

Japan's Upper House Election of 29 July 2001

THE ELECTION FOR JAPAN'S HOUSE OF COUNCILLORS TOOK PLACE ON 29 July 2001. The result was a resounding victory for the major governing party, the Liberal Democratic Party, with its majority regained after the failure in the previous election in 1998. The election was very interesting in two senses. First, the deepening difficulty of the economy did not prevent the LDP from making a comeback of sorts. Normally, the Japanese voters, like most others, reward the governing party when the economy goes well.¹ Secondly, its newly chosen maverick President, Junichiro Koizumi, successfully adopted a rhetoric of 'Reform with Pain' for the ostensible reason of escaping Japan's dilemma: the impossibility of allowing many business firms and banks to go bankrupt without thereby aggravating economic problems and antagonizing the electorate; its inability to drastically reduce the large number of public corporations with large registered deficits; and its inability to drastically reduce huge accumulated deficits. He came, he saw and he won. 'How?' is the question that the rest of this article attempts to answer.

The effects of economic stagnation since the collapse of a bubble economy in 1991 appeared most tangibly and painfully in the form of the steady increase in bankruptcy and unemployment by 1997. Before that year, the collapse of the bubble economy was not widely regarded as very serious, thus the lukewarm economic management of 'business as usual' continued more or less unhindered, while some negative consequences of all the previous decade's excesses were already alarmingly visible.² This was due in part to another negative consequence of the bubble economy: during the bubble economic

¹ Inoguchi Takashi, *Gendai Nihon seijikeizai no kozo* (The Contemporary Japanese Political Economy), Tokyo, Toyokeizaishimposha, 1983; Masaru Kohno and Yoshitaka Nishizawa, 'A Study of the Electoral Business Cycle in Japan', *Comparative Politics*, 22:2, 1990, pp. 151-66.

² On the economic management in the 1990s, see, for instance, Yoshikawa Hiroshi, *Tenkankino Nihon keizai* (The Japanese Economy in Transition), Iwanami shoten, 2000; and Richard Wellner, *En no shihaisha* (Princes of the Yen), Tokyo, Soshisha, 2001.

expansion, there was rampant corruption among politicians in 1989–93, thus the attention of the public was focused more on corruption and its alleviation. The corruption issue toppled the Liberal Democratic Party from power in 1993.³ The anti-corruption coalition was formed immediately and ruled the country from 1993–95 with anti-corruption, fair representation and clean competition secured by legislation by the end of 1993. With that package of anti-corruption political reform legislation, the populist forces lost their momentum and more or less collapsed, and the Socialist Party took power in 1995–96 with the Liberal Democratic Party joining the government as a major coalition partner. It was a coalition government of an unprecedented kind with initially very divergent basic platforms. However, the regional security crises taking place over North Korea in 1993–94 and over Taiwan in 1995–96 again attracted the government's and the people's attention.⁴ With the Socialist Prime Minister tackling the task of shaping the US–Japan Defence Cooperation Guidelines and paving the way for reinterpretation of the Constitution to meet the challenges of regional security, the economic issues were not tackled head on. Then the Liberal Democratic Party took over in a revived form and the Social Democrats (the name of the Socialist Party was changed to the Social Democratic Party) left the coalition in 1996.

On coming to power Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto took as his primary task administrative and fiscal reform. That meant the overhaul of the bureaucracy in terms of administrative structure and spending pattern. It was an economic response to the collapse of the bubble economy as well as a political response to the exposed apparent corruption of bureaucrats, taking advantage of the growing popular antipathy to bureaucrats at a time when the individual household's budget was getting increasingly tighter. Here the government's economic forecast played a critical role of misleading Prime Minister Hashimoto into going ahead with a reform package, which was inherently deflationary, at the very time when the economy went

³ As for how the Liberal Democratic Party governed the economy and the country until its fall from power in 1993, see, Inoguchi Takashi, *Nihon: taikoku no seiji uneji* (Governing Japan: The Economic Power), Tokyo, University of Tokyo Press, 1994.

