

Political News Coverage During the 1986 Japanese Election Campaign*

Abraham Diskin and Ofer Feldman

Introduction

Much research on political news coverage of election campaigns suggests that the campaign itself is often the most frequently described item. Some of the latest studies conducted, for instance, in the United States(1) and Israel(2), have revealed that political reporting during the campaign period was focused much on polls as well as debates, activities and strategies of the candidates, which were analysed in terms of their impact on the campaign rather than dealing with "the real and more important national concern" or with the policy implications of the campaign. Moreover, by using various methodological approaches and techniques, studies of the local and national campaign races pointed out that the various news media tend to stress similar issue areas(3), and that different candidates or political parties received - more or less - the same amount of newspaper coverage.(4)

While there has been a substantial study on campaign coverage in some Western democratic countries, little is known about this issue in Japan. In fact, no extensive up-to-date study has examined the nature of the campaign coverage in the Japanese press, the amount and diversity of issues introduced in the different papers during that time period, the space allocation or the emphasis on different political parties gained through the campaign race. The Japanese press, however, deserves special attention, mainly in the light of the newspapers' enormous circulation(5) - dominated by the "five big" national papers(6) - and the Japanese people's relatively high awareness of, and exposure to, politics from the newspapers, especially during periods of electoral campaigns.(7)

This study, therefore, is designed to describe and explain the election news coverage carried in major Japanese newspapers, and to provide an examination of the editorial content pattern of the papers during an election time. This kind of data provides an opportunity to evaluate the function of the Japanese press during election campaigns.

Methodology

The findings presented here are based on a survey of the coverage of the 1986 Japanese double election campaign carried in six daily news-

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papers.(8) The 1986 campaign provided a good opportunity for exploring questions dealing with the newspapers coverage, mainly for two reasons: first, it was a double election for both the House of Representatives (Lower House) and the House of Councillors (Upper House). This happened for only the second time in Japanese postwar election history.(9) At stake in the election were 638 seats comprising all 512 seats of the Lower House and 126 or half of the 252 seats in the Upper House.(10) Due to this fact, it was expected that the national news media would show more interest in the election campaign - a lot more than in the case of a regular election which is mostly locally oriented. Second, more than in any other election, the focus of the poll was on the question of whether the ruling Liberal-Democratic Party (L.D.P.) would be able to win the majority of seats in the Lower House or whether there would be another period of a near-even power balance between the L.D.P. and the opposition parties. In the previous election in 1983, the L.D.P. lost its majority but managed to stay in control of the government by forming a coalition with another conservative party, the New Liberal Club (N.L.C.). (In fact, the L.D.P. achieved an unprecedented victory in the 1986 elections.) Both of these circumstances were expected to draw much attention from the press in covering any and every activity among the ruling and opposition parties' leaders, in introducing a variety of issues on the agenda of the political arena and in supplying the public the broadest possible coverage, highlighting the campaign from a variety of standpoints.

Political news coverage data were collected during the campaign period from the daily newspapers, including morning and evening editions(11), for an 18-day-period from June 19, the first day of the campaign for the Upper House, through July 6, 1986, the election day.(12) Only news stories in which the coming election were mentioned, directly or indirectly and which appeared on the first page, the political, economic or social pages of each paper, were included in the present study. Analyses, feature stories, editorials or editorial columns and any other commentaries or interviews were not included in the analysis. The coding scheme involved the measurement of the news story's length (in column inches), placement in the paper, number and size of pictures, the source of the story and the nature of the content.

In general, as many as 1,432 news stories were coded; the YOMIURI had 231 stories; ASAHI - 257; MAINICHI - 254; SANKEI - 258; NIHON KEIZAI - 216; and TOKYO SHIMBUN - 216. The stories were divided into two main categories: "General Stories", (which accounted for 585 news items - 40.9%); and "Parties or Leaders Stories" (847 stories, 59.1%) in which the source or the major thrust of the story was one of the parties or one of the candidates participating in the campaign.

