Political Communication in Japan

Political Communication in Japan:

Democratic Affairs and the Abe Years

Edited by

Suzuki Takeshi

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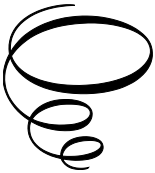

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NOTE ON JAPANESE NAMES

Throughout this book Japanese people's first names follow their family name, such as Abe Shinzō, using the correct word order in Japanese.

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PREFACE

THE VALUE OF STUDYING POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN JAPAN

THOMAS A. HOLLIHAN

This volume examines political discourse and communication in Japan, especially focusing on the short and somewhat disruptive terms of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and the long and successful rule of Abe Shinzō of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Despite the close political ties that have existed between Japan and the United States since the end of World War II, few communication scholars have undertaken studies published in English of Japanese politics, campaigns, or public speeches. This edited volume addresses this gap in research and offers insightful and important critical discussions of the rhetoric created to shape some of the most significant issues in Japan over the past roughly two decades. Essays in the volume cover a wide range of topics and a great deal of ground. Topics include the dynamics of new campaign communication technologies and strategies, constitutional disputes regarding Japan's military capabilities, ideological controversies differentiating left-leaning politicians and those on the right concerning Japan's future, discussions of the threats that Japan faces from North Korea and a rising China, and the rhetorical strategies to mobilize the public to counter the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Historical Ties between Japan and the United States

Scholars in the United States should have significant interest in Japan's political communication given the unique history that binds these nations together. Indeed, Japan's Constitution was drafted to achieve U.S. goals and objectives and to assure that Japan remained a democratic nation and a U.S. ally. During the U.S. military occupation following the conclusion of World War II, General Douglas MacArthur, as commander of U.S. military forces,

presided over the crafting of Japan's new Constitution. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, MacArthur had three primary objectives in mind in the formation of the new document: he intended to "make the emperor accountable to the Japanese people, eliminate Japan's ability to wage war, and create a parliamentary system akin to the British system, abolishing the inherited power of Japan's aristocracy" (The History of Japan's Postwar Constitution, 2022). MacArthur turned to a subordinate, General Courtney Whitney, The Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers' Government Section, to oversee the Constitutional process. Whitney, in turn, assigned Colonel Charles Kades to provide the text, and gave him only one week to produce a first draft. Kades, and his staff, were said to have been shaped by the progressive politics of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, and they used this opportunity to address such diverse issues as "women's rights, land reform, and the breakup of the *zaibatsu,* Japan's industrial and financial conglomerates. They also sought to establish democratic freedoms: those of assembly, speech, and religion" (The History of Japan's Postwar Constitution, 2022).

Arguably, the most controversial aspect of the draft document was article 9, and a fierce debate over it unfolded. In the draft submitted by the occupying powers, Article 9 called for Japan to "abandon force as a means for settling international disputes." Many legislators in Japan's Diet, who would be asked to affirm the new Constitution, enthusiastically supported this idea to demonstrate Japan's commitment to peace and stability. Others thought the wording went too far. Ultimately, a compromise was proposed, and the second paragraph was amended "to read that Japan would not maintain armed forces for the purposes of aggression, thereby carving out Japan's right to self-defense, as stipulated in the U.N. Charter" (The History of Japan's Postwar Constitution, 2022). The new language was approved by the Diet on October 7, 1946, with only five dissenting votes. A few days later, on November 3, 1946, Emperor Hirohito announced the new Constitution, thus confirming its legitimacy (The History of Japan's Postwar Constitution, 2022).

The new Constitution fundamentally reshaped Japanese politics, culture, and society and reframed the relationship between the people, the government, and the emperor. Emperor Hirohito, and his successors, the

descendants of the Sun Goddess, would no longer rule as the absolute authority. Instead, the emperor would become "the symbol of the state and the unity of the people" (Article 1 of the Constitution). The emperor now has important but primarily symbolic and ceremonial powers. He appoints the prime minister and chief justice of the Supreme Court, convenes the Diet, and meets with visiting royals, heads of state, and ambassadors. As is the case for the royal family in the United Kingdom, he attends many civic events, expresses sympathy for the victims of conflicts and natural disasters, and honors public memories and important civic occasions (Japan's Emperor and Imperial Family, 2021). The post-war Constitution created Japan as a bulwark of democracy in Asia and fundamentally altered its sense of its own national purpose and its relations with its neighbors. It provided the foundation and political stability that permitted the rebuilding of a nation destroyed by war and it enabled the economy to grow into what is now the third largest GDP in the world. Japan remains a resolute ally of the United States and a stable partner in the U.N. system of rules-based order.

