



The Role of Communication and Culture in the Conflict between Japan and Sea Shepherd

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Abstract. This paper delves into the intricate dynamics of the Southern Ocean conflict (2005-2017), an at times highly publicized confrontation between Japanese whaling vessels and the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. It examines the pivotal role of cultural factors in shaping and driving this conflict. Drawing upon a range of media representations, including television, print, and digital platforms, the analysis underscores how Sea Shepherd's activities, bolstered by substantial support from a dedicated environmental activist subculture, have influenced public perception and action. Central to this study are three distinct cultural perspectives that illuminate the multifaceted nature of conflict and communication. By exploring how cultural underpinnings can both spawn and manifest within conflicts, this paper offers a nuanced understanding of the communicative expressions and cultural dimensions at play in the Japan-Sea Shepherd standoff. The findings not only shed light on this specific case but also contribute to broader discussions on the intersection of culture, communication, and environmental engagement.

Keywords: communication; conflict studies; cultural dynamics; Japan-Sea Shepherd; media analysis.

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1. Introduction

In March 2013, Japan's whaling fleet headed home with the smallest catch on record. For the fleet, this was a great disappointment, but for Sea Shepherd and its founder, Paul Watson, it was a great success.

The Sea Shepherd is a non-profit marine conservation organization that focuses on the protection and preservation of marine wildlife and habitats around the world. Founded by Captain Paul Watson in 1977, Sea Shepherd uses direct action tactics to combat illegal fishing, whaling, and other harmful activities that threaten the health of the oceans (Bose, 2018). Over the years, they have operated a fleet of ships and have employed techniques such as patrolling, documenting violations, and intervening to stop what they see as illegal activities. Their stated mission is the protection of marine ecosystems and the promotion of environmental conservation. However, the construction of an organization's social identity is

not determined by its actions and statements alone, but rather is enabled and constrained by contextual factors, such as the prevailing language and narratives used to describe it. The identity of Sea Shepherd is constructed through competing narratives that can be seen in English and Japanese language media. For example, when viewed in the English version of Wikipedia — a free, web-based, collaborative, multilingual encyclopedia that is the largest and most popular general reference work on the Internet — the group is introduced as follows: “The Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SSCS) is a non-profit, marine conservation activism organization based in Friday Harbor on San Juan Island, Washington, in the United States” (Wikipedia, 2023a) On the Japanese version of the website, they are introduced as follows: Sea Shepherd environmental protection group (or, The Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, popularly named Sea Shepherd, or SS) are pirates (Wikipedia, 2023b). This stark contrast in depiction — a conservation group in English and pirates in Japanese — underscores the profound influence of cultural perspectives and their relationship with communication and conflict.

Conflicts between Sea Shepherd and Japanese whaling ships have been well documented (Becker, 2009). These conflicts, particularly in the Southern Ocean around Antarctica and Australia, have received extensive media coverage on television, in newspapers, and over the Internet. This media coverage was particularly prevalent around the world just before and during 2010 (Peace, 2010). While information on Sea Shepherd is readily available online in both English and Japanese, the interpretation of this information varies significantly between Japanese and English Wikipedia, reflecting diverse cultural lenses.

2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative research approach, focusing on the analysis of media representations to understand the role of communication and culture in the conflict between Japan and the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. The methodology is designed to capture the complex interplay of cultural dynamics, media narratives, and the construction of social identities within this high-profile environmental conflict.

The primary data for this research consists of a diverse range of media sources, including television broadcasts, print media, and digital content from both English and Japanese language platforms. The selection of media sources aims to encompass a broad spectrum of narratives and perspectives, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the cultural and communicative dimensions of the conflict. These media sources include:

- a. Television broadcasts: analysis of television programs, particularly the documentary-style reality series ‘*Whale Wars*’, which has played a significant role in shaping public perceptions of the Sea Shepherd’s activities and the broader conflict.
- b. Print media: examination of newspaper articles, magazine features, and journalistic reports from both Japanese and international publications, focusing on their portrayal of the whaling debate, the actions of the Sea Shepherd, and the cultural underpinnings of the conflict.

- c. Digital content: review of online news articles, blogs, social media posts, and the digital versions of the English and Japanese Wikipedia pages on the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, to understand the role of digital platforms in disseminating and shaping narratives.