The research strategy involved three major categories of press coverage: "Campaign Events", "Horseraces", and "Issues". Each of these categories was divided into sub-categories and defined specifically. "Campaign

Events" consisted of those news stories in which the major thrust of the story was the campaign itself, the source was one of the candidates or parties involved in the campaign, and the subject matter was partisan. It was divided into five sub-categories: "comments about opponents" - which included reactions on rival candidates' activities or intentions; "comments about the campaign" - which included opinions about the campaign or the election race in general; "comments about the debate" - which included opinions and evaluations of candidates and parties to the suggestion of arranging an open discussion with the participation of the parties' leaders and discussing of various stances and policies adopted toward a list of issues; "party or candidate qualities" - which included candidates' references to themselves or to their parties, in spheres such as personal style, political philosophy, past public record and personal qualification; and "other".

"Horseraces" refers to news stories which were not directly attributed to candidates' statements or activities. This was divided into five sub-categories: "public opinion polls" - which included information and results of public polls conducted by the newspaper companies, but did not include interpretations and explanations of the results or predictions of how the campaign would turn out; "voter profiles" - which included reportage about voters' activities or concepts of the campaign; "campaign strategies and activities" - which referred to news coverage related to a candidate's activities or policies, revealing that the candidate was doing something to gain a campaign advantage, such as stories about the co-operation among several opposition parties in some constituencies; "mood of the country" - reportage on candidates' speeches and audience reactions, stories about public disturbances created by supporters of a party, about voter activists who were arrested for campaign violations, or about the effect of the weather on election day; and "other".

"Issues" were news stories which referred to policy statements made by the candidates. However, not included in this category were general news stories on topics that also happen to be issues in the campaign such as the argument of how, when and if to conduct any open debates among the leaders of the various parties. The "Issues" were divided into two main groups: "domestic issues" and "foreign issues". The domestic issues included news stories about taxes, educational problems and textbook references, administrative reforms, and economics - related stories (including the high value of the yen) and others. Foreign issues included news stories which referred to Japan's relations with the U.S., the U.S.S.R., Europe and Asian countries, as well as defense issues and international trade. It should be mentioned that only a few domestic issues (e.g., the value of the yen) could have been depicted as having international aspects.

Every time an issue appeared in a campaign story, it was coded only once in any given story. Early in the coding process, two trained coders classified a sample of items in order to ascertain the level of intercoder

reliability. An absolute agreement of 93.2 percent was achieved; following this result, the coders were restructured in detail about the style of coding the news stories.

Results

The breakdown of the news stories which appeared during the Japanese double election campaign in the six newspapers is introduced in Table 1.

Tab. 1: Number of news stories devoted to four main types of subjects during the campaign.

| Newspaper | Subject | | | | | | | | Total | |
|--------------|---------|------|-------------------|---------------|------|------|---------|-----|--------|-----|
| | Events | | Campaign Issues | | | | Foreign | | | |
| | abs. | % | Horseshoe abs. | Domestic % | abs. | % | abs. | % | abs. | % |
| Yomiuri | 60 | 26.1 | 100 | 43.5 | 54 | 23.5 | 16 | 7.0 | 230 | 100 |
| Asahi | 93 | 36.9 | 114 | 45.2 | 35 | 13.9 | 10 | 4.0 | 252 | 100 |
| Mainichi | 62 | 24.4 | 106 | 41.7 | 69 | 27.2 | 17 | 6.7 | 254 | 100 |
| Sankei | 53 | 20.6 | 143 | 55.6 | 45 | 17.5 | 16 | 6.2 | 257 | 100 |
| Nihon Keizai | 75 | 34.7 | 81 | 37.5 | 48 | 22.2 | 12 | 5.6 | 216 | 100 |
| Tokyo | | | | | | | | | | |
| Shimbun | 75 | 35.0 | 107 | 50.0 | 25 | 11.7 | 7 | 3.3 | 214 | 100 |
| TOTAL | 418 | 29.4 | 651 | 45.7 | 276 | 19.4 | 78 | 5.3 | 1,423* | 100 |

* In 9 cases the specific subject could not be clearly defined.

