Japanese Politics Today

From Karaoke to Kabuki Democracy

Edited by
Takashi Inoguchi
and Purnendra Jain

<center>1</center>

Prime Ministers

Takashi Inoguchi

Introduction: Are Japanese Prime Ministers Inherently Weak?

When Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was abruptly hospitalized for two weeks in September 2007, the *Financial Times* commented that Japan might be able to function without a prime minister because Abe had not even appointed an acting prime minister. Abe's chief cabinet secretary provided bedside briefings to him for two weeks, at the end of which Abe resigned from office.[1] This event and other similar examples of Japanese prime ministers give sometimes the impression that Japan is a country without a leader. Karel Van Wolferen's writings exemplify this view well.[2] In examining three recent Japanese prime ministers—Shigeru Yoshida, Kakuei Tanaka, and Junichiro Koizumi—I make two points:

1. That the political system of Japan carries heavy legacies from the early modern period and that the floundering of Japanese-style absolutism in the late sixteenth century paved the course of Japanese political development in a fragmented and fissiparous fashion.[3]
2. That the effectiveness of a prime minister to forge a solid coalition in harmony with the spirit of his time while in office is key to his ability to overcome the limited constitutional and institutional authority allocated to the Office of Prime Minister.

I chose Yoshida, Tanaka, and Koizumi because they represent the three distinctive periods since 1945 and thus need to be examined carefully according to historical contextual differences:[4]

1. Military occupation and economic reconstruction (1945–1960);
2. Strong economic growth (1960–1985); and
3. Globalization (1985–2010).

First, I summarize the early modern legacies of the Japanese political system pointing to the quasi-federal nature of bureaucratic dominance.[5] Then I characterize the three periods of the post-1945 Japanese political system, focusing on the support base, priority policies, the predominant government ministry, public sentiment and concerns, and reasons for supporting opposition parties.[6] Third, I depict Yoshida, Tanaka, and Koizumi as prime ministers representing each of these three periods, illustrate how effective coalition formation strategies do make a difference to the strength and weakness of prime ministers, irrespective of constitutionally prescribed, institutionally embedded, and historically carried-over structures within which each prime minister has to act.

Japan's Early Modern Legacies

By early modern legacies, I refer to the unsuccessful attempt in Japan to establish an absolute monarchy as done in early modern Europe. Instead, the Japanese political system retained the late medieval, feudalistic fragmentation of power during the early modern period (1603–1867) and the modern period (1868–1985).[7] Ieyasu Tokugawa, prevailed over 300 domains with a quasi-monopoly on external commerce, diplomacy, and defense in his hands. The era of Pax Tokugawa (1603–1867) was achieved through a quasi-federalist scheme, Japanese style. A sharp distinction among the four classes—warriors, peasants, artisans, and merchants—existed, with the warriors mostly disarmed and assembled into the castle towns of domains where their duties were defined primarily as bureaucratic. The key feature of domain governance is bureaucratic authoritarianism that was clannish in nature. Each domain was headed by a domain lord who organized his bureaucracy based on the idea of the extended family with warriors-cum-bureaucrats capping the structure of the domain.[8] Another key feature is the democratizing potentials of bureaucratic authoritarianism in the domain.[9] As the task of governance in the domain expanded gradually in tandem with the rise of the population and increased agricultural production, the warrior class category loosened to include rich peasants and merchants, especially as domain finance was intermittently tight and lending to the domain became a common business of rich merchants. In 1603 the warrior population accounted for 3 percent of the population, but in 1867, this class accounted for 7 percent. More important to the democratic potentials of this type of bureaucratic authoritarianism in a domain is the decision-making mode of collective discussion among senior bureaucrats whose highest priority was the protection and promotion of organizational dignity and interests, but not necessarily loyalty to the domain chief.[10]

Quasi-federalism, organizational decision making based on the conception of an extended clan, and inclusive authoritarianism are the three central features of early modern, modern, and postmodern Japanese politics. These features have manifested themselves time and again. Quasi-federalism metamorphoses itself into a federation of bureaucratic agencies. Each bureaucratic agency is semisovereign, although not necessarily the Office of the

Prime Minister. Organizational decision making based on the concept of an extended clan is succeeded by each bureaucratic agency, not necessarily the prime minister's decision. The scope of power available to the prime minister is considerably limited and occasionally only slightly more than nominal. The same holds true for inclusive authoritarianism. Although authoritarianism metamorphosed into democracy through the years, the impetus to include more clients under its umbrella did not decline under democracy.[11]

In 1868 and the ensuing years, quasi-federalism and organizational decision making with extended clan conception and inclusive authoritarianism were retained in modified forms. The transition of *haihan-chiken* (abolish domains, establish prefectures) into more or less semisovereign bureaucratic agencies is important. Replacing domains and centralizing prefectures came naturally. Semisovereign, bureaucratic agencies came, at least, initially in the form of Meiji Restoration leaders capturing government posts and positions and attracting like-minded people or nonstrangers from their home domains to work with them. For instance, the army was heavily Choshu-dominant and the navy was Satsuma-dominant. Even with the equalization of the four classes after 1868, the former warrior class dominated government. Up until the 1920s, more than one-half of upper stream civil servants came from warrior families.