At the analysis step, this study employs a thematic analysis to identify and examine the recurring themes and narratives within the media sources. This analysis is guided by three distinct cultural perspectives. First, cultural lens perspective, especially to investigate how cultural biases and preconceptions influence the portrayal and interpretation of the conflict, particularly in terms of moral judgments and the attribution of identities (e.g., conservationists vs. pirates). Second, cultural medium perspective, for exploring how the conflict is sustained and manifested through cultural mediums, examining the role of environmental activism, national identity, and collective values in shaping the actions and perceptions of the involved parties. Third, symbolic interactionism, focusing on the symbolic dimensions of the conflict, analyzing how communication and media representations reflect and shape the identities, meanings, and relationships between Japan and the Sea Shepherd.

The research adheres to ethical standards in qualitative research, ensuring the respectful and accurate representation of all perspectives. Media sources are appropriately, and the analysis aims to provide a balanced view of the conflict, avoiding the perpetuation of biases or stereotypes.

Thus, this study applies a comprehensive approach to exploring the intricate role of communication and culture in the conflict between Japan and the Sea Shepherd. By analyzing a wide range of media sources through a multi-faceted cultural lens, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the communicative expressions and cultural dimensions at play in this environmental standoff.

3. The players

The debate over Japan's whaling activities revolves around the legitimacy of its scientific research claims. While Japan asserts that its whaling is conducted for research purposes and is in line with international regulations, evidence suggests that it may serve as a cover for commercial whaling. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled in 2014 that Japan's whaling program at the time (JARPA II) was not conducted for scientific research purposes (Risch et al., 2019). Genetic evidence has also linked Japan with the illegal trade of protected whales, suggesting that whaling under the pretext of scientific research may serve as a cover for commercial purposes (Baker et al., 2010).

Officially, Japan conducts whaling expeditions for research purposes (Durney, 2020) under the auspices of the Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR, or *Nihon Geirui Kenkyūjo*). The ICR was founded in 1987, shortly after the International Whaling Commission (IWC) implemented a moratorium on commercial whaling in 1986. However, Japan's stance on whaling is supported by its rejoining of the IWC in 1987, allowing it to continue whaling under the auspices of the IWC's scientific committee (Imawan et al., 2021). However, independent research suggests that deliberate bycatch and illegal hunting, as well as illegal importation from Japan, may be significant sources of whale meat, casting doubt on the legitimacy of Japan's whaling activities (MacMillan & Han, 2011). Before the IWC moratorium, Japan conducted small-scale research whaling, catching a total of 840 whales from 1954 to 1986 (Clapham et al., 2007). However, the rise of commercial 'by-catch

whaling' in Japan and Korea has raised concerns about the true nature of these activities (Lukoschek et al., 2009).

The organization Sea Shepherd, founded in 1977 by former Greenpeace activist Paul Watson, operates globally with a stated mission to protect marine wildlife. Sea Shepherd's stance on Japan's whaling activities aligns with the view that Japan's claims of conducting whaling for research purposes are a facade for commercial whaling. Sea Shepherd is thus in opposition to Japan, as their perspective is formed by a stated commitment to aggressive yet non-violent defense of marine life, operating within the guidelines of the U.N. World Charter for Nature (Nagtzaam, 2013). Sea Shepherd's position is further reinforced by their active engagement in protecting various marine species, including whales, sharks, dolphins, seals, turtles, sea birds, and fish, and their assertion that Japan's whaling activities are not genuinely for research purposes (Nagtzaam, 2013).

Moreover, Sea Shepherd's global presence and support from diverse regions underscore the widespread concern regarding Japan's whaling practices (Nagtzaam, 2013). This aligns with the international attention and legal actions taken against Japan's whaling, such as the International Court of Justice's ruling against Japan's whaling program (JARPA II) in 2014. Sea Shepherd's perspective and actions drew further attention to evidence that questions the legitimacy of Japan's whaling activities, contributing to the ongoing discourse on the true nature of Japan's whaling practices (Nagtzaam, 2013).

4. The conflict story

The most publicized confrontations between Japan and the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society primarily occurred from 2005 to 2017 (Mizroch et al., 2009). This period marked a series of high-profile campaigns by Sea Shepherd against Japanese whaling activities in the Southern Ocean, particularly in the Antarctic region. These confrontations gained significant international media attention and were often a subject of controversy and debate.