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate the relative percentage of news stories devoted by a paper to a certain issue in relation to the paper's total number of stories. (Percentages were rounded out to the first decimal place; thus some do not add up exactly to 100%.)

It can be seen clearly that the news coverage was dominated by "Horse-race" stories, which were more than double that of "Domestic Issues," eight times that of "Foreign Issues," and one-a-half times that of "Campaign Events" items. This pattern which was common to all of the newspapers examined reveals that Japanese newsmen tend to pay great attention to writing about topics that involve the campaign itself rather than reporting what the various candidates or parties had to say about the campaign or about policy issues. It could also be a result of the fact that policy issues were not emphasized by the competing parties.

Further analysis revealed that the "Horse-race" items were dominated by stories related to the "campaign strategies and activities" of parties and candidates (319 stories or 49%), which introduced - at large - the steady setting up of arrangements by the opposition parties, such as the

Japan Socialist Party (J.S.P), Clean Government Party (C.G.P. or Kemeito), and the Democratic Socialist Party (D.S.P) to cooperate with one another in a bid to block the ruling L.D.P. from winning a majority. In other words, one party backed another party's candidates in a constituency where the first one had no candidate, and got the favour returned in other constituencies where the second one had no candidate of its own. "Comments about the campaign" made by the candidates were the news items which appeared most often in the "Campaign Events" category (187 stories or 44.7%); comments of candidates about the public debate, a round-table discussion in which a limited range of issues would be debated by the parties' leaders, comes in second in frequency (123 stories or 29.4%). The following sub-category, "comments of candidates about opponents," gained much less coverage (46 stories or 11%). Among the "Issues," the dominant news items were those related to the domestic area; candidates' views concerning the implementation of a new tax policy by the government ranked highest (116 stories or 42.2%), followed by general statements of candidates about Japanese policy in the post-Nakasone regime (59 stories or 16.6%) and about the general economic situation (55 stories or 15.5%). Policy toward Asian countries and the U.S.S.R. appears most often in the "Foreign Issues" category (42 stories or 11.9% and 14 stories or 3.9%, respectively).

Although the general tendency was to emphasize "Horse race" items, some prominent differences among the various newspapers regarding the importance allocated to a certain category can be identified. For instance, the ASAHI tended more than any other paper to introduce stories based on the various candidates and parties - as sources - about issues related to the campaign or to opponents, but it significantly emphasized less than any other national paper the policy issues (about half of those revealed by the MAINICHI). SANKEI, for its part, turned less to candidates as sources of comments and put more emphasis on "Horse race" items; in fact, more than any other newspaper. As expected, the NIHON KEIZAI put less emphasis on "Horse race" stories; since this newspaper is more economics-oriented, it has much less space to devote to politics, and its political stances are not too emphatic, at least not as much as the stances detected in the other daily newspapers.(13) Interestingly, the paper with the biggest nation-wide circulation, the YOMIURI, appears to hold the "mean average" among the five national papers in carrying "Horse race" and "Campaign Events" items, but tended to introduce more policy issues' stories, especially on foreign topics. TOKYO SHIMBUN, as one of the "bloc" papers carried from this standpoint - higher than the average number of the national papers, "Horse race" and "Campaign Events" stories. TOKYO SHIMBUN tries to be more locally oriented, putting more emphasis on stories related to the campaign itself and the