⁴ Inoguchi Takashi and Purnendra Jain (eds), *Japanese Foreign Policy Today*, New York, Palgrave, 2000; Michael Green, *Japan's Reluctant Realism*, New York, Palgrave, 2001.

into a short-term downward slide in 1997.⁵ The Upper House Election of June 1997 resulted in a considerable loss of seats and Prime Minister Hashimoto's resignation followed shortly after in 1997. Then Keizo Obuchi was named as President of the Liberal Democratic Party and thus Prime Minister as well as leader of the majority coalition in the National Diet. Keizo Obuchi put the utmost emphasis on economic recovery rather than administrative and fiscal reform for two years 1997–99, while pumping a large amount of public money into public works and other projects, thus creating an enormous government deficit. His economic management was not accompanied by much government deregulation or the restructuring of banks, public corporations and fiscal expenditure. Thus the economy remained near stagnation. Then he fell into a coma and died in spring 2000.

Out of a discussion in a smoke-filled room among a few leaders of the largest faction, emerged Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori, who belongs to the third largest faction in the Liberal Democratic Party. His legitimacy deficit was no less serious than the government deficits. His popularity rating was continuously at a low level and when the election for a Liberal Democratic Party presidential candidate was held, he was prevented from running and a maverick, Junichiro Koizumi, was elected by the electoral college, consisting not only of parliamentary party members but also a considerable number of electors representing local chapters of the Party, in April 2001. The prevailing mood in spring 2001 was that of impasse and of yearning for a leader who would show a clear path to economic recovery. Economic stagnation had bedevilled the nation for at least a decade and no political leader had been able to do much about it. First, the blame had been laid on politicians in the early and mid-1990s; secondly, bureaucrats were the target of popular distrust in the mid-1990s; thirdly, business leaders were held culpable toward the end of the 1990s. Popular confidence in institutions fell to its lowest point. While the people were almost over-critical of democratic political institutions such as parliament, political parties and political leaders, popular commitment to democracy as an *ideology* and as an

⁵ The political development from Hashimoto to Obuchi is succinctly described in Takashi Inoguchi, 'The Future of Liberal Democratic Party Politics: Obuchi's Legacy', Global Communication Platform, Tokyo, 10 April 2000. http://www.glocom.org/opinions/essays/200004_inoguchi_obuchi/

institution has remained robust; it is confidence in democracy as *practised* that remains at a low level.⁶

THE CAMPAIGN

Junichiro Koizumi's 2001 campaign went well. He was lucky in two respects. His predecessor, Yoshiro Mori, was somewhat dull, suffered numerous mishaps and made mistakes, and was exceptionally unpopular. Furthermore, the economy did not show any signs of recovery but the public seemed to face the economic difficulties with perseverance, resignation and even calm. They looked for a bright sign somewhere and found it in Junichiro Koizumi. Shortly after his victory in the election for presidential candidate of the governing party in April 2001, this factor became increasingly clear. His popularity rating soared as high as 85–88 per cent, even before the Upper House election of 29 July. His campaigns were characterized by a number of notable features: 1) He called for 'reform with pain'; 2) his speeches consisted of repeated short sentences like 'Let us change the LDP in order to change Japan', 'Vote for me for reform', 'Let us jointly suffer the pains of reform'; 3) his strategy of manipulating the mass media was so successful that his decades-long secretary (and chief gate keeper who handles the whole range of appointments, appearances, campaigns, finance, policy decisions, and mass media) Isao Iijima, was sometimes compared favourably with such a mass-media magician as the electoral strategist for President Bill Clinton, Dick Morris.⁷ One of the most effective uses of the mass media engineered by Iijima was Koizumi's dramatic reversal of the

⁶ Takashi Inoguchi, 'Confidence in Institutions: Evidence from Japan', paper prepared for presentation at the Civil Society Workshop, Tokyo, 12–13 June 2001; Takashi Inoguchi, 'Confidence in Institutions', paper prepared for discussion at the European Consortium for Political Research annual meeting, Canterbury, England, 6–10 September 2001; Takashi Inoguchi, 'Japan: From Binding to Extending Social Capital', in Robert Putnam (ed.), *Democracies in Flux: The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, forthcoming in 2002. The survey data on confidence in institutions in eighteen societies in Western Europe and East and Southeast Asia are derived from the project on Globalization and Political Cultures of Democracy, funded by a grant from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, for the period between 1999–2003 (project number 11102000).