In 1945 Japan unconditionally surrendered to the Allied Powers led by the United States. The United States wanted Japan to rule itself under the general direction of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, General Douglas MacArthur. With the exception of the army, the navy, the Internal Security Police, and some war-tainted politicians and high-ranking bureaucrats, much of the imperial service was retained. The emperor's status was changed dramatically from a sovereign king to a living national symbol through the abolishment and replacement of the Imperial Constitution with a new constitution. Quasi-federalism among bureaucratic agencies did not change at all with each agency remaining broadly semisovereign in its policy area.

Core elites of the bureaucracy continued to be from the warrior class of the early modern period. The modern Japanese political system evolved around the bureaucracy. That explains why the modern Japanese political system has been fragmented, fissiparous, and decentralized at the very top level of government by semisovereign bureaucratic agencies, why prime ministers (or domain lords) have never been like the descendants of absolutist monarchs in Europe or autocrats in China, and why the modern Japanese political system has been able to adapt to environmental changes at home and abroad without jeopardizing its basic continuity. Yet the three features (quasi-federalism and organizational decision making with extended clan conception, and inclusive authoritarianism) have not changed as much for the bureaucracy. From the prime ministers' perspective, the three features manifest themselves as follows: that is, prime ministers are like domain chiefs. They do not necessarily enjoy the power of the highest authority. Prime ministers are constitutionally and institutionally weak. Prime ministers give broad directives to cabinet

ministers but not detailed instructions. Prime ministers must obtain consensus from all cabinet ministers before cabinet-sponsored bills are sent to the National Diet. If a cabinet member resists signing a proposed bill, then she or he must resign from office or the entire cabinet. The prime minister is no exception to this rule. Only when the prime minister exercises his authority with exceptional tact and good timing, can he be very powerful. Yet his power is never guaranteed.[12]

The path dependence of the modern Japanese political system is underlined in this chapter and book with some inevitable dissonance from what the more conventional view of modern Japanese history would suggest, that is, modernization and centralization in 1868 and thereafter and democratization and centralization in 1945 and thereafter. Until recently, the bureaucracy has enjoyed dominance. As globalization permeated society and reduced mediating institutions' weight, bureaucracy entered a period of slow decline as a key political actor. During the post-1985 period, the bureaucracy has become less of a predominant political force and prime ministers have had to experience some daunting change in their political environment.

Three Periods of Post-1945 Japanese Politics

Before examining our three prime ministers and their style and performances, I provide brief accounts of each period in which each prime minister was a key actor. In the first period after World War II, the period of occupation and reconstruction (1945–1960), the government's emphasis and orientation was on pacifism and economic growth. This two-prong policy focus came to be known as the Yoshida Doctrine, after the prime minister was credited with its creation and implementation. Renouncing war in its postwar constitution, Japan followed a pacifist military and foreign policy that was possible because of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. The treaty left Japan significantly dependent on the United States for its security; yet the arrangement allowed Tokyo to focus on the second prong of the doctrine—economic reconstruction and growth.

Fueled by deep poverty for the vast majority of the Japanese population in the immediate years after World War II, political emotions and opposition to the government ran high. The political tension and sentiments of the electorate shifted as the economy started to grow and reconstruction ensued. In 1955, two conservative parties joined together to form the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Sparked by the growing power of the center-right and growing support from the self-employed, the LDP electoral power base continued to expand into rural areas that had witnessed, under the U.S. occupation, farmland reforms and the creation of a large class of landowning farmers. The economic programs and initiatives of government sponsored an ongoing expansion of support from the self-employed business sector. The Economic Planning Agency, known then as the Headquarters for Economic Stability, led Japan's efforts at economic reconstruction.

In the years after World War II, political tempers ran high. The Japan-U.S. Security Treaty served as a lightning rod, with the loudest political voices warning that U.S. military installations on Japanese soil would only hasten Japan into another war. The Japan Socialist Party (JSP) and the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) were among those voices. Conversely, those who argued that such a security arrangement would deter any military threats resonated less well among the public. The LDP, or at least the party that would eventually become it, supported this viewpoint. The other point of contention was how the government should proceed economically: should the emphasis be on promoting economic recovery through reconstruction and building fundamental economic strength or should the emphasis be more at a microlevel, at the level of the individual and individual family. The LDP supported the former economic approach; the JSP and JCP supported the latter.

Strong economic growth characterized the second period under consideration (1960–1985) in this chapter. The Japanese bureaucracy together with the LDP and business formed a powerful tripartite structure that propelled the Japanese economy to grow and expand at an unprecedented rate. Although all three actors are credited, the model of development is viewed as bureaucracy driven. The bureaucracy directed and managed the development of the national economy: from the administration of research and development subsidies seeking technological innovation to subsidies for less competitive industries to corporate financing. The bureaucracy provided the budgets for industrial infrastructure and gave direction on fiscal and financial policy.

The primacy of the bureaucracy in the Japanese policy process has led to the characterization that "government overrules politics." Indeed, the guiding principles behind a policy are frequently drafted by government agencies for governing parties and business leaders to review. The historical roots of this bureaucracy-driven political structure can be found in the periods of early modern (1603–1867) and modern (1868–1985) Japan.

Farmers and self-employed businessmen formed the initial base of support for the LDP, but their importance to the party diminished as a new body of LDP support appeared from the new middle class and "new middle-class masses" that emerged with economic growth.

In the postwar years, the overarching policy objectives of the LDP were to provide the conditions for stable and competitive economic growth, that is, conditions that led to Japan resuming its position among the advanced countries. To reach those objectives, the policy priorities focused on the obvious area of macroeconomic management and the, not so obvious, area of social policy. Concerned by downward trends in its support base, the LDP sought to strengthen and expand its support among the new middle-class masses by prioritizing social policy.