Japan's Constitution—like that of the United States—is a stable document that was deliberately crafted in such a way as to make it difficult to amend. Indeed, for over 70 years the Constitution has remained unchanged even though there have been many calls for revision as Japan is challenged to respond to the new problems of the 21st century. Indeed, the Liberal Democratic Party, which despite its name, is actually the more conservative party in Japan, has attempted various constitutional reforms since the mid-1950s, but without success (Constitutional Change in Japan, 2022). Although it may seem odd that the more conservative party seeks to amend the Constitution while the more progressive party defends it against change, it is such because the conservatives want to pursue a more muscular foreign policy for Japan and they invoke historical narratives of a time when Japan possessed a strong military while progressives want to preserve the notion of Japan as a pacifist nation (Ward, 2019). The public speeches and debates over constitutional reform are mentioned in several of the chapters in this volume. Abe's attempts to revise Article 9 in order that Japan might be able to significantly expand its military capabilities are the specific focus of only one chapter, but the issue is either directly or indirectly referenced in several other chapters because it has so persistently been a topic of political

conversations, campaign debates, public speeches, and media coverage of Japanese politics.

As has already been mentioned, despite the close relationship and shared democratic structures and commitments between Japan and the West, and especially between Japan and the United States, few westerners are very familiar with the dynamics of political communication in Japan. This reflects in part, of course, the challenge of undertaking comparative scholarship as differences in political systems, historical experiences, national narratives, and media systems complicate such scholarly inquiry. Given how closely knit together Japan and the United States are, however, in terms of their economic development and trade, their security interests, and their interlinking historical relationship, this is a problem that demands new attention. Both Japan and the United States serve as imperfect but nonetheless significant models of democracy and market capitalism at a time when a wave of authoritarian regimes threaten both. Recognition and understanding of the unique characteristics of politics in Japan will help scholars in both nations, and in other democratic nations, understand each other's unique perspectives and build theories that account for both the similarities and differences in their political practices and institutions.

Politics in Japan

Unlike the United States, which has ricocheted back and forth from moderately liberal to sharply conservative administrations and has recently seen the Republican Party tack increasingly to the right, Japan has been dominated by center-right politics since the mid-1950s. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)—the more conservative of the two major Japanese parties—has dominated over the more liberal Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). The DPJ has come to power primarily when corruption scandals of various types have rocked the LDP. Political campaigns in Japan are party-driven, and the dominance of the LDP means that most people one meets or interacts with in Japan will likely be LDP members (Ikeda & Huckfeldt, 2001). As a result, Japanese citizens may be less likely to expect political differences from new acquaintances and less likely to directly confront or address those differences should they arise (Ikeda & Huckfeldt, 2001). In that political opinions are often expressed within the issue constellations

that define party differences, determining the political positions of independent voters in Japan may be difficult to pin down, and because the Japanese culture is a bit more reticent about expressing potential disagreements, Japanese may be less likely to disclose their opinions to others whom they do not know well (Ikeda & Huckfeldt, 2001).

Political campaigns are also strictly regulated in Japan. Candidates for the House of Councilors and House of Representatives have 17 days and 12 days respectively to openly campaign for office. Japan also strictly limits candidate advertising. Due to these differences, the political environment is far less polarizing or all-encompassing in Japan than in the United States, and as a result, elected officials are allowed more time to focus on governing and policy formation than on their next campaigns. Due to the short campaign periods and the limits on advertising, candidates actively seek direct personal contact with voters and most political candidates communicate with their voters by holding public rallies (Maeshima, 2018).