⁷ Dick Morris, *VOTE.COM*, New York, Renaissance Books, 1999.

government's position on the Hansen disease case. The government was the defendant and took the position that it was not responsible for the sufferings of many leprosy patients who were forced to live lives in segregated hospitals even many years after the disease was cured. The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Labour took this position when a local court delivered a verdict that the government was responsible and was about to take the case to a higher court. Iijima himself kept repeating to journalists that the government was about to take action accordingly, perhaps in order to dramatize the issue. At the last moment, the Prime Minister, Koizumi, announced his decision that the government accepted responsibility for the enormous sufferings of the Hansen disease patients and that the government would abide by the court verdict. Koizumi's popularity ratings soared immediately. His sense of justice and his leadership pleased the electorate enormously, especially at a time when bankruptcy and unemployment were rampant and when many wanted the government to take a 'bold lead with a warm heart' in economic policy.

Relying on Koizumi's personal popularity and his slogan of reform, the Liberal Democratic Party was able to join the bandwagon and greatly increased its number of seats. The reformist credentials of all other parties were undermined by Koizumi. The largest opposition party, the Democratic Party, with the most reformist platform in the 2000 general election, put forward candidates whose campaign slogan was, to the embarrassment of the Democratic Party leadership, 'join Koizumi to achieve reform'. The party had a reduced number of seats. Of two coalition partners, the Conservative Party and the New Komei Party, the former's number of seats fell to just one. The latter increased its seats somewhat. But on the whole the coalition parties were outshone by Koizumi the reformist. The right-wing opposition, the Liberal Party, increased its seats with the benefit of the nationalistic mood. The Communist Party suffered a great loss, as did the Social Democratic Party. These parties were marginalized by the surge in popular support for the Koizumi-led Liberal Democratic Party.

Since the Liberal Democratic Party's victory resulted in the main from the success of his campaign strategy, we should examine his strategy more closely. He made ample use of the media in three ways: first, by appearing on TV news programmes and in playing a high-profile role in television debates; secondly, by effective use of the internet and thirdly by frequent photo-opportunities in women's magazines. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Koizumi is

Table 1
Upper House Election Out-turn by Party

	<i>Total number of seats</i>	<i>Seats contested in this election</i>	<i>Seats won in this election</i>
Liberal Democratic Party	109	(61)	64
Democratic Party of Japan	59	(22)	26
Komei Party	22	(13)	13
Japan Communist Party	20	(8)	5
Social Democratic Party of Japan	8	(7)	3
Conservative Party	5	(3)	1
Liberal Party	8	(3)	6
Others	14	(7)	3
	245	(121)	*

Source: *Asahi Shimbun*, 1 August 2001

*(The number of seats contested in this election was 124. However, three seats were made vacant by law before the election.)

the first prime minister who was able to take his party along with him through his effective use of the media, despite his weak organizational power base in the party itself. Yasuhiro Nakasone, who was leader from 1982–87, resembled him in terms of his weak power base in the party and his capacity to make strong appeals to a wider audience through his oratory. But Nakasone's use of the media was confined to the traditional media such as radio and TV appearances and speeches on the hustings as prescribed by the Fair Campaign Law. Kakuei Tanaka, leader from 1972–74 was also a talented speaker, and his organizational power base in the party was very strong. On one occasion, in the recent election within the legally prescribed two-week campaign period, the TV Channel Ten put out a programme with an audience consisting mainly of housewives who bombarded Koizumi with questions. His studio appearance was most effective and his popularity rating soared.

Then on taking up office, he started to use the internet to reach the people, taking advantage of the great resources of the Prime Minister's Office.⁸ His message is transmitted every day in his characteristically short sentences, describing his feelings when he met this

⁸ Visit koizumi@mmz.kantei.go.jp. See also Yokoe Kumi, *E-politics*, Tokyo, Bungei shunju sha, 2001.

or that person and when he went to this or that gathering. This is always done in conversational language rather than in the more formal, written, Japanese style. His message reflects his solitary lifestyle. Since his marriage broke down in the early years of his political life, he has lived with his two sons who are taken care of by his mother, and with two of his sisters. His youngest boy, born after the divorce, lives with his former wife. He was called *henjin*, which means an eccentric, by Makiko Tanaka, daughter of Kakuei Tanaka and a parliamentary member, when he was a presidential candidate in 1999. His effective use of the internet derives from the very personal touch in his messages. The tears shed when he saw pictures of the young kamikaze pilots who were about to depart for their suicidal mission, from the air base in the southernmost prefecture of Kagoshima (built incidentally by his father in the wartime years) were widely remarked. That sentiment was further expressed in his statement on 13 August 2001 when he paid a visit to the Yasukuni shrine where the war-dead are buried, including those who were executed for war-crimes.