The government ministries central to Japan's policy aspirations during the period of reconstruction and economic growth were those that had the portfolios for international trade and industry (MITI), finance (MoF), and

health and welfare. With regard to budget allocation and size of population, the Ministry of Health and Welfare would not appear to be a key ministry, however, its significance was soon to be realized. The increasing recognition of the growing middle-class masses and their importance in enhancing and securing LDP support translated into a mounting awareness about the significance of social policy.

Over the years, the governing party and opposition parties have experienced several ups and downs in their respective support base. Rising income levels and lower worker participation in labor unions did not correlate directly to a shrinking support base for opposition parties. LDP political gaffes and scandals certainly worked in favor of the opposition parties' support base. At times the opposition parties also garnered substantial support among the segment of the new middle-class masses that supported stronger social policies, pacifism, and equality. To reclaim this block of votes, the LDP responded by placing a greater emphasis on social policy and alliances with other countries. This block of votes also shifted away from the opposition parties as pressure for market liberalization intensified and principles, such as pacifism, became linked to protectionism.

Aided by technology, globalization gained considerable momentum at the end of the twentieth century. This phenomenon divides national economies and seeks to merge and reintegrate the most competitive industries. This is a constant process. Those who are less competitive see their income levels drop.

Globalization affects all areas of policy. To secure their support base, governing parties must have as their primary concern those companies that compete internationally. The organizational structure to support these companies must be astutely and adroitly readjusted to changing market and other forces and must be a priority for governing parties. The catch phrases for the governing parties must be continuous technology innovation, improved efficiency, and increased competitiveness.

How the LDP responds to the tide of globalization will largely impact its support base. The LDP decided to present an optimistic and aggressive approach to tackling uncertainties presented by globalization. This message resonated with parts of the electorate who believe that although government deregulation and market liberalization negatively affect their employment and lives, the future would be bleaker if this path was not followed. This electorate is further fortified by Prime Minister Koizumi's own show of enthusiasm and courage in facing these risks himself. Therefore, the support base of the LDP during this period of globalization comes from those Japanese citizens who share their leaders' belief that the uncertainty of the future is best faced with optimism, strong resolve, and a bold approach.

Globalization presents challenges and forces states to refocus their policies. Waning economic growth, changing demographics, and gender inequality also pose challenges. Globalization prompts the Japanese governing party to shift from policies of macroeconomic management to those that can ameliorate economic standards and alter regulations. Those who are less

competitive look to the government for financial assistance. Japan does not have a safety net. Social policies are under financial strain as demographics change to a predominantly aging population and economic growth remains poor. Gender equality is also weak, but here it is the corporate culture that must first change.

Since 2005 Japan's population has been in decline. Reversing this trend will do much to abet the above issues. Yet the high rate of childless couples has much to do with the conditions of economic uncertainty, strained social policies, and the lack of a safety net. Increased government allocation of funds will not resolve these issues. Globalization spotlights issues not previously considered serious, but all the same must be addressed for actors to be competitive. Policy emphasis is on deregulation and reducing government expenditures. Those ministries given large portions of the budget (e.g., Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport) are no longer a policy priority. That said, individual ministers can highlight specific policies and issues. The shift in the working dynamics of ministries has met resistance that is twofold. First, the bureaucracy of large ministries and agencies oppose political maneuvering; second, government bureaucratic culture does not endorse swift actions or quick decisions. To overcome the lack of bureaucratic will for policy redesign, the prime minister and his cabinet ministers are increasingly needed to be the driver of government policy.

Globalization makes the role of the Japanese prime minister and his cabinet indispensable to the political process. If the office of the prime minister serves only a symbolic role, then ministerial secretaries, campaign strategists, and political consultants are behind-the-scene workhorses on globalization-related issues. Any outgoing political statements must be carefully considered. The more critical the public, the more likely government's policies will be negatively received. The 2006 by-election in Chiba prefecture revealed that Ichiro Ozawa, the new president of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), had outmaneuvered Koizumi with an emphasis on voter mobilization and the human touch over Koizumi's bold and carefully crafted messages.

The opposition parties must also strive to connect with their support base. Both globalization and reform of the lower house electoral system have changed the political landscape. Government spending habits have also changed. Pork-barrel projects are gone. A prolonged recession has drastically limited the government spending for large-scale public works, central government grants to the local government, and large-scale social policy projects. Moreover, voters are no longer swayed by Diet members' promises to secure central government funding.

Given the changed circumstances, how can a politician win the electorate's support? It is now the political message that mobilizes voter support. To rally support, Ozawa had face-to-face meetings with each organization in his district, cycled around his district to meet people, and when campaigning used a pile of crates as his podium. This approach is known as street-side campaigning, and was once the forte of the LDP. In contrast, Koizumi made campaign speeches from the top of a campaign truck and depended on his

use of bold, skilful rhetoric to win the voters. At one time, the opposition parties were content to make grand overstatements, knowing that power was not within their reach. Today, the political environment has changed. The LDP attracts voters who are worried about the future and feel reassured by the party's bold, optimistic message. The LDP has chosen to employ courageous rhetoric over a detailed outline of specific policies. Conversely, opposition parties have relinquished their traditional strategy of overstatement, and instead have focused on presenting themselves as the real representatives of the people. Their emphasis is to shake hands, meet people, and be the sympathetic ear, ultimately stressing that they are the ones with the human touch.

