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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PRESS IN JAPAN

SALEHA BILAL HUSAIN
Department of Mass Communication
University of Karachi, Karachi-75270, Pakistan

The Japanese media and communication system are technologically advanced and uniquely successful in Asia but have been criticized for their inability in performing the watchdog function due to party line proclivities. But suddenly the image of Japan is changing again. Apparently, the media of this mighty economic power, Japan, continues to play an active watchdog role, despite the fact that intrabureaucratic relationship that determines the conduct of ministries there has the chief feature of decision-making by consensus.

INTRODUCTION

There is little question that Japan, a country of Eastern ethics and Western technology (Toyo dotoko, Seyo gei) is capturing world attention for many reasons in recent years. One of these reasons may perhaps be its rapidly increasing importance on the international scene.

While the trade conflict dominated the headlines, Japan was quietly moving into second place among the donor nations in its overseas development aid (ODA) to developing countries. Since 1977, Japan has undertaken two "ODA doubling plans" to increase its official development assistance to the level of $4.3 billion for 1984, second only to U.S., at $8.2 billion.[1] In a speech at the United Nations in September, Foreign Minister Abe Shintaro announced that Japan was launching yet another ODA doubling plan over the period from 1986 to 1992. Given the seeming reluctance of the Japanese public to support more than modest increases in defense spending, aid-giving has represented a means for Japan to enlarge its international role. In the climate of fiscal restraint in recent years, spending for defense and for foreign aid have been the only two budget items that have been allowed to rise significantly. If the present trends in Japaneses aid-giving continue, and U.S. development continues to decline in real terms, Japan is likely to emerge in the next

few years as the number one donor to the developing world.

What were the major forces that made Japan an economic giant? What effect is Japan's technological advancement having on media? What explains Japan's extremely high media usage? How large a role does culture play in determining the approach of the media and of journalists? For example, are journalists more deferential, less likely to go in for investigative journalism in a Western sense? A host of further questions arise as one begins to answer these, by the scope of this study is limited to an examination of government media relationship in Japan. Politicians is to gain favorable publicity and exposure. Many add that this meeting does not prevent a broader framework of relations, and some have even found a linkage between the nature of the relations and the content of the transmitted information.

By observing the politicians' point of view, Clapp[2] noted that reporters have greater access to politicians than does any other group; thus the relationship between them is especially significant. Dunn[3], Cater[4] and Matthews[5] deduced that through the constant contact between reporters and politicians, both groups are equally good primary sources of information. At the same time, a great number of reasons for potential conflict between the two groups appears to exist in that a reporter's seeking to gather news and a politician's seeking to be exposed in a favorable light are not based on equivalent motives, suggesting the possibility of lasting tension between the two. On this point, Dyer and Nayman[6], as well as Matthews, noted that since reporters and parliamentarians are also aware of the interest values which are, in fact, close and sometimes common to their respective jobs, it becomes clear that the two groups depend on mutual assistance in order to realize their respective intentions and responsibilities to the public. They also have the ability to build each other up; the politician by supplying the reporter with daily information, is able to help increase the credibility of a reporter, while the latter, by transmitting information from the politician, can essentially contribute to the leader's political success.

This cooperation seems, from the point of view of both sides, to be more efficient than confrontation. In any case, as Dunn and Cater note[7], in order to achieve cooperation, the relationship between reporter and politician sometimes tends to informality, to the degree where reporters may even appear, at times, to be acting in the role of "unoffical" advisers to the politicians, or, what is more, as reliable and trusted friends. The implications of these relations may be to enlarge the information extending to members of parliament, who are not able to obtain information from the reporters, who in turn, have relatively easy access even to the opposition parties, the bureaucracy and interest groups.

Although research in these areas has been conducted in Western democratic countries, it has been unexplored, for the most part, in Japan. Examination of the aims of politicians in meeting reporters and the implications of these meetings seem particularly interesting in the case of Japan, not only because Japan is the only non-Western democracy in an advanced industrial society, but also because the Japanese mass media play a critical role in the daily affairs of the Japanese people.

