



Media and Politics in Japan

Edited by

Susan J. Pharr and

Ellis S. Krauss

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This book grew out of a workshop series sponsored by the Joint Committee on Japanese Studies of the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies.

To Robert and Martha
with love and gratitude

PREFACE

THIS book resulted from an international collaborative venture that has a long history. The project from which it grew was sparked by a discussion of the Joint Committee on Japanese Studies (JCJS) of the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) in the early 1980s. Reflecting on what key areas of research had been neglected in the social science literature on Japan, the committee asked why the media as a force in social and political life had received so little attention. No country in the industrial world is as media-saturated as Japan. Its five national dailies—each with a circulation of over 2 million—translate into the highest per-capita newspaper circulation in the world. Some 90 percent of adults read newspapers daily, and the average person watches more than three hours of television a day. Given the rising importance of the media in all the industrial societies, Japan thus presents itself as a laboratory for exploring the role the media play today in democracies. Japan is an especially useful testing ground, JCJS members held, because the great bulk of research on the role of the media in politics and society has focused on the United States. Japan offers a setting for testing and rethinking theories derived from American experience.

The JCJS agreed to make funding available for a planning meeting if scholars came forward to take up the challenge. But organizing a project on the media in Japan proved to be more difficult than the committee had thought. Most collaborative research ventures of the kind encouraged by the SSRC bring together scholars who are already working independently on related topics or themes and who are thus ready and willing to join in a common endeavor. In the case of work on the Japanese media, however, the situation was entirely different. Remarkably, despite the widely acknowledged importance of the topic, relatively few scholars outside Japan have conducted research on the contemporary Japanese media's role in politics. In Japan itself, despite the existence of key media research centers at the University of Tokyo, Keiō University, and elsewhere, relatively little research has focused on the broad effects of the media on political life in a comparative framework.

Susan Pharr agreed to organize the project, and there followed a long period of recruitment that continued, indeed, until the book assumed its final shape. Of the American authors whose work is represented in this volume, none had a lengthy track record of academic research on the media in Japanese politics at the time of the first planning meeting, held in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in May 1984. Partly as a result of this project, Ellis Krauss was stimulated to expand his preliminary research on NHK into a larger research program. He came to play a leading role in the project and later joined Susan Pharr as an editor of this volume.

John Campbell, University of Michigan, and Scott Flanagan, Florida State University, joined Pharr and Krauss at the first planning session. Also at the session were Michael Reich of Harvard University, Fukashi Horie of Keiō University, and Ted Bestor representing the SSRC. Frank Schwartz, then a graduate student at Harvard, served very ably as rapporteur. David Paletz, a political scientist at Duke University who has studied the media in a comparative political-science framework, was unable to attend, but he made valuable suggestions concerning scholars working on related topics with a focus on other parts of the world who might be enlisted at some stage as discussants.

At the session, it was agreed that the project should be binational, in order to draw on and learn from the base of media research in Japan. Pharr subsequently contacted Hiroshi Akuto, University of Tokyo, who became, with her, co-organizer of the project. It was also agreed that Akuto would edit any Japanese-language publication resulting from the project. Further recruitment then proceeded on both sides of the Pacific. Akuto successfully sought a grant from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) to support travel and research-related activities of the Japanese participants. Pharr received funding from the SSRC for the first workshop, and from the Japan–United States Friendship Commission for the second and follow-up activities.

The first workshop was held at the Nissan Institute, Oxford University, 11–14 July 1985. Arthur Stockwin, director of the institute and Nissan Professor of Modern Japanese Studies, served as host. The Nissan Institute provided a congenial setting for a workshop that included Michio Muramatsu, Kyoto University; Hirohisa Suzuki, University of Tokyo; Olga Linne, University of Leicester; and Colin Seymour-Ure, University of Kent; Ted Bestor, representing the SSRC; and Morio Watanabe, then of the University of Wisconsin, serving as rapporteur. At the workshop, the project participants presented preliminary drafts of their papers or research plans. Because most of the

participants were new to comparative research on the media in politics, Olga Linne and Colin Seymour-Ure, both of whom have studied the media in other advanced industrial nations, made very valuable contributions to the meeting. Michio Muramatsu, though he is not a media specialist, played an important role in the discussion because of his deep knowledge of politics and political behavior in Japan.