Although some have lamented that Japanese political leaders are bland and colorless, the word in Japanese is "'*bimyou*', a word as indistinct as a wisp of cloud, as nonbinding as a weather report. . . Bimyou has roots in the Buddhist concept *mimyo*, referring to something of an indescribable wonder. Its widely used meaning is 'subtle,' which has a pleasant literary quality. By 2000, it had morphed into something more colloquially, dismissively bland" (Hilton, 2022). There have been exceptions, however, Japanese politicians whose style, charisma, or discursive appeals broke the mold and reshaped political practices. For example, the former Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei, who served in office from 1972-1974, and who remained a leading figure in the Liberal Democratic Party into the mid-1980s, was considered a "hero" to many rural people because of his skill in articulating their "hopes and grievances" (Tsuzuki, 2000). Sadly, however, Tanaka was also touched by several scandals, and was arrested and found guilty by two lower courts in the Lockheed bribery scandals that rocked Japan during the 1970s. Despite the lower court convictions, however, his appeal remained unsettled before the Supreme Court when he died in 1993 (Johnson, 1986).

Another Japanese politician who was highly regarded for his communication and campaign skills was Nakasone Yasuhiro, who served as Prime Minister

of Japan from 1982-1987. Nakasone is credited for helping rebuild the LDP following the scandals of the previous decade, and for governing Japan during a time of strong economic growth. He is also frequently considered "Japan's Ronald Reagan," because he helped to inspire a new spirit of Japanese nationalism and pride (Tsuzuki, 2000). He also pursued educational reforms, and specifically sought to infuse Japanese school children with a spirit of patriotism and of respect for their elders and for authority (Schoppa, 1991). It is also noteworthy that Nakasone became personally close to President Reagan and to British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, arguably improving Japan's relations and prominence as a close ally to both nations (Sieg, 2019). Nakasone, however, also sparked controversy among Japan's Asian neighbors. He angered the public and governments in China and Korea "when he made an official visit to Tokyo's Yasukuni shrine, where convicted war criminals are honored along with Japan's war dead, on the 40th anniversary of Japan's surrender" (Sieg, 2019). Furthermore, "in a 1978 memoir, Nakasone recalled setting up a 'comfort station' – a euphemism for a military brothel – on the island of Borneo during the war, although he later denied personal knowledge of the facility" (Sieg, 2019).

Koizumi Junichiro was also a noteworthy communicator who significantly altered the style and character of politics in Japan. Koizumi served as Prime Minister and as President of the LDP from 2001-2006. Koizumi will always be remembered for his long wavy hairstyle. An article in the *Los Angeles Times* gushed that "Koizumi's defining characteristic . . . is his shaggy mop of permed hair. Like its owner, the mane shows every sign of having a mind of its own. Koizumi's victory over party insider Hashimoto Ryutaro, known for his '50s-style slicked-back hair, represents the tress-related triumph of freedom over constraint" (Magnier, 2001). Soon, however, Koizumi also came to be known for his "powerful discourses in support of Japan's international proactivity based on closer cooperation with the United States as well as deregulation and domestic reforms" (Hook, 2010, p. 4). Hook describes Koizumi as a "transformational" leader whose "promotion of a more proactive role for Japan internationally, and the implementation of deregulation and 'structural reforms' domestically, helped to set the agenda for future administrations" (p. 1).