Following his victory in winning the party's nomination for presidential candidate, the search for his divorced wife and the interview she gave were publicized in several women's magazines. The coverage was on the whole sympathetic, not condemning him for having divorced his wife when she was pregnant with their third child, although some articles were more critical than others. Since then he has become a celebrity in women's magazines. Not only he, himself, but his sons as well have often appeared, seeming almost to be aspiring to movie-actor type fame. At any rate, capturing the female vote seems to have been an unexpectedly positive factor in boosting his popularity ratings. And, of course, he appointed as many as five women cabinet ministers.

This campaign style was of enormous importance at a time when what is called the 'organized vote' seems to have been diminishing steadily.⁹ The Liberal Democratic Party, long in power, had drawn many business sector associations, professional associations, religious associations, etc., under its umbrella, and could rely on their votes at

⁹ Nihon keizai Shimbun, 'Shizumu bukai, gium taito' (Committees on the Decline, Parliamentarian Leagues on the Rise), 31 December 2000; Patrick Moeller, 'Upper House Elections in Japan and the Power of "Organized Votes"', paper presented at the British Association of Japanese Studies annual meeting, Cardiff, Wales, 11-13 September 2001.

elections. The Liberal Democratic Party was an interest-intermediary between various social sectors and various bureaucratic agencies. The party claimed to be a catch-all party for all kinds of business, professional, social and other interests which could shelter under its umbrella and influence legislative processes and policy implementation. The Liberal Democratic Party's intermediary role was in fact less salient during the third quarter of the twentieth century, as the bureaucratic machine gathered momentum. But from the first oil crisis of 1973, the Liberal Democratic Party's patronage of interest groups was on the increase. The magic power of the developmental state as portrayed by Chalmers Johnson and others waned significantly as state-led economic mobilization and growth which started in the second quarter of the twentieth century reached a plateau by the end of the third quarter of the twentieth century.¹⁰ Rather than straightforward administrative guidance, more locally-targeted and context-related issues were promoted through the Liberal Democratic Party's machinery and had an effect. What is called *zoku giin* (legislative tribes, meaning largely LDP committee-based parliamentarians, specializing in various policy areas in parallel to bureaucratically segmented policy areas) played an increasingly large role in legislative processes in much of the last quarter of the twentieth century.¹¹ Legislative tribes flourished especially in the 1970s and 1980s. They formed social interest groups at the grassroots. At the same time they linked social interests with bureaucratic agencies through the Liberal Democratic Party, for long the governing party. Legislative success was unlikely to be achieved unless they were included in the consultation process.

Enhanced legislative power was accompanied by the rise of non-bureaucratic and non-governmental forces in Japanese society.¹² The limited power of legislative tribes became increasingly apparent as societal interest representation had less control over bureaucratic processes. The tribes' diminished importance was further accentuated

¹⁰ Chalmers Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle*, Stanford, Cal., Stanford University Press, 1993.

¹¹ Inoguchi Takashi and Iwai Tomoaki, 'Zoku giin no kenkyu' (A Study of Legislative Tribes), Tokyo, *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 1987.

¹² Frank J. Schwartz and Susan Pharr (eds), *The State of Civil Society in Japan*, book manuscript, Program on US-Japan Relations, Harvard University, October 2001. Yamamoto Tadashi (ed.), *Deciding the Public Good: Governance and Civil Society in Japan*, Tokyo, Japan Centre for International Exchange, 1999.

by the fall from power of the Liberal Democratic Party between 1993 and 1995. Although the loss of power proved to be shortlived, the party was made painfully aware of its insecurity at the time. The loss of power in 1993 reflected the ineptness of the party's attempt at social interest representation through bureaucratic means. The bureaucracy was increasingly rigid and inept at handling issues which did not fit the policy framework that took the self-contained nature of policy within the sovereign state for granted. In other words, globalization has been permeating the state and society of one of the most national-conscious countries in the world. The result was the inept and inappropriate handling of the collapse of the bubble economy in 1991, with effects still apparent today.

