreciation of the intricacies of global public policy analysis. The delegates applied the rules of procedure in an atmosphere where oral presentations and diplomatic exchange of views were encouraged. There was the cross-pollination of ideas and experiences as participants came from different national backgrounds with a shared commitment to multilateralism. As Kolb (1984, p. 41) has rightly noted experiential learning is a “process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.”

NMUN Japan was situated in a setting that allowed delegates to bring their differing backgrounds into the culturally-rich society of Japan with a twist: the local students had to adjust to the rigors of using a foreign language (English) whereas non-Japanese delegates had to adapt to the challenges of attending a conference on foreign territory with its associated cultural demands. From its *washoku* (which is on UNESCO’s list of intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity) dining experience to the exquisite gardens that exhibit the *wabi sabi* of Japanese aesthetics, delegates to NMUN Japan were treated to a rich and rewarding cultural experience. The shock of encountering a new culture was eased somewhat by the careful planning of conference organizers in embedding local KCUFS students in the cultural tours and other activities of the visiting delegates. Through careful observation and sensitivity to the local culture (for instance, not being loud in the *Shinkansen*), delegates were able to develop knowledge of Japanese culture and behave in a manner that was culturally acceptable. By coming to Japan my delegates from MacEwan University learned a great deal about Japan's

contribution to global governance and its use of soft power to promote human security, as well as use of its historical position to advance the cause of nuclear disarmament. The delegates also developed tolerance for differing perspectives and cultural norms.

While one cannot readily assess the impact of the widespread media coverage of NMUN Japan on the Japanese mass public or even the effects of Japan's changing view of its role in the world on the public, it is still worthwhile that the conference reached a broader Japanese audience beyond Kobe. Gabriel Almond (1950) may be right that the public's view on foreign policy issues are neither stable nor meaningful, but NMUN Japan gave the mass public a small window to see that this group of local and international delegates places deep importance on cooperative internationalism, and also showcased how experiential learning can "recreate complex, dynamic political processes" (Gretchen et al., 2000, p. 146) and provide innovative solutions to global problems. Perhaps it might have highlighted to the Japanese mass public that cooperative internationalism is worth pursuing instead of isolationism and militant internationalism that is heard in populist rhetoric around the world. On a practical level, it also conveyed a subtle message that learning and using English is a way of breaking Japanese insularity by enhancing communication with North Americans. For their part, North American delegates enjoyed a brief taste of life in Japan: the hospitality of the hosts; the wonders of the UNESCO world heritage sites visited; and the benefits of the cross-cultural learning afforded by the conference. NMUN Japan was a resounding success for the quality of the educational experience for delegates, and tangentially for using the media to share with the mass public the model cooperative internationalism on display at the conference.

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