

The Era of Koizumi's Right-Wing Populism

*A study of ideology, political practice
and rhetoric in Japan*

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Abbreviations

ASDF	Air Self-Defense Forces
CEFP	Committee on Economic and Fiscal Policy
CGP	Clean Government Party (<i>kômeitô</i>)
CP	Conservative Party
DPJ	Democratic Party of Japan
FILP	Fiscal Investment and Loan Program
FLE	Fundamental Law of Education
FTA	Free Trade Agreements
GAC	General Affairs Council
GSDF	Ground Self-Defense Forces
JP	Japan Post
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
LP	Liberal Party
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery
METI	Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (former MITI)
MLIT	Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport
MOC	Ministry of Construction
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MPT	Ministry of Post and Telecommunications
MSDF	Maritime Self-Defense Forces
NCER	National Commission on Education Reform
NPM	New Public Management
PARC	Policy Affairs Research Council
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PSA	Postal Service Agency
SDF	Self-Defense Forces
WTO	World Trade Organization

Japanese terms

<i>Amakudari</i>	Bureaucrats and politicians descending retiring from their positions to well-paid leader positions in public corporations
<i>Dôroku zoku</i>	Highway <i>zoku</i>
<i>Hikaku san gensoku</i>	Three non-nuclear principles
<i>Ichiritsu nôsei</i>	Equal payments to farmers
<i>Jûshô shugi</i>	Mercantilism: the view of the Japanese postwar state as only concerned with economic growth and trade balance
<i>Kantei</i>	Prime Minister's Office
<i>Kômeitô</i>	New Clean Government: LDP's coalition partner. The political organization of the <i>sôka gakkai</i> , a Buddhist sect.
<i>Nihon shintô</i>	Japan New Party
<i>Rachi mondai</i>	The abduction issue: North Korea's kidnapping of Japanese citizens during the 1970s.
<i>Sanmi ittai kaikaku</i>	Tax reform: taxation but also expenditure responsibility transfer from central government to local government
<i>Yûsei zoku</i>	Postal services <i>zoku</i>
<i>Zoku</i>	Policy 'tribe'

Use of Japanese

I have used the Hepburn romanization (chi, sho, etc.). The diacritic (ô) indicates all long vowels except in familiar places (Tokyo). I have used n rather than m before syllables beginning with m, b, and p (such as shinbun). All Japanese names are written with the family name first, even for Japanese scholars publishing in Western-language publications.¹

¹ I have stolen partly from the standard in *The Journal of Japanese Studies*.

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1 Introduction

Corrupt politicians, vested interests, and an inefficient government! With his right-wing populist project of reforming Japanese economy and politics, Koizumi Jun'ichirô went straight into the center of Japanese politics in April 2001. Koizumi – Japanese politics' *enfant terrible* - represented fresh air in a party haunted by corruption scandals, non-transparent political processes and ageing leaders. Koizumi promised a tough fight against the political establishment, the end of preferential treatment of protected industries and a more competitive economy in the age of globalization. He was even ready to fight members of his own party – or destroy it. The neoliberal structural reform program of the economy and government, the populist fight against politics-as-usual and the willingness to use force in foreign policy were all trademarks that made Koizumi a peculiarity in Japanese politics.

From April 2001 to August 2006, Koizumi was the Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) prime minister in Japan. Compared to the fast-changing cabinets of the 1990s, this stability was a remarkable achievement. Through four national elections, Koizumi guided the LDP to success. The Lower House election in 2005 resulted in the highest support of the LDP since 1986.

Koizumi's structural reforms were neoliberal. Not only did he set forth to privatize public corporations and postal services, but Koizumi sought to deregulate industries and reform government. Koizumi acted upon a populist worldview, in which he presented himself as the spokesman of the people in a struggle with the Japanese elite. In foreign policy, Koizumi supported the U.S. War on Terrorism and sought to participate in the war and occupation efforts.

With his provocative, conflict-oriented political style, Koizumi attracted massive media attention. Using external committees sharing the same ideological outlook, neglecting factions when appointing and reshuffling his cabinets and exercising a strong top-down leadership, Koizumi changed the rules of the political game within the LDP. When his neoliberal reform number one – privatization of postal services – did not pass the Diet in August 2005, Koizumi dissolved the Diet, fired a minister and threw out anti-reformists in the party. The LDP had never seen such an ardent fighter against their consensus politics.

1.1 Research Questions

In this thesis, I investigate the ideology and political practice of Koizumi in his over five-year-long period as prime minister in Japan. I formulate three questions to improve the analytical treatment of the complex political phenomenon Koizumi was:

1. What was the ideological content of Koizumi's political project?
2. How did ideology relate to Koizumi's political practice?
3. Why did Koizumi achieve popularity for such a long period?

The questions relate to different layers of human practice and society. Through an analysis of speech, written statements and policy proposals, I discuss the ideological content of Koizumi politics. The research chapters are separated on the basis of ideological content to ensure an analytical treatment of each of the ideological elements in right-wing populism. In chapter 5 and 6, I also investigate election campaigns, the political process of implementing policies and foreign policy to grasp the political practice of Koizumi. Not only is it of interest to analyze *what* political agents attempted to change politics and society into but also *how* they performed politics. The last question asks for explanations. By reviewing the literature on Koizumi, I find that there are several explanations offered on different levels for *why* Koizumi experienced high popularity in Japan. The literature lacks, however, treatments of the relationship between political popularity and the content of the political agent's ideology and political practice. I develop hypotheses that may fill this gap.

1.2 Relevance

Japan is one of the more populous countries in the world and it is currently the third largest economy in the world. Furthermore, Japan is situated in an area where major historical, geo-political, economic and cultural issues are at work - with China, Taiwan, Russia, South Korea and North Korea in close proximity. An attempt to grasp the dynamics of Japanese politics is relevant for anyone who is interested in contemporary Japanese society.

1.3 Contributions of the thesis

This thesis provides insight into the ideology behind Koizumi politics and shows the relation between ideology and political practice. I place the ideas and policies Koizumi proposed into a historical and contemporary context. Furthermore, I investigate attempts to explain Koizumi's success and categorize the explanations. Lastly, I develop four hypotheses that contribute to the understanding of his popularity in Japanese society.

On a more general level, the thesis offers an analytical treatment of the most important Japanese political party (at least prior to 2009). The LDP has contained a variety of political currents, but a few ideological positions have been strong. While Koizumi was not alone in arguing for neoliberal reforms and nationalist actions, the synthesis – right-wing populism – seemed to be rather unique in contemporary LDP.

1.4 Overview of the thesis

This thesis is structured as follows. In chapter 2, I present a theoretical understanding of key concepts and discuss the methodology and data. Chapter 3 provides an overview of Koizumi, his political career prior to becoming prime minister, and the political circumstances he operated within. In chapter 4, Koizumi's neoliberalism is shown through an analysis of his structural reform program, while chapter 5 provides a discussion of Koizumi's political project as populism. Then, in chapter 6, I analyze

Koizumi's foreign policy and his nationalist approach to the Yasukuni Shrine visits and education policy. Chapter 4, 5 and 6 constitute the research chapters. In chapter 7, I show that Koizumi's ideological constellation – right-wing populism – was a synthesis of neoliberalism, populism and nationalism. Furthermore, I discuss different explanations for understanding Koizumi's popularity. Lastly, I provide four perspectives on the reasons behind the resonance for Koizumi's right-wing populism. In chapter 8 – the epilogue – I outline the aftermath of the Koizumi period.

2: Ideology and politics: theory, methodology and data

Ideology and political practice are key concepts in this thesis. To enable an academic study of the expressions of ideology and political practice in a Japanese context, I examine the meaning of these concepts in this chapter. Then, I establish the purpose of the field of history and its methodology – critical source reading and interpretation. I end this chapter with a review of the data I utilize in this thesis.

2.1 Ideology

Ideology is a contested concept in social and human sciences. The meaning differs depending on scientific field (political science, sociology, history, literature, etc.) and analytical ‘school’ (neo-Marxism, cultural studies, linguistic analysis, etc.), but also among authors in the same field and ‘school’. According to the Oxford dictionary, ideology is a “system of ideas and ideals, especially one which forms the basis of economic or political theory and policy”, with a sub-definition as a “set of beliefs characteristic of a social group or individual”.² This definition captures the main elements in ideology (at least for political analysis), but I believe there is a need to shortly - but critically - assess the content of this definition to form a comprehensive understanding of how the concept of *ideology* shall be understood to enable a fruitful analysis of ideology in Japanese politics.

Ideology is a systematic understanding of the social world, i.e. the reality that takes place when humans communicate and interact, or as “a comprehensive and coherent social perception of the world”.³ Ideology may be descriptive (how the social world *is*), normative (how the social world *should be*) and prescriptive (how *to improve* the social world from how it *is* to how it *should be*) or all three elements. As the Oxford definition implies, ideologies are ideas, i.e. sets of thoughts in human’s minds, and are thus present for research and interpretation only through human practice. Such human practice – utterances, written statements and human actions - are *ideological* in so far as they deal with the social world. Most human behavior deals therefore with ideology. This focus on human practice emphasizes ideology as a process and how ideology is embedded in time and space.

Drawing upon the work of Berger and Luckmann, professor Carol Gluck in her seminal *Japan’s Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* reminds us that “[i]deologies not only reflect and interpret the social realities that sustain them; they also ... construct those realities and remain in constant dialectical relationship with them.”⁴ This view is in accordance with Bourdieu: “Sociology must include a sociology of the ‘perception of the social world, that is, a sociology of the construction

² <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/ideology?q=Ideology>. Retrieved 08.02.12.

³ Hodge and Kress, 1993, p. 15.

⁴ Gluck, 1985, p. 7. Indeed, Gluck’s definition resembles the definition applied in this thesis. The main difference, I believe, is the appreciation of how ideologies may also be anti-establishment in their approach to the social reality. Gluck draws upon Gramsci who is not wrong in his emphasis on how ideologies, when successfully perceived by dominated groups, reduce the need for force, but he applies a narrower definition.

of visions of the world which themselves contribute to the construction of this world.”⁵ Furthermore, Bourdieu emphasizes how ‘visions’ are social but disputed phenomena: “... there will be different or even antagonistic points of view, since points of view depend on the point from which they are taken, since the vision that every agent has of the space depends on his or her position in that space.”⁶ While for Bourdieu ideology is somewhat similar to his concept of ‘doxa’ – structures of dominance that naturalize into human practice and are seen as natural and legitimate⁷ – and thus a pejorative and dominating concept (as with the Marxists), I do not apply a negative definition of ideology nor do I reserve the concept only for dominating worldviews. Martin Seliger proposes: “[Ideologies are] [s]ets of ideas by which men posit, explain and justify ends and means of organized social action, and specifically political action, irrespective of whether such action aims to preserve, amend, uproot or rebuild a given social order.”⁸

Ideologies are present in politics in many ways. More concretely, I shall look for three specific ideological traits in this thesis. First, political actors construct and act upon images of friends and enemies – normative images of themselves as the *right* electoral choice in comparison to their *enemies*, which may be concrete (political competitors) or more abstract phenomena (e.g. capitalism, globalization). Certainly, such images need also explanations of why the cause of the protagonist is more important than other causes.⁹ In the realm of democratic party politics, a separation between inter- and intra-party attacks and praise is useful.¹⁰ Although neglected in the literature on Koizumi, his initial friendly orientation towards the main opposition party, the DPJ, developed during the five-year period, mainly as a response to the change in ideological positioning of the DPJ. Second, overall views of society and humans belong to the world of ideologies: the degree of human responsibility, subjectivity (as in human agency) and individuality in relation to the role of community, society, nation or state. Third, more specific views on spheres of society, such as politics, economy and religion, and the interrelationship between them are features of ideology I will examine.

2.2 Political practice in the national political field

With his inauguration as prime minister in April 2001, Koizumi entered the center of Japanese politics. As the democratic leader of Japan and the president in the major party, the LDP, Koizumi sought to implement his political program. Not all shared his ideological positions, however. There are several concentrations of immediate political power in the Japanese political system. How did Koizumi

⁵ Bourdieu, 1989, p. 18.

⁶ Bourdieu, 1989, p. 18.

⁷ Bourdieu and Eagleton, 1992.

⁸ Seliger, 1976, p. 14.

⁹ Inspired by Geiss, 1987, but not confined to his analysis.

¹⁰ Groeling, 2010.

(attempt to) implement his policy initiatives? In all democratic political systems, the policy-making process is a complex process with many different stakeholders involved. With political practice I refer to the political input process – the initiative, the debates, the development, the formulation, the discussion, the reformulation, the proposal and the vote for policies/laws (not necessarily in that order).

Following the process-oriented definition of ideology that also takes into account that actions may be ideological, political practice is *ideological*. The reason is that the practice itself – in addition to the arguments and policy initiatives – shows the way the political actor acts and responds to the political environment. Not necessarily the outcome of a *conscious* or rational analysis, the political practice reveals the terms on which political action is based upon.

In this thesis, I analyze the political practice of Koizumi: his policy style, strategies and rhetoric in relation to the political reality of the Koizumi period. The historical analysis shows that Koizumi, at times, showed willingness to compromise, contrary to his ideology and rhetoric. This does not mean – as some observers have claimed – that Koizumi was not as tough or consistent as the image he tried to project. Any political agent is constrained by the political opposition that exists or the political structure they operate in.

Political agents are required to exercise a certain consistency between ideological statements and rhetoric on the one side and the political practice on the other. Since Koizumi was conflict-oriented, proposed controversial policies and developed new policy-making methods, he faced strong resistance both from within the LDP and from opposition parties. It was not easy to implement his reforms or foreign policy bills when opposition was strong. Also, Koizumi lacked a formal support base in the LDP and was particularly vulnerable to intra-party opposition. However, at the same time, the media displayed daily the ideological conflict between Koizumi and the anti-reformists. The difficulty that Koizumi faced in introducing reforms of the Japanese party politics was well-known for the Japanese public.

2.3 Purpose of the field of history and its methodology

This thesis analyzes Japanese politics, its dynamics and the ideas that existed in a given period (2001-06) in a historical perspective. I trace the historical roots of ideas and movements, but also try to understand the historical context any agent operates within. Moreover, historians try to identify historical breaks as well as continuation in the historical development. The most important task of a historian is to seek to explain these developments. When writing history “... historians do not discover a past as much as they create it; they choose the events and people they think constitute the past, and they decide what about them is important to know.”¹¹ We attempt however to write a reliable and reasonable story.

¹¹ Howell and Prevenier, 2001, p. 1.

I treat the historical situation idiosyncratically – as unique. But such a treatment does not imply that we cannot find similarities in the ideological expressions and political processes somewhere else – in historical time and geographical space. In the age of globalization and rapid economic, social and technological change, similar ideologies are spread, enforced and implemented politically all across (at least) the Western world – including Japan. On the other hand, given the political, economic, social and cultural circumstances, the ideologies and the political actions and reactions differ. Thus, the study needs to be sensitive to the ideological expression and the political implementation at a local level. This is in accordance with the idea of *glocalization*, i.e. that globalization ultimately takes place in a local space.

Without the clearly defined academic rules and research methods found in social sciences – both quantitatively and qualitatively - history as an academic field is based on the reading of historical sources in a *critical* manner. Historians categorize their sources as *remains* and *testimonies*.¹² All relics from the past can be used as remains since they tell us something about the period they originated in. A testimony, however, is a source that contains a report or statement about an event. To use a source as a testimony is thus to consider the report or statement as a *fact* about the past. This is very different from reading a report or statement as the writers' view on the past – as we do with remains. A *critical* reading of a source implies reviewing the sources with a conscious attitude about the person/people producing the source, his/her/their framework and purpose for producing the source, the circumstances under which the source was produced, whether the source was produced under formal/informal or public/private conditions, the (hidden) meaning, etc. In Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier's words: "the historian's basic task is to choose *reliable* sources, to read them *reliably*, and to put them together in ways that provide *reliable* narratives about the past."¹³ I have tried to live up to the great standards of historians.

Historians reconstruct the past in a written form. As the past contains an almost infinite – but finite – amount of events, human interaction, utterances, etc., historical analysis requires a careful selection of the important *facts* of the past and a structuring of the historical process into a narrative. Reading and interpretation of the sources contribute to a framework for more comprehensive narrations and explanations of the past. Although historical analyses have no pretention of predicting the future, - an ambition sometimes found in, for instance, political science - a thorough understanding of historical developments contributes to an improved knowledge and comprehension of present-day processes. It is also so for Japanese politics, I believe.

It is not enough to point to different reasons for why a certain historical development took place, but also to evaluate the strength and depth of each reason and produce a reasonable relationship

¹² Kjeldstadli, 2010.

¹³ Howell and Prevenier, 2001, p. 2.

between the reasons. Views, perspectives, and arguments that eventually may become ‘theories’ shall be established on the basis of careful construction of syntheses. But how do we know that the synthesis is correct and right? In the field of history, we cannot ‘prove’ our synthesis, instead we need to rely on the ability to convince through arguments. Thus, we shall be aware of the value of guidance and constructive criticism of our interpretation from other scholars. This is how improvement in our understanding of the past can be ensured. Ultimately, only academic critique from fellow scholars can guarantee the quality of the arguments and analyses.