Japanese Personality and History

Out of the chaos and destruction in the wake of Hiroshima in 1945, the Japanese rapidly forged a new nation, solidly founded in the precepts of democracy and in tune the modern world. Yet the annihilations of war that destroy the physical trappings of a country cannot completely obliterate the psychological tenets of a way of life from the minds of people. Modern Japan is still a product of her past and to understand fully the modernJapanese, it is to the past that one must look for explanation. The components of what may be termed a Japanese national personality had their genesis in the highly structured society of feudal Japan.

If the seventeenth century marks the age of radical philosophy in England and the eighteenth century is a "siecle des lumieres" or "philosophic century" to the French, then the early years of the Meiji period (1868-1911) certainly are to the Japanese an era of "Civilization and Enlightment" (bummerkaika). With the Meiji Restoration in January, 1868, came attempts to do away with feudalism, enlighten the people, impose libertarian ideas on the country and suppress overt nationalism. The extremely rapid industrialization of this period made inroads into the rigid feudal ways of life and although these changes were generally superficial, a deep seated unrest was creeping into a once peaceful national soul. Many old customs were abolished during the Great Emperor Meiji's reign, but substantial practices did not take their place. The people, accustomed to acting in their assigned roles, were left without definite guides to behavior[8]. Critic Tsuneri Fukuda termed it "a history of abnormal adaptability[9]".

The Japanese had been taught from childhood the paramount importance of conformity, to avoid the ostracism and scorn that deviant behavior would bring. Every role that had prescribed sequences and uncertain situations, in which they might lose self restraint and face, was avoided and feared. With the modern, Western facade that had been pulled over the nation, many such unprecedented situations arose, causing great internal psychological conflict. It was a spiritually sick country that entered the Second World War, united by hypernationalism, by Imperial duty and a desire to assume its rightful place under the sun as a superior race dwelling on a sacred land.

The war effort drained the strength of the Japanese nation, physically and mentally, and culminated in a complete breakdown in morale with defeat in 1945.

The physical rebuilding of Japan was amazingly rapid. By the mid- 1950s she had surged past her pre-war standard of living[10]. Morale, however, is longer in the making. With prosperity well established, the Japanese began to search for standards and goals that would spiritually unite their country. The Ikeda government (1960-1964) brought political stability and boosted economic success to new highs and the Japanese intensified their strivings for solidarity and definition of their national self. Editor Kinjiro Sasahara of the *Chuo Koron* wrote:

> For the first time since the war, intellectuals had the desire to look back in retrospect upon the history of Japan to identify what Japan was in order to find its future role.[11]

In his first press conference after being elected prime minister November 9, 1964, Eisaku Sato, stressed that his government would take a stronger stand in world affairs. He was faced with a fight in the Diet over the revision of Japan's post war constitution, which many Japanese felt was forced upon them by the American Occupation Forces. In the constitution, Japan renounced war as a means of settling international differences, limiting herself to a self defense force and trusting in the justice and faith of all peace loving nations. Japan abandoned the doctrine of the Emperor's divinity. Rival conservative political groups merged in 1955 to form the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) which has held power ever since. It was not until defeat and occupation after World War II that Japan became directly exposed to external political and economical influences of the West. Politically, it skillfully adapted Western democratic practices to its own system. Economically, it concentrated with determination and success on absorbing and improving Western industrial products and processes and in developing new products.

An often told story comes to mind that illustrates Japan's longstanding talents in replacing imported manufactures with their own. In the early 16th century when Japan was a remote country, a Portuguese ship stopped at a small island south of Kyushu and by some means the Japanese obtained several flint lock rifles. It was a time of civil war in Japan and the guns were certain to be in great demand by all sides. A decade later, some Europeans again visited the country and discovered that the flint locks had not only been copied but had been perfected. Having been reproduced in great quantities these weapons were being used effectively by many armies all over the country. Other similar stories illustrate how quickly Japanese pick up good ideas from others, begin by imitation, go on to improvements, and soon become self-sufficient.

The Press and the Japanese Government in Mid 40s

While the Japanese press was not granted absolute freedom after Japan's surrender, it nevertheless was accorded liberty of action to a degree unprecedented in the nation's history. Major restrictions imposed by General MacArthur's ten-point "Press Code for Japan" of September 19, 1945, were aimed at eliminating any criticism of the occupation forces. Japanese editors were told by the Supreme Commander: "News must adhere strictly to the truth". (See Appendix A for Press Code Japan - 1945).