Between 2005 - 2006, marked the beginning of Sea Shepherd's direct interventions against Japanese whaling vessels. Additionally, between 2007 - 2017, Sea Shepherd continued its annual campaigns, which were named 'Operation Leviathan', 'Operation Musashi', 'Operation Waltzing Matilda', and others. Each campaign involved attempts to disrupt Japanese whaling activities, often leading to confrontations at sea. After 2017, there was a notable decrease in such confrontations, partly due to Japan's temporary suspension of its Antarctic whaling program and changes in the strategies of both parties. However, it's important to note that the specific years of these confrontations can vary slightly depending on the sources and the definitions of 'publicized confrontations'.

Australia has taken Japan to the International Court of Justice in the past, where in 2013, UN judges debated the validity of Japan's scientific whaling program. Outside the courtroom legal battle, however, the Japanese government fought off literal attacks from Sea Shepherd on the high seas. Sea Shepherd has been active worldwide for over 30 years and has been involved in many altercations with governments and private fishing boats around the globe. However, with the advent of their 2008 documentary-style reality television series *Whale Wars* (2008-2013) which followed the group's encounters with Japanese whaling vessels in the Southern Ocean, the group gained an unprecedented amount of fame and notoriety (Robé, 2015).

Whale Wars showed Sea Shepherd engaged in contentious tactics such as throwing chemicals and ramming and boarding Japanese whaling vessels. Moreover, over their existence, the organization has sunk more than ten whaling vessels and damaged plenty more via often violent tactics (Fletcher, 2018). The Japanese ships work in conjunction with the ICR and the Japanese Government's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF, or *Nōrin-suisan-shō*). Therefore, the show could be said to document a protracted conflict between a private group and a sovereign nation. As such, Japan has long called the group eco-terrorists.

Sea Shepherd receives a lot of support from viewers, activists, and fans from around the world (Filisko, 2015). Additionally, much of the media attention in the past was exacerbated due to *Whale Wars*. In 2013, members of Aerosmith appeared on their show and in the media, lauding the group's activities. However, even among allies, support for Sea Shepherd is not unanimous. Former members have denounced the group and accused it of lying to the public and even sinking one of their ships to generate media attention. Also, perhaps trying to denounce any national ties with the group, a 2013 ruling in a United States court declared the American branch of Sea Shepherd pirates (Magnuson, 2014). Interestingly, Watson, himself has chosen to label his organization, paradoxically mind you, as *pirates* and *pirates of compassion* in the past (Stuart et al., 2013). It is important to note that Sea Shepherd does not represent any other single developed country but is seen as a collective product of industrialized nations.

The Japanese government has made appeals to other nations to neither accept nor support the Sea Shepherd's tactics. In the eyes of many Japanese politicians, netizens, and news media outlets, this conflict is perceived to be a cultural one between Japan and the 'West'. This perception of a cultural conflict is built on and enforced by the following: the comparative lack of media attention given to whaling in Norway, Iceland, and Denmark; the UN court battle against Japan initiated by Australia's allegations that Japan was masking commercial whaling ventures under the guise of scientific whaling expeditions; the feeling that the world does not care for the safety of Japanese citizens who are being attacked at sea; the widely stated belief that eating whale is no different than 'Westerners' eating cows or kangaroos; and the fact that the West takes pleasure in watching and supporting a television show that documents the 'heroic' and illegal activities of an all-White crew who attack and endanger the lives of Japanese citizens engaged in legal whaling.

5. What is culture?

To analyze this conflict as a cultural one, it is useful to define what culture is and is not. According to Avruch (2000), culture is not homogenous, not immutable, not uniformly distributed among members of a group, not synonymous with tradition or custom, not timeless, and a person does not possess but a single culture (Menkel-Meadow & Love, 2006). Thinking of culture in this way allows us to do away with simplistic arguments claiming that because whaling is Japanese culture, it is by default justifiable or that all of Australia, North America, and Europe can all be classed as part of a single developed culture that kills and eats animals as they like for meat while simultaneously denouncing whaling. This idea of culture as shifting and changeable can make it difficult to analyze its effects on conflict, so to make the intangible tangible, we will present some metaphorical ways of looking at culture.