In any interpretative exercise, an awareness of Hans Gadamer’s argument that the Enlightenment Era’s differentiation between truth and prejudices fails to grasp how important tradition (and prejudice) is in human beings social life, their understanding of their social environment and source interpretation.¹⁴ According to Gadamer, culture and tradition imposes prejudices upon interpretative practice. This has particular implications when studying the past and other cultures: are we able to interpret texts (in a wider sense) produced in the past in a *different* cultural context? Yes, but the interpretation will be colored by our upbringing (again in a wide sense). Two factors contribute to a less colored study here. First, the past I study is not very old. Second, Japanese academics are themselves active in the study of the Japanese past. That said, it may actually be fruitful to be an outsider. In fact, some of the best analyses of Japanese politics, society and history are produced by scholars from the West.

2.4 Data

I expect the ideological expressions in the national political field to take the form of books, articles, speeches, blogs, parliamentary debates, participation in radio programs, policy recommendations, laws, foreign affairs initiatives and responses, etc. These are written or oral statements. Most government sources are available on the internet. Whereas Koizumi’s own contributions (blog, book, radio program, policy statements) are treated solely as *remains*, newspaper articles are also considered as *testimonies*. I utilize sources for the study of Koizumi, but I also take into use the existing literature on Koizumi in particular, as well as more general works on Japanese politics and society. *Literature* is other academics’ views, arguments, hypotheses, etc. about social phenomena. In contrast to *testimonies* (sources), I consider the *literature* in a communicative manner, i.e. I discuss the arguments, criticize (neutrally) them, and then negotiate with them. I must also confess that I have used Wikipedia extensively, in particular the Japanese version. Not only does it contain a lot of facts about politicians, parties, elections, etc., but it includes an impressive source and literature list. Wikipedia is therefore a splendid starting point for an analysis of Japanese politics.

¹⁴ See Gadamer, 2004.

Ideology is also present in the way political agents act (or do not act): the political *practice* is made visible through political action, reaction, and non-action. The political practice of Koizumi has been studied by many scholars. I use their accounts to understand the political strategies and methods, and the relationship between ideology and political practice. The prime minister had a political agenda, but he was not alone. To succeed with his political project, Koizumi cooperated and conflicted with other ministers, councils, the LDP, coalition parties, opposition parties, the media, Japan's diplomatic relations, etc. The literature and the above-mentioned sources suffice to understand the political circumstances under which Koizumi acted within and to answer the research questions. The final product which this study represents is *reliable* – not necessarily objective and truthful - and will hopefully be subject to critical scrutiny, criticism and approval by the academic community.

3 Koizumi Jun'ichirô: reform, reform, reform

In this thesis, I am interested in ideology, political practice and rhetoric. In such a perspective, individuals and their past experience may seem superfluous. I am not able to explain why Koizumi acted as he did. Instead, a short presentation of Koizumi's background helps us understand Koizumi's placement in the political landscape and in the public memory. I show Koizumi's relations with the LDP, his stance on postal reform and his former election attempts in 1995 and 1998. Also, I elaborate on the dynamics of the management of the LDP with analyses of factions and the YKK trio. The 2001 presidential election was the third Koizumi ran in.

3.1. Background¹⁵

Koizumi Jun'ichirô was educated as a neo-classical economist at Keio University in Tokyo. After graduation, Koizumi studied at the London School of Economics where his studies were interrupted by his father's death. Koizumi returned to Japan and then participated in the 1969 election in Yokosuka, the district where his father and maternal grandfather had been elected to the Diet.¹⁶ Despite the backing of a powerful political family (and the tradition of inter-generational political inheritance in Japan), Koizumi was unsuccessful. Instead, he was hired as the secretary of LDP politician Fukuda Takeo. This meant integration into a faction that became antagonistic to the clientelistic politics that Tanaka Kakuei represented. Both Tanaka and Fukuda had grown strong under the wings of LDP heavy weight Satô Eisaku (PM 1964-72). Although Satô had wanted Fukuda as the winner of the 1972 LDP election, Tanaka became extremely popular, in particular among the public. From the close relationship with the Fukuda faction, Koizumi learnt about *doken kokka* (the construction state) and the structural characteristics of the Japanese political economy that reinforced the power and money distribution among LDP politicians.

3.2. Political career

After three years, Koizumi tried once again in the 1972 election. This time, he was successful.¹⁷ Although he was known as the 'weirdo' (*henjin*) for his approach to the postal service privatization issue, his political career progressed rapidly. Koizumi became Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare in 1988 in the Takeshita Cabinet (1988-89). Due to the Recruit Scandal, the Takeshita Cabinet resigned, but Koizumi received a ministerial position again in 1992, now as the Minister of Post and Telecommunications in the Miyazawa Cabinet (1992-93). The fall of the Miyazawa Cabinet in 1993 marked the end of 38 years of LDP cabinet monopoly in Japanese politics. Although Koizumi ran

¹⁵ Facts on Koizumi's political history from The Ikuo Kabashima Seminar (ed.): *Koizumi seiken no kenkyû* [Koizumi Regime Research]. Bokutakusha. 2008. Tokyo. Pp. 293-300.

¹⁶ Larimer, 2001a.

¹⁷ Larimer, 2001b.

against him in the 1995 LDP presidential election, Hashimoto Ryûtarô asked him to join the Cabinet as the Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare in 1996.

3.3. LDP presidential election attempts – two failures

In 1998, “in the midst of the worst economic performance in the postwar period,” the Upper House election ended in a terrible result for the LDP after the neoliberal reformer, Prime Minister Hashimoto, suggested a tax increase and reduced public spending.¹⁸ Hashimoto resigned due to the election result. A presidential election was thus on the agenda in the LDP. At the time, the decision was to be made by a committee of LDP parliamentarians and one LDP member from the forty-seven prefectural chapters. As Gerald L. Curtis argues, the election took place “in the context of LDP factional politics”.¹⁹ The three candidates were Obuchi Keizô, Kajiyama Seiroku and Koizumi Jun’ichirô. Obuchi himself was the head of the largest and most powerful faction and was supported by party-secretary Koichi, who again was the heir of the Miyazawa faction and Yamazaki. Katô and Yamazaki were, as discussed above, part of the YKK trio.²⁰ But instead of supporting their comrade, Obuchi was the key to their succession into the center of Japanese politics: “if Obuchi was denied the party’s presidency, the Obuchi faction in all likelihood would splinter and the hopes of Katô and Yamazaki for a smooth transition to leadership of their respective factions would be set back.”²¹ Kajiyama acted upon the opportunity for failure to maintain factional order. As a former party-secretary, Law minister and chief cabinet secretary, Kajiyama sought to attract members inside the Nakasone and Miyazawa factions that opposed Katô and Yamazaki, as well as politicians that supported a *hoho rengô* (conservative-conservative alliance) instead of the LDP’s cooperation with the Socialists and the New Party Sakigake (NSP).²² Kajiyama was the main choice of the financial markets and the Japanese business community due to his emphasis on bank reforms and economic growth. While Obuchi was the behind-the-scenes consensus-maker, Kajiyama was “portrayed as a forceful, presidential-type of leader.”²³ Indeed, Kôno Yôhei together with several other LDP members, including Asô Tarô (grandson of prime minister Yoshida Shigeru, and prime minister himself from 2008-09), supported Kajiyama in the election. In January 1999, these politicians left the Miyazawa faction and started the Kôno faction. Koizumi joined the election, but with much less support inside the LDP. He was not even able to receive total support

¹⁸ Curtis, 1999, p. 208.

¹⁹ Curtis, 1999, p. 212.

²⁰ Curtis, 1999, p. 212.

²¹ Curtis, 1999, p. 213.

²² The Liberal Party was led by Ozawa Ichirô, one of the most prominent players in Japanese politics in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. He proposed to the LDP to join a conservative-conservative alliance. As a former LDP member, Ozawa left the LDP in the turmoil in 1993, established the Sakigake party, but left again to lead a party totally controlled by himself. His party emerged with the DPJ in mid-2000s, and finally in 2009, his dreams of overthrowing the LDP power monopoly in Japanese politics became true.

²³ Curtis, 1999, p. 213-14.

from his own faction, Mitsuzuka (at the time).²⁴ On the other hand, according to Curtis, Koizumi “seemed to be the people’s choice” as in “terms of public popularity, the candidates were ranked in the order of Koizumi, Kajiyama, Obuchi”.²⁵ But since the election was a decision made by LDP politicians and high-ranked prefectural members, public popularity played at the best a minor role.

Koizumi had joined the LDP presidential election in 1995 as well. At that time also, Koizumi faced fierce competition from politicians with larger faction support than himself. Originally, the president election was seen as a choice between Hashimoto Ryûtarô and Kôno Yôhei. But since Kôno was not even able to achieve the support of his own Miyazawa faction, he resigned from the election campaign. Koizumi joined and the election became a ‘fresh policy dispute’ of two controversial fellows.²⁶ But Hashimoto, backed by the Obuchi faction, won the election and became the prime minister of Japan when PM Murayama resigned.²⁷

3.4. Postal privatization – the ‘iron triangle’ and willingness to cooperate

It was with postal privatization that Koizumi made the major headlines in his pre-prime minister political career. Not only did he aggressively seek neoliberal reforms of the Japanese political economy, he was also very critical to many members of his own party and likewise open for cooperation across the party structures of Japanese politics. During his tenure as the minister of Post and Telecommunication in the Miyazawa Cabinet (1992-93), Koizumi established himself as a reformist regarding the postal services.²⁸ In addition, immediately after the appointment, Koizumi opposed the Ministry of Post and Telecommunication’s recommendation to increase older people’s tax exemption on interest income (*rôjin maruyû*).²⁹ The statement aroused fury among *yûsei zoku* (postal tribe) and the MPT, and eventually an increase compromise was reached among the leading LDP politicians.³⁰ Koizumi was not alone in his reformist stance, however. In 1996, Koizumi proposed postal services privatization in a study group he led together with Tanaka Shusei (party leader of NPS) and Hosokawa Morihiro (the reform politician who left LDP in 1993 to lead the first non-LDP cabinet since 1955).³¹ Moreover, Prime Minister Hashimoto had proposed privatization in 1997, but withdrew from political battle when the *zoku* politicians and bureaucrats showed major opposition.³²

²⁴ Mitsuzuka Hiroshi rose as the leader of the faction in 1991, from Abe Shintaro, but resigned in 1998 in favor of Mori Yoshiro. Abe supported Fukuda in the Kaku-Fuku battle (*Kaku Fuku sensô*) in 1972. When Fukuda eventually became prime minister in 1976, Abe was asked to take the position of Cabinet General Secretary. With the backing of the Fukuda faction, Abe ran in the 1982 LDP president election, but Nakasone Yasuhiro won a landslide victory. Despite the election, Nakasone asked Abe to join the Cabinet as Foreign Minister.

²⁵ Curtis, 1999, p. 214-15.

²⁶ Asakawa, 2000, pp. 41-42 and pp. 263-65.

²⁷ While Hashimoto received 304 votes, Koizumi was supported by only 87 votes. See Asakawa, 1999, pp. 266-67.

²⁸ Lake II in Itô, 2008, p. 156.

²⁹ Eiji, 2006, p. 104.

³⁰ Eiji, 2006, p. 104.

³¹ http://www.cosmopolis.ch/english/cosmo18/koizumi_japan.htm. Retrieved 07.01.2012

³² Mishima, 2007, p.743.

In 1999, Koizumi co-edited a book on postal privatization with Matsuzawa Shigefumi, a DPJ politician. In the book, Koizumi outlines the arguments that became a significant part of the Koizumi ideology and rhetoric used during the Koizumi period. In his introduction to the 1999 report on postal privatization, Koizumi writes that “[c]onducting administrative and financial reforms without postal privatization are like trying to swim with your hands and feet tied.”³³ Postal services provided the *money in* for the *money out* highway and construction projects and these projects functioned as the vehicle for clientelism and bureaucratic control of the Japanese political decision-making process. For Koizumi, the management of the postal services was inefficient (too many employees, too many offices), the usage of the postal savings and insurance for construction and highway projects were mismanaged and the services provided (mail, insurance and banking) could easily be conducted by the private sector.³⁴ In fact, Koizumi argued that the lack of competition, the state guarantees and the ability to run in deficit provide a long-term problem for the Japanese economy and government.³⁵ Indeed, he states that “[t]he postal service business is in a condition where it cannot increase prices [due new technology and falling demand] despite increased expenses and falls [*hamarikomu*] into the middle of a narrow path [*airo*] where structural deficit occurs.”³⁶ Koizumi also places responsibility for the mismanagement of people’s savings and lack of reform will:

‘This [postal privatization] reform is maybe hated by all ministries and government offices in addition to MPT and MOF. At present, many experienced vice-ministers and secretaries from every ministry and government office are ‘descending from heaven’ [*amakudaru*] into [positions as] presidents and council members in special corporations. More concretely, from MOF to the People’s Finance Corporation, from MITI to the Smaller Business Finance Corporation, from the MOC to the House Loan Corporation, from the MPT to Postal Life Insurance and Welfare Corporation, from MHW to Pension and Welfare Corporation, from the Ministry of Labor to Works Progress Corporation.’³⁷

The issue of dealing with the fiscal deficit of the postal offices is then presented as a dichotomy between tax increase and postal privatization.

‘Concerning the debate on postal privatization, currently, arguments for and against appear, but what we cannot forget is that [postal privatization] is a fiscal deficit problem. It will in the close future certainly become a topic of whether to choose increase in the consumption tax or to choose postal privatization. Until now, the introduction and increase in the consumption tax has been conducted as source of income for the reduction in the income tax. However, soon, the increase in the consumption tax seems to take the shape of filling the need for a revenue source and in correspondence to an increase in the social security expenses. The present bureaucratic structure was untouched (*genzai kanryô kikô wo sono mama ni shiteoita uede*), and because the sources of revenue are not sufficient and the consumption tax was increased, Japan became, unfortunately, a heavy taxing state.’³⁸

In the background, demographic developments, the fiscal condition of the Japanese government and the tax debates in Japanese politics loom. Furthermore, implicitly, postal privatization will lead to a

³³ Koizumi (a) in Koizumi and Shigefumi, 1999, p. 2.

³⁴ Koizumi (a) in Koizumi and Shigefumi, 1999.

³⁵ Koizumi (b) in Koizumi and Shigefumi, 1999.

³⁶ Koizumi (ii) in Koizumi and Shigefumi, 1999, p. 18.

³⁷ Koizumi (a) in Koizumi and Shigefumi, 1999, p. 3.

³⁸ Koizumi (a) in Koizumi and Shigefumi, 1999, p. 2-3.

blow to bureaucratic power as well as lessening the burden on ordinary Japanese taxpayers. Koizumi explains his views on the Japanese political economy:

‘Isn’t this reform a reform that is disliked, not only by the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, but from the Ministry of Finance to all of the ministries and government offices? At present, the many administrative vice-ministers of the ministries and government offices are *amakudari* to become presidents and members of boards in special public corporations...A *family* system is established which is centered around the government that consists of government finance corporations, public corporations, special public corporations, and affiliated private-sector companies. This system is the ‘stronghold’ [*honmaru*] that hinders administrative and financial reforms. Therefore, postal privatization is not simply a fight against the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, but a fight against all the government corporations and all the bureaucrats, in other words, the forces that keep up the present condition and is the first step towards a real administrative and financial reform.’³⁹

Here, Koizumi provides the relation between postal reforms, the ‘iron triangle’ (unhealthy ties between politicians, bureaucrats and vested interests, clientelism, *amakudari*, etc.) and his willingness to fight. Koizumi argues also that large support for his neoliberal reform eagerness among Japanese politicians exists. Indeed, he writes:

‘What I often say is that the discussion on privatization of the postal services is a model of a debate in which we agree on the general arguments but disagree on the details [*sôron sansei kakuron hantai*]. Even in today’s parties, [they] say ‘small government’. Almost everyone, except the Communist Party, agrees that [the government] should leave to the private sector what the private sector is able to do, that the bureaucracy should not be involved in business, and that they should only deal with what is indispensable for the people.’⁴⁰

Characteristic of Koizumi’s approach, he is willing to cooperate with anyone that agrees upon his reform agenda. In the 2001 Lower House election campaign, Koizumi continues this approach as he reaches out for DPJ support. However, we will see that during his tenure, although Koizumi seems to follow this strategy, the political circumstances change around the Koizumi Cabinet. In the 2005 election, therefore, Koizumi and his LDP supporters are more or less alone in their emphasis on the postal privatization plans. This change strengthened his cause as the election turned out to be a pro-Koizumi or anti-Koizumi election.

3.5. The YKK trio

Koizumi was also famous for being part of the YKK trio, consisting of Yamazaki Taku (leader of the LDP’s Policy Research Council), Katô Kôichi and himself, Koizumi Jun’ichirô. The trio, which was ‘established’ by Koizumi’s initiative in 1991,⁴¹ is said to have initiated the fall of Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki in 1991, when the Watanabe, Miyazawa and Mitsuzuka factions backed the step-down.⁴² In 1994, the YKK trio started a study group for younger LDP politicians across faction groups called *Shinseiki* (New Century). The YKK trio belonged to different factions, and the trio acted more as initiative-makers to reform of the Japanese political economy than as a formal organization. As already discussed, Yamazaki and Katô supported Obuchi in the 1998 presidential election. Factions, power struggle, individual ambitions, etc. did not play on Koizumi’s side in 1998. More important than the

³⁹ Koizumi (i) in Koizumi and Matsuzawa, 1999, p. 3.