The relative scarcity of data on the media in Japanese electoral politics spurred the Japanese team to conduct an election study in Japan for the project. Sponsored by JSPS and carried out in February 1986, the survey (described in the chapters by Hiroshi Akuto and by Toshio Takeshita and Ikuo Takeuchi) included questions submitted by Ellis Krauss and Scott Flanagan. It enriched the data base for the project and represented a form of American and Japanese collaboration that has not been common in binational projects sponsored by the joint committee.

The second workshop was held in Hawai'i, 5–9 January 1987. All the people whose work appears in this volume (except journalists Maggie Farley and Kristin Kyoko Altman) presented drafts at the workshop. Hirohisa Suzuki and Kiyoshi Midōka, both of University of Tokyo, also made presentations that proved highly useful in the exchange. Patricia Steinhoff of the University of Hawai'i, at that time a member of the JCJS, joined the sessions as a discussant. Majid Tehranian, also of the University of Hawai'i, was an able general discussant for the workshop. Stefan Tanaka of the SSRC served as staff.

From the second workshop emerged a fascinating series of drafts at various stages of research and preparation. But the picture of the media's role in politics was still incomplete. To round it out, a contribution on the media's highly visible role in political scandals was required. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, scandals were convulsing Japanese politics, ultimately triggering the fall of the Liberal Democratic Party in the summer of 1993. Maggie Farley, a professional journalist with much experience in Japan, was invited to contribute a chapter to this volume based on her 1992 master's thesis at Harvard. Kristin Kyoko Altman, a political reporter and anchor for TV Asahi, agreed to prepare a chapter on the intriguing and portentous role of television in the watershed events of the summer of 1993. Krauss contributed a new chapter on another topic of growing interest today: the media's role in trade tensions between the United States and Japan.

Conceived a decade ago to fill a lacuna in the literature on Japan as well as to contribute to comparative research on the media's role in politics, this project has achieved what it set out to accomplish.

Remarkably enough, this book stands alone as the first major collaborative research volume in English to deal with the media's role in contemporary Japanese politics in comparative perspective. The project has also sought to play an active part in spurring further research. In addition to the collaborative activities discussed so far, the project has led to panels at meetings of the American Political Science Association, the Association for Asian Studies, and the International Political Science Association, and to numerous meetings in Cambridge, Tokyo, New York, Pittsburgh, and elsewhere among the many scholars who have participated at various stages. Works by Gregory Kasza (*The State and the Mass Media in Japan, 1918–1945* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988]), Ofer Feldman (*Politics and the News Media in Japan* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993]), and others that have appeared since the project began, or that are now under way, offer promising signs that scholarship on the Japanese media's role in politics and society in comparative perspective is thriving today.

According to the usual practice of books on Japan that seek a wider audience, Western name order is used for Japanese names throughout this volume.

A book so long in the making incurs many debts. We would like to express appreciation to the Joint Committee on Japanese Studies for providing both the inspiration for the volume and the resources for the project in its early stages, and to the Japan–United States Friendship Commission for its generous financial support. We are also grateful to the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science for providing funding for the Japanese participants in the project. We would like to single out Ted Bestor, Stefan Tanaka, and Mary Byrne McDonnell of the SSRC and Lyn Sloan of the Friendship Committee for particular thanks; we have a debt to them as well as to numerous other people in those organizations.

We also extend thanks to the many scholars mentioned in this account who, though not contributors to this volume, took part in the planning meeting, workshops, or related panels at professional meetings, or who participated in some other way. This project brought many of the contributors, including the editors of this volume, into a new area of research, and we all benefited greatly as a result. None of those mentioned bears responsibility for the final volume, but each helped to make it possible.