LeBaron (2000: 2) uses three metaphors for culture to help describe its effects on conflict: “first, culture as a lens; secondly, culture as a medium for sustaining life; and, lastly, culture as a symbolic, interactive system, both shaping and reflecting identity and meaning.” These three metaphors for culture can be applied to Japan and Sea Shepherd.

5.1. Culture as a lens

After World War II, Japan both saw whaling as an abundant source of protein and a lucrative resource that could be used to help feed and rebuild post-war Japan. With the advent of environmentalism and save-the-whales campaigns, the world began to see whales primarily as an endangered species. “Just as a coloured lens distorts other colours on the spectrum, so our cultural lenses show us the things we expect to see and obscure those we do not expect” (LeBaron, 2000: 2).

When Japan and the other various countries look through their cultural lenses at whales today, they may see very different things. Many developed countries feel a great shame for hunting many species to near extinction and feel they have a strong obligation to protect these large intelligent mammals, not only to prevent that from becoming extinct, but also because they perceive these animals to be on a higher level of sentience or intelligence than others. The Japanese see things in much the same way, except that they do not believe an animal’s intelligence alone sets them apart from other animals. Therefore, when engaging in dialogue on the issue, both cultures come to the table with different expectations: the Japanese come ready to talk about natural resources, and non-Japanese come ready to talk about morality. These cultural lenses cannot easily be removed or changed – this is perhaps why Japan has trouble fathoming the concept that Sea Shepherd feels they have any kind of moral authority - but by trying to look through each other’s, perhaps there is a chance that they can reach a better understanding of each other’s position.

5.2. Culture as a medium

Culture can be seen as a medium that “sustains the mental, moral and economic equipment for life” (LeBaron, 2000: 7). To better understand this concept, LeBaron looks at culture as a medium in which one grows, something that changes with the environment, and something that is ultimately life-sustaining. Therefore, culture is always relevant and always changing. Sometimes values and norms are connected to environmental stability, but even if the environment changes and the norms and values must change with it, the culture still survives.

To understand Sea Shepherd, we need to realize that it was formed in a culture that fostered environmental activists. Various commentators have stated that they are a “radical environmental group” (Bose, 2018). The founder came out of Greenpeace at a time when it was a radical and sometimes violent environmentalist group (Oslund, 2004). Such a group could not have existed a few decades earlier, but changes in the political environment allowed for such groups to form and thrive. As times have changed, so has Greenpeace. Sea Shepherd, on the other hand, has thrived on the money and support derived from a transnational radical environmental activist subculture captivated by their exploits on television and the Internet. This support has allowed the group to prosper outside the limitations of a single nation, which alone might not support them.

This culture is in direct conflict with Japanese culture, which is largely limited to a single nation. Japanese culture does not celebrate the roles of activists. It is a collective culture that values consensus and sees such activities as threatening the harmony and stability of the group. It is also a Confucian culture that respects and puts trust in hierarchies and the government. Let us look historically at the Meiji Era or even post-World War II. It is also a culture that has shown a remarkable ability to adapt and change without losing its sense of cultural identity. Specifically, it has changed while largely modeling itself on non-Japanese systems of government and economics. This shows the life-sustaining function of culture as a medium. Adapting as it has too many non-Japanese habits and systems, it is perhaps not surprising that they see little need or value to change their current practices to suit the moral demands of a non-Japanese activist group that does not operate under the formality of a single nation. It is as if Japan and the West have been in an intimate relationship for a long time, and then suddenly, the West's estranged cousin comes out and starts telling Japan how to keep its house.

5.3. Culture as an intimate relationship

LeBaron looks at the metaphor of a relationship to explore culture as an interactive system that both shapes and reflects identity and meaning (LeBaron, 2000: 9). In much the same way a couple's argument may reveal much deeper information about the individuals and the nature of their relationship, so can a conflict symbolically reveal much about how one culture sees itself and how its perceptions are shaped. She writes:

Deep-rooted, apparently intractable, conflict always involves more than material resources and communication; rather, it is intricately linked to the symbolic level of identity and meaning-making, thus rendering them the least amenable to change because identity and meaning are so fundamental to our sense of self and position in the world. The issue for the intervener is how to understand and work with these symbolic dimensions (LeBaron, 2000: 10).

By looking at how Sea Shepherd and Japan interact and express themselves, we can get a better sense of how they see themselves and each other in the conflict.