⁴⁰ Koizumi and Matsuzawa, 1999, p. 203.

⁴¹ http://www.cosmopolis.ch/english/cosmo18/koizumi_japan.htm. Retrieved 07.01.2012

⁴² http://www.cosmopolis.ch/english/cosmo18/koizumi_japan.htm. Retrieved 07.01.2012

immediate outcome of their cooperation, Yamazaki and Katô, as well as Koizumi, represented a new generation of LDP politicians that slowly, during the 1990s, progressed in the LDP's political hierarchy. Katô and Yamazaki eventually became the head of their own factions, Katô became LDP secretary general. Indeed, both Katô and Yamazaki represented potential prime minister candidates.

When Obuchi - the winner of the 1998 LDP presidential election – fell into a coma in 2000, Mori Yoshiro was chosen, in a back-room LDP deal, to become the president of the LDP and thus also as the prime minister of Japan.⁴³ During his short tenure, Mori made many serious political mistakes and participated in scandals. Professor Edward J. Lincoln argues that Mori "...got himself into trouble by saying in public that Japan was a "divine nation," using a politically loaded phrase from the 1930s that implied a national polity centered on a divine Emperor."⁴⁴ Moreover, Lincoln is harsh in his critique of Mori: "The Japanese political system has often selected relatively color-less or weak individuals to serve as prime minister, but even by Japanese standards Mori was a weak and embarrassing choice for the job."⁴⁵ Then, in October 2000, Katô pressed the LDP leadership to put reforms on the agenda. Katô and Yamazaki had been critical to the appointment of Mori in the first place.⁴⁶ But Katô was not satisfied and, as Lincoln argues, "[h]e even toyed with the idea of leaving the party with its faction and either forming a new party or joining forces with the DPJ."⁴⁷ In mid-November, the opposition parties in the Diet filed a non-confidence enactment towards the Mori Cabinet. With its parliamentary system, the cabinet in Japan needs simple majority support – or at least not simple majority non-support – in the Diet. Lincoln states that if Katô and his faction had supported this non-confidence motion, then Prime Minister Mori and his cabinet would have been forced to resign. Yamasaki Taku and his faction⁴⁸ were also ready to support the non-confidence act. Secretary-General Nonaka Hiromu, on the other hand, supported Mori and threatened to expel LDP members that supported the non-confidence act, forcing the LDP parliamentarians to enforce party discipline. Katô backed down in the last minute.⁴⁹ Now, any aspiration to achieve the necessary support among LDP parliamentarians for the prime minister role for Katô or Yamazaki was definitely reduced. The Katô faction experienced even a split, as faction members joined together under Horiuchi Mitsuo.⁵⁰ With two of the 'rising stars' of the LDP losing respect and support, the Mori cabinet continued, despite low public support. Looking forward, the LDP politicians knew that the party faced

⁴³ See Park, 2001, pp. 452-53.

⁴⁴ Lincoln, 2001, p. 51.

⁴⁵ Lincoln, 2001, p. 51.

⁴⁶ Park, 2001, p. 453.

⁴⁷ Lincoln, 2001, p. 53.

⁴⁸ Yamazaki, originally a member of the powerful Nakasone faction, left the faction to establish his own. At the time of the 2001 LDP president election, his faction constituted a medium-sized faction with 21 parliamentarians. See Park, 2001.

⁴⁹ Lincoln, 2001, p. 53.

⁵⁰ Park, 2001, p. 454.

a particular difficulty in renewing the public support in front of the upcoming Upper House election set in August 2001. Who would be better to reclaim LDP's public support than a scandal-free, reform-oriented, and publicly supported politician?

3.6. Charismatic leadership

It has been argued that Koizumi exercised political leadership.⁵¹ More importantly, Koizumi's popularity has been explained (partly) by his charisma.⁵² For instance - more concretely - Peng Er Lam argues that: "The stunning electoral success of the LDP in the 2005 Lower House Election due to the *personal charisma* of Koizumi Jun'ichirô merely masked the organizational decline of the LDP"⁵³ and that Koizumi, as a prime minister, was "photogenic, articulate, daring, decisive, and principled on policies."⁵⁴ Indeed, in the literature on Koizumi, charisma as an explanatory factor has often been understood as an individual and personal possession – his hairstyle, straightforward way of speaking, gestures, good looks, etc. Combined with his anti-status quo position, critique of politics-as-usual and conflict-orientation, Koizumi has been seen as a 'maverick' – an individualist and rebel (*henjin* in Japanese, translates to 'weirdo' or 'eccentric').

But *charisma* as a sociological concept has a wider and slightly different definition. As part of his extensive analyses of modernity, rationalization and bureaucratization, the classical sociologist Max Weber presented three pure forms of legitimate forms of leadership/authority/rule (*Herrschaft*).⁵⁵ In addition to the legal and traditional rule, Weber argues that charismatic rule is a pure and legitimate basis for leadership: "Charismatic authority is based on the belief in the prophet and the acknowledgment (anerkennung) which the charismatic warrior hero, the hero of the streets or the demagogue obtains, but it also collapses together with that belief."⁵⁶ Indeed, the charismatic leader is *extraordinary* – 'das ewig Neue' (the eternally new)⁵⁷ – but with the downside that the fate of the leader was to lose his/her charismatic power.⁵⁸ Furthermore, "[t]he leader is obeyed exclusively for his purely personal, non-everyday qualities and not for his legal position or traditional honour"⁵⁹ and "[m]en do not obey him by virtue of tradition or statute, but because they believe in him... The devotion of his disciples, his followers, his personal party friends is oriented to his person and to its qualities."⁶⁰ For Weber, charisma is: "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which

⁵¹ Gaunder, 2007; Kabashima and Gill, 2010; Shinoda, 2007, etc.

⁵² Krauss and Pekkanen, 2010; Park and Vogel, 2007; Envall, 2008a; 2008b; Stockwin, 2007; Lam in Lye and Hofmeister, 2011; Oka, 2011, p. 126; Christensen, 2006. Indirectly, these authors also argue for Koizumi's charisma: Green, 2009; Kaihara, 2010.

⁵³ Lam in Lye and Hofmeister, 2011, p. 135. My italics.

⁵⁴ Lam in Lye and Hofmeister, 2011, p. 153.

⁵⁵ Weber, 1947; 1978; 1988; 1992; 2004.

⁵⁶ Weber, 2004, p. 140.

⁵⁷ Weber, 1988, p. 483.

⁵⁸ Adair-Toteff, 2005, p. 198.

⁵⁹ Weber, 2004, p. 139.

⁶⁰ Weber, 1992.

he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities.”⁶¹ The charismatic leader is “regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader.”⁶²

Contrary to the commonly applied notions of charisma and rule, Weber defines leadership/rule as social relationships, i.e. the relationship between the leader and the followers. Fundamental to charismatic authority are the beliefs of the followers on their leader. This type of leadership requires “the recognition on the part of those subject to authority”.⁶³ Charisma and thus also charismatic leadership is a personal, temporary and indeed irrational social phenomenon based on the common belief (among followers) that the leader possesses ‘supernatural’, ‘superhuman’ or ‘exceptional’ qualities: the charismatic appeal is sustained only as long people perceive him/her as successful.⁶⁴

On the other hand, the literature has been right – in one sense - when it points to the fact that when Koizumi resigned, Abe, Fukuda and Aso did not possess the charisma of Koizumi – and thus they were not able to sustain similar political momentum. Unlike legal and traditional rule, the transfer of charismatic leadership is quite challenging.⁶⁵ But the one-dimensional understanding of charisma is not sufficient to grasp the sociological concept of charisma – the voters, the people or the audience must also be taken into consideration. Weber’s dualistic concept of charismatic leadership leads up to an open understanding of the political history. In other words, although Koizumi would have still been a handsome, telegenic, straight-forward politician, he could have lost people’s sympathy, admiration and belief. During his five-year period, he did indeed face considerable resistance and opposition among ordinary Japanese.

For this thesis, it is significant that Weber states that charismatic leadership “always results from unusual, especially political or economic, situations.”⁶⁶ Others have confirmed this notion.⁶⁷ When I, in chapter 6, examine the historical reasons behind the success of Koizumi’s ideology, political practice and rhetoric, I look into the political, economic, cultural and social circumstances of Koizumi’s appearance in the center of Japanese politics. There are indeed valid arguments for a sort of crisis

⁶¹ Weber, 1974, p. 328.

⁶² Weber, 1947, p. 328.

⁶³ Weber, 1947, p. 359.

⁶⁴ Weber, 1988, p. 483.

⁶⁵ Weber (2004) spends several pages outlining the different options for charismatic leadership transfer, but emphasizes the difficulty.

⁶⁶ Weber, 1978, p. 1121.

⁶⁷ “Bendix believes that charisma occurs most frequently during emergencies. (1977, p. 300). Mommson holds that the pure form of charisma always depends on something abnormal (1974, p. 59). Schluchter maintains that when everyday life is radically torn apart, then the situation is ripe for people to seek the charismatic leader, the person with extraordinary capacities or competencies (1988, p. 538).” From Adair-Tetoff, 2005; Higley and Pakulski: “These are situations of crisis or of sudden and unexpected developments that trigger collective excitements, anxieties, and expectations culminating in ‘surrender to heroism’” 2007, p. 5, quoting Weber, 1978, p. 1132.

zeitgeist or *mentality* in the Japanese society in the late 1990s and early 2000s. But how do you acquire such a belief among the electorate?

The most important objection towards a focus on a politician's personality, character, energy, ways of speaking, etc. is that it draws the focus away from what the person actually says and argues. In the case of politics, the worldview or ideology that is argued for is important.

3.7. Media influence?

Another – but related – argument regarding the electoral success of Koizumi is that he managed mass media, and in particular television, to an incomparable degree in Japanese political history. The literature focuses on him as 'telegenic' but also how he (and his advisers, first and foremost Iijima Isao⁶⁸) employed a 'skillful media strategy'.⁶⁹ His appearance in TV programs, in particular wide shows, is put forward as the main explanatory factor behind his high support levels throughout his reign⁷⁰: "... talk and variety show coverage is credited as being one of the reasons that Jun'ichirō Koizumi was elected as LDP president in 2001 and maintained power for so many years, including leading the LDP to a landslide win in the 2005 general election"⁷¹ and "Koizumi succeeded in overriding the Diet through his performance on TV."⁷² Fujitake Akira "cannot imagine his [Koizumi's] prime ministership without the role of TV."⁷³

A slightly more refined argument is made by Kabashima and Gill as they argue that Koizumi did not only have a strategy of appearing often in mass media, but that he applied a conflict-orientation to attract media's attention.⁷⁴ The authors agree that TV played an important role, but add that Koizumi constructed a strategy of 'political populism' "... to increase his exposure in the media and develop a public reputation."⁷⁵ Also, they find that mass media chose to present Koizumi in a favorable light and that the media covered Koizumi to a greater extent than other politicians during the Koizumi period. While they understand Koizumi and the media as a dual relationship - Koizumi used the media consciously *and* the media was receptive to his views - Kabashima and Gill also lack a comprehensive *receiver* perspective. Inherent in any understanding of political communication through media – a sender-medium-receiver interpretation - is the receiver, the audience, the electorate.

Indeed, Koizumi managed mass media particularly well. Some of the appearances were well constructed. One example is his participation in a wide show where he enters the stage with a Queen

⁶⁸ Koizumi's right-hand adviser Iijima Isao is mentioned as the man behind his media strategies. Indeed, in his book *Koizumi kantei hiroku* [Confidential Papers from Koizumi's Cabinet Office], Iijima argues that Koizumi himself was not too interested in the media, but that he had good advisers.

⁶⁹ Taniguchi, 2007, p. 155; Ishizawa, 2002.

⁷⁰ Taniguchi, 2007, p. 157 and p. 161; 2011, p. 80.

⁷¹ Taniguchi, 2011, p. 80.

⁷² Taniguchi, 2007, p. 162.

⁷³ Fujitake, 2002, p. 189, from Taniguchi, 2007, p. 156.

⁷⁴ Kabashima and Gill, 2007; 2010.

⁷⁵ Kabashima and Gill, 2007, p. 96; 2010.

song in the background and rips apart a sheet of paper inscribed *teikô seiryoku* (forces of resistance) – his favorite title for his opponents in the LDP and the bureaucracy.⁷⁶ Others fit his emphasis on efforts: 27 May 2001 he congratulates Takanohana, who won the Sumô tournament despite his recent injury, Takanohana: “You endured the pain and hung in there. It was moving. Congratulations!”.⁷⁷

In the time of Koizumi’s initial period as prime minister, he became somewhat a ‘superstar’ in Japanese media – and commodities, such as T-shirts and posters of Koizumi became extremely popular.⁷⁸ Koizumi appeared in traditional mass media, such as the national newspapers and hard television news. However he extended his coverage by participating in soft news⁷⁹, wide shows and talk shows. Also, Koizumi’s interest in sports made him an interview object for sport magazines. As Taniguchi emphasizes, sport journalists are rarely interviewing political subjects and are thus less travelled in the art of critical questions and assessments.⁸⁰ Additionally, the Cabinet Office changed the practice of letting only newspaper journalists enter the building for interviews in the evening to allow tabloids, soft-news magazines and television journalists in as well.⁸¹ Statistics on Koizumi’s presence in the media show indeed that, comparatively speaking, he appeared often and widely in Japanese mass media. As Charteris-Black reminds us when it comes to the space for rhetoric in today’s mass media: “Within the contemporary context, the media have a powerful influence on how persuasion is performed. Speeches are encountered in the domain of the home and therefore the tone and style of delivery need to be intimate and domesticated.”⁸² Through the combination of a direct, personal and involving linguistic strategy and mass media’s influx into people’s homes, Koizumi was able to convey his messages into the most private space of ordinary people.

While Kabashima and Gill argue that Koizumi applied a strategy to reach out to many different mass media channels, such as wide shows, soft news, sport programs, and that the media did indeed provide more space for Koizumi’s actions, behavior and speeches than the other candidates, the authors do not examine more closely why Koizumi caught the audience’s attention. Can any beliefs be popular in Japan if the spokesman is ‘telegenic’, applies smart media strategies and the media covers the politician extensively? I do not think so. It is not like ‘anything goes’ in the world of politics. Also, these factors – sender-medium-receiver - are interrelated: the sender may need to be ‘telegenic’ but it is also necessary with a message; the medium itself is not only responsive to the sender’s way of being and message but also what the market wants, i.e. the resonance among people; the audience - the

⁷⁶ Taniguchi, 2011, p. 69. Kabashima and Gill, 2007, pp. 106-07.

⁷⁷ Quoted from Taniguchi, 2007, p. 155.

⁷⁸ *The Economist*, 28 June, 2001: <http://www.economist.com/node/679762>. Retrieved 06.02.12.

⁷⁹ Short explanation between hard and soft news.

⁸⁰ Taniguchi, 2007, p. 155.

⁸¹ Kabashima and Gill, 2007, p. 108.

⁸² Charteris-Black, 2006, p. 12.

electorate – may like a person but they like him/her only to the extent that he/she makes (at least partly) statements that they agree upon.

3.8. Linguistics – Koizumi’s speech style and directness

There has been argued that Koizumi’s speech habits contributed to his popularity. Azuma with Tsuji Miyako analyzes the rhetorical style of Koizumi.⁸³ They find that Koizumi’s language in many ways was more colloquial and informal than his predecessors – with his use of the nominalizer ‘no’ instead of ‘koto’⁸⁴, no use of the ‘super politeness’ of polite forms in embedded sentences.⁸⁵ Moreover, Koizumi used emblematic expressions (short slogans), unplanned (and indeed informal) speaking - as compared to the planned, formal form of political speeches and colloquial Japanese – with very little use of Sino-Japanese words.⁸⁶ Koizumi “often chooses native Japanese words (*wago*) or everyday conversational Japanese instead of Sino-Japanese words. Speaking lively to the public in “their” language is a strategy, which creates a sense of closeness and shared togetherness with the public.”⁸⁷ One may suggest that there exist a *linguistic* strategy behind Koizumi’s way of speaking as Azuma and Tsuji suggest that the words, formality, distance and directness that characterize one’s language is a matter of choice. Regardless of the *rationality* behind the political language used, it is a fact – along the argument on language as a *strategy* – that Japanese people are trained in adjusting their language to the social context, dependent on the relative status, familiarity, purpose and mood of the conversation. I will not develop further these arguments nor discuss whether their claims are correct. Instead, I have chosen to show that these arguments exist in the literature on rhetoric in Japanese politics. It enables me to show that there exist relationships between how a politician speaks (linguistically), rhetoric and political ideology.