Tab. 2: Newspapers Coverage of the Parties during the Campaign

| | L.D.P. 313 (49.1)* | J.S.P. 133 (20.8) | C.G.P. 70 (11) | D.S.P. 43 (6.7) | J.C.P. 34 (5.3) | N.L.C. 8 (1.3) | Minor Parties ** & Independents 36 (5.7) | Total 637 (100) |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--|-----------------------|
| 1. Total no. of news items | 474 | 112 | 62 | 55 | 38 | 44 | 62 | 847 |
| 2. Percentage of news items from the total received by all the parties | 56.0 | 13.2 | 7.3 | 6.5 | 4.5 | 5.2 | 7.3 | 100 |
| 3. Party's representation in news items compared with its' no. of seats for election .. +6.9 | | -7.6 | -7.3 | -0.2 | -0.8 | +3.9 | +1.6 | 0 |
| 4. Total written space devoted to each party (inches) .. | 7,530 | 1,056 | 476 | 385 | 195 | 326 | 928 | 10,896 |
| 5. Percentages of written space devoted to each party | 69.1 | 9.7 | 4.4 | 3.5 | 1.8 | 3.0 | 8.5 | 100 |
| 6. Party's representation in devoted space compared with its no. of seats for election | +20.0 | -11.1 | -6.6 | -3.2 | -3.5 | +1.7 | +2.8 | 0 |
| 7. Number of news items placed on page 1 | 155 | 15 | 8 | 6 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 195 |
| 8. Percentage of news placed on page 1 | 79.5 | 7.7 | 4.1 | 3.1 | 1.0 | 2.1 | 2.6 | 100 |
| 9. Party's representation in news items placed on page 1 compared with its no. of seats for election | +30.4 | -13.1 | -6.9 | -3.6 | -4.3 | +0.8 | +3.1 | 0 |
| 10. Total no. of pictures associated with news stories ... | 95 | 15 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 11 | 132*** |
| 11. Percentage of pictures associated with news stories ... 72.0 | | 11.4 | 2.3 | 2.3 | 2.3 | 1.5 | 8.3 | 100 |
| 12. Party's representation in pictures compared with its no. of seats for election | +22.9 | -9.4 | -8.7 | -4.4 | -3.0 | +0.2 | +2.6 | 0 |
| 13. Total space of pictures associated with news stories (inches) | 404 | 33 | 7 | 9 | 4 | 5 | 49 | 511 |
| 14. Percentage of space of pictures devoted to each party | 79.0 | 6.5 | 1.4 | 1.8 | 0.8 | 1.0 | 9.6 | 100 |
| 15. Party's representation in total space of pictures compared with its no. of seats seats for election | +29.9 | -14.3 | -9.6 | -4.9 | -4.5 | -0.3 | +3.9 | 0 |
| 16. Mean size of news stories (inches) | 15.9 | 9.4 | 7.7 | 7.0 | 5.1 | 7.4 | 15.0 | 12.9 |
| 17. Mean size of picture (inches) | 4.3 | 2.2 | 2.3 | 3.0 | 1.3 | 2.5 | 4.5 | 3.9 |
| 18. Mean size devoted to pictures in addition to written space (in %) | +5.4 | +3.1 | +1.5 | +2.3 | +2.1 | +1.5 | +5.3 | +4.7 |

* Number and percentage of seats for election of each party.

** Minor parties mentioned most often were: U.S.D.P. (United Social Democratic Party), The Tax Party; Second House Club, and Salarymen New Party.

*** In total there were 283 pictures, 151 of them (53.3 %) were associated with the "General Stories".

events around it, especially in the areas surrounding Tokyo, rather than dealing with issues on the national level.

In order to get the overall picture of the way in which candidates were covered in the campaign, those news stories for which one of the candidates or parties was the major source are broken out and presented in Table 2.

Two conspicuous points can be seen: first, the large amount of coverage the L.D.P. has gained; and second, the dichotomy in the coverage that exists between the two political camps - the "conservative" and the "progressive".(14) First, the L.D.P. was a source for more news stories than any other party, most significantly garnering more than four times the coverage of the No.1 opposition party - the J.S.P. - and more than seven times more than the No.2 opposition party - the C.G.P.. Space devoted to the ruling party, as such was more than seven times that for the J.S.P. and more than 15 times that for C.G.P.; L.D.P. - related stories that appeared in the front page were 10 and 19 times more than those related to the J.S.P. and C.G.P., respectively; the L.D.P. - related stories were associated with pictures which occupied more space than those for any opposition party; L.D.P. items were generally larger and included more pictures which were also larger. In brief, excluding the news items, the ruling party received 70% or more of the reportage in each and every category, as shown in Table 2.