In Japan, the ICR English website media section says that "Whilst the whale research programs conducted by Japan are perfectly legal in accordance with the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, the Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd Conservation Society groups have been sending their ships to obstinate and repeatedly harass, interfere with, and sabotage our research in the Antarctic" (The Institute of Cetacean Research, n.d.). This style of communication is consistent with most of their media releases and press statements at IWC meetings. Their language focuses on the legality of their actions and the denunciation of Sea Shepherd and their aggressive tactics. This is a clear example of Japan communicating that for them, the conflict is related to justice, and they are the victims. It is also an example of framing: legal frame v. moral frame.

Symbolically, this could be an expression of Japan's desire to maintain or save face in the eyes of the international community. Facework concepts that are relevant to needs include "a certain amount of freedom and latitude to make decisions, (2) inclusion and acceptance by others, and (3) belief in [one's] own abilities and effectiveness" (Littlejohn & Domenici, 2001: 112).

If Japan were to comply with the demands of Sea Shepherd, they would be losing what little freedom they have to make decisions about and engage in whaling. This would be embarrassing for an entire nation to give up its internationally recognized legal power because of threats by a small private group of non-Japanese. The fact that they are non-Japanese may further hurt Japan's ego, as Japan has been described as having something of a 'foreigner complex' that makes communication with non-Japanese difficult and even unpleasant (Kowner, 2004).

On the other hand, Japan also has a desire to have its actions and interests accepted and legitimized by the international community. Japan feels it has many good points on the issue of sustainable whaling that are simply not heard by the West (Catalinac & Chan, 2005).

Also, caving into Sea Shepherd's demands could be interpreted as a sign of Japan's lack of ability or effectiveness as a nation. This is a particularly sensitive topic now, as China has overtaken Japan as the largest economy in Asia, and Japan is engaged in land and fishing disputes with China, Russia, Korea, and Australia.

Going to Sea Shepherd's Japanese/English website, we get a sense of how they view and communicate the conflict. "We do not oppose Japanese or Norwegian whaling; we oppose illegal whaling as defined under international conservation law [...] The Sea Shepherd Conservation Society operates outside the petty cultural chauvinism of the human species. Our clients are whales, dolphins, seals, turtles, sea-birds and fish [...] We are not anti-any nationality or culture. We are pro-ocean, and we work in the interests of all life on Earth. 'We only oppose criminals and criminal operations'" (seashepherd.org, 2014). Sea Shepherd uses language that tries to secure them in a place that is transcendent of culture. They show an awareness of the greater Japanese media's accusations that they are racist or discriminatory and try to displace those ideas by appealing to a higher moral plane of protecting animals. There is no legal battle for them because they are not arguing over the legality of Japan's whaling; rather, they are acting on the premise that Japan's whaling is illegal. We can see that they see themselves as fighting a moral battle.

There are similar ideas about facework at play with Sea Shepherd. Because they have labeled themselves as activists and outlaws and proclaimed commitment to extreme views and actions, it would be difficult to turn back or change. They have created this image or brand for themselves, which brings in their supporters. To suddenly recognize IWC laws would limit their ability to chase Japanese vessels, make them appear as sellouts in the eyes of their fans and supporters, and reduce their ability to carry out their proposed objectives.

6. Communications and conflict

Much of what is going on between Japan and Sea Shepherd could be seen as a data conflict, which is considered to be caused by a lack of information, misinformation, different views on what is relevant, different interpretations of data, and different assessments of procedures (Littlejohn & Domenici, 2001: 12).

There is a lack of information, primarily in the media. English and Japanese journalists are selective about what they translate, so very often there is just a reiteration of previous statements in the media. The media's role is particularly important, because of Sea Shepherd's existence as a private organization. They are media savvy and use television and online media to reign in support and money from all over the world. Japan, on the other

hand, primarily communicates their position to governments, which have little or no control over Sea Shepherd's actions once they are in international waters, making them ineffective.

There is also a lot of misinformation going around online about what whales are and are not endangered, what Japan's whaling research entails, how Sea Shepherd uses editing and drama to garner support, and what non-Japanese and Japanese really think about whaling. This misinformation can make genuine dialogue difficult.

When it comes to Japan's research methods and results, there are also arguments about what kind of information is relative, how different information is interpreted, and different assessments of procedures (Gales et al., 2008). If there were not, then Australia would not have taken Japan to the International Court of Justice (Peel, 2015).