Recognizing the bureaucratic limits and the fiscal bankruptcy of the state, the Liberal Democratic Party embarked on the task of administrative and fiscal reform upon assuming office in 1996, with the long-held dream of taming the bureaucracy and enhancing the power of elected politicians. The administrative and fiscal reform process continued between 1996 and 2000, during which period the Liberal Democratic Party was not able to rely on committee-based legislative tribes as bureaucratic agencies were developing, merging and sometimes disappearing, while financial resources were diminishing. Furthermore, the electoral system change in the election for the House of Representatives (Lower House) enacted in 1993, which meant a shift from one vote selecting 2–5 persons in one district to that of one vote selecting one representative in one district, has forced an elected parliamentarian from a district to be a generalist rather than a specialist in a particular policy area.¹³ The result was that interest group formation by Liberal Democratic Party legislators became more issue-based. Since the enactment of the non-profit organization law, with the aim of empowering civil society organizations and individuals, in 1999, NGOs have become much more visible and influential. Many used to think of Japan as consisting of GOs (governmental organizations) and NGIs (non-governmental individuals). Even when legislative tribes were thriving in the 1970s and 1980s, some were more of *banken* type (i.e. assiduously guarding

¹³ Steven Reed and Michael Thiel, 'The Causes of Electoral Reform in Japan', and 'The Consequences of Electoral Reform in Japan', in Matthew Soberg Shugart and Martin P. Wattenberg (eds), *Mixed-Member Electoral Systems: The Best of Both Worlds?*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001.

sectoral-cum-bureaucratic interests like a dog protecting its master) while others were of *ryoken* type (i.e. audaciously trying to identify and capture sectoral and other social interests like a hunting dog serving its master).¹⁴ Of the two categories of legislative tribes, the latter has evolved into something less committee-based and resembling more an NGO and other more flexible organizations. They are called *giun*, the parliamentarian leagues, often crossing party lines according to the issue. In other words, they seek control of those policy areas which could create a new political space for them and which would help to enhance their electoral and financial bases. Hence the flourishing of *giun* in such policy areas as the environment, biotechnology and information technology, which are likely to stimulate economic growth.¹⁵

Given this clear trend of less reliance on organized interests on the lines of bureaucratic agencies, it is not surprising at all to see the drastic decline of organized voters.¹⁶ Zenkoku kensetsu kyokai (the Construction Industry Association) had 1,740,000 members in 1980 but now has only 270,000. Zenkoku noseikyo (the Agricultural cooperatives Association) had 1,120,000 members in 1980 but now has only 160,000. Nihon ishi renmei (the Medical Doctors' Association) had 830,000 members in 1980 but now has only 220,000. To stem the tide of decreasing organized votes for the Liberal Democratic Party, a number of steps have been taken in recent years.

First, the upper house election used two different electoral procedures, one of which was proportional representation on the basis of party list with a party label written in by a voter. The legislative amendment was made in 2000 to the effect that not only party label but also a listed candidate name is accepted as a valid vote for her/his party.¹⁷ It is based on the Liberal Democratic Party's perception that there have in the past been a number of invalid votes cast for the party precisely because voters did not write the party's name but listed candidates' names since, unlike district-based candidates, PR-listed candidates tend to be nationally well known.

¹⁴ These two types are discussed in Inoguchi and Iwai, *Zoku giin no kenkyu*, op. cit.

¹⁵ See reference in note 10.

¹⁶ *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 5 August 2001.

¹⁷ *Asahi Shimbun*, 10 June 2001.