The dichotomy in the coverage between the ruling party and any other opposition party becomes more clear when a comparison of the number of seats each party held before the election and its share of related news stories is made note of. That comparison reveals, in fact, that all of the opposition parties were under-represented in news items, total space devoted to these items, and the number and size of the pictures associated with the stories. This indicator shows clearly that among the opposition parties the most under-represented party was the J.S.P. followed by the C.G.P.. Other opposition parties, such as the D.S.P. and J.C.P. were also under-represented, but not so significantly.

Second, and not less interesting, is the fact that the L.D.P. and the N.L.C., as the two parties who formed a coalition in the government, received over-represented coverage in number of news items and in the space devoted by the newspaper to such items and associated photos. This dichotomy between the two main political camps reveals much more favourable attitude shown by the press toward the top government parties. One possible explanation is that this was caused not by a bias of the newspapers but rather by the fact that day-to-day politics, which is naturally reflected in the campaign, is dominated by the two coalition parties, and especially by the dominant L.D.P..

Table 2 shows also that certain minor parties and independent candidates received over-represented coverage; this tendency can be explained partly by the attention paid by the press to a number of "famous" candidates who withdrew from their "native parties" and ran on

an independent ticket (such as Kakuei Tanaka, once kingmaker of Japanese politics, and a D.S.P. member who was accused of taking bribes), and partly as a result of the large number of minor parties and their candidates who ran for the Upper House (20 parties which fielded 177 candidates). However, the relative unimportance of these candidates and parties in the news can be revealed by observing their low placement among items which appeared on the front page, though they get much placement among items which appeared on the back page, though they get much space in pictures. These findings show partly that they were more a matter of "piquant" news to the papers, appearing frequently on the social pages, rather than a real sources of political information worth placement on the front page.

Tab. 3: Number of news stories devoted to parties by each newspaper.

| Newspaper | Parties | | | | | | Minor Parties & Independents | Total |
|-----------|---------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| | L.D.P. | J.S.P. | C.G.P. | D.S.P. | J.C.P. | N.L.C. | | |
| Yomiuri | 83 (62.9) | 16 (12.1) | 8 (6.1) | 7 (5.3) | 7 (5.3) | 5 (3.8) | 6 (4.5) | 132 (100) |
| * | +13.8 | - 8.7 | - 4.9 | - 1.4 | 0.0 | +2.5 | -1.2 | 0 |
| Asahi | 63 (43.4) | 25 (17.2) | 12 (8.3) | 10 (6.9) | 7 (4.8) | 12 (8.3) | 16 (11.0) | 145 (100) |
| * | - 5.7 | - 3.6 | - 2.7 | + 0.2 | -0.5 | +7.0 | +5.3 | 0 |
| Mainichi | 94 (59.1) | 25 (15.7) | 8 (5.0) | 10 (6.2) | 8 (5.0) | 7 (4.4) | 7 (4.4) | 159 (100) |
| * | +10.0 | - 5.1 | - 6.0 | - 0.5 | -0.3 | +3.1 | -1.3 | 0 |
| Sankei | 107 (63.7) | 15 (8.9) | 10 (6.0) | 11 (6.5) | 5 (3.0) | 5 (3.0) | 15 (8.9) | 168 (100) |
| * | +14.6 | -11.9 | -5.0 | -0.2 | -2.3 | +1.7 | +3.2 | 0 |
| Nihon | 74 (58.3) | 14 (11.0) | 12 (9.4) | 7 (5.5) | 6 (4.7) | 7 (5.5) | 7 (5.5) | 127 (100) |
| * | +9.2 | - 9.8 | -1.6 | -1.2 | -0.6 | +4.2 | -0.2 | 0 |
| Tokyo | 53 (45.7) | 17 (14.7) | 12 (10.3) | 10 (8.6) | 5 (4.3) | 8 (6.9) | 11 (9.5) | 116 (100) |
| * | - 3.4 | - 6.1 | -0.7 | +1.9 | -1.0 | +5.6 | +3.8 | 0 |
| Total | 474 (56.0) | 112 (13.2) | 62 (7.3) | 55 (6.5) | 38 (4.5) | 44 (5.2) | 62 (7.3) | 847 (100) |
| * | + 6.9 | - 7.6 | -3.7 | -0.2 | -0.8 | +3.9 | +1.6 | 0 |

* Party's representation in news stories compared with its number of seats for election.