Three Prime Ministers: Yoshida, Tanaka, and Koizumi

Yoshida, Tanaka, and Koizumi are perfect profile as Japanese prime ministers who, to prove powerful, must act within the above summarized parameters.[13] In my scheme of analysis, Yoshida represents the period of military occupation as an authoritarian diplomat of aristocratic heritage. Tanaka represents the period of strong economic growth as captured in his bestselling book, *Remolding the Japanese Archipelagoes*. And Koizumi represents the period of globalization, focused on the deregulation and privatization of (semi)governmental firms. The period of military occupation extends till 1960 when Japan and the United States revised the Security Treaty, whereby the asymmetric alliance was moderated in the direction of more symmetry. The period of strong economic growth ends in 1985 with the signing of the Plaza Accord, designed to accelerate qualitatively and quantitatively the tide of globalization through deregulation of currency trade.

Yoshida

Shigeru Yoshida was a professional diplomat.[14] He was bold and self-confident, and, at the same time, arrogant and abrasive. In the 1940s he acted against the military to facilitate the termination of war against the United States. Because of his actions he was constantly monitored by internal security police, culminating in de facto house arrest for the remaining part of the war. Incoming General Douglas MacArthur purged from office many professional politicians for being tainted with wartime activities. Yoshida was selected as the leader of a newly established, conservative, pro-American political party. The country's surrender and the conclusion of the peace treaty had been handled by prime ministers very close to the Imperial House. But Yoshida handled the security treaty between the United States and Japan. Yoshida was articulate and decisive and at the same time thoughtful. Yoshida reasoned that since Japan had been completely defeated by the United States that wanted to retain and use all the military bases and facilities in Japan, it would not be a bad decision for Japan to conclude an alliance treaty in

which the United States guarantees Japan's defense while Japan abandons its right to build its own armed forces to defend the country as outlined in the famous Article 9. Critics of Yoshida were abundant. The National Diet was not always well controlled by the governing coalition. Public opinion overwhelmingly opposed Yoshida's decision. Yet Yoshida was determined and decisive. He argued that a completely defeated Japan should make the best use of the situation, gallantly accepting the terms of the alliance and with determination focusing on recovering from the war to develop a highly industrialized country without the burden of building its own armed forces to cope with the Cold War confrontation.

In retrospect, Yoshida was the best man for the task. Among the conservatives the overriding propensity was to be exceedingly nationalistic, stressing patriotism and armed buildup even under the military occupation. The presence and power of such sentiments should not be underestimated. Yoshida had the audacity to go it alone with his decision. He persuaded the governing party even though the bulk of party members and supporters did not like what they viewed as a submissive position taken by the Japanese government. His characteristic aloofness and arrogance played well in this situation. Yoshida, not being a professional politician or a publicly elected figure, asked party leaders not to give him the task of intraparty persuasion when he accepted his party presidency. In return Yoshida said he would single-handedly deal with MacArthur. Vis-à-vis MacArthur, Yoshida was a good match. MacArthur tended to be overly self-confident and arrogant. MacArthur was both the United Nations commander in chief of its forces in Korea and the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers in Japan. To handle MacArthur, a task critical to Japan's recovery, was best left to Yoshida. A single and simple message (complete obedience to power) sent by Yoshida resonated well with MacArthur. Moreover, Yoshida was aristocratic. When he signed documents, it was not Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida but His Majesty's subject Shigeru.

In terms of the needs of both Yoshida and MacArthur, Yoshida was fortunate. Yoshida was not interested in the day-to-day handling of many administrative matters and the consensus-building mechanisms of party politics and formation of public opinion, and MacArthur was also equally indifferent to the task of day-to-day administration, which was left mostly to two key bureaucratic groups within the occupation authorities, those New Dealers carried over from the 1930s and those Cold War confrontationists. MacArthur was relieved by the U.S. role in what was called indirect rule. The longstanding Japanese bureaucracy continued to work tirelessly under Yoshida without many complicated daily problems arising because of the direct rule of the Japanese leadership. MacArthur's primary focus was the Cold War; Yoshida's was swift economic recovery and political stability for Japan.

In sum, Yoshida was a perfect fit for the type of Japanese politics under military occupation. His diplomatic career helped him to deal with MacArthur. Yoshida represented the dignity of a nation and sense of independence when

foreign military forces occupied the country. Yoshida was a national savior in that he taught the Japanese people that they could be proud even at the nadir of their nation's existence, if one is proud of the nation and confident in the nation's ability to recover and grow.

Here, it is important to note that the steady work by the national bureaucracy during the period helped the military occupation to become a far less traumatic experience to the nation and helped the economic recovery and development to proceed amazingly smoothly.

Tanaka

Kakuei Tanaka was a professional politician.[15] A son of a horse dealer, he was a self-made man. Since he was a graduate from a technical engineering school, the training helped him immensely later in his political life when redesigning the Japanese economy and society. He acquired valuable experience in construction and in doing land deals with the government, small and large, and with financing sources.