The Japanese press was not only permitted to criticize the government of Japan with the advent of the occupation, but it was encouraged to do so if it felt such criticism justifiable.

Prime Minister Baron Shidehara, in a speech in 1945, painted a bleak future for post war Japan. He enumerated the many problems that were confronting his cabinet, but failed to explain to the satisfaction of the Japanese press how his government intended to cope with these problems. Newspaper *Nippon Times* lamented that it was "the hopeless bad luck of the people that they have to tide over this difficult situation under the leadership of such an incapable government[12]"

In the same vein, newspapers *Mainichi* editorialized:

> What the people who are groaning in the rock-bottom of difficulty, want to hear from the prime minister is what action the government is taking to cope with the situation, but not the promise... If the government is really determined to act in the interest of the people... we want to see it in a clear-cut way.[13]

Newspaper *Asahi* said editorially that the Prime Minister's speech

> ... typifies the transitory character of the Cabinet and its known lack of political power... The mere enumeration of these burdens in a speech cannot possibly inspire the people to have confidence in the government.[14]

Mainichi turned to the subject of inflation in an editorial, pointing out that the salaried workers were the greatest sufferers in a period of spiraling prices.

> Inflation was caused by the government when it issued too many notes in expectation of victory... And where did the money go? It went to the Zaibatsu which were manufacturing war supplies

during the war, throwing general workers into a miserable state...[15]

In the Spring of 1946, the Japanese government limited all Japanese salaries ordering the rest of each individual's earnings to be blocked in restricted bank accounts. Strict rationing and price control measures were also decreed. These measures were aimed at checking rampant inflation.

"Whether we like it or not, price controls are necessary in order to establish a peaceful Japan" was the typical conclusion reached by a majority of Japan's journals in discussing the government's new economics. The editors warned, however, that "control should be democratic and not bureaucratic"[16].

Mainichi, in a sharply worded editorial published on March 16, 1947, advised the Japanese government to "get down to brass tacks" in developing a program to combat the acute food shortage and inflation, declaring in part:

> The people must be shown concrete and practical programs which are workable under the present situation. The voters are fed up with the high sounding phrases and brilliant slogans. They want, and nation needs, constructive, practical and detailed programs that will give rise to the people and defeat the forces of inflation.[17]

As the Japanese food problem became more acute, resulting ultimately in the importation of food from America to avert starvation, Japanese editors became correspondingly more caustic in their appraisals of efforts of Baron Shiedehar's Cabinet to meet the crisis. "Minister of Agriculture... is not prepared with any adequate policy for the current agricultural administration... and since his appointment, he has carried out no effective or beneficial policy."[18]

When the votes were counted in the April 10 election, no one party had a clear majority. The Liberal Party polled the most votes, followed closely by the Social Democrats and the Progressive. In view of this fact, Premier Shidehara told the press shortly after the election that the present "unstable condition" necessitated the continuance of his Cabinet in office. The Premier did add, however, that "if there are full prospects for a three-party coalition materializing smoothly", he would be willing to step out. This announcement was met by overwhelming press opposition. *Mainichi*, for example, accused the Shidehara government with "intrigue," contending that this administration could do nothing which another cabinet could not do.

The Japanese press featured Shidehara's application for membership in the Progressive Party (which subsequently elected him party president), and the effort of his Cabinet members to line up Liberal and Socialist partly support behind Shidehara in a three-party coalition government. These political machinations were reported widely in the Japanese newspapers to the accompaniment of blistering editorial comment. *Yomiuri*, in a typical observation, said that the Shidehara Cabinet was more interested in "manipulations to maintain power" than in the hunger of the people. This paper added that leaving the affairs of government in the hands of Baron Shidehara and his Cabinet "is tantamount to inviting hunger and trouble for society." [19]

The rising tide of pressure finally convinced the Cabinet that its position was untenable and the entire Shidehara government resigned en bloc on April 22, 1946. The resignation was welcomed by Japanese newspapers, and frequent use was made of the expressions "finally" and "at last". Typical of the press reaction were the following extracts from a *Yomiuri* editorial:

> At last ... the Shidehara Cabinet has decided to resign. Despite large scale political intrigue and the backing of monopolizing capitalists, it was not able to ignore the power of public opinion.' This is plainly a victory for the democratic forces and a further step toward democratic government.[20]

Discussing the overthrow of the Shidehara Cabinet, *Mainichi* declared in part:

> It was the power of public opinion that brought about the capitulation of the Shidehara government. The Cabinet held on tenaciously to the very end, but the will of the people triumphed. Anachronistic political maneuvering and bargaining has finally bowed successful overthrow of the Shidehara Cabinet must go to the people... The next government, whether coalition, Liberal, Socialist, or Progressive, must realize that actually feeling the meaning of the sovereignty of the will of the people.[21]

The task of forming a new government finally was given to Shigeru Youshida. An *Asahi* editorial criticized a tax increase from 18 to 20 and demanded that the "government publish the figures justifying its move".

The perfectural press was just as bitter as its Tokyo contemporaries in assailing the government's revised tax bill. *Osaka Shimbun* reported "violent opposition

from the workers... who cannot live on their income even without new burdens, "while *Nipponkai Shimbun* charged that "labor now is taxed more severely than the rich." *Chubu Nippon* charge that "the government is ignorant of the actual living conditions of the working class — nearly 80 percent of their income is spent to get food and nothing else. This change is impossible for them." *Ishikawa Shimbun* called for "outright abolition."[22]

Myriads of other extracts are on record that may be quoted to support that the press of Japan censured the government when it felt that censure was necessary.

The Press and the Japanese Government in Mid 60s

The *Japan Times* has the expressed purpose of explaining Japan and the Japanese way of life to the foreigner, and half of its circulation is foreign. The *Japan Times* is regarded in most circles as an instrument by which the Japanese government can expound its policies and feelings on various issues.

Given the psychological impact of the *Japan Times* and the nature of its audience, one can infer that if the editorials in the *Japan Times* are read by the potential audience, they would have important effects on the decision-making process of the audience. The audience of the *Japan Times* is generally made up of opinion leaders who influence a much greater number of people. In making decisions, these opinion leaders draw on a large number of sources. The *Japan Times* is a source of primary influence. This part of the paper, therefore, deals with what the opinion of the *Japan Times* was in the mid sixties, with particular attention to the advent of the Vietnam War.

Borop[23] made a study of the "editorial treatment of the Vietnam War in the Japan Times, 1964-67." A two-pronged experimental design was used to break the editorial coverage of the war in Vietnam in the *Japan Times* down into working components and to analyze the components in three ways. The basic categorization and analysis were done by content analysis in which the editorials were placed in categories and rated as favorable, neutral or unfavorable to United States' involvement in Vietnam, and statements for each category were examined for trends and development of policy over the 1964-47 period. The categories developed in the content analysis were then used as the concepts for a semantic differential that was applied to the editorials from 1967 to measure the meaning of their concepts as they had developed at this time. The *Japan Times* at the time of the study had no direct link with the government of Japan, but many people still associated, either directly or subconsciously, the newspapers with its war time function as a propaganda organ. Borop found, through the above mentioned research, that the *Japan Times* was highly critical of communism in general and communist involvement in

Vietnam in specific. The editorials laid the blame for the Vietnamese situation fully on the communist regimes in Hanio and Peiping and stated that the United States was in Vietnam to stop the spread of communism. The *Japan Times* was highly favorable of United States involvement in Vietnam in the period of 1964-67. The only source of major concern was that Japan might be dragged into the war in some way against her will. By 1967, however, even the fear that Japan might become involved seemed to have been allayed and the editorials were focused on solving the problem in Vietman.

The general feeling throughout the editorials was that the U.S. should remain in South Vietnam to defend it from communist aggression, but at the same time should exercise the utmost care not to inflame the situation or precipitate a wider conflict. The *Japan Times* did object strenuously to the use of U.S. B-52s based on Okinawa for direct raids on North Vietnam, stating that these could subject Japan to any retaliation against the U.S. bombing raids.

Thirty-one editorials on Vietnam appeared in the *Japan Times* in 1965. Of these, ten were rated positive on U.S. involvement in Vietnam and the rest were rated neutral. An editorials of August 6, said:

> We are convinced that our government is handling the matters involved alright and we do not believe the Americans will make any unfair demands upon Japan in the process of prosecuting the War."