In closing, the editors of this English-language volume wish to express particular thanks to Hiroshi Akuto and other members of the

Japanese team for their warm hospitality in Tokyo to both of us over the years of the project, and to the Nissan Institute and Arthur Stockwin for providing such a pleasant and stimulating setting for the first workshop. We also extend our thanks to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, formerly headed by Amos Jordan and now by David Abshire, where the workshops were planned and organized; to Harvard's Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies, directed formerly by Akira Iriye and now by Helen Hardacre, where the final work on the volume was completed; and to the Japan Council and its Japan Iron and Steel Federation endowment fund, Faculty of Arts and Sciences Dean Peter Koehler, and Political Science Department Chair B. Guy Peters, University of Pittsburgh; to Margot Chamberlain, who ably oversaw the many drafts and changes that come with an editing project; to John McVey and George Scialabba for their editing; and to Kim Reimann, Saori Horikawa, and Christina Davis for their valuable research and other assistance; to Mary Mortensen, who prepared the index; and to Patricia Crosby and Cheri Dunn of University of Hawai'i Press. On a personal note, Ellis Krauss is grateful to Martha Leche for her unflagging support and tolerance during the later stages of this project. Susan Pharr would like to thank her husband, Robert Cameron Mitchell, for his help and unstinting support throughout.

SUSAN J. PHARR

ELLIS S. KRAUSS

CONTENTS

<i>Tables</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xi
Part I. The Mass Media and Japan	1
Introduction: Media and Politics in Japan: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives SUSAN J. PHARR	3
1. Media as Trickster in Japan: A Comparative Perspective SUSAN J. PHARR	19
Part II. Media Organizations and Behavior	45
2. Mass Media as Business Organizations: A U.S.-Japanese Comparison D. ELEANOR WESTNEY	47
3. Portraying the State: NHK Television News and Politics ELLIS S. KRAUSS	89
Part III. The Role of the Media in Politics and Policy	131
4. Japan's Press and the Politics of Scandal MAGGIE FARLEY	133
5. Television and Political Turmoil: Japan's Summer of 1993 KRISTIN KYOKO ALTMAN	165
6. Media and Policy Change in Japan JOHN CREIGHTON CAMPBELL	187
7. Media and Political Protest: The Bullet Train Movements DAVID EARL GROTH	213

8.	Media Coverage of U.S.–Japanese Relations ELLIS S. KRAUSS	243
Part IV. Media and the Public		275
9.	Media Exposure and the Quality of Political Participation in Japan SCOTT C. FLANAGAN	277
10.	Media in Electoral Campaigning in Japan and the United States HIROSHI AKUTO	313
11.	Media Agenda Setting in a Local Election: The Japanese Case TOSHIO TAKESHITA AND IKUO TAKEUCHI	339
Part V. Media and Politics		353
12.	The Mass Media and Japanese Politics: Effects and Consequences ELLIS S. KRAUSS	355
	<i>Contributors</i>	373
	<i>Index</i>	375

TABLES

Intro.1	Japan's Mass Media	6
1.1	Competing Interpretations of the Media's Role	34
2.1	Mass Media Firms among Japan's 500 Largest Corporations	51
2.2	Mass Media Firms among the 500 Largest U.S. Corporations	52
2.3	Employment Changes at National Newspapers, 1977-1987	68
2.4	Employment Changes in Broadcasting Firms, 1977-1987	73
3.1	Percentage of Total Items and Total Time Related to Type of News: NHK	98
3.2	Content of the News about Government and Politics: Japan and the United States	100
3.3	Comparison of NHK 7 P.M. News and U.S. News on Activities in Domestic News	102
7.1	Parties Supported by the Leaders of the <i>Shinkansen</i> Citizens' Movements	232
8.1	Number of Times "Japan" Mentioned in Newspapers (1984 and 1990)	248
8.2	Japan and the United States: Television News Coverage of World Regions	250
9.1	Association between Various Demographic Attributes and Media Exposure	283
9.2	Media Exposure and Associativeness (Pearson's <i>r</i>)	286
9.3	Association between Media Exposure and Political Knowledge	289
9.4	Issue Awareness by Media Exposure and Education Level Groups	290
9.5	Political Attitude Constraint: Simple and Multiple Correlations between Various Attitude Dimensions and the 1976 Vote by Media Exposure and Education Level Groups	291
9.6	Association between Media Exposure and Issue Salience and Position (Partial <i>r</i>)	294

