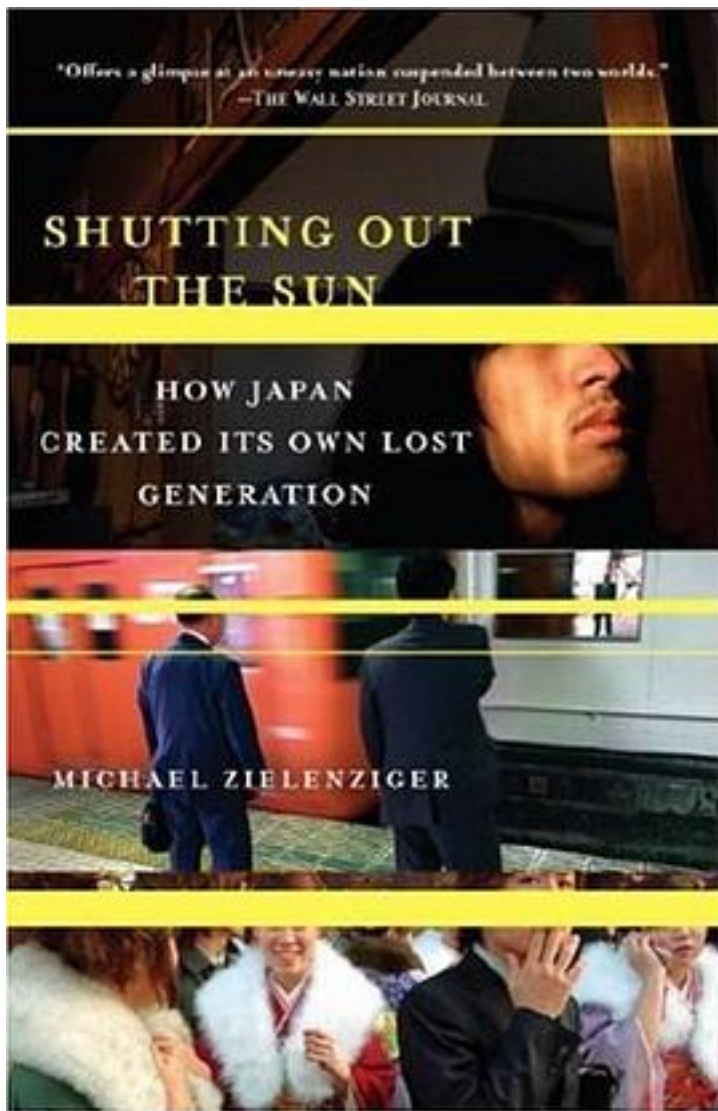


# Shutting Out the Sun



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The world's second-wealthiest country, Japan once seemed poised to overtake America. But its failure to recover from the economic collapse of the early 1990s was unprecedented, and today it confronts an array of disturbing social trends. Japan has the highest suicide rate and lowest birthrate of all industrialized countries, and a rising incidence of untreated cases of depression. Equally as troubling are the more than one million young men who shut themselves in their rooms, withdrawing from society, and the growing numbers of "parasite singles," the name given to single women who refuse to leave home, marry, or bear children.

In *Shutting Out the Sun*, Michael Zielenziger argues that Japan's rigid, tradition-steeped society, its aversion to change, and its distrust of individuality and the expression of self are stifling economic revival, political reform, and social evolution. Giving a human face to the country's malaise, Zielenziger explains how these constraints have driven intelligent, creative young men to become modern-day hermits. At the same time, young women, better educated than their mothers and earning high salaries, are rejecting the traditional path to marriage and motherhood, preferring to spend their money on luxury goods and travel.

Smart, unconventional, and politically controversial, *Shutting Out the Sun* is a bold explanation of Japan's stagnation and its implications for the rest of the world.

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