As the media focuses more and more attention on Japan's activities, Japan is becoming more and more defensive. Organizations like Greenpeace and newspaper editorials have suggested that the more pressure Sea Shepherd puts on Japan, the further they are from changing the minds of Japanese people and thus could be doing more harm to whales in the long run. Twenty years ago, whaling was not such a big issue in Japan, but since 2008, the conversation has existed. Specifically, the media, citizens, netizens, and politicians see Sea Shepherd's attacks on whalers as an attack on all Japanese culture.

7. Facework as the key: media as a potential mediator

Mediators must be sensitive to social and cultural issues of face, or one's feeling of being honored and respected (Littlejohn & Domenici, 2001). Littlejohn and Domenici (2001: 187) suggest "four qualities that characterize effective conversations: collaboration, power management, process management, and a safe environment." If these are thought to be essential to creating a positive facework environment for a mediator, then perhaps these qualities could also be applied in media to encourage constructive dialogue.

Over the years, Japan's official communications appearing in English language media have ranged from tactless to silent. In 2013, mainstream news outlets repeatedly played clips of Mr. Yoshimasa Hayashi, the Harvard-educated Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, saying in English that 'whaling is part of Japanese culture', as if this statement alone should have been enough to end the debate. All the while, whether being condemned or lauded, Sea Shepherd got non-stop media attention and sound bite opportunities that reinforced the dominant English language narratives on the issue of whaling. Rather than educate the viewer, these media communications only feed into existing dominant narratives. A meditative approach would address issues of face, respecting the positions of both sides, and require English media outlets manage the process of communication between them.

In terms of power management, Japan requires empowerment to express themselves in English and develop constructive controversy where stakeholders can "openly and cooperatively debate ideas in a spirit of improvement rather than personal attack" (Littlejohn & Domenici, 2001: 190). However, media outlets have no incentive to facilitate this. Therefore, Japan could initiate their own media campaign to proactively address the perspectives that dominate English language discourse, such as moral concerns. This would be a departure from its current strategy of mostly ignoring or deflecting such concerns. Avoidance can be an effective approach to communicative conflict when the issues or people involved are judged to be unimportant. However, it is a poor long-term strategy for

addressing such a longstanding issue and winning over the hearts and minds of Sea Shepherd supporters, as even silence has the potential to damage Japan's reputation, as it may be considered obstinate or cold. A media campaign amplifying Japan's voice could help to mediate communicative conflict by signaling a willingness to engage, but would require process management, starting with the question, "How can we best communicate about this project in a way that works effectively?" (Littlejohn & Domenici, 2001: 190). It would also require a safe environment, such as platforms to make sure that Japanese voices are heard, and that those voices address the feelings and concerns of their opposition.

8. Conclusion

For many in the West, whaling is perceived as a moral issue. Sea Shepherd acknowledges that their activities are, at the very least, on the fringes of legality. However, they appeal to a higher moral authority, envisioning themselves in a similar light as freedom fighters or civil rights protestors in Western history. In America, there exists a cultural admiration and support for acting against perceived injustices. This extends to the belief that violating a law can be morally justified if the law itself is deemed unjust.

Conversely, for the Japanese, the issue of whaling is not predominantly moral. While the Japanese hold a deep respect for all animals, they view whales as a manageable ocean resource akin to any other fish species. To them, the notion of singling out whales for special human attachment seems irrational. Their perspective on the conflict centers around justice and the legitimacy of their whaling practices under international law. Japan sees itself as compliant with the law, albeit constrained by regulations they consider to be grounded in sentimentality rather than rationality. Despite their adherence to legal frameworks, they feel unjustly targeted by regulations prohibiting whaling and further victimized by the actions of a private organization that remains unpenalized by international authorities.

According to (Littlejohn & Domenici, 2001), moral conflicts are characterized by profound differences in worldview or ideology, involving deep philosophical disparities where parties' understandings of reality are fundamentally incongruent. Suppose Japan wishes to bridge the communication gap with the West and maintain its international reputation. In that case, it must address and respond to the Western focus on the moral implications of whaling. This response should be articulated in the media rather than solely in legal settings; failing to do so may lead to continued misalignment with global perspectives on the issue, regardless of legal adjudications.

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