Another related point is related to the political use of *tatemae* and *honne*. Ofer Feldman has a convincing argument that the separation between *tatemae* and *honne* also applies in the world of political language. While *tatemae* is the formal, ‘presented truth’ – the *oyake* (public, formal, ceremonial), *honne* refers to the ‘honest feeling’, the *ura* (‘actual, genuine intent’).⁸⁸ Feldman states that “[t]he two concepts of *honne* and *tatemae* reflect different attitudes of a person conversing on a given issue.” In the political realm, politicians tend to stick to *tatemae* since this it “is not socially

⁸³ Azuma and Tsuji in Khanittanan and Sidwell, 2004.

⁸⁴ Maynard (1997) argues that the nominalizer ‘no’ represents ‘proximal framing’ with immediacy involved as compared to ‘koto’ that represents ‘distal framing’, contributing to distance-making. Koizumi used ‘koto’ in situations where involvement and personal opinions were less important.

⁸⁵ Mori for instance uses the polite *masu*-form in embedded clauses in 66 percent of his speeches (as well as in the ending of the sentences).

⁸⁶ On Sino-Japanese words, Azuma and Tsuji argue that: “Generally, Japanese politicians tend to use Sino-Japanese words in their speech so that they conform to the socially prescribed image of traditional, educated and intellectual statesmen. However, the excessive use of Sino-Japanese words has the effect of creating a psychological distance between politicians and the public.” Azuma and Tsuji in Khanittanan and Sidwell, 2004, p. 31.

⁸⁷ Azuma and Tsuji in Khanittanan and Sidwell, 2004, p. 32.

⁸⁸ Feldman in Feldman and De Landtsheer, 1998, p. 43.

acceptable to express personal feelings or opinions in a public forum, nor is it appropriate to interject personal opinions in what is regarded as public affairs.”⁸⁹ Also, indirect, superficial and non-evaluative statements are usual among Japanese politicians because “[t]o prevent embarrassment, public debate, and criticism over what they might say, high-level Diet members and other public officials often conceal to the public their real thoughts and opinions.”⁹⁰ He proceeds by drawing a link between the back-door consensus political system of Japan and *tatema* statements on politics in the public: fear of evoking disturbance to the exclusive, back-door, consensus decision-making processes, politicians refrain from making personal and direct statements. Feldman argues that what appears as ‘slip of tongue’ rather is the presence of *honne* in media statements. Last, following Takase, Feldman shows that the prime ministers have attempted to direct the political focus towards their own goals through the use of political slogans: Ikeda Hayato’s (1960-64) *shotoku baizo keikaku* (income-doubling plan), Tanaka’s (1972-74) *Nippon retto kaizoron* (remodeling the Japanese archipelago), Nakasone’s (1982-87) *senjo seiji no sokessan to kokusai kokka nippon* (the final settlement of postwar politics and the internationalization of Japan). Hashimoto did also have a reform-oriented slogan *kaikaku to sôzô* (reform and creation). Such slogans were also utilized extensively by Koizumi. However, as the examples show, the slogans are rather abstract. But I find Koizumi’s slogans to be more direct. For instance, *seiiki kôzô kaikaku* [structural reforms without sacred cows] was not abstract. The reforms were known and, given Koizumi’s constant attack on the Japanese political economy, and the ‘iron triangle’ of politicians, bureaucrats and vested interests, there was no doubt who Koizumi termed *seiiki*.⁹¹

3.9. The ideologies of the Koizumi reign

I have now presented Koizumi’s political history, his main political interests and his placement in the Japanese political landscape. In addition, I have visited arguments that focus on charismatic leadership, the role of media and linguistic features of Japanese politics. These are important explanatory factors behind Koizumi’s popularity, but I question whether these factors are enough to explain why Koizumi became popular and retained relatively high support levels during his time as Japanese prime minister.

I believe that the ideology and the political practice of Koizumi need to be assessed to provide the fuller picture of the reasons behind such high resonance among ordinary Japanese. Charismatic leadership is always helpful for leading an anti-status quo political party or movement, but constitutes, at best, only a necessary factor - not sufficient - to explain his support. Concerning media exposure, it is not clear whether the massive media focus on Koizumi was driven by supply or demand factors. Probably, the answer is somewhat balanced. First, Koizumi (and his advisors and supporters)

⁸⁹ Feldman in Feldman and De Landtsheer, 1998, p. 44.

⁹⁰ Feldman in Feldman and De Landtsheer, 1998, p. 52.

⁹¹ More on Japanese political economy and the ‘iron triangle’ in Chapter 4 Neoliberalism in Japanese.

aggressively sought exposure in established as well as new media channels. Second, media established – or at least – contributed to the underdog image because mass media itself seeks popular stories, but also may have found Koizumi a preferable candidate in light of the 1990s political turmoil. Finally, Koizumi's fight against factions, status-quo politics and his structural reform in favor of economic revival provoked interest among readers and watchers. To understand why, we can either focus on the *form* – which is often done in the literature – or we can analyze the content of his political project. That is what I do in this thesis.

4 The politics of structural reforms: Neoliberalism in Japanese

At the same time that he inaugurated his Cabinet in 2001, Koizumi proposed a large structural reform plan. Koizumi sought to reform the Japanese economy and society. The plans included reform of the government, of public corporations, of the financial sector, and of the private sector. With Koizumi as the prime minister, Japanese politics experienced a focused and long-term reform. Even after he resigned in August 2006, the Koizumi structural reforms continued to be part of the political debate and policy implementation process in Japan.

Since Koizumi was a politician with libertarian beliefs in human beings and society, it was wonder why he proposed to restructure the Japanese society and economy. A libertarian understanding of humans – with its emphasis on individual freedom – led to a neoliberal attitude toward the Japanese state and markets. Many scholars have viewed the structural reforms as neoliberal.⁹² Koizumi's structural reforms were concerned with shrinking the size of the government, reducing waste in the public sector, increasing competition in the public and private sector and dealing with the existence of substantial amounts of 'bad debt'. Two of the most important policy proposals were Koizumi's attempts to privatize the public highway companies and the postal services. He also sought to deregulate the universities, to cut subsidies to agriculture and to reform the pension and health system. The target was threefold: increase the role of market forces, reduce public spending and limit the power of the central government.

The structural reform plans met fierce resistance, not only from other parties and affected organizations and industries, but in particular, from LDP politicians affiliated with particular policy fields – tribal politicians (*zoku seijika*). The postal services and public road companies constituted, in fact, the foundation of LDP's support in rural Japan, traditionally a strong support base for the LDP.⁹³ Koizumi's structural reforms challenged the very roots of the political establishment in Japan.

The climax of the implementation of structural reform took place when Koizumi called for a snap election in August 2005. Due to major opposition within both the LDP and the Diet, Koizumi dissolved the Lower House to acquire enough votes to get the privatization of the postal services through. Although the election involved large intra-party competition, Koizumi and his followers won a landslide victory in the election. The result, 296 seats out of 480 seats, was among the best in postwar Japanese politics for the LDP. Koizumi could then continue his reform program with strong support in the parliament.

Not all of Koizumi's reforms were implemented. Some were changed to meet compromises made with the LDP anti-reformists and the opposition parties as well as the coalition parties. But Koizumi's structural reform program was successful to the extent that he remained a popular politician

⁹² Kabashima and Gill, 2010; McCormack, 2007; Shinoda, 2007; Ôtake, 2003; 2006.

⁹³ Ôtake, 2006, p. 65.

and the undefeated leader of the LDP for over five years. To stay in power for this long without much formal support in the LDP, but with high support in the media and among the electorate, was somewhat of an achievement.

4.1 Overview of the chapter

In this chapter, I look into Koizumi's structural reforms. First, I discuss his personal beliefs on humans, society and the state as is expressed in the rather personal confessions of his blog. Also, I look into the rhetoric of Koizumi's political campaigns. To understand the content of neoliberalism as an ideology, I define the concept and examine the development of neoliberal politics in the world in general but with a closer look at Japan. The reform project consists of a variety of proposals targeted at different sectors and with different structural implications. To enhance the analytical insight, I therefore categorize the structural reforms, investigate the content and targets of the policy proposals and discuss the reform proposals.

I argue that Koizumi's structural reforms in general were neoliberal, and as such, Koizumi was the third neoliberal successful reformer in Japan with Nakasone and Hashimoto as the major predecessors. Although neoliberal reform attempts are found in nearly any Western country the last 20-30 years, Koizumi's reform program was pointed towards particular Japanese structures. Thus, Japanese neoliberalism is at the same time belonging to an ideology found in many other countries, but the practical expression was Japanese.

4.2 Koizumi – a libertarian

Koizumi was a known postal privatization protagonist. In the LDP presidential campaigns in 1995 and 1998, Koizumi had argued for splitting the postal services into bank, insurance and mail delivery services and let the private sector take care of the different businesses.⁹⁴ As a fundament for his privatization eagerness was a belief in a society that should provide freedom and support the development of the skills and abilities of each individual. The individual would at the same time, however, have responsibility for utilizing the opportunities and be rewarded according to efforts and results. With this belief in humans and society, Koizumi articulated a critical view on the role of the Japanese state, public corporations, the central government (bureaucracy) and special interest (highway industry, postal services and agriculture).

In his weekly magazine (blog), Koizumi wrote on different topics from domestic politics and foreign affairs - apparently those topics that concerned him at the time. The blog provides the most personal expressions of his ideological views. Although a libertarian approach to humans and society shines through in many of his letters, Koizumi's blog on social inequality offers the most explicit arguments for a focus on individual opportunities and use of abilities:

⁹⁴ Mulgan in Schoppa, 2011; Curtis, 1999.

‘In any country, in any period, I believe it has been a degree of inequality. How can we make a country with vigor? Because it is so that every individual holds different abilities, how can we make the best use of these abilities [*chikara*]? I think that at the same time as we recognize individual difference and diversity, it is desirable to create a society where one can display creative originality [*sōikuzō*] and stimulate efforts to increase each person’s abilities and a society where efforts are rewarded. Isn’t it so that, fundamentally, it is important in any time for businesses, countries, communities and also individuals to cheer oneself and act upon a spirit of ‘self-help and self-control’ [*jijo to jiritsu*] where ‘a spirit of helping oneself’ [*mizukara wo tasukeru seishin*] means to do yourself what is for you to do, and ‘a spirit of controlling oneself’ [*mizukara wo rissuru seishin*] means to not cause troubles for others?’⁹⁵

Individuals have different skills and abilities. For Koizumi, individuals should be stimulated to develop their skills and be rewarded for effort. Then, there will be a variety of outcomes according to effort and skills. Diverse outcome is not bad per se. Inequality is not what matters, as long as it is just. Instead of a focus on outcome-inequality, Koizumi suggests to center attention on how to make everyone spend their skills and abilities to actualize their potential. This will improve the situation for individuals, as well as businesses, communities and Japan. If inequality stems from different aspirations, dreams and efforts, then this inequality is not a political issue anymore. It is rather a sign of diversity. Such a focus on freedom and individual effort has implications for his political views.

Koizumi continues by stating that:

‘As I try to progress with the reforms, there may be people that are satisfied with the current situation, and there may be people that are used to the current situation that says ‘maintaining the current situation is good’, but how can we make a society that offers lots of chances to actualize the potentiality one holds? That is why I pursue reform. I believe that the reforms to create a society that is able to challenge and where one does not become crushed after a failure or two, even for those who has failed. Indeed, ‘failure is the origin of success’, I believe.’⁹⁶

Koizumi’s structural reforms are the answer to how to create an improved society. For Koizumi, a situation where people’s skills are nourished and efforts rewarded provides both better outcomes for the individual but also for businesses, communities and the country.

But what about those who do not have the skills? For instance, the anti-reformist per se, Kamei Shizuka, claims that Koizumi desired a *jakuniku kyōshoku* [engl.: survival of the fittest; lit.: the weak meat is the feast of the strong] society.⁹⁷ Koizumi was, however, not unaware of the downside of a focus on individual skills and efforts: “At the same time, for those who cannot make it only with their own abilities, even how hard they try, how can we together help them? Maybe public institutions [should] lend a helping hand? This is [an] important [issue].”⁹⁸ There is indeed space for the public, for the government or for the communities in Koizumi’s libertarianism. But the emphasis is on the individual.

Ōtake Hideo suggests that Koizumi, in contrast to Nakasone Yasuhiro and Ozawa Ichirō, did not derive his political reforms from ‘systematic ideological thought’ but instead that his project developed through a thorough understanding of a ‘fiscal crisis’ and his ‘critical attitudes’ towards other LDP

⁹⁵ Koizumi weekly E-magazine, 2 March 2006.

⁹⁶ Koizumi weekly E-magazine, 2 March 2006.

⁹⁷ Kamei, 2003, p. 14.

⁹⁸ Koizumi weekly E-magazine, 2 March 2006.

politicians and bureaucrats.⁹⁹ Ôtake concludes that “his reform projects hardly reflected the philosophy of neoliberalism.”¹⁰⁰ First of all, in the realm of politics, I do not believe ideological viewpoints require the same degree of system thinking as in the realm of philosophy. Second, to conclude that Koizumi’s reforms lacked the neoliberal ideology is a failure to acknowledge the justifications for the reforms: government is inefficient, politicians are corrupt and the private sector is able to provide the same, or even improved, services. Also, I believe it is a miscalculation of the importance of the underlying view on humans, society and government. When it comes to economic relations, individual responsibility and human opportunities in the Japanese society, Koizumi was an outspoken libertarian, which is a rather unusual ideological point of departure for a Japanese politician. When Koizumi’s utterances, written statements and policy recommendations are examined, I find that his neoliberal ideology is in accordance with his libertarian views on human beings, society and government.

4.3 Neoliberalism – a definition and its history

In this thesis I am interested in neoliberalism as an ideology of the roles of Government and the Market, the relationship between them and the implicit human understanding of the ideology.¹⁰¹

Neoliberalism is an ideology that proposes to submit human action, human interaction and human opportunities to the doctrines of the free market. The market forces will, according to neoliberalism, ensure that human potential and skills are used in an efficient manner. The free market and the market forces ensure not only an efficient allocation in the economy - such a social organization contributes to people’s happiness as they can freely choose their lives. This view is supported by David Harvey as he argues that:

‘Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong property rights, free markets, and free trade.’¹⁰²

In neoliberalism, freedom is defined *negatively*, as the lack of government invasion, control and regulation. Harvey continues by explaining the role of government in neoliberalism:

‘State interventions in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum because, according to the theory, the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitably distort and bias state interventions (particularly in democracies) for their own benefit.’¹⁰³

Given private property, free trade and the maintenance of law, we find on the one hand, in neoliberalism, little or no space for government. Freedom, the ability to exercise creativity and entrepreneurial skills will, according to neoliberalism, thrive in an environment with less (or no) government. Analytically, this ‘less government’-doctrine holds for a larger space for individual

⁹⁹ Ôtake in Mizuno and Phongpaichit, 2009, p. 212.

¹⁰⁰ Ôtake in Mizuno and Phongpaichit, 2009, p. 212.

¹⁰¹ Other prominent interpretations of ‘neoliberalism’ include for instance Michel Foucault’s theories of neoliberalism as a type of governmentability, i.e. how the government structure and shape the *subject*. I do not intend to elaborate further on the plurality of *neoliberalism* and the relation between different understandings.

¹⁰² Harvey, 2005, p. 2

¹⁰³ Harvey, 2005, p. 2

decision-making as well as a larger role and more markets for the ‘private’ sector. Thus, while neoliberal ideology implies a larger role for market forces in the economy, the political implication of neoliberalism is a government with less power and fewer areas of responsibility. On the other hand, neoliberalism is actually proposing a central role for the government, in the sense that the government provides; the necessary institutional framework for protecting strong private property rights, free markets and free trade; government guarantees the opportunities for private initiative in nearly all areas of the social world; government must seek to open up markets that do not yet exist; and finally, but most importantly, when markets are created, the government is supposed to retreat.¹⁰⁴ Hence, while neoliberalism is an ideology of politics with a non-political ideal, the ideology bases its prescription for change on a strong, competent and reform-able government.

Richard Peet and Elaine Hartwick present in *Theories of Development* a useful distinction of the sources behind neoliberal economics. First, the monetarist economics of Milton Friedman, with the Chicago School in the U.S. and Institute of Economic Affairs in the U.K. as the main institutions, argued that “macroeconomic problems like inflation and indebtedness derived from excessive government spending driving up the quantity of money circulating in a society”.¹⁰⁵ Second, the influence from new classical liberalism of economists such as Friedrich Hayek, who claimed that socialism and Keynesianism contribute only negatively to economic and social development, and that instead a society must turn towards classical liberalist ideas from Adam Smith and David Ricardo.¹⁰⁶ Third, Peet and Hartwick find a source of neoliberalism in “conservative political and economic ideas glorifying laissez-faire and rugged individualism”.¹⁰⁷ He mentions Ayn Rand and the American Heritage Foundation as examples of actors embracing such ideas.¹⁰⁸ Philosopher Arne Johan Vetlesen points to the fact that in the 1940s and 50s, neoliberalism was an outsider ideology, far from the mainstream thinking on politics, governance and capitalism.¹⁰⁹ Through the 1970s, however, and especially in the years between 1978-80, neoliberalism became a forceful ideology in shaping society in Western countries, including China (Reagan, Thatcher, Xiaoping).