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate the percentage of news stories devoted by a paper to a certain party, relative to the paper's total number of stories. (Percentages were rounded out to the first decimal place; thus some do not add up exactly to 100%.)

Table 3 tries to identify the trends of the different newspapers taken toward the various parties that took part in the campaign.

A dichotomy among the newspapers can be seen clearly: the SANKEI, YOMIURI, MAINICHI and NIHON KEIZAI, carried - in general - more stories based on sources in the L.D.P. and the N.L.C. and thus over-represented their power in total coverage. This tendency can serve to strengthen the assumption that at least the SANKEI, YOMIURI and NIHON KEIZAI tend to support the conservative wing on the political map.(15) The newspapers that under-represented this wing include TOKYO SHIMBUN and ASAHI; the latter is well known as the most progressive paper, and the most critical of all the papers vis-a-vis the government.(16) Interestingly, however, the ASAHI devoted many more stories than any other paper to the N.L.C..

On the other hand, No.1 and No.2 opposition parties - J.C.P. and C.G.P. - were under-represented in all of the papers with the former party suffering more, but significantly it is less under-represented in the ASAHI, perhaps because of the critical stance mentioned above. ASAHI and TOKYO SHIMBUN, in general, under-represented all of the political parties except the N.L.C., the D.S.P., the minor parties and the independent candidates. This tendency in the TOKYO SHIMBUN is found to be somewhat in contradiction to findings of previous studies that the paper follows the lead of the YOMIURI in its stories;(17) it tends more to follow the ASAHI, according to this present analysis.

Conclusions and Implications

This investigation revealed some significant findings. As in some other democratic countries, political news coverage during election campaign in Japan tends to focus on activities of political parties and candidates, on polls and debates, rather than on any policy implications of the campaign. Different from other countries, however, is a prominent imbalance in coverage of the various political parties; specifically, there was a significant advantage for the "conservative camp" over the "progressive camp" in their relative exposure in the press, most notably a clear tendency of the different newspapers to refer to what the ruling party is doing or what its candidates have to say.

Interestingly enough, the same trend has been observed in two other instances. The first is related to an analysis of the editorials and the feature stories which the newspapers examined here have published during the period under examination. All the newspapers referred to the ruling L.D.P. much more frequently than they did to any other party. Compared to the other parties, the ruling L.D.P. was mentioned in the various papers' editorials about five times more often than the largest opposition party, the J.S.P., and six times more frequently than the second largest opposition party, the C.G.P.. The L.D.P. was mentioned two or three times more often respectively than these parties in feature stories.(18) Another study which suggests the same attitude toward the

L.D.P. focused on the political stories of local SHIKOKU newspapers and the SHIKOKU editions of the national daily newspapers.(19) While examining related issues, this research pointed out that L.D.P. candidates in this specific constituency have received close to or more than fifty percent of the total political coverage, while stories regarding the party as a whole significantly dominated total campaign coverage, occupying three times more space than stories about the J.S.P. and seven times more space than those about the C.G.P. From the point of view of coverage, this study concluded that there was an unmistakable bias in the local press and the local editions of the national newspapers.(20)

This tendency, as reflected simultaneously in the national and local press, may stem from two main factors: first, the L.D.P., as the dominant party in Japan, has controlled the nation for more than 30 years. This can explain the tendency of the press to follow its activities more closely, to introduce it in more detail than any other party, and to do it more significantly, than would the press in a country without a dominant party. The second reason, however, is rooted in the failure of the opposition parties, for their part, to provide any really convincing policy stances during the campaign, maintaining instead a persistent stances of political negativism. This can partly explain the relative lack of interest that the press showed in the opposition camp. Reporters concentrated instead on the campaigning done by L.D.P. candidates, mainly the current crop of "New Leaders", those who hoped to succeed Nakasone as Prime Minister. Lack of policy issues, on the one hand, and focus on the question of whether the ruling party could attain a stable majority in the double election, on the other, caused the newspaper to focus on "horse-race" items rather than on other kinds of news stories.