Table 2
Organized Votes for LDP

Liberal Democratic Party <i>Support organization</i>	<i>Number of votes</i> <i>votes 2001 (1980)</i>	<i>Party members</i>
Taijû (Former Postmasters)	470,000 (1,030,000)	230,000
Gunon renmei zenkoku rengôkai (War Veterans)	290,000 (990,000)	150,000
Zenkoku kensetsu gyôkai (Construction industry/ real estate)	270,000 (1,740,000)	180,000
Nihon izokukai (War-bereaved)	260,000 (920,000)	110,000
Nihon ishi renmei (Doctors)	220,000 (830,000)	110,000
Zenkoku tochi kairyôseiji renmei (Rural Construction Industry)	200,000 (1,160,000)	90,000
Nihon kango renmei (Nurses)	170,000 (520,000)	120,000
Zenkoku nôseikyô (Agricultural Co-operatives)	160,000 (1,120,000)	10,000
Keidanren/Nikkeiren (Business Associations)	160,000 (n.a.)	n.a.
Jichi shinkô kankei (Local orgs./Firemen)	150,000 (800,000.)	20,000
Nihon yakuzaiishi renmei (Pharmacists)	150,000 (n.a.)	n.a.
Nihon shika ishi renmei (Dentists)	100,000 (930,000)	20,000
Tokiwakai rengôkai (Former Japan Railway employees)	90,000 (760,000)	70,000
Nihon jidôsha seibi seiji renmei (Auto repair shops)	90,000 (820,000)	20,000
Bôei kankei (Former Self Defence Force personnel)	70,000 (900,000)	1,000

Source: Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 5 August 2001, p. 2

Secondly, at least initially, a small number of legislators started to use the internet for a number of purposes. It seems that they use it first to reach out to sections of the the electorate who have been increasingly difficult to address; secondly, to articulate and disseminate politicians' policy views to the electorate, and thirdly to respond to the electorate's questions, criticisms, advice and requests in ways that are quick, compassionate and as helpful as possible. Unlike in the United States, in Japan the internet is not used so much to receive

campaign donations or to mobilize volunteers.¹⁸ All these three aims are interrelated and overlap in several ways. One event that raised popular awareness of the use of the internet is what is called the Kato débâcle in 2000. Towards the end of 2000 the opposition parties came together to table a call for a vote of no confidence in the very unpopular Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori who was in office 2000–2001. Koichi Kato had been trying to wrest power from the unpopular Prime Minister. His ideological position is mildly centre-left within the Liberal Democratic Party and his faction was second largest in size, next to the Hashimoto faction. Following the terms in office as prime minister of Hashimoto and Obuchi, both of whom came from the Hashimoto faction, Mori, head of the third largest faction, gained power. Whether or not Kato would join the opposition in the no-confidence vote became a topic of speculation. Kato's vacillating frame of mind was evident in his TV appearances. Finally he chose to abstain rather than voting yes or no. His popularity plummeted immediately. This was a disappointment for his sympathizers. Kato, long a diligent email user, seemed to be overwhelmed by the number of email letters sent to him as events unfolded. He was almost emboldened sufficiently to take action. Then at the last moment he succumbed to the persuasion of his faction followers not to quit, instead of taking the lead to exit en masse. Within a year following that event, the number of internet users among legislators increased significantly. By October 2001 the Nippon koso forum, a think tank-cum-forum for public policy proposals, started to make use of the internet to conduct regular opinion polls on policy and key issues of the day and make the results available to its members.¹⁹

Thirdly, despite the phenomenal increase in the number of legislators using the internet, television remains the most powerful medium in terms of impact, rather than newspapers or magazines, or radio. It is especially TV debating or question-and-answer programmes that create strong name recognition, which is what counts in an election. Since the Japanese campaign law allots the same amount of TV time to all the candidates on NHK, the semi-public broadcasting station, and since they cannot advertise their campaigns on TV, candidates who participate in such debating or question-and-answer programmes on non-NHK broadcasting stations become

¹⁸ Dick Morris, *VOTE.COM*, and Yokoe Kumi, *E-politics*, op. cit.

¹⁹ Visit <http://www.kosonippon.org>

familiar to the voters. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi excelled in the use of TV from the time he became the Liberal Democratic Party's President and during the campaign for the Upper House election of 29 July. An instance of this was when he announced on live TV his dramatic decision on the reversal of the government position on the Hansen disease court case. He appeared often on TV, not just on news programmes, but also in debates and on programmes with a studio audience of housewives. Commentators, journalists and legislators of various parties took part in the debates. In handling the mass media, Isao Iijima, Koizumi's secretary for the last two decades, seems to have played a crucial role in grooming him to appear most effectively on TV. He seems to manipulate the mass media by going ahead of the Prime Minister each day to prepare the ground and give guidance such as from which angle to photograph Prime Minister Koizumi. The entire Liberal Democratic Party benefited from Koizumi's popularity in the campaign and on election day. The outcome was outstanding success.