9.7	Media Exposure and Political Involvement	296
9.8	Direct and Indirect Effects of All Independent Variables in Path Analysis Model on Political Participation Levels	298
9.9	Factor Loadings of 12 Issue Items on 4 Principal Factors (Oblique Rotation)	305
10.1	Content of Election News	323
10.2	News Coverage of the Candidates (Japan)	325
10.3	News Coverage of the Candidates (United States)	325
10.4	Political Bias of News Reporting, Machida Mayoral Election	326
10.5	Political Bias of News Reporting, Tokyo Gubernatorial Election	326
10.6	Exposure to the Daily Paper's Political News and Network Newscasts	327
10.7	Most Influential News Sources in Japan	327
10.8	Topics Encountered and Discussed during the Campaign (Japan)	328
10.9	Candidates' Campaign Exposure from Media and Direct Sources (Japan)	329
10.10	Perceptions of Election's Most Important Aspect (Japan)	330
10.11	Perceptions of Election's Most Important Aspect (United States and Japan)	332
10.12	Number of News Stories Analyzed (United States)	336
10.13	Number of News Stories Analyzed (Japan)	336
10.14	Topics of Election Conversation during Campaign	337
11.1	Selected Issues Emphasized by 4 Newspapers during Machida Election Campaign	343
11.2	Comparison of Voters Who Mentioned Some Issue and Those Who Didn't	345
11.3	Voter's Personal Issue Salience during Machida Election Campaign	345
11.4	Voter's Perception of Other Machida Voters' Issue Salience	346
11.5	Spearman's Rank-Order Correlations between Media's Emphasis and Voter's Salience by Demographic Variables of the Respondents	347
11.6	Spearman's Rank-Order Correlations between Media's Emphasis and Voter's Salience by Contingent Variables	348

PART I

The Mass Media and Japan

Introduction

Media and Politics in Japan: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

SUSAN J. PHARR

FEW questions are as intrinsically fascinating and of obvious importance for understanding the present and the future of industrial democracies as those that concern the role of the media in society and politics. At the U.S. political conventions in the summer of 1992, media representatives far outnumbered the presumed “real” players, the delegates. Lingering television images of town halls, memories of billionaire Ross Perot on camera with graphs in hand, and news of a media-stung Democratic president’s 1994 moves to reshuffle his team of spokespersons and spin-doctors once again: these are vivid reminders of the omnipresence of the media in politics today and of their centrality to politicians and the public alike.

The role of the media in the political upheavals in Japan in the summer of 1993 offered similar reminders. Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa’s fall, sealed by a no-confidence vote in Japan’s parliament, or Diet, on June 18, began on May 31 with some ill-advised remarks in a television interview.¹ As new conservative parties rose to challenge the long-standing dominance of Japan’s Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which had held power since 1955, their leaders raced from one talk show to the next positioning themselves for the July 18 lower house election. No sooner had election results confirmed the demise of the LDP’s solid majority than leading politicians from all of Japan’s parties rubbed shoulders on two- and three-hour television specials discussing coalition formulas. In the political rumble of summer 1993, *tarento* (literally, “talents”)—media celebrities turned candidates—trumped Japan’s aging generation of conservative leaders who were more skilled at backroom deal making than talking on camera.