In Chapter 6 of his book *Japan*, Suichi Kato describes the mass media of Japan in the early sixties as free from any direct control by any political power, whether party, government or military. They were not official or unofficial mouthpieces for specific points of view. This political freedom, combined with peculiar economic characteristics of the post war press, produced a notably apolitical press interested in maximizing circulation largely by moving with what are seen as popular trends. Because the major income of the press came from circulation rather than advertising, there has been pressure to seek maximum circulation through popular appeals. Aside from a certain sensationalism in news coverage, there has been a tendency to confirm or reflect current popular opinion. Kato commented, "in sum, the mass media tend to emphasize majority opinions and minimize minority opinions." Thus, the media in Japan tend to reinforce existing values, existing concepts of the rules of the game and majority concepts of what it means to be Japanese. This is, of course, the same type of role one finds the mass media filling in most modern nations, one that is primarily informational and latently socializing.

On the whole, the relations between the Japanese government and mass media remained relatively open. Access to official existed and reporters did have a right to criticize government. In fact, the decade that followed saw that despite numerous protests and libel suits from many political and business leaders, the press went to great lengths to reconcile the right of the people to know and the basic human rights of the suspected politicians. A number of prominent individuals, including former Primer Minister Tanaka, were arrested. The Japanese press definitely exercised editorial influence on government policies. So much so that in 1978, when the Defence Agency proposed "legislation to provide against national emergency," with implications of restricting news activities, a storm of controversy was stirred up by the press. Editorials of practically all newspapers cautioned against a seeming trend towards authoritarian government and demanded maintenance of the principle of civilian rule. The Defense Agency finally announced that the emergency would not include control of speech. Also, when the Prime Minister stated in the Diet that he intended to look into a law to protest secrets, the press and opposition parties criticized the plan as a control measure, and the government backed down. Hasty decisions affecting freedom of the press were not tolerated. In the late 60s and later, jailing of newsmen and suspension and confiscation of newspapers remained rarities. The press appeared to be outspoken and powerful to quite an extent.

The Press and the Japanese Government in Mid 80s

The mass media in the 80s comprise a network that extends from the five major nationally circulated newspapers—the *Yomiuri* (circulation 13.4 million copies daily), *Asahi* (12.2 million), *Mainichi* (6.4 million) *Hihon Keizai* (3.2 million), and *Sankei* (2.9 million)—- through local papers (about 98 of them, with at least one newspaper in each of the 47 prefectures), and 4 bloc papers with their circulation extending to several prefectures. The average circulation of Japanese dailies is the highest in the world after the USSR and the USA, and the circulation per head is the highest in the world at about 579 copies per 1000 inhabitants. The large number of weekly news journals is a notable feature of the Japanese press. Technically, the Japanese press is highly advanced, and the major newspapers are issued in simultaneous editions in the main centers.

Japanese broadcasting is done by Nippon Hoso Kyokai, NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) which is a public broadcasting system with two television channels, two AM ration networks (with 105 stations) and one FM (with 58 stations), all nationwide, plus 95 commercial television companies (operating 4,705 stations), 48 AM (with 190 stations), one shortwave (with 2 stations) and four FM radio broadcasting companies (with 7 stations).

Japan is not a country which pays lip service to its Press Council or Code of

Ethics. They are taken seriously. In consequence, Japanese newspapers are completely free; the liberty of the Press is guaranteed by the constitution; there are no newspaper laws and no system of registering newspapers nor of the reporters who work on them.

The key to Japan's success is the organization "Nihon Shinbun Kyokai," financed from within the industry; the largest and probably the most efficient Media Council in the world. It covers the activities of newspapers, news agencies and broadcasting the works closely with the Motion Picture Moral Code Committee. It deals with advertising as well as editorial content. It is now a quarter of a century old. It works basically on a set of Canons of Journalism to which all its members subscribe and its final sanction infringement is expulsion, though this is very rarely applied. Its secretariat has a staff of veteran journalists who examine every day the entire content of all the newspapers published by member organizations throughout Japan. Stories, photographs or advertisements which violate the Code are cut out, filed and classified. They are then submitted to the appropriate monthly meetings of the Editorial Committee which has some 50 members drawn from the industry. If the Committee considers that anything in any way violates the Code, a warning is sent to the newspaper concerned. If the newspaper does not heed the warning, it is then referred to the Directors of NSK, A great deal of research and study into the ethical side of mass media operations is also undertaken by this organization which has a separate study group operating in this field.