His expertise was honed in his early days in Manchukuo (1932–1945) and wartime and immediate postwar time business activities when near chaos prevailed and a small dint of entrepreneurship mattered immensely in the near-complete vacuum. Tanaka's book *Reconstructing the Japanese Archipelago* lays out his longtime dreams with many concrete examples of the direction in which Japan should proceed as a highly industrialized country without many natural resources but a well-educated population with a strong work ethic. His strength was his ability to make use of the legislative drafting process and to forge a policy-focused coalition based on his own solid understanding of local folks' grievances and their resentful attitude toward the state and of his remarkable familiarity with numerous laws regulating infrastructural, industrial, and agricultural development in those less developed areas.

Tired of bureaucratic leaders who preceded him, the electorate saw Tanaka as a national hero-to-be at the time of his ascent to power. However, the first oil crisis of 1973–1974 dashed that expectation. Yet being articulate, aggressive, and agile, Tanaka was the best leader for the crisis. He assured the nation that they need not worry about petroleum shortages as the government was committed to vigorously accelerating the construction of oil tank bases and the exploration and exploitation of petroleum supply lines. When the United States made rapprochement with China amid the turmoil of the Vietnam War, Tanaka moved swiftly to do the same and more. In 1971 the United States realized rapprochement with China, best characterized as diplomatic normalization. Japan followed the United States but moved beyond diplomatic normalization to make peace, followed quickly by a combination of business and war reparation initiatives to help China in its modernization. Henry Kissinger raised concern that Tanaka could endanger U.S. national interest by acting so recklessly, so swiftly, and so independently.

Domestically, Tanaka was a perfect fit to Japanese politics during the period of strong economic growth. His vigor in moving himself upward was resonant with the national rise in the ranking of Gross National Product and economic growth rate. He was one of the youngest cabinet ministers and one of the youngest to become prime minister (1972–1974). What was striking about him was his encyclopedic knowledge of names and faces, and sometimes birthdays, of civil servants that impacted his policy interests and met his supporters'/clients' interests. He represented the focal points of business, bureaucracy, and the LDP.[16] Through his vigorous interactions with people from every walk of life he made his bureaucratic networks function in their most visible, tangible, and effective way. Important to stress here also is that his strength was in making and maintaining the national bureaucracy his close assistant. For that purpose, he interacted with bureaucrats intensely and extensively to give his directives on issues over cabinet ministers in charge of that portfolio. His knowledge of policy issues and bureaucrats' names was most remarkable. He was definitely hyperactive in policy areas. He symbolized the nation's immersion in high economic growth.

In terms of the governing party, his grip of power was near perfect. He outpaced his rivals on all fronts. When the economy grew by leaps and bounds, government revenue grew proportionately. Thus policy ideas and initiatives found numerous opportunities to be materialized. The governing party is made up of factions, each led by a faction leader. The Tanaka faction grew and grew because of his charisma, his financial assistance to faction members for their campaign money and other purposes, and his political tact in getting high-ranking posts in the party and the cabinet for his faction members, all of which culminated in the Tanaka faction being the predominant faction of the governing party. Yet power degenerates once it reaches its pinnacle. Tanaka was indicted by the prosecutors' office for bribery related to the Lockheed aircraft company and found guilty. While in the process of appealing the lower court sentence through a higher court, Tanaka passed away.

Koizumi

Junichiro Koizumi is a third-generation politician of a political dynastic family.[17] Koizumi was a lone wolf. He did not like meetings and dining with fellow politicians. Although he belonged to the Fukuda faction, he did not attend its meetings assiduously. After serving the country as prime minister for five years (2001–2006), he was alone with no followers. He did not speak much in meetings or in tête-a-têtes. Thus, he did not collaborate much with others. When he acted, he acted alone. When he acted, he surprised because he did not consult anyone beforehand. Throughout his career, two people stood out for their communications with this lone wolf. First, one of his three sisters, Nobuko, has been his secretary throughout his political career. Second, his secretary, Isao Iijima, was his right-hand man and a shrewd and strong gatekeeper for Koizumi. Most importantly, Koizumi did not visit his

district often and did not bring pork-barrel projects to his district. Roads in the district are in poor condition. Public transportation to Tokyo is not very convenient.

His early political career was overshadowed by the predominance of the Tanaka faction. His lone wolf style was nurtured and honed during this period. Only after the strong economic growth period and the Cold War were over, did opportunities arrive. The first chance went to the opposition parties that took over power briefly in 1993–1994. Koizumi's chances came only after the Takeshita faction (successor of the Tanaka faction) enfeebled itself slowly with the onset of a long recession (1991–2006). The Tanaka faction was predominant from the time that Eisaku Sato appointed Tanaka secretary-general of the LDP in the mid 1960s till 2000 when Keizo Obuchi, the last prime minister of the Tanaka faction, suddenly passed away. Yoshinori Mori, the leader of the Fukuda faction, then captured power. Accordingly, members of the Fukuda faction were in the spotlight from 2000. Koizumi was one of them. In 2001 Mori was forced to resign due, in part, to his poor relationship with the mass media. Koizumi beat his rivals in the 2001 presidential election.

The 1985 Plaza Accord heralded in the period of globalization. The tide of globalization started to permeate every area of the globe. The much-vaunted national unity and solidarity was steadily undermined by deregulation and market liberalization that accompanies this tide of integration. Most directly, mediating institutions that include bureaucracy, political parties, trade unions, and interest groups are reduced in terms of their role and weight. Koizumi's politics of deregulation and remediation was his response to that tide and was meant to activate the economy. Koizumi politics means less mediation between the public and leaders. Hence his deregulatory legislations. Hence his kabuki performance. The strategy of pushing populism and raising participatory modes is adopted worldwide. In an era of globalization, of more floating votes, of less mediation, and of more digitalization, the transition from representative to monitory democracy has been taking place universally as the tide of globalization reduces the power of organized interests and bureaucratic fortresses.