Thus, by the time Abe Shinzō became prime minister, first from 2006-2007 and then again from 2012-2020, becoming the longest-serving prime minister in Japan's history, the nation had become accustomed to political leaders who were more highly skilled and strategic in their communication styles. Abe hailed from a staunchly conservative and nationalistic political family. His maternal grandfather was Kishi Nobusuke, who was accused of war crimes by the Americans, but who was released from prison without having to submit to trial. Kishi served as Prime Minister of Japan from 1957-1960 and was a strong opponent of the US imposed Constitution (Rich, 2022). Abe's father also went into politics and served as the Foreign Minister of Japan and as head of the LDP. Abe followed his grandfather and his father into politics, after studying political science at Seikei University in Tokyo and then pursuing a graduate degree in international relations at the University of Southern California (Rich, 2022). Abe, like his grandfather, also sought to amend the Constitution to free Japan from Article 9, and to rebuild its military capability. Although he never succeeded in repealing Article 9, in 2015 he pushed through the Diet a series of new security bills that "would allow Japan's Self-Defense Forces to team up with allied troops to fight combat missions abroad. He also formed a national security council and helped increase Japan's defense budget" (Rich, 2022). The bills were popular among Japan's conservatives but were not well received in China or South Korea, where war-time memories of Japanese occupation remained strong. Abe had also provoked outrage in Beijing and Seoul two years before when he visited the Yasukuni Shrine that honored the dead soldiers who gave their life on behalf of the Japanese empire. Abe was the first prime minister to visit the shrine in seven years, and his 2013 visit, as well as his efforts aimed at Constitutional reforms, made relations among the Asian neighbors difficult. Abe explained his visit to the shrine telling reporters: "There is criticism based on the misconception that this is an act to worship war criminals, but I visited Yasukuni Shrine to report to the souls of the war dead on the progress made this year and to convey my resolve that people never again suffer the horrors of war" (Slodkowski & Sieg, 2013). Tragically, Abe personally suffered the equivalent of the horrors of war. He was assassinated by an assailant armed with a homemade gun while delivering a political campaign speech in the historical city of Nara on July 8, 2022 (Reynolds, Takeo, & Nonomiya, 2022).

Preview of Chapters

Readers will find in this volume chapters that give insight and deepen understanding of the important leadership debates and ideological fault lines that divide the two major parties in Japan. They will also gain insight into the most significant issues and political controversies that have roiled Japan and that have structured voter choice and engagement.

Japan has also faced recent crises and calamities that demanded rhetorical leadership from its elected officials. Readers will gain insight into how effectively Japan's elected officials responded to the Great East Japan Earthquake, the resulting tsunami, and the disaster at the Fukushima nuclear power plant that threatened the entire nation and arguably the planet. The crisis at the plant undermined the self-confidence and even pride that the Japanese people had in their nation's technological superiority and sense of order. In that Japan is also heavily dependent on electricity produced from nuclear power, this tragedy also caused significant insecurity about Japan's future economic growth. Japan prioritizes its energy security and technological ambitions even more than it does its electricity production. Due to the Fukushima crisis, Japan was forced to close its 54 nuclear power plants that produced as much as 30 percent of the nation's electricity. Today 33 plants are again operational, but Japan must import approximately 90 percent of its energy requirements (Nuclear Power in Japan, 2022). Many lives were also lost in this tragedy, and so some of the rhetoric is devoted to memorializing the nation's losses, but it was also a moment for heroic sacrifice as workers were called back to the plant to stabilize it and reduce the risk of a complete meltdown, so it was also an opportunity to celebrate these heroes and to honor their character and dedication to public service.

Readers will also better understand how Japanese politics were altered by the emergence of digital social media and the Internet. The access to online forms of communication gave new power to Japanese citizens permitting them to serve as their own editors and to actively participate in shaping their own news diet while also enabling them to become producers and not only consumers of content.

As already mentioned, Abe Shinzō's ambitious calls for constitutional reforms that would permit Japan to revise Article 9 and become a more capable and significant military power to counter threats from a rising China and from North Korea receive significant attention in this volume. When Japan's Constitution was ratified, both China and Korea were poor, chaotic, and relatively weak nations that did not appear to constitute a threat to Japanese security. Now, of course, China has built a powerful military and has grown its economy to the point that it has surpassed that of Japan and is now the second largest GDP in the world. In addition, under its current leader Xi Jinping, China has become increasingly aggressive and is challenging Japan's Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, and perhaps challenging Okinawa as well. China is also claiming vast areas of the South China Sea. Many Japanese people worry that China is establishing military bases on islands in the South China Sea, and that it could use those bases to strangle international shipping lanes essential to the transportation of both vital imports and exports to Japan, and even directly threaten the Japanese fishing industry, naval forces, and perhaps even Japan's cities. In addition, the despotic dictator of North Korea, Kim Jung Eun, has succeeded in building nuclear weapons and missiles capable of delivering them that directly threaten Japan's security. Recently, Kim Jung Eun has even begun to test fire these missiles over Japan's territory. These nuclear developments have occurred despite the fact that Japan's security partner, the United States, has long promised that it would never tolerate a nuclear North Korean state. These events were taken as a clear argument by Abe for Japan to revise its Constitution and significantly expand its military capabilities. This represented a profoundly controversial position in Japan, a nation that was devastated in World War II and that suffered two nuclear blasts that killed thousands of people, and where the culture is infused with memories of loss and suffering.