The trigger for the introduction of neoliberalism in politics was, according to Peet and Hartwick, the economic crisis of the 1970s, the end of the Bretton Woods, soaring oil prices and stagflation.¹¹⁰ The economic planning of Keynesianism, the rise of the welfare state in the postwar years, the tight government control of capital, industries and employment were reform targets for neoliberal ideologues. Strong government, Keynesianism and the welfare state were developed as a response to

¹⁰⁴ Vetlesen, 2010, pp. 8-9.

¹⁰⁵ Peet and Hartwick, 1999, p. 49

¹⁰⁶ Peet and Hartwick, 1999, p. 49.

¹⁰⁷ Peet and Hartwick, 1999, p. 49.

¹⁰⁸ Peet and Hartwick, 1999, p. 49.

¹⁰⁹ Vetlesen, 2010.

¹¹⁰ Peet, 1999, p. 49

the Big Depression of the 1930s and further developed in the postwar period. The class compromise between organized labor and employers, industrialization and a relatively egalitarian distribution of the rising living standards mark these developments. Indeed, the postwar Strong Government was a reaction to classical economic liberalism's inability to provide adequate reactions to the economic and political misery of the Great Depression. The pendulum swung however again to the other side as neoliberalism was an ideological attack on the political, economic and social system that

Although the Chicago school influenced the Pinochet government in Chile in the 1970s, the major political breakthrough of neoliberal ideology was the victory of the Thatcher government in the U.K. in 1979 and the Reagan Administration in the U.S. in 1980. Also, the Deng Xiaoping government in China turned the politics towards neoliberalism. Through the 1980s, neoliberal ideology was visible in politics and policies across the Western world. Privatization, deregulation and liberalization of the government and the economy have been on the agenda since the early 1980s. Industries that used to be core public responsibility under Strong Government – communications, infrastructure, energy among others – were now targets of privatization, but privatization took also place in the provision of health, long-term care and education services. Furthermore, the organization of labor in unions was seen as an obstacle to an economy driven by market forces solely.¹¹¹ Government, with its bureaucracy, was itself the object of reform as the neoliberals sought to shrink the size of the government workforce and govern more efficiently.

Lastly, in Japan, the neoliberal idea of shaping public institutions to obey to the capitalist logic of the business world: New Public Management (NPM). As a side-specie of neoliberalism, NPM is the idea or theory of laying the government and in particular public welfare service production under the same logics as the business world: increasing efficiency, making patients into consumers, implementation of incentive structures, establishing corporate governance with less control from democratic institutions and more power over the decision-making, etc. Education institutions, health care and long-term care services, etc. have all across the Western world experienced reforms of NPM the last 20-30 years. Japan is not an exception.

4.4 The history of neoliberal reforms in Japan: Koizumi as the third wave

In the early 1980s, neoliberal ideology made its breakthrough in Japanese politics. Although apparent from the late 1970s, it was during the years of the Nakasone Cabinet (1982-87) that neoliberal administrative reforms were pursued with political conviction. From the think-tank for neoliberal reforms, The Provisional Commission for Administrative Reform (*Rinji Gyôsei Chôsa Kai*), with the honorary president of *Keidanren*¹¹² as the chairman, prime minister Nakasone received not only policy

¹¹¹ The PATCO strike, where President Reagan used the chance to fire over 12,000 federal air traffic controllers are symptomatic in this sense.

¹¹² Japan Federation of Economic Organizations, the main employer's organization in Japan.

recommendations, but also the required credentials to move towards reforms.¹¹³ The reform suggestions from the Commission were concerned with reduction of public servants and public spending, especially in the fields of health, pension and education, privatization of public corporations, rationalization of government, and reallocation of funds from central to local government.¹¹⁴ The Nakasone Cabinet followed up the neoliberal suggestions and privatized the National Railways, the Nippon Telephone and Telegraph and the Monopoly Corporation, reformed the health care and the pension system and liberalized the education system.¹¹⁵

The neoliberal reform efforts did not end with the Nakasone Cabinet. Despite an active reform discourse up until the mid-1990s, however, the reform implementation was minor in scale. For instance, Prime Minister Hosokawa, leading the seven-party coalition that came to power in 1993 when the LDP lost its forty year old majority in the Lower House, pledged himself to a neoliberal reform program.¹¹⁶ The cabinet did not, however, pursue reform successfully, except by changing the electoral system from majority to single-member districts. With the inauguration of the Hashimoto Cabinet in 1996, a second wave of neoliberal reforms took place in Japan. Reduction of the bureaucracy size and number of ministries, reintroduction of fiscal responsibility, health and pension reforms, deregulation and privatization, liberalization of the financial sector, and education reforms were again high on the political agenda during the Hashimoto era.¹¹⁷ The Hashimoto Cabinet was rather short-lived, however, and, according to Hirashima Kenji, the reform implementation was confined to a financial sector deregulation in accordance with views of the bureaucrats in the Ministry of Finance. Hashimoto was also able to reform the political decision-making processes in Japan. Shinoda Tomohito argues that the administrative reforms of the Hashimoto Cabinet restructured the *Kantei*, the Cabinet secretariat for the Japanese prime minister, which supported the prime minister's ability to play a larger role in Japanese domestic and foreign politics.¹¹⁸

Koizumi's structural reform project can be seen as the third wave of neoliberal reform projects in Japan.¹¹⁹ Although not all the reforms proposed were new, the scope and scale of Koizumi's reform project were unprecedented in Japanese politics. What made Koizumi special compared to the former cabinets was, according to Yoshida Toru, the slimming of government "represented by restraints on public debt, compression of public corporation budgets, reform of special corporations, and the privatization of public road corporations and the postal service".¹²⁰ In Kawabata's analysis of reform in Japan, Koizumi represents yet another ardent reformer. In contrast to Nakasone who focused on

¹¹³ Kumon, 1984.

¹¹⁴ Kumon, 1984.

¹¹⁵ Ôtake, 1999, p. 372.

¹¹⁶ Hirashima, 2004, p. 42.

¹¹⁷ Ôtake, 1999.

¹¹⁸ Shinoda, 2007, for instance p. 11.

¹¹⁹ Hirashima, 2004; Yoshida, 2011, p. 55; Kawabata, 2006.

¹²⁰ Yoshida, 2011, p. 55.

privatization of public railroad and telecommunication corporations and Hashimoto's government reforms, however, Koizumi struggled for reform of postal services and highway corporations.¹²¹ To Alisa Gaunder, Koizumi was willing to take risks, he had a clearly formulated vision of his reforms and he was committed to his cause and as such, he was similar to other reformists in Japanese politics, for instance Ozawa and Prime Minister Miki xxx (199x-9x). Koizumi, however, operated in a new institutional environment, with electoral reform (1994), Cabinet reform (1999) and government reform (2001).¹²² Also, Koizumi was willing to stretch his constitutional potential the farthest, with his actualization of the threat to dissolve the Lower House in 1995 if the postal reform did not pass the Upper House.¹²³

Regarding public infrastructure and communications, Koizumi emphasized the need for the Japanese government to privatize the postal service and the public road companies. This is in line with the privatization of the railroad company and other monopolistic corporations conducted by the Nakasone Cabinet. But the legitimization differed between Koizumi and Nakasone. Both Koizumi and Nakasone emphasized the need for a small and efficient government as well as letting market forces handle production of goods and services. But for Nakasone, the railroad privatization, for instance, was based upon a clash with the militant railroad unions.¹²⁴ As part of the global neoliberal reform movements in the 1980s, labor unions were viewed as protecting special interests, as obstacles to economic growth and as an explicit enemy to the reform government. In Japan, Nakasone provided a message to the public that the privatization of the national railroad was a means to reduce the negative influence of the railroad labor unions. Koizumi, on the other hand, attacked instead the infamous relationship between politicians, bureaucrats and protected industries, especially the construction, highway and postal industries. Koizumi presented the need for separating the decision-making on the construction of roads from the savings in Japan Post as people's savings financed the highway building. The legitimization of the reforms was founded on Koizumi's attempt to relieve Japanese taxpayers, postal savers and society from the costs of large-scaled uneconomic infrastructure programs, to reduce the government's massive debt problem and to decrease the central government's control of Japanese economy and society.

4.5 The structural reforms

Koizumi proposed to reform politics and economy by privatizing public corporations, reforming the tax system, eliminating the budget deficits, removing subsidies, and increasing the responsibility of local and regional government on the expense of central government. Koizumi argued that the

¹²¹ Kawabata, 2006.

¹²² Gaunder, 2007, p. 123.

¹²³ Gaunder, 2007, p. 130.

¹²⁴ Ôtake, 2006, p. 12-16.

government in Japan needed to be smaller and that governance as such was an obstacle to achieving a healthier economic situation. Koizumi emphasized to “leave to the private sector what it can do”, but also to “leave to the districts what they can do”.¹²⁵ Instead, local authorities and public institutions themselves were to increase the capacity to make their own decisions. Since most of his political campaigns and Koizumi’s public appearance belong in chapter 5, I pay less attention to the rhetoric in this chapter. But it is important to note that in the overall ideology of right-wing populism, neoliberalism functioned as a means to reduce the power of the political elite - politicians and bureaucrats - on Japanese people’s everyday life as well as an answer to the libertarian demand for increased individual freedom and individual rewards for efforts and results.

It was not a small program of reforms that the Koizumi Cabinet attempted to introduce in Japan. Rather, Koizumi sought to reform many areas at the same time. I have separated them into four categories: i) reform of protected industries, ii) reform of the Japanese economy, iii) reform of public welfare, and iv) reform of local government. I will present the reforms and place them in a politico-historical context.

Reform of protected industries

Perhaps the most emphasized area for reforms, Koizumi and his supporters sought to rid Japan of protected industries. The purpose was to destroy the ties between politicians, bureaucrats and protected industries and to let prices, profits and employment levels be decided by market forces instead of the political establishment in cooperation with business organizations and corporations.

One of the most important themes in the Koizumi structural reform project was the attempt to privatize special public corporations which included highway companies, financial corporations as well as Postal Services Agency (PSA).

During the first few years, the privatization or abolition of the highway corporations occupied much political attention. These corporations not only constructed roads all along Japan but also exercised tight connections to the companies dealing with parking lots, shopping malls and restaurants that were placed along these roads.¹²⁶ The highway companies were intrinsically sewn into the political economy of Japan by the 2000s. The massive financing of infrastructure construction outside the big cities was a means to increase political support for the LDP. By providing construction tasks for local firms and employment opportunities, the political support for LDP politicians was secured. But another reason for large infrastructure investments in the 1990s was the fact that the highway construction became an important part of the Keynesian measures against the negative business cycle in the

¹²⁵ Koizumi, 2005.

¹²⁶ Ôtake, 2006.

Japanese economy in the aftermath of the bubble crash.¹²⁷ But the fiscal measures to make the Japanese economy return to its growth track have not been successful, at least not in the sense to make Japan experience high growth rates again.

With comparatively high expenditures on roads¹²⁸, the construction expenditures developed to be seen as a problem for the balancing of the Japanese government's budgets. The politicians' ability to acquire the necessary financing of the road building was provided by the PSA, one of the world largest financial institutions and the main savings institution for Japanese people. Koizumi reduced the spending on road construction by 10 per cent annually.¹²⁹

Ever since his days as Minister of Postal Services, Telecommunications and Infrastructure in the early 1990s, Koizumi had been an advocate for the privatization of the PSA. Constituting the main savings institution for ordinary Japanese people, the PSA was one of the largest financial institutions in the world.¹³⁰ The Koizumi Cabinet sought to split the PSA into three companies: each with the responsibility for mail services, savings and insurance respectively. Emphasizing the need for reform from an early stage, the Koizumi Cabinet began the policy process in 2003. Reform of the PSA developed to be the most important conflict in Japanese politics in 2005. Koizumi was unsatisfied with the low support his privatization plan received in the Parliament and used his constitutional ability to call a new election. The 2005 election was by far an election of the privatization of the PSA. With the massive support that the LDP received in the election, the Koizumi Cabinet could push the reform agenda further into realization.

Not even agriculture was saved from the reform agenda of Koizumi. Structural reform of the agricultural sector included a consideration of changing the equal support for all farmers (*ichiritsu nôsei*) to direct payment to large-scale and full-time "core farming entities". The largest effort, however, was made towards incorporating agriculture into the agenda of Free Trade Agreements (FTA). The target was ultimately to strengthen the competitiveness of the agricultural sector vis-à-vis an efficient globalized food market.¹³¹ Among the neoliberal reformist politicians, the agricultural sector was seen as inefficient, and the government was seen as contributing with competition regulation, protection of domestic production and wasteful subsidy incentives. Not only was the Koizumi Cabinet seeking to reduce public spending, but the agriculture reforms are seen in relation to global free trade (which Japan supports in other areas) and the project of becoming more attached to the East Asian countries. Structural reform of the agricultural sector was thus seen as necessary for

¹²⁷ In 1990, the Tokyo stock market crashed. Several years later, in 1995, the property market followed the stock prices. The stock and property prices have never returned to the bubble values.

¹²⁸ Lam in Lye and Hofmeister (2010, p. 151): "Before the Koizumi Cabinet, Japan under the LDP had the highest percentage of GDP committed to public works among the G7 countries."

¹²⁹ Lam in Lye and Hofmeister, 2010, p. 151.

¹³⁰ Kawabata, 2006, p. 120.

¹³¹ Mulgan, 2005.

increased efficiency of the Japanese economy both domestically and internationally. However, the reform met strong resistance, especially from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery (MAFF).¹³² Additionally, the *nôsei zoku* (agricultural politics tribe), other LDP politicians and farmer organizations (among them *nôkyô*) opposed the ‘marketization’ of the agriculture sector. In cooperation with the Koizumi Cabinet’s minister of MAFF, the ministry made their own initiatives. They approved the extension of a leasing system where private companies could rent land, but did not recognize that companies could own private land.¹³³ Also, while subsidies were cut and public revenue income was transferred to local government, the subsidy system per se remained in the hands of MAFF. The reform process showed that the bureaucracy is not always a political block per se. The MAFF international initiatives were in conflict with the policy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI).¹³⁴ The ministries dealing mainly with industry and economics were less reluctant to see neoliberal reforms take place. But as Aurelia George Mulgan states in her analysis of Koizumi reform’s impact on the agricultural sector, “the basic patterns of agricultural power and policymaking consistent with the “old” system have not yet altered sufficiently to allow radical reform to take place.”¹³⁵

Reform of the Japanese economy

Even with the main focus on the troublesome relations between politicians, bureaucracy and special interests, Koizumi and his cabinet identified challenges in the regulations and characteristics of the Japanese economy. Indeed, the three most important targets for reform were in this respect i) the financial situation of Japanese banks, ii) corporate governance, and iii) the state of the labor market. The Koizumi Cabinet pushed for reforms in these areas.

A haunting challenge to the Japanese economy in the ‘lost decade’ was the banking sector; on the one side the protection of the bank sector and on the other side the existence of ‘non-performing loans’.¹³⁶ The opening of the bank sector to increased competition has taken place over time. The 1996 ‘big bang’ reforms of the financial sector during the Hashimoto Cabinet provided more competition, lower barriers between banks, securities and insurance companies, and eased regulation on products and fees.¹³⁷ Also, the Japanese government’s guarantee for all deposits was seen as contributing to distortionary incentives for the financial sector. Thus, in March 2002, the Koizumi Cabinet changed the insurance of bank deposits from ‘a blanket guarantee on all banks deposits’ to limit the insurance

¹³² Mulgan, 2005.

¹³³ Mulgan, 2005, p. 289-91.

¹³⁴ Mulgan, 2005.

¹³⁵ Mulgan, 2005, p. 297.

¹³⁶ The term ‘non-performing loan’ refers to a loan where repayments are not being made as originally agreed between the borrower and the lender, and which may never be repaid. Another term – yet not as appropriate – is *bad loan*.

¹³⁷ Partikis, 1998, p. 577.

on deposits above 10 million yen.¹³⁸ With the reforms, Koizumi Cabinet attempted to reduce the state's responsibility for the credibility and health of the Japanese financial sector.

The Koizumi Cabinet sought to eliminate the existence of non-performing loans as well. Since the crash of the bubble economy in 1990/91, Japanese banks had struggled with non-performing loans. These companies often received new credit support to be able to take care of the original loans and interest. This financial practice resulted in banks not taking into calculation their losses, and corporations being haunted by old debt. The size of the problem imposed a structural risk to and was a source of inefficiency in the Japanese economy. Koizumi saw this as a central problem for the Japanese economy, and the reforms sought to increase the financial strength of financial institutions by reducing the number of the institutions, deleting non-performing loans and the purchase of these loans. This area was defined as an area of particular emphasis for the Koizumi Cabinet. By placing Minister of Economic Policy, member of CFPF, and professor in economics at Keio University, Takenaka Heizô, as the responsible person, Koizumi indeed embraced a publicly known person that was seen as having the necessary academic knowledge and authority as well as he lacked the political ties that could hinder a tough approach to the problem. The Takenaka Scheme included measures to appraise the assets and supervise the real equity of the banks, but most importantly, the government established a company, Industrial Revitalization Corporation (IRC) with the responsibility of purchasing bad loans that had a high certainty of being recovered.¹³⁹ According to Iwamoto Yoshiyuki, the Koizumi Cabinet was successful in the sense that over half of the major banks' non-performing loans were deleted by the fiscal year 2005.¹⁴⁰

The Koizumi Cabinet attempted to reform corporate governance, i.e. the way corporations are managed and operated. Ronald Gilson and Curtis Milhaupt argue that "Japan dramatically reformed its corporate governance system in 2002".¹⁴¹ The model of governance introduced was the American model of corporate boards and committees, shareholder value maximization and transparency. While the METI preferred the new model, METI wanted to leave the change of corporate governance open for choice, just because the best option would be chosen in a market economy.¹⁴² Also, the main business organization in Japan, *Keidanren*, with both large, multinational corporations, and small- and medium-sized firms as member companies, desired the ability to choose, due to its members' different interests.¹⁴³ The new regulatory laws were indeed introduced as a choice.