Symbolic of his distaste for mediation is his style of decision making within the constitutional constraints and institutional framework.[18] When government discussions focused on how to reform and reduce the local transfer portion of national tax revenue to local governments, Koizumi brusquely advised the three ministers, who favored their pet projects to the exclusion of other bureaucratic interests, that if they did not come up with an integrated plan, he would make the decision. He avoided intervening in their discussions, knowing too well that bureaucrats act as representatives of a semisovereign entity. In order to dilute their self-claimed semisovereignty, the best he could do was not to assert prime minister's sovereignty but to force them to come up with the best option among themselves. If Koizumi meddled, he would only make more enemies by revealing his preferences. Once a final decision was made, Koizumi deleted all the phrases outlining

the causes and reasons for adopting that policy, saying that every and each policy action had so many causes and reasons and that picking one or two of them only created more enemies and confusions. Only the content of the policy decision mattered. Hence his politics of privatizing postal service and encouraging farmers and small business to stand on their own feet. Whether prime ministers are able to exercise their power effectively depends on many factors. Koizumi would have been unsuccessful in an era of high economic growth, organized interests, and bureaucratic dominance. He was successful in the era of globalization because he had a flair for politics that befits the times, of less mediation, of more floating voters, and of far too long an economic depression.

It is important to note that since 1945, the majority of prime ministers were not able to exercise much power because of constraints and lack of knowledge, skills, flair, and fortune. The three prime ministers I examined are rare because they fit their time. The LDP was an exemplifier of such an organic entity in politics. To add salt to the wound, Japan's economic development momentum was lost, registering at best a 1–2 percent annual growth rate. Koizumi fitted the political environment perfectly. First, he was a lone wolf, an ultimate individualist. He was never too dependent on organizational backings, whether in his district, in his party politics, or in national politics. Second, he was a believed in small government, whether it was for his district or for the entire nation. Third, he believed in free trade at home and abroad. Fourth, he believed in the power of words and prose. He was astute in using the mass media. His language was combative, forceful, and determined, yet lasting no more than 10 minutes. His speech immediately preceding his call for a general election on August 8, 2005, was fierce, forceful, and tactful, arguing that because his postal liberalization bill was denied in the House of Councilors, he could not proceed with it in the National Diet and that he must ask the entire nation to give a respectful judgment as to whether the nation has confidence in Koizumi or not.

In terms of policy, he distinguished himself from other prime ministers. His instinct for right directions was apparent in policies that sought economic renewal through privatization and liberalization and diplomacy that leaned to one side at a time of crisis. The collapse of the economic bubble in 1991 brought Japan into an unprecedented long recession. Koizumi was assisted by cabinet minister Heizo Takenaka in his economic policy of recovery through innovation, including at the organizational level. By the time Koizumi's tenure ended and he retired as prime minister and member of the National Diet in 2006, the economy was showing signs of recovering. It is unfortunate that in 2008 the Lehman Brothers triggered the great global recession that hit Japan also hard. Koizumi privatized and liberalized a couple of semigovernmental enterprises, including postal services. The other pillar of his policy was leaning to one side at a time of global war against terrorism. His pro-U.S. policy was perfect in terms of timing, a minimum commitment of troops sent and withdrawn.

Koizumi declared full support for Bush's war against global terrorism but sent troops to Iraq only after Bush declared victory! Koizumi interpreted the constitutional ban on sending troops abroad that once the war was declared over, Japan could then send troops to help in reconciliation and recovery.

Zeitgemaessheit a Strong Leadership Requirement

Zeitgemaessheit occurs when political leaders are in harmony with the political environment of the time. Yoshida was a perfect leader to deal with Douglas MacArthur, and he did not have to invest much energy in domestic rivals and other politicians and bureaucrats. Therefore, Yoshida's authoritarian personality did not hinder him from exercising his leadership; rather it helped him to do so. It was a simple hierarchical world. The United States was *supremo* bar none. Its representative was, therefore, supreme. Yoshida played the role of a sergeant who carried out decisions on behalf of the commander in chief. Some accused Yoshida of being a comprador, to which Yoshida rebuffed that those vanquished must act with a sense of dignity vis-à-vis those victors. He was fond of saying that taking up a prime ministership is what only the fool does.

Tanaka was a perfect leader to make the best use of bureaucrats to envision the policy direction and draft legislative bills, because he was experienced in finding solutions to those problems raised by clients and district people by connecting himself within a myriad of interactions among bureaucrats, politicians, and business leaders. Tanaka was a political entrepreneur in a complex organic whole. Just like karaoke, the button you push determines the political action. Every morning at his home he met dozens of people who sought his help in fixing their problems. Tanaka, after listening to them each for a couple of minutes, directly called someone who he believed would play a key role in resolving the situation. Needless to say, the larger the repertoire of karaoke, the better, and the more effective one becomes. Tanaka had the largest repertoire and he sang karaoke most effectively.