POLICY POSITIONS

The Liberal Democratic Party is located on the centre-right of the ideological spectrum of Japanese politics. Some 25–35 per cent of voters vote for the Liberal Democratic Party. If close to 40 per cent of voters normally abstain in national-level elections, which has been the case of late, the Liberal Democratic Party can barely get a parliamentary majority. Given the decade of economic depression and lack of swift and bold activity by the government, the electorate was especially weary of Yoshiro Mori, a dull, inarticulate, accident-prone prime minister, who came to power almost by default because of the sudden death of his predecessor, Keizo Obuchi. Koizumi focused on bold leadership and painful reform in order to restore economic growth. The other three presidential election candidates advocated varying mixes of painful economic reform and swift economic recovery. Koizumi took the most extreme position, almost omitting the desirability for swift economic recovery. He won largely because he was able to impress the voters in the presidential electoral college, which was enlarged at the last moment to include not only legislators but also local party chapter representatives. The impression he gave was that he was very likely to take a bold lead in curing the

malaise of the Japanese government and the economy. The Upper House election focused on the theme of bold economic reform. The Liberal Democratic Party became reformist whereas the opposition parties tried to sell the policy of 'economic reform with a warm heart' in varying forms. It was curious that until spring 2001 the Liberal Democratic Party was only half-heartedly reformist, whereas the opposition parties were offered a trenchant critique of the Liberal Democratic Party's line and presented a really reformist front. Sincere or not, the Liberal Democratic Party led by Koizumi succeeded in the Upper House election. Between April 2001, when he became President of the Liberal Democratic Party and subsequently Prime Minister, and July 2001 the policy debates in the National Diet focused on economic reform and the required economic policy package. Although the debates conducted in the National Diet and in the mass media touched on fundamental problems of the Japanese political system, the difficulties that a Koizumi reform platform might encounter were not fully realized by the electorate. Some major difficulties already apparent during the four-month period leading up to the Upper House election were first, the dilemma of allowing ill-performing banks and firms to go bankrupt when the consequences for many employees and employers would involve hardship; secondly, the difficulty of closing down or privatizing quasi-governmental or quasi-public organizations or corporations which are a huge drain on the public purse, a measure which bureaucrats would resist forcefully; thirdly, there was the difficulty of trimming government expenditure and withdrawing government bonds beyond three zillion yen, especially where social policy budgetary cuts (medical, welfare, pension) and those for public works in construction and transportation were concerned. The fourth difficulty was that of persuading the Bank of Japan to print more money. All these and other issues remained outstanding after the unusually hot summer of 2001, when the temperature often rose to 33° centigrade.

Meanwhile, although Koizumi's popularity ratings remained high throughout the summer, stock prices went down steadily. It looked almost as if the more popular Koizumi was, the more despondent was the market about the economic outlook. After all, Koizumi said, pain first, then recovery. Although the economic reform issue dominated the election, it was only after the Upper House election that those basic issues were confronted. Two major shocks came in September 2001. First came the unexpected tragedy

of 11 September in New York and Washington, DC, pushing down US business indicators drastically. Although of major world stock markets, Japanese business indicators were least negatively affected ten days after the event, it was clear that the Japanese economy was going further down the road of bankruptcy and unemployment. Then came the announcement of the half-year trading results for September (the Japanese fiscal year starts in April and ends in March) which were very disappointing, if not unexpected. All this encouraged the 'recovery-first' school of thought to lead to the drafting of a supplementary budget as an emergency measure during the summer and autumn. Meanwhile, Koizumi's plans for trimming the budget and privatizing quasi-governmental organizations/corporations seemed to be frustrated.