The volume also provides an interesting focus on the unique metaphors, political slogans, and clever linguistic choices used to discuss important issues in Japan. The Japanese language is revealed to be a rich source of nuanced messages that are shaped by Japanese literature, history, and culture. The focus on such linguistic devices effectively integrated

rhetorical theories and principles developed in the West to fit an Asian culture.

Finally, like every other nation, Japan has been challenged to create policies and rhetorical strategies to assuage public anxiety and mobilize the public's response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic emerged just as Japan was preparing to invite the world to Tokyo to participate in the XXII Olympic Games in 2020, and because the games represented the investment of millions of yen to expand sports facilities and other major infrastructure projects, the timing could not have been worse. Ultimately, the schedule for the games was pushed back to 2021, and a much smaller version of the games was held largely without international audiences in the stands. The COVID-19 pandemic represented a global test of political leadership. This volume examines the efforts of the Abe administration to protect Japan's citizens, encourage quarantines and social isolation to control the spread of the disease, ramp up health care facilities to provide medical care to those infected, and control feelings of panic and anxiety. Scholars interested in how their own governments responded to the global pandemic can gain insights into the uniqueness of Japan's experiences from this discussion.

Summary

This volume thus represents an interesting and important collection of essays addressing a variety of different political topics, issues, strategies, technologies, and moments of historical crisis in Japan. I believe readers will find these essays informative and useful in deepening their understanding of Japan, its people, and its political institutions.

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE HISTORIC TRANSITION BETWEEN THE LIBERAL LDP ADMINISTRATIONS AND THE CONSERVATIVE ABE ADMINISTRATION

SUZUKI TAKESHI

Over the last 20 years, we have witnessed historic transitions in Japanese politics, including the change of government in 2009, and the longest government in history, led by Abe Shinzō from 2012 to 2020. Now is the time to reflect upon what has happened in Japanese political communication and argumentation. This chapter presents the background information necessary to understand the chapters that follow. Specifically, it introduces readers to Japanese political communication and argumentation before the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) administrations and the second Abe Shinzō Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) administration took office. Both parties attempted to develop a new style of political communication after the popular and charismatic Koizumi Junichirō administration (April 2001—September 2006). One style was performed by the DPJ administrations (September 2009—November 2012), which was rather ideologically diverse to be coherent since they used to belong several different political parties. Although the DPJ's ideograph of *seikenkotai*, or "The Change of Government," in the August 2009 election made it possible to end 54 years of near continuous LDP rule, the DPJ administrations now faced the task of formulating and implementing policy agendas, not just criticizing them (Hook, 2011; Funabashi & Nakano, 2017). Thus, they ended their time in office having accomplished few political achievements. The other alternative to the Koizumi style was performed by the second Abe Shinzō administration (December 2012—September 2020), which was conservative and pragmatic and accomplished a number of domestic and

international items on its agenda (Asia Pacific Initiative, 2022). More detailed analysis of the two alternative styles will be presented and discussed throughout this book. In the end, we hope to provide a comparison and contrast between the two approaches, and critical insights for the future of Japanese political communication and argumentation.

Koizumi Junichirō as a Prime Example of the Televison Age Prime Minister

At various stages in their terms, Japanese prime ministers can point to a high approval rating awarded to them and their administrations by the public. This should not be considered merely a popularity-contest statistic; rather, it represents an opportunity for prime ministers to try to accomplish their objectives and get support for their programs. It is well known that U.S. presidents employ the power of words to advance their agendas and to influence people (Campbell & Jamieson, 2008). Rhetoric has long been recognized as an essential element of power, one that scholars have said enables leaders to fulfill their very public roles of explaining, persuading and inspiring the people they lead. US presidents have often been identified with their political slogans. For example, Franklin D. Roosevelt advocated the "New Deal," John F. Kennedy the "New Frontier," and Lyndon B. Johnson the "Great Society." Although these slogans were collective headings for a number of specific policy programs, they successfully focused the minds of the nation by indicating desirable policy directions, and the respective presidents never hesitated to explain to the public what they were trying to achieve.