Surprisingly the Canons of Journalism, which come under six heads—sphere of news reporting and editorial writing; the principle of editorial comment; impartiality; tolerance and decency; guidance; responsibility and pride, are not in themselves excessively long.

There are several sub-clauses which are models in themselves, e.g. sphere of news reporting etc. sub clause 3: "In treating news one should always remember and be strictly on guard against the possibility of such news being used for propaganda purposes." Sub Clause 4: "Criticism of persons should be limited to such as that which could be made direct in the face of the persons involved."

In outlining the principles which should govern editorial comment, it is stated: "the writer should maintain the public spirit of being a speaker for those who otherwise have no means of voicing their opinions." There is, of course, the right of correction and the obligation that "those who are to be criticised should be given the opportunity to defend themselves."

On responsibility there is the statement:

> The principle difference between newspapers and other commercial enterprises is that newspapers in their reportorial and editorial activities exercise great influence over the public. The public chiefly depends on newspapers as the source of information and the basis of their judgment of public events and problems. From this distinction arises the public character of journalistic enterprises and the special social status of journalists. The realization of their responsibility and pride by journalists is fundamental in ensuring their special status. These are points which must be observed by each individual journalists.

The political map in Japan consists of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, which is generally defined as conservative, and the central parties (the Clean Government Party, Democratic-Socialist Party, and the New Liberal Club). The Japanese Socialist Party and the Japanese Communist Party are considered progressive. In these groups, the basis of support can be identified very clearly, and other major differences lie within the sphere of foreign policy.

The National Diet—the highest organ of state power—is composed of two Houses: the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors. Members of both Houses are elected democratically but each House has a different basis of qualification. The total membership of the House of Representatives is 511 and the term in office is four years. The figures for the House of Councillors are 252 and six respectively and half of the members of this House are elected every third year.

A study was carried out by Offer Feldman in Winter 1985 (Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 62 No.4) to evaluate the opinions of Diet members about the press and about what newspapers print concerning political life and activities, and to find any tendencies that might arise from the individual relations between reporters and Diet members. The researcher wanted to find out, (a) if the Diet members meet any reporters, if so how often; (b) what channel of the mass media does a Diet man have the greatest degree of contact and (c) for what purpose does the Diet man meet reporters of the mass media — transmitting information/obtaining information/social friendship basis/maintaining good relations/other.

The research indicated that the reporters who enjoy the most frequent contact with politicians are those of the national newspapers, local newspapers and NHK. The aim of getting information rates the highest in all cases. On the other hand, the significance of the aim of giving information is not as great in the cases of the local papers and NHK as it is for national newspapers. About 17.5 percent of respondents meet national newspaper reporters in order to transmit information to them, while

24.7 percent meet them in order to obtain information. It indicated further that the main reasons for meeting reporters appear to be two-fold: to exchange information and to maintain good relations with them, particularly in view of the huge circulations of the press. Furthermore, within this framework, politicians consult with reporters, listen to their suggestions and to some extent are influenced by them.

Recently, Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone has particularly forged a leadership style that rests heavily on winning popular support through media. Three major characteristics of his personal style stand out. First is his use of the media to reach the public and to create an appealing image. Nakasone is a master of the photo opportunity. Surrounded by shouting camera crews, he meditates in Zen temple, and the image that emerges seems uncontrived and as old as Japan itself. Besides working to create an image, Nakasone uses television as a direct route to the public to win support for his programs, bypassing the Diet and his own party. His nationwide prime time television address on April 9, 1985, urging the Japanese to buy more foreign goods, was unprecedented in Japanese politics, as was a television program soon after in which he was shown out shopping for foreign-made items.