Koizumi was a perfect leader as a lone wolf who took risks and played the most effective roles on the basis of calculated moves. Koizumi is fond of kabuki, Japanese opera, and amid his most hectic times watched it. His motivation came from a desire to convey his message in the most effective and succinct prose by learning and emulating relevant scenes. When he called for a general election on August 8, 2005, he was rehearsing the passages from the *Man from La Mancha* (Don Quixote). When he publicly announced his soon-to-be resignation toward the end of his party's presidential tenure at the prime ministerial garden party in the Shinjuku-gyoen in spring 2006, he sang the short poem composed by Hosokawa Garasha, wife of a leader, who was besieged in her husband's absence for war assignment elsewhere by his enemy in the warring period of the late sixteenth century, and who committed suicide after singing the poem. Koizumi learned from drama and acted dramatically.

CONCLUSION

Japanese prime ministers are constrained by constitutional and institutional setups. The point I make is simply that with the parameters of the time well grasped and placed in control, Japanese prime ministers can be very powerful. I briefly examined the nature of those parameters in the three periods since the end of World War II—the period of military occupation, the period of strong economic growth, and the period of globalization. Then I examined the three prime ministers who fitted those parameters of the time—Yoshida, Tanaka, and Koizumi. It is not that every prime minister is a good fit for his time; rather the opposite is more often true. This is why the phenomenon of leadership deficit is often observed. Yoshida was perfect in that he was self-confident. His time was that of military occupation by foreigners. He had to act with dignity to uphold the nation's pride despite all the wounds and humiliation. Tanaka was the best man for his time. As long as he knew which button in the karaoke machine to push, karaoke democracy worked well. The politics of this period was based on the tightly knit organic whole often scripted by the bureaucratic corps. Tanaka was articulate in policy thinking, aggressive in persuasion, and agile in action. Koizumi was superb for his time. His obsession with pithy prose and sentences drawn from *kabuki* and *noh* (another traditional form of Japanese theater) was effective in an era of globalization and digitalization. *Zeitgemaessheit* cannot be underestimated when political leadership is examined.

The dramatic power change from the LDP to the DPJ on August 30, 2009, may be attributed in part to the lack of *Zeitgemaessheit* in the leadership style of Shinzo Abe (2006–2007), Yasuo Fukuda (2007–2008), and Taro Aso (2008–2009), the three prime ministers who succeeded Koizumi. They all lacked charismatic appeal and critical public leadership qualities. That said, the global economic recession triggered by the Lehman Brother's default meltdown and its negative consequences on the government and the legitimacy deficit, in part fed by the three successive leadership changes (all untested by popular vote) since 2005, did make an enormous difference. Yet none of the three ensuing national leaders after Koizumi had the leadership requirements for a period of globalization.[19] The DPJ understands now that *seiji shudo* (Politics take command!) does not work well once in power. MP Yukio Edano of the DPJ, for one, keeps repeating this message. The DPJ as an opposition kept criticizing the LDP government, arguing that the LDP government was too dependent on bureaucracy and too subservient to bureaucratically formulated policy packages and that the DPJ, once in power, would practice the politics of *seiji shudo*. But negating karaoke politics does not necessarily help the DPJ to play kabuki politics better. It must be noted that democracy is in transition. I argue that the type of democracy has been in great transition from karaoke to kabuki democracy in Japan, with many other versions of transitions occurring in many other democracies, but all in basic harmony with the argument made by John Keane, that is, the transition from representative democracy to monitory democracy is increasingly

and ubiquitously unfolding and deepening around the globe. Tanaka and Noburo Takeshita relied heavily on bureaucracy and worked closely with it to mediate interests. Koizumi's practice was no mediation. He did not like bureaucracy or his own party, the LDP. Yoshida's style was that of a subject, a subject both to General MacArthur and Emperor Hirohito. His time was neither that of state sovereignty (Japan was occupied) nor that of globalization (Japan was recovering from war). Whether prime ministers fit the time is most critical. With regard to the post-Koizumi landscape, being a second or third generation politician, Abe, Fukuda, or Aso did not master a wide range of karaoke songs unlike Kakuei Tanaka. Prime Ministers and prime ministerial aspirants of the Democratic Party seem to be desired in terms of flair befitting an era of Kabuki democracy as long as they refuse to be a puppet of bureaucracy. It is important to note that the DPJ's 2009 victory was obtained by Ichiro Ozawa more than by Hatoyama. Ozawa represents a good mix of karaoke democracy, taking care of critical organized voters called rengo (federation of trade unions), and kabuki democracy, attacking bureaucracy and stressing livelihood first with his characteristically "good country folk" style of speaking clearly, directly but somewhat slowly, and with pauses placed between sentences.

