MASS MEDIA PARTICIPATION IN JAPANESE PUBLIC POLICY NETWORK ORGANIZATIONS

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Beside various differences between Japan and other modern democracies, there are similarities. The mass media play various roles in public policy processes[1], as do statutory and non-statutory public advisory bodies (ABs). Similarly, in Japan as in other modern democracies two questions have become subject to polemics and discourses: (1) whether by *participating* the media actually *influence* public policy making or rather are being managed by government.[2] and (2) whether ABs autonomous of government control or manipulation, and effective in achieving their formal goals.

What Japan, on one hand, and other democracies, on the other, *do not* have in common is the extent to which the media pay attention to and its members participate in ABs. My research reveals that typical of Japan and rare or nonexistent in other democracies is very high salience of ABs in the mass media and of the mass media in ABs. Almost every day, the Japanese major newspapers and electronic media cover and evaluate the formation, activities, or reports and recommedations of at least one advisory body. Japanese media by far surpass their foreign counterparts in frequency and thoroughness of their coverage of ABs.[3] Most importantly, Japanese media not only *cover* and *evaluate*, but also *participate* in ABs as members, both when the media are the policy object (i.e. the subject of deliberation directly concerns some aspect of the media) and otherwise. In other democracies they cover and evaluate, but rarely participate[4] — the occasional exception being mainly when the media are the policy object.[5]

Japanese journalists' participation in public-policy deliberation groups is neither a new, postwar phenomenon, nor restricted to ABs formed by government. Since prewar days, eminent journalists have participated in ABs formed by government, as well as in various kinds of policy study and deliberation groups formed by organizations outside of government; the latter included policy study and deliberation groups formed by media organizations or by their members. The members of some of the study and deliberation groups formed outside of government have included state bureaucrats.[6] A recent famous example of a non-governmental public policy deliberation councils is the Seiji Kaikaku Suishin Kyōgikai (Committee for the Promotion of Political Reforms 政治改革推進協議会), formed in 1992 by business, labor, and media leaders.[7]

In the postwar era, two types of public advisory bodies have evolved: statutory (known as

shingikai 審議会) and non-statutory (often, and misleadingly, referred to as *shiteki shimon kikan* 私的諮問機関, i.e. "private" advisory bodies). Both are *public* in two respects: they are formed by government authorities and include members currently not in government. In recent years, the two types of ABs have become increasingly similar in membership and functions.[8] My analysis below is focused on *shingikai,* the more formal type and about which fuller information is available. The analysis of membership is largely based on data on *shingikai* in 1973, 1983, and 1992 I generated from Japanese government publications and various Who's Whos.[9]

About 50% of all shingikai have included at least one member from the mass media (hereafter referred to as "journalists"). But journalists have constituted a small minority of the members of the respective *shingikai.* Journalists' membership in *shingikai* has been dominated by NHK (the semi- governmental broadcasting corporation) and the "big five" national newspapers (Nikkei, Yomiuri, Asahi, Mainichi, and Sankei, in decreasing order of frequency).

Journalists' participation in *shingikai* has become institutionalized and "patterned."[10] There has been notable continuity of individual journalists from one term (ordinarily three years) to another; and non- continuing individual journalists have almost invariably been replaced by other journalists, often from the same media organization. And certain bureaus (the administrative level that actually determines membership composition) tend to continuously appoint journalists from one media organization, or from a limited number of media organizations.

Shingikai media members play several roles. Like university professors, media members are typically appointed as "members of learning and experience" (*gakushiki keikensha* 学識経験者) and/or "representatives of the 'public interest'" (Kōeki 公益). In 1992, all media *shingikai* but three also had university professors among their members. They are expected to contribute certain expertise and/ or take fair, impartial positions. And as in the case of university professors, media members have been variously criticized for lacking assertiveness, being ignored by government (including, at times, the organizations which appointed them) and by other categories of members, or for having been manipulated into the roles of legitimizers and publicizers of the appointing authorities' agenda and policy positions.[11]

My analysis of media members' roles is based on three types of evidence: (a) responses of media members to a questionnaire I mailed in 1974 to members of all categories other than cabinet members and state bureaucrats,[12] (b) summaries of surveys of media members' evaluation of their participation in *shingikai* and *kondankai* conducted by and for the *Asahi,* and (c) a typology of *shingikai* constructed by Sone and his associates at Keio University[13]. There types of evidence are supplemented by sporadic interviews with several Japanese journalists.