Only two other issues were salient before and during the election campaign. One was the history issue and the other was defence. Riding on a surge in nationalism, a right-wing publisher and author collaborated on a history book for approval by the Ministry of Education. Approval was granted after some major revisions were made on the advice of the Ministry. It caused an uproar in neighbouring countries especially in South Korea and in China. The Ministry's position is that as long as the basic description of historical events and personalities is correct and as long as its general tone does not contravene the Constitution, it will give approval. The often disregarded fact is that as many as six history books have been granted approval by the Ministry of Education, whose ideological position spans anywhere from centre-right to left-wing. It was not the case that the right-wing history book was the only history textbook. Of all junior high schools in Japan, less than one per cent adopted that particular right-wing history textbook.²⁰ When the right-wing textbook was put forward for approval, the Korean and Chinese governments protested and the Korean government imposed a permanent ban on entry into Korea by 25 war criminals. Koizumi himself did nothing and let the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs deal with the issue. This gave the impression that Koizumi was more right-wing on historical and patriotism issues than previously thought. The impression was reinforced in August when he announced that he would pay a visit to the Yasukuni shrine, where the war-dead

²⁰ Of all the high schools in Japan, less than one per cent adopted the right-wing history textbook. *Asahi Shimbun*, 16 August 2001.

including war criminals, were buried, on 15 August, the anniversary of the day Japan surrendered thus ending the Second World War. In the face of further vigorous protest from South Korea and China, Koizumi compromised to the extent of changing the date of his visit to 13 August.²¹

The other important issue was defence, but it was not given central importance during the Upper House election campaign. Yet of all the statements Koizumi made in the first couple of months in power, those referring to China, Korea and other neighbouring countries were fewest. His visit to the United States focused attention on the fact that Japan and the United States have been good allies and will remain so in the future, with Japan's support for the US-led missile defence system as far as research and development for missile defence in East Asia was concerned. Given the Bush foreign policy as glimpsed through Condoleezza Rice's article in the magazine *Foreign Affairs* and the Armitage Report of 2000 on the alliance between the United State and Japan, the Koizumi statement at the White House suggested that Japan's foreign policy would become more pro-US and more in favour of the build-up of defence.²² In other words, Koizumi's foreign policy seemed to indicate that Asian neighbours would be overlooked as Japan toed the Bush policy line. Coupled with the history textbook issue and the issue of the visit to the Yasukuni shrine, which disturbed both the United States and Asia alike, Asian neighbours were quietly watching Japan's new approach to foreign policy with some apprehension. The key orientations of Koizumi foreign policy were revealed after the events of 11 September. First, pro-US. Secondly, pro-defence build-up. Thirdly, possible constitutional revisionism. Previously, the development of Koizumi foreign policy had been hampered by the fact that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been paralysed by scandals, and the feud between Foreign Minister Makiko Tanaka and senior bureaucrats has made it inevitable that the Prime Minister's Office be put in charge of foreign policy. The drawback is that the Prime Minister's Office does not have anyone conversant with, let alone confident in, foreign policy. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo

²¹ *Asahi Shimbun*, 14 August 2001.

²² Condoleezza Rice, 'Promoting the National Interest', *Foreign Affairs*, 79:1 (January/February 2000), pp. 45–62; Richard L. Armitage et al, 'The United States and Japan: Advancing Toward a Mature Partnership', *INSS Special Report*, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, 11 October 2000.

Fukuda is a man of balance and compromise, but he makes no claim to expertise in foreign affairs. Senior bureaucrats in charge of briefing Koizumi were appointed to their positions by default, as all their superiors had been removed by forced resignation following scandals, and these advisers may not be fully competent to give sound advice. This is ironically the kind of foreign policy-making process as envisaged by the Armitage Report of 2000. It stated that the bureaucratic machinery and executive-legislative coordination take too much time to make an important decision; it is therefore necessary for swift decisions to be made by the prime minister and key party and parliamentary leaders in consultation with the United States.

CONCLUSION

The 29 July 2001 Upper House election was interesting for two reasons: first, in that, unlike many other elections, the poor economic conditions did not handicap the governing party and, secondly, in that the alarmingly steady loss of organized votes for the governing party did not prevent it from winning. Rather, Koizumi skilfully deployed the rhetorical slogans of 'reform with pain' and 'change the Liberal Democratic Party and change Japan'. Furthermore, his skilful way of fully utilizing TV appearances to enhance name recognition, use of the internet to reach out to the voters, the projection of his image of decisive leadership with a warm heart (the Hansen disease court case) through the mass media, and the mobilization of female voters all played a critical part in his successful campaign. But as the hundred-days honeymoon period has passed, Koizumi is learning that his own record on delivery of promises will come under scrutiny once the honeymoon is over.