Above all, the indicated tendency of Japanese papers to allocate more news items and pictures and more overall space to the ruling party - which could work to its advantage - undermines certain suppositions of an anti-conservative or anti-ruling party approach as one of the basic characteristics of the Japanese press.(21) Moreover, even the papers that tended to under-represent the ruling party, such as the ASAHI, also tended to do the same to the opposition parties. Taken together, these results suggest that Japanese newspapers tend, perhaps, to show a different pattern of political coverage during an election campaign. In fact, the latest studies have pointed out that this tendency may also exist because of the personality of ex-Prime Minister Nakasone, who, with his public appeal, decisiveness and pragmatic leadership style, contributed much to this specific style of coverage introduced by the press.(22)

The question of whether such a tendency will be exhibited in future elections can not be answered easily. We can assume, however, that the press's focus will probably be the extent to which the ruling party will be able to secure the unprecedented landslide victory the party scored in 1986, slighting the issues which the opposition parties might seek to put on the political agenda. At any rate, the personal traits of Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita might not be a focus of press interest.(23)

Notes

- (1) For instance, James G. Stovall: Foreign policy issue coverage in the 1980 presidential campaign, in: *Journalism Quarterly*, 59 (Winter 1982), pp.531-540; James G. Stovall: Incumbency and news coverage of the 1980 presidential election campaign, in: *Western Political Quarterly*, 37 (December 1984), pp.621-631.
- (2) Eyal, Chaim H.: Newspaper political advertising and news in the 1984 Israeli elections, in: *Journalism Quarterly*, 62 (Autumn 1985), pp.601-608.
- (3) Windhauser, John W.: How the Metropolitan press covered the 1970 general election campaigns in Ohio, in: *Journalism Quarterly*, 53 (1976), pp.264-270; Windhauser, John W.: Reporting of campaign issues in Ohio Municipal election races, in: *Journalism Quarterly*, 54 (1977), pp.332-340; Meadow, Robert G.: Cross-media comparison of coverage of the 1972 Presidential Campaign, in: *Journalism Quarterly*, 50 (Autumn 1973), pp.482-488; Tidmarch, Charles M.: Tidmarch/Hyman, Lisa J./Sorkin, Jill E.: Press issue agendas in the 1982 congressional and gubernatorial election campaigns, in: *Journal of Politics*, 46 (1984), pp.226-1242; Russonello, John M./ Wolf, Frank: Newspaper coverage of the 1967 and 1968 presidential campaigns, in: *Journalism Quarterly*, 56 (Summer 1979), pp.360-364; 432.
- (4) Evarts, Dru/Stempel III, Guido H.: Coverage of the 1972 campaign by TV, news magazines and major newspaper, in: *Journalism Quarterly*, 51 (Winter 1974), pp.645-648, 676); Windhauser, John W.: Reporting of Ohio Municipal elections by the Ohio Metropolitan daily press, in: *Journalism Quarterly*, 54 (1977), pp.552-565; Stempel III, Guido H./Windhauser, John W.: The prestige press revisited: coverage of the 1980 presidential campaign, in: *Journalism Quarterly*, 61 (Spring 1984), pp.49-55; Stovall, James G.: Incumbency and news coverage of the 1980 presidential election campaign, in: op. cit..
- (5) There are as many as 120 daily newspapers, with combined circulations of close to 67 million copies a day, a fact which has established Japan as the world leader from the viewpoint of ratio of population to consumption of print media.
The Japanese Press - 1984. Tokyo: Nihon Shimbun Kyokai, 1984; p.84.
- (6) The newspapers and their circulations are: Yomiuri (13.7 million copies a day), Asahi (12 million), Mainichi (6.4 million), Nihon Keizai (3.3 million) and Sankei (3 million). Their circulations account for 57.4% of the total circulation of newspapers in the country. See: Nihon Shimbun Nenkan (Japanese Newspapers Yearly). Tokyo: Nihon Shimbun Kyokai, 1985.