With few exceptions, journalists do not tend to contribute expertise in the narrow sense of the term or state-of-the-art scientific knowledge, but rather a general grasp of a given policy area, and familiarity with the interests, resources, values, views and policy positions of various of groups and organizations of government and civil society in that policy area. Individual media members currently affiliated with a media organization are "boundary

transaction persons" playing a "two- level game" — one vis- a- vis their "lifetime" media organization, the other vis-a-vis the appointing authority and other members of the respective advisory body. Affiliated media ordinarily behave as free agents, but when their organization has formulated a position which is incongruent with theirs, they tend to defer to the position of their organization. When the issue entrusted to or taken up by a *shingikai* is highly conflictual and their media organization has been strongly concerned but internally divided failed to forge a unified position, the media member will abstain, resign, or refrain from accepting appointment in the first place.

This can be explained by the affiliated journalists' work environment. Like employees in high positions in other large scale Japanese organizations, their training, placement in certain departments of the organization (or subsequently in subsidiaries of the organization), promotion patterns, and the emphasis on group activity (what, in the case of journalists, Haruhara and Amenomori refer to as "corporate journalisn")[14] — all combine in forging a strong organizational orientation. At the same time, another aspect of their environment pulls them in a different direction. Like other members of *shingikai* and *kondankai*, they tend in the course of continuous participation to assume the role of "boundary transaction persons":[15] though committed to their organization, and under the circumstances mentioned above under obligation to act as their organization's instructed delegates, interaction with other *shingikai* members becomes a learning process, often leading to consensus among *shingikai* members, at which point they, media members included, attempt to convince their organization to go along with that consensus.

Analysis of the types of shngikai whose members include journalists suggests that they often play the role of legitimizers of the authority's policy proposals, contrary to the image the appointing authority seeks to project. But, as in the case of expertise, legitimizing should be put in proper context: the policy proposals media members appear to legitimize often are products of complex pre-*shingikai* consultations in which journalists participate.

In Kumon's terminology, Japan has become a network society and *shingikai* the most representative from of Japanese "transworld network organizations." Transworld: they consist largely of representatives of a variety, though not all, Japanese "worlds" or "circles" (*kai*) — business, political, bureaucratic, educational, mass media (*genronkai*), increasingly labor. *Organizations:* they have patterned membership and complex structures. *Networks:* their members largely seek to share information; their structure is not hierarchical; and being consensus oriented they ideally make decisions on a "unit- veto" basis respecting minorities, but to avoid paralysis and be effective, apply the principle of "wa" (harmony), often through mediators, in an attempt to persuade minorities, sometimes even majorities, to yield or compromise in the "public interest."[16] The extent and pattern of mass media participation in *shingikai* indicate that the major media organizations have become a salient component of patterned public policy networks (in addition to academics and the "triangle" of interest group organizations, interested Diet members [*zoku giin* 族議員], and bureaucrats of certain administrative units.) More generally, the Japanese media "world" (言論界) itself is a well

integrated network via horizontal, cross-organization communication and cooperation channels at various levels, with economic resources and interests, on one hand, and public-oriented values and policy-relevant resources, on the other. It has become one of the major hubs of very complex public policy processes, of which *shingikai* are only one, relatively visible forum.