A second dimension is his use of the foreign arena to score points at home. Most if not all post war prime ministers have looked to their international role to help them gain standing at home, but no one has gone as far as Nakasone. In his international activity, Nakasone appears to answer a felt need of the Japanese people in the mid 1980s to be at the center of the world stage rather than at the periphery. Even domestic critics of his sometimes graceless elbowing to stand beside the powerful are quick to say that Japanese leaders abroad often have been too different in the past. The success of his international efforts is measured in the results of a survey conducted in November (1985) in which an astonishing 75 percent of eligible voters expressed approval for the diplomacy of the Nakasone government over the past three years[24]. Here again he needs the media.

A final hallmark of the Nakasone style is his straightforward presentation of issues through the media. The public finds his politics "wakari-yasui" easy to understand. Unlike his predecessors, who seldom reached out to the public to explain government decisions in language the public could relate to, Nakasone lays out issues in a clear-cut and often vivid fashion. In extorting his influence to replace top executives of Japan Airlines after the August 12 air crash, for example, he labeled them "irresponsible, arrogant men," charging that they had failed to show sincere sympathy for the 520 victims of the JAL air crash and that they had failed to maintain good labor-management relations and high staff morale.[25] When the issue is presented in this way, the public's interest in politics rises dramatically.

One dominant norm of Japanese political culture which is believed to influence strongly, it may be reiterated, is the concept of consensus or harmony. Japanese try to patch up differences and avoid open conflict more than any other people, but the role of the press need not be misunderstood due to this reason. Far from being a mere mouthpiece, the press tries to inform, guide and form public opinions.

> Sunday's double elections for the Diet resulted in a devastating setback for the opposition camps... Parliamentary democracy functions effectively only when the opposition plays a responsible role as a countervailing power to the ruling party... It is time for all opposition parties to rethink their strategies and reform themselves to accommodate the changing and versatile demands of the general public.[26]

When Libya was bombed by the USA on April 15, 1986, two of the leading newspapers came out with editorials having different approaches.

The *Japan Times* of April 16, 1986 wrote an editorial under the heading "Mr. Reagan's III-Considered Attack." The theme of the editorial was that, although America was provoked, this response (of bombing) was not appropriate.

The *Yomiuri Shumbun's* editorial of April 15, 1986 was under the headline "A Way to Break the Evil Cycle of Terrorism and Retaliation." The theme of this editorial was quite different from one of the *Japan Times,* for it strongly justified the bombing and expressed that such an attack was necessary under the circumstances.

This shows again that the media are playing a responsible and independent role without acting collectively as a mere mouthpiece of the government.

CONCLUSION

All that is stated above supports the concept that the framework of connections between reporters and politicians in Japan goes beyond the transmitting of information from the political elite. What is hoped is that despite Nakasone's political style having its emphasis on the use of the media, such a relationship will be maintained in future.

If communication has a role to play in changing or preventing change in the social structure, the reporters of Japan need to be more alert than ever before. In today's world, media men are the agents of power. There are no two opinions on

this elsewhere — outside Japan — either.

APPENDIX - A

PRESS CODE FOR JAPAN OFFICE OF THE SUPREME COMMANDER FOR THE ALLIED FORCES

19 September, 1945

AG 000.73 (18 Sep 45) CI

MEMORANDUM FOR : IMPERIAL JAPANESE GOVERNMENT.

THROUGH : Central Liaison Office, Tokyo.

SUBJECT : Press Code For Japan

1. News must adhere strictly to the truth.
2. Nothing shall be printed which might, directly or by inference, disturb the public tranquility.
3. There shall be no false or destructive criticism of the Allied powers.
4. There shall be no destructive criticism of the Allied Forces of Occupation and nothing which might invite mistrust or resentment of those troops.
5. There shall be no mention or discussion of Allied troop movements unless such movements have been officially released.
6. News stories must be factually written and completely devoid of editorial opinion.
7. News stories shall not be colored to conform with any propaganda line.
8. Minor details of a news story must not be overemphasized to stress or develop any propaganda line.
9. No news story shall be distorted by the omission of pertinent facts or details.
10. In the make-up of the newspaper no news story shall be given undue prominence for the purpose of establishing or developing any propaganda line.

FOR THE SUPREME COMMANDER:

/s/ Harold Fair /t/ HAROLD FAIR
Lt Col, A.G.D. Asst Adjutant General.

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