Notes

1. Inoguchi, "Japanese Contemporary Politics: Towards a New Interpretation," pp. 67–86; Inoguchi, "Can the LDP Survive Globalization?" pp. 45–49.
2. Van Wolferen, *The Enigma of Japanese Power.*
3. Inoguchi, "The Ghost of Absolutism"; Inoguchi, *Tokugawa Moderu o Sutekirenai Nihonjin* (The Japanese Who Cannot Throw Away the Tokugawa Model).
4. Inoguchi, "Japanese Contemporary Politics."
5. Inoguchi, "The Pragmatic Evolution of Japanese Democratic Politics"; Inoguchi, "Federal Traditions and Quasi-Federalism in Japan," pp. 216–289.
6. Inoguchi, "Japanese Contemporary Politics"; Inoguchi, "Parliamentary Opposition under (Post-) One-Party Rule: Japan," pp. 113–132.
7. Inoguchi, "The Pragmatic Evolution of Japanese Democratic Politics"; Inoguchi, "Federal Traditions and Quasi-Federalism in Japan."
8. Murakami et al., *Bunmei toshite no Ie-shakai* (The Ie-Society as Civilization).
9. Inoguchi, "The Pragmatic Evolution of Democratic Politics."
10. Kasaya, *Shukun Oshikome no Kozo* (The Structure of Placing a Domain Lord under Home Arrest). Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan.*
11. Inoguchi, "Japan: The Personalization of Politics-Kozumi and Japanese Politics."
12. Van Wolferen, *The Enigma of Japanese Power.*
13. As for all the prime ministers in Japanese modern history, see Toriumi, *Rekidai Naikaku Shusho Jiten* (Encyclopedia of Prime Ministers).
14. Kosaka, *Saisho Yoshida Shigeru*; Hara, *Yoshida Shigeru;* John Dower, *Empire and Aftermath Yoshida Shigeru and the Japanese Experience 1878–1954.*
15. Iwami, *Tanaka Kakuei: Seiji no Tensai* (Genius of Politics); Shigezo, *Seijika Tanaka Kakuei* (The Politician Tanaka Kakuei).

16. *Asahi Shimbun*, January 5, 2010.
17. Shimizu Masato, *Kantei Shudo:Koizumi Junichiro no Kakumei* (Prime Minister's Leadership: The Revolution of Koizumi Junichiro); Inoguchi, "Japan: The Personalization of Politics-Kozumi and Japanese Politics," pp. 209–227.
18. Private conversation with a high-ranking bureaucrat who participated in this high-level policymaking on the reduction of the local transfer. (December 21, 2010, in Tokyo)
19. Inoguchi, "Political Parties and Democracy: Japan."

Bibliography

Asahi Shimbun, January 5, 2010.

Dower, John, *Empire and Aftermath Yoshida Shigeru and the Japanese Experience 1878–1954* (New York: Harvard University Asia Center, 1988).

Hara, Yoshihisa, *Yoshida Shigeru—Sonno no Seijika* (A Imperial Subject as a Politician) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2005).

Hayasaka, Shigezo, *Seijika Tanaka Kakuei* (The Politician Tanaka Kakuei) (Tokyo: Chuokoronsya, 1987).

Ikegami, Eiko, *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

Inoguchi, Takashi, "The Pragmatic Evolution of Japanese Democratic Politics," in Michele Schmiegelow, ed., *Democracy in Asia* (New York: St. Martin's, 1997).

———, "Federal Traditions and Quasi-Federalism in Japan," in Baogang He, Brian Galligan, and Takashi Inoguchi, eds., *Federalism in Asia* (London: Edward Elgar, 2007).

———, "The Ghost of Absolutism," paper presented at the Anglo-Japanese Daiwa Fund Lectures, London, November 22, 2007.

———, "Can the LDP Survive Globalization?" *Education about Asia,* 12, no. 3 (2008): 45–49.

———, "Parliamentary Opposition under (Post-) One-Party Rule: Japan," *The Journal of Legislative Studies,* 14, no. 1/2 (2008): 113–132.

———, "Japanese Contemporary Politics: Towards a New Interpretation," in Rien Segers, ed., *A New Japan for the Twenty-First Century: An Inside Overview of Current Fundamental Changes and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 67–86.

———, "Japan: The Personalization of Politics-Kozumi and Japanese Politics," in Jean Blondel and Jean Louis-Thiebault, eds., *Political Leadership, Parties and Citizens: The Personalization of Leadership* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 209–228.

———, *Nihon seiji no nazo: Tokugawa model o sutekirenai Nihonjin* (The Enigma of Japanese Politics: The Japanese Who Cannot Throw Away the Tokugawa Model) (Tokyo: Nishimura shoten, 2010).

———, "Political Parties and Democracy: Japan," in Kay Lawson and Baogang He, eds., *Political Parties and Democracy: Eurasia and Asia* (New York: Praeger, 2010), pp. 173–189, 261–263.

Iwami, Takao, *Tanaka Kakuei: Seiji no Tensai* (Tanaka Kakuei: Genius of Politics) (Tokyo: Gakuyo shobo, 1998).

Kasaya, Kazuhiko, *Shukun Oshikome no Kozo* (The Structure of Placing a Domain Lord under Home Arrest) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1988).

Keane, John, *The Life and Death of Democracy* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2009).

Kissinger, Henry A., *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?: Towards a Diplomacy for the 21st Century* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001).

Kosaka, Masataka, *Saisho Yoshida Shigeru* (Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida) (Tokyo: Chuokoronshinsha, 2006).

Krauss, Ellis and Robert Pekkanen, *The Rise and Fall of Japan's LDP* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2010).

Murakami, Yasusuke Shunpei Kumon, and Seizaburo Sato, *Bnmei toshite no Ie-shakai* (The Ie-Society as Civilization) (Tokyo: Chuo koronsha, 1979).

Shimuzu, Mahito, *Kantei Shudo:Koizumi Junichiro no Kakumei* (Prime Minister's Leadership: The Revolution of Koizumi Junichiro) (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shinbunsha, 2005).

Toriumi, Yasushi, ed., *Rekidai Naikaku Shusho Jiten* (Encyclopedia of Prime Ministers) (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 2009).

Van Wolferen, Karel, *The Enigma of Japanese Power* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1989).

Whiteley, Paul, "Is the Party Over? The Decline of Party Activism and Membership across the Democratic World," *Party Politics*, September 2010.