NOTES

1 IN JAPAN: Ofer Feldman, *Politics and the News Media in Japan* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994); Scott C. Flanagan, "Media Influences and Voting Behavior," in Scott C. Flanagan, Shinsaku Kohei, Ichiro Miyake, Bradley Ricardson, and Joji Watanuki, *The Japanese Voter* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 297-331; Ikuo Kabashima and Jeffrey Broadbent, "Referent Pluralism: The Mass Media and Politics in Japan," *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Summer 1986), pp. 329-61; Nathaniel B. Thayer, "Competition and Conformity: An Inquiry Into the Structure of Japanese Newspapers," in Ezra F. Vogel, ed., *Modern Japanese Organization and Decision Making* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 284-303; Thayer, "Japanese Foreign Policy in the Nakasone Years," in Gerald L. Curtis, ed., *Japan's Foreign Policy After the Cold War: Coping With Change* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1993), pp. 90-104; Taketoshi Yamamoto, "The Press Club of Japan," *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Summer 1989), pp. 371-88. IN OTHER DEMOCRACIES: David L. Altheide, *Media Power* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1985), Chap. 4; Dan Caspi and Yehiel Limor, *Hametavchim: Emtsaei Hatikshoret Be' Israel 1948-1990* [The Mediators: The Mass Media in Israel 1948-1990] (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1992) (Hebrew); Yoel Cohen, *Media Diplomacy: The Foreign Office in the Mass Communication Age* (London: Frank Cass and Co., Ltd., 1986), pp. 5-9.; Eva Ezioni-Halevi, *Kesher Haelitot Vehademocratia Be' israel* [Elites and Democracy in Israel] (Tel-Aviv: Sifriat Poalim), 1994, pp. 28-9, 125-36 (Hebrew); Robert S. Lichter, *The Media Elite* (Maryland: Adler and Adler, 1986); Jean Seaton and Ben Pimlott, *The Media in British politics* (Brookfield: Gower, 1987), pp. 4-15; Robert J. Spitzer, ed., *Media and Public Policy* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1993).

2 Ofer Feldman, "Kuwority pēpā ni dappi seyō," *Mainichi Shimbun*, April 3, 1994; William R. Nester, "Japan's Mainstream Press: Freedom to Conform?" *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (Spring 1989), pp. 29-39; Inoguchi Takashi, "Sengo 50-nen to shimbun: karaoke jānalizmu kara dappi o," *Shimbun kenkyū*, No. 522 (January 1995), pp. 61-63. In his work regarding the United States, Herman presents a picture of government-media relations, which bears close similarity to that depicted by critics of government-media relations in Japan. He writes, for example, as follows:". . .the media. . . serve mainly as a supportive arm of the state and dominant elites, focusing heavily on themes serviceable to them, and debating and exposing within accepted frames of reference. . . The dominant media are themselves members of the corporate-elite establishment. Furthermore, media scholarship has regularly stressed the tendency of the media to rely excessively on the government as a news source and to defer to its positions. . . Media analysts have long noted that the economics of the media push journalists into the hands of 'primary definers' who offer a daily supply of supposedly credible news [Fn. 12: 'Primary definers are major news sources who, by virtue of their importance as sources are able to define what is noteworthy.']. . . A Symbiotic relationship tends to develop between primary definers and their regular beat reporters, who are rewarded for being cooperative and penalized for unfriendly reporting. These 'old-boy networks' are reinforced by linkages between officials and senior managers and editors in the mainstream media. . . they also depend on the government for television licenses, contracts to provide goods and services and support in overseas activties." Edward S. Herman, "The Media's Role in U.S. Foreign Policy, *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (Summer 1993), pp. 25-6.

3 For example, Ellis B. Krauss' comparison of news broadcasts of NHK and ABC in the U.S. is notable. He found, among other things, that 10% of NHK news related to advisory bodies whereas ABC news related to none; and focusing on NHK "headline news," 18% of the headlines related to advisory bodies. "Kokka no byōsha: NHK terebi nyūsu no seijigaku," *Rebayasan*, No. 15, Fall 1994, pp. 130-31. In Germany, once reports of *major* advisory councils are published, they get thorough coverage in the media. Muller-Groeling, 1993.2

4 ENGLAND: Cartwright 1975, p. 176; AUSTRALIA: Smith 1976, p. 408; SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES: Olsen 1981, pp. 501, 503; L. N. Johansen and O. P. Kristensen, "Corporatist Traits in Denmark, 1946-1972," in L. Lehmbruch and Philippe C. Schmitter, eds., *Patterns of Corporatist Policy Making* (London: Sage Publications, 1982), pp. 189-217; Premfors 1983; USA: Mirra Komarovsky, ed., *Sociology and Public Policy: The Case of Presidential Commissions* (New York: Elsevier, 1975); Wolanin 1975; Mark P. Petracca, "Federal Administrative Committees, Interest Groups, and the Administrative State," *Congress and the Presidency*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Spring 1986), pp. 83-114; HOLLAND: Scientific Council for Government Policy, *Voorstudies En Achtergronden: Adviseren Aan de Ovenheid* (Den Haag, 1977); GERMANY: Muller-Groeling 1993.