Accordingly, there are three points of interest regarding Japanese political leadership. First, Japanese prime ministers should offer their political vision to the public for support, and implement programs based on that public support (Suzuki & Foreman-Takano, 2004). Unfortunately, too many politicians work merely for their own supporters, rather than speaking up for the general public. In the past, Japanese politicians decided everything behind closed doors and with very few people involved. They consulted only vested interest groups, and sometimes railroaded bills through the Diet. Such old-style politics, which turns the voter-representative relationship upside-down, has already lost its political legitimacy.

Koizumi Junichirō, however, declared that he would destroy the old LDP style politics, and he actually did, thus causing "Koizumi fever" among Japanese people. As Ignatius (2001) describes, "Media reports about Koizumi have featured the gee-whiz details that journalists love—his long, wavy hair, his taste for heavy-metal music, the public craze to buy his posters, the millions of people who subscribe to his email newsletter, known as 'The Lion Heart' because of his leonine looks" (p. 18). Accordingly, Koizumi fever functioned as a driving force for the LDP in the 2001 election of the House of Councilors. Uchida (2001) observes: "For years, LDP-centered politics have been the object of public discontent and criticism, creating a deep sense of alienation among the people" (p. 18). Koizumi emerged as a reformer within the LDP. His public demands for the destruction of the usual pork barrel politics provided a blueprint for reforms that promised to end the out-of-date political structures that had been dominant in Japan as they rehabilitated political processes. As a result, the Koizumi administration was regarded as inspirational in moving the collective will of people trying to meet manifold changes in Japanese economic society to break political inertia (Suzuki, 2010). Although his political slogan, "Structural Reform without Sacred Cows," seemed to fulfill the public's rhetorical need, an analysis of its symbolic function has been uncovered by past scholars of communication.

Regarding rhetorical leadership, Koizumi did a good job of forming a consensus that reforms were needed during the House of Councilors election in 2001. It seems, however, that he failed to win agreement on the real issues that it became necessary to discuss as a result. A consensus already existed among Japanese people that they needed to find solutions to the economic crisis. People's interest had already shifted to such issues as how and what political programs should be implemented, and what the consequences of such implementations would be. However, I do not think the Koizumi administration took enough responsibility in explaining the consequences of reform to the public.

In addition, I believe that Japanese Prime Ministers should open the public sphere as a place for public debate and discussion of social and political issues (Suzuki & Foreman-Takano, 2004). Of course, the mass media should provide a public forum where politicians, intellectuals, and other

concerned citizens can join in. Unfortunately, the public sphere is relatively inactive in Japan. Although Question Time between the prime minister and opposition parties was introduced in the Diet on February 23, 2000, it was conducted only seven times that year, far fewer than the approximately 30 times a year that takes place in the British Parliament. The growing number of *mutohaso*, or unaffiliated voters, is another indication that the people are not given enough information or arguments about each party's platform so that they can decide which to support.

Concerning the public sphere, members of Koizumi's administration were active in identifying problems that existed, but were far behind schedule in disclosing facts about the privatization of public corporations. This does not necessarily mean, of course, that the Koizumi administration could have carried out every reform within the benchmark "first 100 days" of its administration, but it does mean that it should have outlined the priority list of proposed reforms during the honeymoon period. Without this explanation concerning priority, the media began to harshly criticize the administration. People are willing to endure hardships only if it appears reforms will bring about positive change. It is the media's role, however, to take an active role in setting up public forums where politicians, intellectuals and concerned citizens can exchange opinions and engage in public debates. Mere coverage of the prime minister's administration is not sufficient.

My point is that Japanese prime ministers should exert their utmost efforts to win and maintain public trust both domestically and internationally (Suzuki & Foreman-Takano, 2004). Philosophers tell us that it is often necessary to find "a right means to moralistic ends". Clearing up domestic and foreign suspicions about where Japan is trying to go in terms of education, economy and industrial development requires disclosure of information and open discussions of how the status quo can be changed. Thus, the prime minister must identify himself with honesty and commitment to improvement in a way that is unmistakable and can be understood by the public.