The labor market in Japan has experienced major changes since the fall of the Bubble Economy in the early 1990s. More flexibility regarding employment situations, increased wage differences, and

¹³⁸ Imai, 2006, p. 3436.

¹³⁹ Iwamoto, 2006, pp. 91-103.

¹⁴⁰ Iwamoto, 2006.

¹⁴¹ Gilson and Milhaupt, 2005, p. 344.

¹⁴² Ahmadjian, 2003.

¹⁴³ Ahmadjian, 2003.

an explosion in the use of non-regular workers have been the outcome of globalization, a higher unemployment rate and the fact that “[s]ince the 1990s, increasing flexibility of the labour market has been a policy priority in Japan.”¹⁴⁴ Once Koizumi became prime minister, the cabinet established the Strategic Headquarters for Industrial Revival and Employment Measures as a part of the Cabinet Office. This section was to deal with structural reforms and unemployment.¹⁴⁵ Including advices from CEFPP and proposals from the Council on Labor Policies (CLP), the Koizumi Cabinet reformed different aspects of the Japanese government’s labor market intervention. The Koizumi Cabinet revised the *Dispatched Worker Laws* to enable firms to increase the hire period of non-regular workers from one to three years, also allowing non-regular workers to be hired at industrial production sites.¹⁴⁶ Other occupations have now no limit in the period for being hired as a temporary worker.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, the cabinet reduced the rate and maximum pay of unemployment benefits, mainly for high-paid workers.¹⁴⁸ Also, the ability to receive unemployment benefits is tied to the reason for unemployment (with those unemployed due to bankruptcy in a preferential situation), but the Koizumi Cabinet chose to improve the conditions of unemployment benefits for non-regular workers to that of regular employees. While these policies are welfare-improving for the non-regular workers, the structure of providing welfare security to (only) participants in the labor market is a continuation of the *workfare* policy line found in the Japanese world of welfare capitalism.¹⁴⁹ In accordance with neoliberal ideology, the Koizumi Cabinet attempted to align the *welfare* situation more dependent on the ability to profit from the labor market and by that strengthening the incentives to put in efforts in education and work.

At the same time, the Koizumi Cabinet increased the support of vocational education and skill development in firms for young unemployed.¹⁵⁰ The cabinet also improved the public information systems for allocating new jobs and established offices for active public labor market actions.¹⁵¹ Although still based on the relation between labor, the labor market and corporations, the cabinet also included educational institutions to increase the skills and work ability of displaced people. These measures are a consequence of the beliefs that the fundamental challenges in the Japanese employment situation are the lack of the necessary ‘human capital’ and the ‘information obstacles’ in respect of the demand for labor. The government may support the labor force in expanding their knowledge and

¹⁴⁴ Gaston and Kishi, 2005, p. 395.

¹⁴⁵ Gaston and Kishi, 2005, p. 397

¹⁴⁶ Gaston and Kishi, 2005.

¹⁴⁷ Ôtake, 2005.

¹⁴⁸ Ôtake, 2005.

¹⁴⁹ Welfare provision in Japan has been centered on the labor market and: “Work policy was largely achieved through protectionism and governmental regulation in terms of securing the livelihood of less productive workers through work in sheltered sectors.” Seeleib-Kaiser, 2002, p. 753. See also Shinkawa and Pempel in Shalev, 1996.

¹⁵⁰ Ôtake, 2005.

¹⁵¹ Ôtake, 2005.

skills (human capital) through education and vocation. To sum up, the Koizumi Cabinet sought to make Japanese labor more flexible by increasing the flow of labor, by increasing the human capital in the ‘labor pool’, and by adjusting the social benefits to create ‘incentives’ to work.

Reform of public welfare

Not only were the infrastructure, communication and banking responsibility of the Japanese state reformed under the Koizumi cabinet, the production and financing of welfare services were also examined to make the Japanese government slimmer and more efficient.

The 2004 reforms of the higher education sector in Japan brought New Public Management (NPM) methods into the public universities in Japan; the reforms decentralized decision-making processes and the reforms sought to reduce the education expenditures of the Japanese government.¹⁵² The public universities changed legal status and the employees “were no longer national civil servants (*kokka kômuin*)”, which reduced the opportunities for lifetime employment.¹⁵³ Then, corporate models of management were introduced with increased influence over important decisions by decreased interference from the Ministry of Education on the one hand and more control internally on the expense of the traditional professor-led *kôza* system on the other.¹⁵⁴ The reforms introduced a more competitive system with the establishment of ‘Centres of Excellence’ and educational programs with massive funding to create a model where institutes compete for research funds through competitive application.¹⁵⁵ Transparency measures were made so to enable supervision of the universities, while the restructuring of national universities to become more similar to a company enabled them to negotiate contracts and to acquire patents for inventions made at the universities.¹⁵⁶ One of the targets of the 2004 reforms was to remodel the universities to become ‘engines of economic growth’.¹⁵⁷ These reforms of higher education are neoliberalization of academia in the sense that competition, funding and the free market create platforms to judge on winners and losers in the academic world. Also, the new governance structure reflects the neoliberal objective of professional and non-political leadership and is a means to depoliticize the field of education.

The Koizumi cabinet presented a pension reform. The target was to increase participation rates, decrease payments, the “income placement ratio”, the ratio between receivers of pension benefits and income-earning people will be reduced.¹⁵⁸ The reform included several changes, including: high-income old workers will get their pensions reduced, people on parental leave earn pension points despite the fact that they do not contribute to the system, people only receive benefits from one

¹⁵² Hatakenaka in Eades, Goodman and Hada (ed.), 2005; Onishi and Yoshida, 2004, p. 405.

¹⁵³ Goodman in Eades, Goodman and Hada (ed.), 2005, p. 1.

¹⁵⁴ Hatakenaka in Eades, Goodman and Hada (ed.), 2005.

¹⁵⁵ Onishi and Yoshida, 2004, p. 405.

¹⁵⁶ Hatakenaka in Eades, Goodman and Hada (ed.), 2005, p. 56.

¹⁵⁷ Hatakenaka in Eades, Goodman and Hada (ed.), 2005.

¹⁵⁸ Takayama, 2006a & 2006b.

program, except people with disable benefits that can also receive the earnings-related component of the pension system, divorced spouses receive half of the pension of the former spouse.¹⁵⁹ Indeed, justified by demographics and the condition of the Japanese economy, the pension reform was an attempt to reduce the public responsibility for pensions in Japan. But at the same time, the introduction of the Koizumi pension scheme made adjustments that countered the structure of the pension system to be mostly beneficial to male, long-term employed breadwinners.

The health sector was also scrutinized for identifying measures to reduce the mounting health expenditures of the Japanese government. Facing a major demographic challenge with large cohorts of elderly people and lower fertility rates, politicians have been interested in reforming the health and long-term care services for a long time. The LTCI reform of the long-term care system was introduced in 2000 by the Mori Cabinet. Koizumi sought to continue the private sector-orientation of this reform. The Japanese health system is based upon private companies managing clinics and hospitals,¹⁶⁰ but health services are provided on an equal basis across Japan.¹⁶¹ The financing of health services is done through a government insurance system, where people provide according to employment status, income, etc. The Koizumi Cabinet changed the user fees from 20 percent to 30 percent, but avoided to increase the user fee share for retirees.¹⁶²

Reform of local government

With Koizumi's reforms, decisions were decentralized through delegation of decision-making power to the local governments across Japan. The CFP proposed in 2003 the "trinity package" (*sanmi ittai kaikaku*). The package involved changes in the local governments income bases: the local tax, the local allocation tax and the national government disbursement.¹⁶³ Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications, Katayama Toranosuke, was the leader of the reform project of decentralizing decisions and the tax structure vis-à-vis the central government. In accordance with Prime Minister Koizumi's speeches and the advices made by CFP, Katayama proposed to increase the local government's tax base at the expense of the central government to a 1:1 ratio.¹⁶⁴ The Koizumi Cabinet sought to decrease the amount of subsidies and fixed loans to not to distort the local government decision-making.¹⁶⁵ Local governments organized and sought more independence from central government and larger control over their own situation. There was, however, an internal debate in the Koizumi Cabinet. The Ministry of Finance (MOF) had opposed such a central-to-local change since

¹⁵⁹ Takayama, 2006a, p. 3-4

¹⁶⁰ Imai, 2002.

¹⁶¹ Imai, 2002.

¹⁶² Imai, 2002.

¹⁶³ Doi, 2004.

¹⁶⁴ Ikawa in Shinichi and Bahl (ed.), 2009. A 1:1 ratio means that the decrease in central taxation is equal to the increase in local taxation.

¹⁶⁵ Ikawa in Shinichi and Bahl (ed.), 2009.

the ministry wanted to keep the control over public income flows and the flexibility required to fight the increase in national debt.¹⁶⁶ In a coalition with reform-oriented ministers, the CEFP, and associations of local governments Koizumi came to an agreement with LDP politicians and Kômaitô in 2005 about introducing the ‘trinity package’.

Areas of non-reform?

Although the Koizumi Cabinet sought reform in many public sectors and business industries, there have been shown that certain areas experienced no attempt of reform. Two participants in the debate on the Koizumi era, Barclay and Koh, argue that the fishing industry was not subject to the neoliberal structural reforms, despite the existence of sectionalism, regulations and subsidies, and control of market forces.¹⁶⁷ The corporative character of the government-business relations has sustained through years of neoliberal reforms in other areas of Japanese political economy. Barclay and Koh argue that the nationalist discourse surrounding Japanese fish culture – harvesting, preparation and consumption – as well as the strong relations between bureaucrats, government organizations, business organizations and businesses made the introduction of neoliberal reforms less possible.¹⁶⁸

Such arguments, however, fall short in comparison to the reform of the agricultural sector, as discussed above. The acknowledgment of the position of homegrown rice in Japanese nationalist discourse is well-known. The Koizumi Cabinet did not let ‘nationalist discourses’ cede them from reform attempts. Rather, as I show in *Chapter 6 Nationalism in Japanese*, Koizumi’s nationalism goes beyond such a narrow definition as being concerned with attributes such as ‘fish’ or ‘rice’. The neoliberal ideology of marketization can indeed be working symbiotically with nationalist ideology, although it will hurt the interests of those producing these attributes that are claimed to be *Japanese* products. Agriculture is also enmeshed in the politics of interest organizations, LDP politicians in search of voters and money, and bureaucratic control, regulation and subsidies.¹⁶⁹ I believe, the coalition of politicians, bureaucrats and special interest functioned more like a motor for reform attempts than a resistance in the case of Koizumi politics.

4.6 The neoliberal reform project

Since the early 1980s, Japanese politics have contained neoliberal reform currents. Indeed, the *reform* discourse in Japan has contained a plurality of meanings as a variety of politicians, with different political programs and intentions, have used the concept. The review of the totality of the Koizumi cabinet’s structural reforms has, however, placed the reforms in an ideological landscape – as neoliberal.

¹⁶⁶ Doi, 2004, p. 3.

¹⁶⁷ Barclay and Koh, 2008.

¹⁶⁸ Barclay and Koh, 2008.

¹⁶⁹ See Mulgan, 2006.

Koizumi and his cabinet sought to reform the Japanese political economy. The reforms were overall neoliberal: creation of new markets, privatization of public corporations, transfer of decision-making from central government to the private sector and local government, increase of responsibility of financial institutions, reinforcement of the free float of capital, and amplification of the flexibility of the labor market. Regarding how they were planned to change the structure of the political economy (government, business, civil sector and the relations between these sectors), the reforms varied, however, both in degree and character. The privatization of special public corporations and postal services (the mail service component) were attempts to delete the government's involvement in deficit-producing activities and as such, these reforms contained the harshest critique of government and politicians' waste, inefficiency and incompetence. Private initiative would secure sound financial management. The privatization of postal services (the bank and insurance components) would implicate that the Japanese government lost its easy access to money which was seen as the main reason behind the government's habit of increasing the deficit in the national budgets. The flexibility in the labor market, the introduction of new corporate management models and the banking sector reforms were attempts to increase the float of capital and labor in the Japanese markets. Although full flexibility was desired, the Koizumi cabinet conducted gradual steps. Also, the banking reforms included attempts to decrease the amount of 'bad debt' in the economy. Although Koizumi and Minister of Economic and Fiscal Policies Takenaka initially desired private investors to take the cost of debt write-down, the cabinet's main strategy for rid the economy for such loans was the national acquisition of the 'bad debt'. Also, during the Koizumi period, the government partly nationalized the major Resona Bank when it was on the brink of bankruptcy in May 2003¹⁷⁰, which shows a pragmatic attitude to dealing with the major difficulties in the post-bubble Japanese economy. When it comes to the reforms of social security and health services, the Koizumi cabinet sought step-wise reductions in the public responsibility and increase in citizens' participation premiums. It was never, however, the purpose of the cabinet to totally privatize the burden of saving for retirement or paying the health insurance premiums totally. Even for the most neoliberal cabinet ever in Japan, the government was seen as possessing an important responsibility in providing basic security for its citizens. As discussed above, some areas, that according to the neoliberal logics of Koizumi politics, deserved reform attentions but did not become a topic for structural reforms (fishing industry). I criticized the arguments proposed for the reform neglect. Rather, Koizumi and his cabinet saw many areas mature for reforms and they were required to prioritize.

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5 “I will destroy my party”: the Koizumi project as populism

Koizumi was a candidate for the presidency of the LDP three times, but twice he failed to achieve the highest number of votes – in 1995 and 1998. The third time, in April 2001, Koizumi somewhat surprisingly won the internal LDP leadership election in front of the absolute favorite and leader of the largest faction, Hashimoto Ryûtarô. Koizumi went on to lead the LDP through four parliamentary elections – with the 2005 election as the largest triumph. He emphasized the neoliberal message of reforming Japanese government through privatization and deregulation. Nonetheless, neoliberal reforms were not only Koizumi’s domain. Other prominent politicians, former Prime Minister Hashimoto included, promised neoliberal reforms of the government and the private sector. Koizumi, however, was alone – at a national level - in the ability of projecting an image of himself being on the ordinary Japanese citizens’ side against the political establishment. He claimed to rescue ordinary Japanese from the power and corrupted practices of the political establishment and attempted to provide a political alternative that was seen as trustworthy, or, at least, more trustworthy than what other politicians were able to.

The main challenge to restoring the greatness of the Japanese economy was, according to Koizumi, the unhealthy relationship between politicians, bureaucrats and vested interests. He was even ready to destroy his own party and its factions if the LDP politicians did not support his reform agenda. No industry was to be spared when Koizumi sought to destroy the unholy alliance of politicians, bureaucrats and vested interests. The neoliberal reforms fit his image: privatization, introduction of competition and deregulation of central government were the means to reduce the power of the political establishment, to eliminate structural corruption and *amakudari*¹⁷¹ and to – over time - rescue the Japanese economy.

Several scholars argue that Koizumi was a populist in the sense that he applied populist strategies.¹⁷² Japanese scholars are especially receptive to defining Koizumi’s strategies as populist. Koizumi was conflict-oriented, he presented anti-status quo policies, he used straightforward language, and he applied media strategies to appear often in news reports, TV shows, and soft news. I show, however, that Koizumi’s arguments, policies and rhetoric represented a populist *ideology*. I argue that Koizumi projected an image of himself being different than all other politician – he was the *henjin*¹⁷³, the lonely crusader confronting the power of the political establishment, the only one willing to make the painful measures to save the Japanese economy. In this thesis I stress that Koizumi’s populism was an *ideology*. The neoliberal reforms of the Japanese political economy functioned as the means for

¹⁷¹ Literally descendants from heaven. The concept refers to the existence of profitable career opportunities for bureaucrats and politicians in public and semi-government corporations which they have regulated and controlled during their government careers.

¹⁷² Matsutani in Tanabe, 2011; Ôtake, 2003; 2006; Yoshida, 2011; Kabashima and Gill, 2010; McCormack, 2007.

¹⁷³ Outsider, weirdo.

fighting the enemies of the Japanese people – politicians and bureaucrats. As he sought to prevent the government from wasting taxpayers' money and to bring vitality to the Japanese economy, Koizumi demonized politicians, bureaucrats and special interests – the Japanese 'iron triangle'. The political message of Koizumi's populism helps us understand the resonance among the Japanese electorate.