5 For example, The Peacock Committee on Public Television in Britain. Hennesy, *The Great and the Good*, p. 64.

6 Two prominent participants in such groups in the prewar era were future prime minister Ishibashi Tanzan and ill-fated Ozaki Hotsumi who was executed for his participation in the Sorge spy ring during the Pacific War. See, respectively, Sharon Nolte, *Liberalism in Modern Japan: Ishibashi Tanzan and his Teachers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); and Chalmers Johnson, *An Instant of Treason: Ozaki Hotsumi and the Sorge Spy Ring*. Expanded Edition (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

7 It is also known as Minkan Seiji Rinchō (民間政治臨調 "Private" Politics Ad-Hoc Council). Seiji Kaikaku Suishin Kyōugikai, *Nihon henkaku bijion* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1993). ition.

8 Frank J. Schwartz, "Shingikai: The Politics of Consultaion in Japan" (Ph. D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1991), Part 2, pp. 317-23.; Shindo Muneyuki, "seisaku kettei no shisutemu: shingikai, shimon kikan, shinku tanku no yakuwari," *Jūrisuto [zōokan tokushu]*, No. 29, 1983, pp. 246-51; Tsujinaka Yutaka, "Shakai henyō to seisaku katei no taitō: shiteki shimon kikan seiji no tenkai." *Kita Kyūshū Daigaku hōsei ronshū*, Vol. 13. No. 13, 1985, pp. 20-69.

9 *Jinjikoshinroku* (Tokyo: Jinjikoshinjo); *Zenkoku kakushu dantai meikan* (Tokyo: Mikami Makechingu Insuteichto); *Asahi nenkan*, etc.

10 "Patterned" is used here in the sense of "patterned pluralism," a concept presented by Muramatsu and Krauss. M. Muramatsu and E. Kuauss, "The Conservative Policy Line and the Development of Patterned Pluralism," in Kozo Yamamura and Yasukichi Yasuba, eds., *The Political Economy of Japan, Vol. I: The Domestic Transformation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 1987, pp. 555-94. Also Muramatsu, "Patterned Pluralism Under Challenge: The Politics of the 1980s," in Garry Allinson and Yasunori Sone, eds., *Political Dynamics in Contemporary Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 1993, pp. 50-71.

11 About academics, see, for example, Taketsugu Tsurutani, "Academics in Japan's Advisory Council System: The Ambiguity and Danger in their Role," *Administration and Society*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (May 1986), pp. 91-109. Regarding journalists see, for example, "212 Shingikai ni miru," p. 65; James Horne, *Japan's Financial Markets: Conflict and Consensus in Policymaking* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985), pp. 160-2; Asahi, November 24, 1991.

12 1996 questionnaires, 693 responses; response rate of 35% — about average for mail questionnaires, high for some of the busiest persons in Japan. The demographic and career backgrounds of those who did and did not respond were very similar. The number of respondents from the mass media was 41.

13 Sone Yasunori Study Group, *Shingikai no kiso kenkyū* (Tokyo: Keio University, 1985).

14 Haruhara Akihiko and Amenomori Isamu, "Newspapers," in Foreign Press Center, ed., *About Japan Series, 7: Japan's Mass Media*, 1994, p. 32.

15   I borrowed this concept from social psychology of organizations focusing on labor negotiations. The more recent "two-level game" concept used in the study of international negotiations is based on the same idea.

16   Shumpei Kumon, "Japan as a Network Society," Shumpei Kumon and Henry Rosovsky, eds., *The Political Economy of Japan*, Vol. III: *Cultural and Social Dynamics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 21-7.