- (7) Manabe, Kazufumi: Patterns of political and social attitudes: A cross-national comparison, in: *Kansei Gakuin University Annual Studies*, 29 (Dec. 1980), p.90.
- (8) The six newspapers are the "big five" national newspapers and the Tokyo Shimbun (1.3 million copies a day) as one of the "bloc" papers with a circulation extending into several prefectures of distribution to the areas around the nation's capital.
- (9) The first was in 1980, when a double election became a necessity because of a non-confidence motion passed against the Masayoshi Ohira cabinet.
- (10) About the Japanese election system see, for instance, Passin, Herbert (ed.): *A Season of Voting - The Japanese Elections of 1976 and 1977*. Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1979, chapter 1.
- (11) The major Japanese newspapers publish both morning and evening editions under the same title, as a set. The stories printed in these two editions are edited in such a way as to maintain continuity from one to the other.
- (12) The campaign period was 15 days for the Lower House after its dissolution on July 21, and 18 days for the Upper House which was dissolved on July 18.
- (13) About some concepts of the Nihon Keizai and Asahi, see Feldman, Ofer: Japanese politicians' exposure to national and local dailies, in: *Journalism Quarterly*, 63 (Winter 1986), pp.821-826, 833.
- (14) The conservative camp includes the L.D.P. and the N.L.C., while the progressive camp includes the J.S.P., the Japan Communist Party (J.C.P.) and C.G.P.. The D.S.P. is regarded as a "middle-of-the-road" party. See: Serizawa, Isao: *Senkyo to seiji ishiki no shoso* (Various Aspects of Election and Political Consciousness), Tokyo: Hokki, 1980; pp.96-106.
- (15) Brown, Ronald G./Lee, Jung-Bock: The Japanese press and the 'People's Right to Know', in: *Journalism Quarterly*, 54 (Autumn 1977), pp.479; Tsujimura, Akira: *Rokudai shimbun shasetsu no henkodo wo tsuku* (A criticism of inclination in editorials of six major newspapers), in: *Seiron*, 63 (July 1976).
- (16) Tsujimura, Akira: *Rokudai shimbun shasetsu no henkodo wo tsuku*, in: op. cit., p.63.
- (17) Ibid.
- (18) Feldman, Ofer: *Showa 60-nen dojitsu senkyo ni okeru simbun hodo no naiyo bunseki: shaesetsu oyobi tokushu kiji ni miru henko* (Content analysis of the 1986 double election campaign: Bias in editorials and feature stories), in: *Keio Daigaku Shimbun Kenkyu Nempo*, in press.
- (19) Each of the national daily papers has a prefectural edition which has its own one or two local pages.

- (20) Konoe, Shinsuke: Chihoban no senkyo hodo: 86-nen shu-san do-jitsu senkyo no shimbun hodo bunseki (The election campaign coverage of the local pages of Japanese press: A study of the 1986 double election for the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors), in: Kagawa Hogaku, 7 (July 1987), pp.35-70.
- (21) Kim, Young C.: Japanese Journalists and Their World. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1981, p.1; Thayer, Nathaniel B.: Competition and conformity: An inquiry into the structure of the Japanese newspapers, in: Vogel, Ezra F.: Modern Japanese Organization and Decision-Making. Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1981 (4th printing); p.284.
- (22) For example, Feldman, Ofer: Dojitsu senkyo no shimbun roncho (The tone of the press in the Japanese double election campaign). Unpublished paper, presented to the annual meeting of the Japan Election Studies Association, Tokyo, 1987.
- (23) This assumption is based on latest research conducted by the junior author in Tokyo during late 1987, on the images and evaluations of political leaders and leadership by the public. A related paper will be completed soon.

Summary

This paper attempts to describe and to explain political news coverage during the 1986 Japanese election campaign in six major newspapers; it aims also to provide an examination of the editorial content pattern of the Japanese papers in an election time. The findings show that political news coverage was dominated by "Horserace" - related items rather than "Issues" or "Campaign Events" stories, and that most of the papers tended to over-represent the dominant Liberal Democratic Party (L.P.D.) and to under-represent the opposition parties; the L.D.P. - related news items were generally larger and included more pictures, which were also larger.