When the temperature of the battle between Koizumi and his opponents – the anti-reform camp - was at the highest - during the 2005 election campaign - Koizumi secured the highest support for the LDP in decades. Koizumi's extreme emphasis on privatization of the Japan Post resulted in a Koizumi vs. anti-reformist election. Not only was the LDP split in the views on Koizumi's policy proposals, but I show also that Koizumi's politics changed the dynamics among the other parties in the Japanese Diet as well. It seems the populist ideology had large potential for support in the Japanese society in the early 2000s.

5.1 Overview of the chapter

In this chapter I examine the ideology presented by Koizumi as well as the strategies and the rhetoric used by Koizumi. I also elaborate on the political practice of Koizumi's politics. In chapter 3, I presented the structural reform project as neoliberal ideology. In this chapter, however, I place the reform agenda in the ideological territory of populism. This improves our understanding of the political phenomenon Koizumi represented while also pointing to the reason behind the high support for his politics among Japanese. Additionally, a historical analysis of Koizumi's populism improves our knowledge and understanding of the dynamics of political practice in Japan.

The chapter is structured as follows: first, I present the scholarship on populism and its history, both in the West and in Japan. The role of populist ideology in modern Japanese society is emphasized. Then, I investigate the history of the Koizumi period with a particular look at the elections, the challenges with being in the center of power, and the relation to the alliance parties but also the dynamics within the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). I discuss the importance of the political practice of Koizumi, the methods and strategies as well as the rhetoric. Two major discussions are stressed: the reasons behind why he was elected to president of the LDP in 2001 and why Koizumi was able to secure political support from both within the LDP and from the public for such a long period. I proceed with a historical treatment of his two major privatization attempts – highway corporations and postal services – and I show that his political practice supported the populist ideology.

5.2 Populism

The starting point for a definition of populism is that it is the ideology of the *people* (Lat.: *populus*; Germ: *Volk*; Jap: *kokumin/minshu/minkan/minzoku*). In political theorist Margareth Canovan's words: "Populism in modern democratic societies is best seen as an appeal to 'the people' against both the

established structure of power and the dominant ideas and values of the society.”¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, populism has been defined as a “‘style of political rhetoric’ that seeks to mobilize ordinary people against both the established structure of power and the dominant ideas and values of the society.”¹⁷⁵ Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell write that populism is an ideology that “... pits a virtuous and homogeneous people against a set of elites and dangerous ‘others’ who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity, and voice.”¹⁷⁶

In East Asia, the *kan* (officials; government) and *min* (people) dichotomy has a centuries-long history in political thought.¹⁷⁷ With the introduction of a democratic parliament in 1890 the relationship between *min* and *kan* changed, as the *min* suddenly acquired opportunities to participate politically.¹⁷⁸ It was ambiguous whether the newly elected politicians represented *kan* or *min*. What developed was a pejorative view on politics as the elected representatives of the *min* did not live up to the idealized, romantic expectations of a politician with principles (*shugi*) but instead the politicians were viewed as conducting an ‘unsavory campaign’, corrupt and only interested in fame and profits.¹⁷⁹ In the public debate of the time, the importance of *kan-min* cannot be underestimated: “As the arbiters of the public opinion [intellectuals, the press and popular parties] expressed it, this dichotomy between the *kan* and the *min* constituted the fundamental structure of Japanese politics.”¹⁸⁰ Brian J. McVeigh also argues that the relationship between *kan* and *min* offers analytical insight into Japanese politics:

‘Whatever usefulness the customary left-right heuristic may have, the *kan-min* (“authorities-people” or “official-popular”) dichotomy is probably just as important for analyzing Japan, where state and society have cooperated on economic endeavors. However, on politico-civic matters, the state and “the people” have eyed each other suspiciously ... after the war, populism often become a type of anti-state nationalism, expressing itself as political apathy, dislike of explicit displays of national state power ... or a general suspicion toward the political authorities.’¹⁸¹

Inherent in this notion of the people vs. elite (but also other out-groups) is the argument that the *people* inhabit the best insight in how to shape society and create a good life. Populists place a strong belief in the people’s *common sense*. In this embrace of *common sense*, a revolt against the dominant views on knowledge, taste and lifestyle is established. The distinction between *kan* and *min* cannot only be understood in political terms, it is also important to note the *social* and *cultural* cleavage separating the

¹⁷⁴ Canovan, 1999, p. 3.

¹⁷⁵ Kazin, 1995, p. 3.

¹⁷⁶ Albertazzi, Daniele and Duncan McDonnell: *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy*. New York. 2008. Palgrave MacMillan. P. 3.

¹⁷⁷ Gluck, 1985, p. 60.

¹⁷⁸ Although the suffrage rights were limited to wealthy citizens, two-thirds of elected persons were commoners, one-third former samurais; a majority of the seats in the House of Representatives was won by popular parties: Gluck, 1985, p. 68.

¹⁷⁹ Gluck, 1985, p. 60-67.

¹⁸⁰ Gluck, 1985, p. 60.

¹⁸¹ McVeigh, 2004, p. 76-77.

political establishment from the people.¹⁸² As Bourdieu has shown, people are distinguished through their habits, taste, and preferences.¹⁸³ Populist ideology is constituted around a political, but also a social and cultural, division between the political elite and the people.

The political ideal of ‘the will of the people’ - stemming from Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Age of Enlightenment – is one of the pillars of representative democracy. While the parliamentary politicians ideally are to represent the people, their political practice and the subsequent perception of the politicians’ ability to stay faithful to their democratic ideal may be different. Due to the complexity of this ideal, Margaret Canovan, argues that populism must be understood in relation to the two faces – the pragmatic and the redemptive - of modern representative democracy.¹⁸⁴ The pragmatic face is the institutions, the political rules and norms, the ways of dealing with politics that democracy provides.¹⁸⁵ The redemptive, on the other hand, is the ideal of *vox populi vox dei* - government of the people, by the people, for the people: “Inherent in modern democracy, in tension with its pragmatic face, is faith in secular redemption: the promise of a better world through action by the sovereign people”.¹⁸⁶ The conflict between democracy as a method/institutions and democracy as a process/ideal is nutrition for populists as they criticize the political *elite* for monopolizing the democratic - or *undemocratic* - institutions of modern representative democracy. Based on this, Paul Taggart argues that populism is a child of representative democracy.¹⁸⁷

With a communitarian and organic approach to the harmonic entity, the *people*, populism seeks to place the *people* in center for political debate and decision-making and as such it rejects any notion about conflicts *among* the *people*. The people inhabit a ‘heartland’ “in which, in the populist imagination, a virtuous and unified population resides”.¹⁸⁸ Other groups, in particular, the *elite*, are then envisioned as the obstacle for the will of the people to be implemented.¹⁸⁹ As such, the (real or imagined) cleavage between the *people* and other groups constitute the fundamental cleavage that populists act upon.

Due to the, real or imagined, inabilities of representative democracy to represent the *people*, the populists often propose to change the democratic rules of the game. Populists are usually not acknowledging that status-quo political institutions and policy-making is able to produce the outcomes that the *people* desire. The populists tend to be anti-pluralists as well, as they fight the system of

¹⁸² Carol Gluck touches upon the cultural aspects of the *kan-min* dichotomy when the newly elected politicians are: ““prefectural assembly types” who “went to Tokyo a lot”... Furthermore, “from the viewpoint of the common folk, farmers who wore frock coats, even if they wore them over the traditional hakama, were uncommon farmers indeed.” Gluck, 1985, p. 69.

¹⁸³ Bourdieu, 1984.

¹⁸⁴ Canovan, 1999.

¹⁸⁵ Canovan, 1999.

¹⁸⁶ Canovan, 1999, p. 11.

¹⁸⁷ Taggart, 2004.

¹⁸⁸ Taggart, 2000, p. 95.

¹⁸⁹ Betz in Betz and Immerfall, 1998, p. 4.

pluralism, i.e. the existence of interest groups lobbying for their interests, and thus operate in the space between the people and the decision-makers.¹⁹⁰ As long as the parties or movements seek to reform the rules of the representative democracy, they are seen as being *radical*, e.g. *radical* right-wing populism in Western Europe.¹⁹¹ When it is proposed to fundamentally change the political system, the parties are usually termed *extreme*. The fascist ideology of pre-war Japan is in this sense *extreme* in its views on Taishō democracy, while the present-day populism of Japan may be termed *radical* due to its inclination to oppose status-quo policy-making. Legitimacy is critical to representative democracy. Populists attack the politicians for lacking such legitimacy, in moral, social and cultural terms. The level of resonance among the electorate is therefore dependent on the ability of the political system to politically satisfy the voters.

Related to the lack of legitimacy is the argument on resentment. Hans-Georg Betz stresses the resentment in the rhetoric of populism:

‘One of the main features of this rhetoric is the appeal to resentment, which, as Robert C. Salomon has argued, is an emotion ‘that is distinguished, first of all, by its concern and involvement with power “reflecting” a kind of blame and personal outrage, an outward projection, an overwhelming sense of injustice’. At the same time, resentment is more than expression of impotence, it also invokes a desire for radical change: ‘the world could and should be other than it is, with those at the top no longer on top, and those at the bottom no longer at the bottom’.’¹⁹²

Paul Taggart writes that “Populism is not the politics of the stable, ordered polity but comes as an accompaniment to change, crisis and challenge.”¹⁹³ The point is that populists, regardless of the reason of (the perceived) crisis (moral, economic, etc.), act upon a notion that politics-as-usual is not efficient or able to handle the crisis. The 1990s were a decade of political, economic and social turmoil. Koizumi’s rise as the LDP president came thus in time of widespread crisis sentiment among Japanese.

Although somewhat in danger of attempting to make the terrain fit the map, I find these five characteristics interesting for the Japanese reality. Koizumi attacked the way representative democracy functioned in Japan (‘politics-as-usual’), he worked for a particular ideal society (heartland) and he acted upon a sense of crisis. Taggart’s last point - the trouble of relying on one person’s charisma and popularity - is indeed apparent in the case of Koizumi: when he resigned in September 2006, the populist project ended.

Populism – its history

The first populist movements are usually referred to as the *narodniki* in Russia from around 1870 and the U.S. People’s Party in the 1890s. Common for them both are the agrarian ideals and the immediate critique of the capitalist-industrial developments in the US and Russia in the 19th century. Populism has

¹⁹⁰ Akkerman, 2005.

¹⁹¹ Betz, 1994.

¹⁹² Betz and Johnson, 2004, p. 313. The authors quote Salomon, 1994, p. 103; 119.

¹⁹³ Taggart, 2004, p. 275.

been vibrant in Western Europe and Latin America, but also in the U.S. In the case of US populism, the 1960s and 1970s saw the rise of a populist right. Common traits for this populist right is the derogatory view on Washington politics, big government, the political class, and liberal welfare-oriented bureaucrats, with corruption, government waste and the neglect of the ‘small man’ and ‘ordinary people’.¹⁹⁴ In Latin America, populist leaders, parties and movements have appeared in mainly two waves – classical populism (1930 - 1960) and neo-populism (1980 -).¹⁹⁵

Latin American populism has been characterized by being nationalist and anti-U.S. While classical populism – with Juan Peron in Argentina, Getulio Vargas in Brazil and Lazaro Cardenas in Mexico – sought to establish distributive and expensive welfare programs as a means to broaden the support base and strengthen the anti-elitist rhetoric, under neo-populism – with Fernando Collor in Venezuela, Alberto Fujimori and Alan García in Peru and Carlos Menem in Argentina – the neoliberal critique of government has replaced the content of the populist leaders emphasis.¹⁹⁶ At the same time, under neo-populism in Latin America, “the tremendous spread of television has also diminished the need for organization.”¹⁹⁷ Again, the normative judgments in political analyses have also been apparent as these politicians and movements have been labeled as applying political demagoguery, organizational instability, economic irresponsibility and distributive generosity.¹⁹⁸

In Western Europe, populism has a long history. Particularly since the 1970s, many populist movements and leaders have organized stable support bases and organized long-term political parties.¹⁹⁹ Instead of being short-lived phenomena, several parties have been established as relatively large and influential entities in Western European countries. Right-wing populists are present in - among others - France (Front National), Austria (FPÖ), Italy (Forza Italia), Denmark (Danish People’s Party) and Norway (Progress Party). As mentioned above, Hans-Georg Betz has argued that there are two different ideal types – neoliberal and nationalist right-wing populism. While most right-wing populists focused on a neoliberal critique of the welfare state in the 1970s and 80s, several of the parties have developed into a nationalist populism where the cultural/ethnic critique of Islam is one of the fundamental pillars of the parties’ ideology and rhetoric.

Populism in Japan – history and scholarship

A striking feature of the Anglo-American literature on Japanese politics is the dearth of studies on populism. Rather, for several scholars, Koizumi’s project is viewed in a positive light due to his program of increasing the space for market forces, reducing government spending and fighting vested

¹⁹⁴ Kazin, 1995. See also Ôtake, 2003, pp. 113-118.

¹⁹⁵ See Weyland, 2001.

¹⁹⁶ Weyland, 2001.

¹⁹⁷ Weyland, 2001, p. 16.

¹⁹⁸ Weyland, 2001, p. 6.

¹⁹⁹ Simonsen and Kjølsvædt in Simonsen et al., 2009.

interests.²⁰⁰ His political style is seen as a means to strengthen the prime minister's role in policy-making, which again is very much welcomed. These scholars perceive the Japanese reality in similar terms as Koizumi. In the Japanese literature, on the other hand, there are some influential contributions that discuss Koizumi's neoliberal project and foreign policy in relation to the literature on populism.²⁰¹ These are more skeptical to his political project, sometimes even derogative, since they view Koizumi's political style and policy preferences as simplifications of a complex reality and as upper class-oriented. A common feature of this Japanese literature is they define populism as political style.

Populism in Japan has been discussed extensively by Ôtake Hideo - a prominent scholar on Japanese politics.²⁰² In his 2003-contribution, he argues that mainly two types of populism have been represented in Japan: interest-led populism and neoliberal populism.²⁰³ Interest-led populism is oriented towards the development of a welfare-state, the creation of (geographical) redistribution mechanisms and is reliant upon heavy public spending, especially construction spending. It is a populism enmeshed in interest-led politics (*rieki yûdô seiji*) and *redistribution-to-local-areas* politics (*jimoto kangen seiji*).²⁰⁴ While interest-led populism is populist in the sense that it tries to define the elite politicians with extensive ties to the strong Japanese bureaucracy as an obstacle for the 'just' distribution of wealth to all, such populism is 'guided by the interests' of rural and poorer areas of Japan. The mighty LDP politician Tanaka Kakuei (PM 1972-74) stands out as the ultimate interest-guided populist and signals indeed the beginning of Japanese populism:

'Tanaka Kakuei is the model of interest-led populism in Japan. Tanaka Kakuei that was most popular among the people for a long period, was not a simple interest-guided politician but along other populists at the same time, he directed 'ordinary people' (*futsû no hito*) against elites such as Tokyo University bureaucrats and bureaucrat politicians (Satô Eisaku, Fukuda Takeo).'²⁰⁵

With his fight against the Tokyo University bureaucrats and LDP politicians, Tanaka secured the premiership in 1972 in an internal LDP-election against Fukuda Takeo (Koizumi's faction leader). Tanaka became the most popular prime minister in postwar Japan. Though he resigned as prime minister after accusations of corruption²⁰⁶, he continued his powerful influence in backroom LDP politics as the leader of the Tanaka faction - which eventually turned into the Hashimoto faction, Koizumi's nemesis. Tanaka's legacy is the 'construction state' (*doken kokka*) with the emphasis on

²⁰⁰ While providing much-needed insight into the dynamics of Japanese politics, Aurelia George Mulgan, Patricia MacLachlan, Susan Carpenter and Kawabata Eiji have in common a normative approach – they appreciate Koizumi's reform attempts. Even stronger is the teleologic perspective that Frances M. Rosenbluth and Michael F. Thies argue for: neoliberal reforms are a necessary political program as the electorate demand consumer-oriented political processes in the age of global capitalism.

²⁰¹ See Ôtake, 2001; 2003; 2006; 2009; Kawabata and Gill, 2007; Yoshida, 2011; Mitsutani in Tanabe, 2011.

²⁰² See Ôtake, 2001; 2003; 2006; 2009.

²⁰³ Ôtake, 2003.

²⁰⁴ Ôtake 2003; 2006.

²⁰⁵ Ôtake, 2006, p. 5.