On this point, Hook (2011) argues that domestically, "the Koizumi administration aimed at consolidating a neoliberal approach to questions of

political economy through reform and deregulation" (p. 7). He (2011) goes on to say:

> This brought about a shift in the boundaries between the state, market and society, with the market being given greater priority as a way to try to revive the economy. Three elements are central to the deregulation and structural reforms introduced by Koizumi: reform of the postal services and quangos such as the Japan Highway Public Corporation; decentralization of power to local authorities, with reduction of central government subsidy and increase in local tax-raising powers; and deregulation in such areas as education, medical care, and so on. (p. 7)

When it comes to the issue of policy decision-making, as mentioned already, Koizumi repeatedly and rather simplistically stated, "We have to endure the current economic difficulties." He did not delineate how prescriptions would work to cure Japan's "disease". If Japan needed surgery, Koizumi should have explained to the people why it was necessary and how it would work in conjunction with rehabilitation programs.

By labeling Koizumi's rhetoric as "Koizumi theater", Sakaiya (2022) contends that it was a product of the age of "TV politics" by saying that Prime Minister Koizumi was frequently featured in soft news programs, such as variety shows (which treat politics as entertainment), and, as a result, gained support from *mutohaso*, or unaffiliated voters. In fact, his "Communication Team", or media strategy team, of the LDP led by Sekou [Hiroshige] placed an emphasis upon media controls, such as the selection of members for TV programs, making commercial messages, and media training for new faces (new or young recruits) (pp. 90-91). Thus, Koizumi not only knew how photogenic he was, but also how soundbites could appeal to the TV age audience.

Ōtake (2003) defines Koizumi's style of populism as "a 'theatrical' political style where, by assuming a dichotomy between 'ordinary people' and the 'elite,' 'good' and 'evil,' or 'friend' and 'enemy,' a political leader takes the side of the ordinary people and performs the role of a 'hero' who fights against the enemy" (pp. 118-119). These strategies are rather out-of-date in the age of the Internet, but this kind of populism worked well during the Koizumi administration (See also Suzuki, 2010).

On the other hand, other LDP prime ministers did not have the rhetorical talent and charismatic character that Koizumi displayed throughout his administration. Consequently, the first Abe administration (September 2006—August 2007), the Fukuda Yasuo administration (September 2007—September 2008), and the Aso Taro administration (September 2008—September 2009) lasted only one year each, respectively (Asia Pacific Initiative, 2022). This pattern of short-lived LDP administrations exposed a lack of human resources, and gave an impression that a change of government was needed, thus, raising the public expectation for the DPJ to take power (See Table 1). For instance, Kobayashi (2012) explains that two myths existed in Japan: "The Change of Government" myth and "Two-Party System" myth. That is to say, "If we make a two-party system, it leads to frequent changes of government so that life may improve. Is it really true, however?" (p. ii). He concludes that without tangible policy changes, the change of government is merely a power struggle, and makes no sense to the electorate. Namely, if the DPJ really wanted to achieve a two-party system in Japan, I believe that they needed to decide *tairitsujiku*, or an axis of opposition, between the two major parties. The axis of opposition, creating a basis of making their policies coherent, could be "new liberalism vs. welfare-liberalism", "silver democracy vs. green democracy", "metropolitan centered" vs. "local centered", or a combination of the above. Without making such an axis of opposition that its members may generally agree on, it is unlikely that Japan can achieve a two-party system such as the one between the Republicans and the Democrats in the United States, or that between the Conservative Party and the Labour Party in the United Kingdom.

Even though the manifesto as a contract between the public and government worked in the favor of the DPJ at the 2009 election, its members suffered from a manifesto dilemma when starting new programs, especially when the 2008 Lehman Brothers Shock caused a significant revenue shortage. Nakakita (2017) points out:

> the manifesto became the DPJ's "contract with the people," complete with a roadmap, list of potential resources, and detailed numbers." The new administration thus found itself trapped. Any amendment to the manifesto in response to changed circumstances, no matter how slight, drew fierce