²⁰⁶ Tanaka was later found guilty in participation in the Lockheed scandal.

redistributing the wealth created in urban districts to rural and less well-off areas. *Doken kokka* refers to the Japanese government's spending on construction and infrastructure and this spending's relation to the LDP and its support organizations. Neoliberal populism is, on the other hand, a populism that places neoliberal reforms as the fundament of policies, but in other areas - social and cultural matters – neoliberal populism is rather conservative since it stresses tradition and the state.²⁰⁷ The traits of the Japanese political economy that Koizumi criticized - the 'iron triangle' of *zoku* politicians, bureaucrats and protected industries - are indeed at the heart of the politics of the *doken kokka*. Koizumi's populism was built upon a critique of the politicians, the structures and the ideas that interest-guided populism had established in the Japanese political economy. Thus, if we accept the general split in populist manifestations in Japanese politics, neoliberal populism can be seen as quite the opposite of interest-guided populism with its focus on privatization, deregulation and marketization of the Japanese government and political economy. The separation of the social world into professional politicians and bureaucrats on the one side and himself and the *people* on the other, is a trademark of Koizumi's populism. Mass media played an important part in this 'theatrical style'. In fact, Ôtake emphasizes media as the medium for Koizumi's political strategy and method. This 'theatrical populism' is a development of the 'neoliberal populism' argument proposed in earlier work. Ôtake argues that:

'Populism is a 'theatrical style' where one tries to perform the hero role that challenges the fight, turns towards the enemies, stands on the side of the 'ordinary people', leads these people at the same time as it emphasizes the leader as the member of the ordinary people and sets as a premise the two fundamentals of ordinary people vs. the elite, the good guys vs. the evil guys, and the friend vs. enemy. This is the number one political method, not by organizing a social movement, but through media, from above, to supply the political support.'²⁰⁸

In his 2006-contribution, Ôtake further develops his argument on Koizumi's populism:

'The characteristics of populist politics is that it reduces politics into a moral-dimensioned fight and makes 'the argument on the duality of good guys and bad guys' [*zendama akudama nigen ron*] into the foundation. [Populists] produce a drama of 'rewarding good and punishing evil' [*kanzen chôaku*] that paints professionals politicians and bureaucrats as the 'evil guys' that reaps the benefits [*amai tsuke wo sû*] from politics and government and oneself as the good guy who represents the people in general.'²⁰⁹

Finally, Ôtake argues that:

'Besides, an important feature of populism is the strong emphasis on the characteristics of being an amateur, layman, ordinary person and outsider, etc. [*shirouto, shominsei, amachua, autosaidaa nado*] as turning inside out the distrust towards political and administrative professionals, politicians and bureaucrats.'²¹⁰

Ôtake argues that Koizumi represented populism in the sense that he applied populist strategies and methods.²¹¹ The populist strategies and methods were based on three elements: the moral division of 'good and evil guys', the creation of 'theatrical politics' [*gekijô kata seiji*] and the image of himself as an outsider to the political establishment. Ôtake finds that other politicians, such as the Japan New

²⁰⁷ Ôtake, 2003.

²⁰⁸ Ôtake, 2003, pp. 118-119.

²⁰⁹ Ôtake, 2006, p. 2.

²¹⁰ Ôtake, 2006, p. 2.

²¹¹ Ôtake, 2003; 2006; 2009.

Party's Hosokawa Morihiro, Kôno Yûhei from 'The Neoliberal Club' (*shinjiyû kurabu*) and Doi Takako (politician from 1969 to 2005) from the Social Democratic Party of Japan/Socialist Party (SDPJ/SP) and her 'Madonna Boom' have utilized 'theatrical populism', but that "the freshness of their charm did not last very long."²¹² Koizumi is the exception:

'He [Koizumi] manipulated the public opinion (*yoron sôsa ni take*) and he opposed the 'ordinary professionals' (*tsûjô puro*) that conventionally were held against the opposing politicians and bureaucrats through boldness and Machiavellianism. As a postwar Japanese politician, [he] established an exceptionally long period in power.'²¹³

Indeed, but even more so, as a prime minister in the post-1993 period – with six predecessors in just eight years – Koizumi's six years constitute incomparable leadership stability.²¹⁴ 'Machiavellianism' constitutes an important concept in Ôtake's 2006-contribution as he perceives Koizumi's strategy to set different stakeholders against each other and use his prime ministerial power to enforce his will through – in opposition to the usual consensus-orientation among the major LDP-politicians.²¹⁵

According to Ôtake, Koizumi is not a self-proclaimed populist:

'However, Prime Minister Koizumi was not a politician that tried to become a populist politician. Rather, he was a politician that tried to materialize long-term Japanese problems that he had thought about for years, at the same time as he mobilized on the basis that he unexpectedly became the idol of the people.'²¹⁶

Very few populists would term themselves populists. Instead, populism is a concept that others, usually scholars, attach to provide a framework for understanding of the content of the ideology, the utterances, the strategies and the policy recommendations. Ideological typology offers insight but, in addition, it provides the ability to conduct comprehensive comparative studies. Although Japan, in many senses, is different from, for example, Western Europe, we can utilize ideological concepts to find shared notions about the social world. Comparisons also benefit in terms of understanding the differences.

Koizumi was a unique character in the national political landscape. However, according to Matsutani Mitsuru, in later years, Japan experienced the rise of *many* individual populist politicians. In Matsutani's words: "We can say that, from the 2000s, Japanese politics faced the era of 'populism'".²¹⁷ Matsutani argues that not only Koizumi Jun'ichirô, but also Tokyo Governor Ishihara Shintarô and Osaka Governor Hashimoto Tôru are forming a *new* phenomenon in Japanese politics, namely populism. This view on the 2000s as the decade of Japanese populism is supported by Kimura Masato

²¹² Ôtake, 2006, p. 3.

²¹³ Ôtake, 2006, p. 3.

²¹⁴ The quick shift in prime ministers continued after Koizumi: Abe (06-07), Fukuda (07-08), Aso (08-09), Hatoyama (09-10), Kan (10-11). While Koizumi was prime minister for 1980 days, the eleven other prime ministers since 1993 has averaged on less than 420 days, see Kanezawa

²¹⁵ Ôtake, 2006.

²¹⁶ Ôtake, 2006, p. .

²¹⁷ Matsutani in Tanabe, 2011, p. 188.

when he argues that the media offered an opportunity for populism and that we see that the discourse on populism increased rapidly in the 2000s.²¹⁸

On the content of populism, Matsutani states that “We find that the common points are to assume clearly as enemies bureaucrats, political parties, the Diet, and organizations, to strongly oppose these groups, and also to present clearly a position of opposition.”²¹⁹ Matsutani also hints that Koizumi and the other populists are arguing in line with the opinion of ordinary Japanese: “It is also possible that these persons [Koizumi, Ishihara and Hashimoto] hold positions of expressions that are based on ‘the public’s common sense’ [*yoron no jôshiki*] more than the perspectives of elites and academics.”²²⁰

Regarding the support for populism, Matsutani argues that different elements of populism resonated with different strata of society:

‘In the case of neoliberal populism, neoliberal policies are, when it comes to social strata, easily getting the sympathy of the middle and upper classes, and the emphasis on state and tradition keeps the conservative stratum, and as a result, the acquisition of wide support becomes possible. That is, it is believed that *aikokushugi* [patriotism], authoritarianism and neoliberalism are influencing. We can say that these political senses of value are easily assumed as enemies [but they] have strong affinity with populism.’²²¹

In his discussion of the content of contemporary populism, Yoshida Tôru argues that “the three characteristics of today’s populism – business ideas as the fundament of politics, story-telling politics [*monogatari seiji*], and making-enemies politics [*teki tsukuru seiji*] – were genuinely practiced by Koizumi Jun’ichirô in Japan.”²²² As for the business ideas, the neoliberal content of Koizumi’s domestic politics fits Yoshida’s argument of populist content – and it is in accordance with Ôtake’s concept of ‘neoliberal populism’. On ‘story-telling politics’, Yoshida explains that: “A composition was created where he [Koizumi] was totally isolated and with no help from anywhere (*kôritsu muen*), and he sought the support to push the law through from the people.”²²³ This story of being the only one is an appropriate argument for Koizumi politics. In relation to Koizumi’s actions in the 2005 election, Yoshida argues that:

‘He accomplished a production where his consistent self’s dream was crushed by the forces of resistance that sought to refuse the reform and where he declared that there are people who oppose the privatization of the postal services law, not only the DPJ, but also from within the governing party he himself led.’²²⁴

This reminds us of the Ôtake argument on Koizumi’s politics as ‘theatrical populism’. But not only was Koizumi ‘alone’, he fought the powerful but yet infamous *stronghold* of Japan:

‘The reduction of the bureaucratic system’s authority and influence, as can be seen in the practice and the realization of the regime shift and the recite of “the abolishment of bureaucratic rule”, had acquired a strong support from the people. If you look to the Nakasone reign - it was established from that time on - who did take over this political road more powerfully than Koizumi? Isn’t this providing some support to the fact that

²¹⁸ Kimura, 2006.

²¹⁹ Matsutani in Tanabe, 2011, p. 189.

²²⁰ Matsutani in Tanabe, 2011, p. 189.

²²¹ Matsutani in Tanabe, 2011, p. 191.

²²² Yoshida, 2011, p. 55.

²²³ Yoshida, 2011, p. 57.

²²⁴ Yoshida, 2011, p. 57.

Koizumi repeated the arguments of Nakasone about Yasukuni Shrine worship and the election by popular vote?²²⁵

Yoshida is here touching an important point: the bureaucracy seems to have suffered from a legitimacy crisis in Japanese society. From being the ideal for stability and order under the Japanese growth period - which ended when the stock markets crashed in 1991 – the bureaucracy became the scapegoat of the economic, political and social problems during the ‘lost decade’, it practiced corruption through *amakudari* and the bureaucracy was enmeshed in a secret web of connections with LDP politicians and special interests.

As for the production of confrontation, Yoshida uses Koizumi’s speech on the 8th of August 2005, immediately after his dismissal of the Lower House (cited in section 4.8 in this chapter). Yoshida argues that “[h]ere, Koizumi, first of all, stressed the binomial opposition of ‘bureaucrats and people’.”²²⁶ Second, in the golden time for TV watching – after eight o’clock – Koizumi presented his message with simple metaphors and rhetoric: “More than anything, ‘easiness’ was prioritized.”²²⁷ Lastly, “... it was a production of ‘confrontation’” as Koizumi constructed a composition where “he was in an isolated condition without any help, and because of this, [he] sought the support to back the bill [of postal privatization] from the people.”²²⁸

Gavan McCormack provides new perspectives on Koizumi’s populism in *Client State*. In an attempt to judge Koizumi politics (foreign politics in particular) as the dream for American interests and a failure for Japanese society, McCormack criticizes nearly every aspect of Koizumi’s political reform attempt, ranging from neoliberal privatization plans to the decisions on foreign policies.

Regarding populism, McCormack argues that:

‘Koizumi politics relied heavily on populism – and populism, as one right-wing critic put it, is the enemy of conservatism. It’s attempts to articulate and manipulate popular demands and resentments always carry the risk of turning into a storm beyond control – especially populism like Koizumi’s, which stressed destruction and prided itself on ruthlessness (*hijo*).’²²⁹

It is necessary to emphasize that populism is not about being popular. Most politicians attempt – in addition to other goals - to become popular, as representative democracy requires the ability to acquire a certain amount of votes in elections. Although manipulation is a derogative term, in one sense, McCormack is right: politicians (always) attempt to convince the electorate, or parts of it, that *their* worldview, *their* arguments, and *their* policy recommendations are better than those of their political competitors. In much more positive terms, he mentions the political positions of Kamei Shizuka – Koizumi’s ‘anti-reform’ politician per se.²³⁰ Let us have a look at which political views

²²⁵ Yoshida, 2011, p. 55.

²²⁶ Yoshida, 2011, p. 57.

²²⁷ Yoshida, 2011, p. 58.

²²⁸ Yoshida, 2011, p. 58.

²²⁹ McCormack, 2007, p. 53.

²³⁰ Kamei Shizuka, the former head of the LDP’s Policy Research Council and postal *zoku* member, is further discussed below. He competed with Koizumi in the 2001 LDP president election as the head of the Kamei-Eto faction,

McCormack himself prefers. These opinions ran contrary to Koizumi's neoliberal reforms (and his foreign policy) and express different political currents inside the same political party, the LDP:

'While Koizumi's neoliberal enthusiasm was unbounded, the LDP 'rebels' ... tended to hold to 'wet' social and political views, and to take seriously the party's original (1955) platform statement about ensuring that 'the construction of a welfare state is successfully completed'. Like Kamei Shizuka, ... these recalcitrants took pride in the fact of the system of free healthcare for the elderly and a 60 per cent income for retirement... For Kamei, wealth creation had to be balanced by its redistribution to the regions, and the provision of a safety net [which Koizumi sought to reform/reduce]— in sharp contrast with Koizumi's dry, modernizing — in his own words 'ruthless' — mission. Kamei was also committed to a strict constitutionalist position on peace and security, and absolutely opposed to Koizumi's dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces to Iraq.'²³¹

Another element in McCormack's writings on populism that should interest us is the statement on conservatism. McCormack seems to argue that populism — in particular Koizumi's destructive populism — is opposed to conservatism. Although McCormack does not inquire further into the relation between conservatism and populism, I find it fruitful to investigate the matter. My task is not to define conservatism in all its varieties — if such a definition exists — but rather to outline the most important features of conservatism in Japanese politics, or the particular kind — hereafter termed 'conservative orthodoxy' — that Koizumi opposed.

Conservatism, as a modern ideology developed in the aftermath of the French Revolution, opposed the views on progress, individualism, authority, tradition and positive political action from the Enlightenment Era and the revolution. More than being an ideology of conservation of *any* given social structure, conservatism is communitarian, believes in tradition, heritage and authority and stresses a harmonic view on the social world. According to Kenneth B. Pyle, "[c]onservatism in the modern world since the French Revolution came to have a direct relationship to social revolution" and "[i]n Japan, [Meiji] bureaucratic conservatism had as a principal motivation the forestalling of social revolution."²³² Pyle builds his argument on how Clinton Rossiter puts it: "The historic mission of political conservatism in the West has been not to defeat but to forestall revolutions, not to crush but to anticipate them."²³³ Pyle discusses the role of the German historian economist Kanai Noboru (1865-1933) in introducing German Bismarckian conservatism to Japan: "Kanai was instrumental in introducing discussion of the social problem (*shakai mondai*) created by industrialization and the positive role required of the state to prevent such problems."²³⁴ Pyle quotes him:

but withdrew from his campaign, supported Koizumi's candidacy, then again ran in the 2003 LDP president election, opposed the postal privatization plan in the Diet in 2005, was expelled from the party by Koizumi and then became the target of Koizumi's 'assassin candidate' Horie Takafumi, the internet millionaire, but won eventually in his district. Kamei and others established a new party Kokumin Shintô (People's New Party), and joined an alliance with the DPJ in 2009, because the DPJ needed majority in the Upper House after a landslide victory in the Lower House.

²³¹ McCormack, 2007, p. 52.

²³² Pyle in Wakabayashi, 1998, p. 130.

²³³ Rossiter, 1968, p. 292.

²³⁴ Pyle in Wakabayashi, 1998, p. 131.

‘If workers are treated like animals, then after several decades unions and socialism will appear. If now we concentrate on protection, we can prevent unions and the spread of socialism. This is the policy of prevention. An illustration of the failure to act is not far to seek; it is in every country of the West.’²³⁵

The industrial revolution of the 1880s and 1890s introduced harsh labor conditions, increased inequality, the class conflict between capital owners and labor – *shakai mondai* - to Japanese society. More than being a reaction to the thoughts of the Enlightenment Era and the French Revolution, Japanese conservatism rose as a social and economic reply to the instability introduced by capitalism, industrialization and urbanization. As Pyle correctly argues, the state was seen as fundamental in the implementation of improved social conditions. The state, I believe, has remained important in Japanese conservatism. Along with Japanese conservative orthodoxy’s focus on growth, industrial development and increased living standards – such as Prime Minister Ikeda’s promise of doubling the GDP during the 1960s – conservatives have argued for increased government intervention in the economy. Tanaka Kakuei and his emphasis on redistribution to rural areas can be seen as an element in this conservative orthodoxy in Japan. Indeed, the Japanese government termed 1973 as ‘Year One of the Welfare Era’ and improved health care and began the indexation of the public pension scheme.²³⁶ Today, the government provides medical care, income maintenance, social services and housing.²³⁷ Conservative politicians have seen the government as a provider of infrastructure (roads, telecommunications, post services), but also of a sufficient security net (pensions, unemployment benefits, health insurance) and – education services. Although the security net has been limited and the production of welfare in-kind benefits have been produced in the private sector (either in the market or within the family), the postwar Japanese welfare model has arguably been to provide security and control as a means to establish social harmony.

For conservatives, politicians should offer ideal business environment and then business should provide their employees with social needs.²³⁸ The ideal of business was to provide long-term employment as well as security in the case of disruptions in the labor market participation. The family was to facilitate care and nursing tasks, with all its inherent views on gender roles, as the tasks were primarily women’s (either as mothers, spouses, daughters-in-law or daughters). Thus, conservatism in Japan has been an ideology concerned with fixing the negative effects of capitalism through redistribution efforts, basic welfare provision and establishment of a sufficient safety net. At the other side of the same coin, conservatism has also stressed ‘traditional’ family structures, hierarchy, and authority.

²³⁵ Pyle, 1974, p. 143.

²³⁶ Collick, 1998.

²³⁷ Goodman et al. in May et al., 1997.

²³⁸ “Just as Sweden uses social policy as a form of industrial policy, Japan uses industrial policy as a means of social policy.” Estevez-Abe, 2008, p.1; “... the government continued pro-industry policies that favored corporations. The companies, in turn, were expected to offer health and welfare services not only to their individual employees but also to their extended families.” Haddad, 2011, p. 33.

Not only were the conservative views on the state provision of infrastructure, a security net and welfare benefits challenged by Koizumi (as shown more extensively in *Chapter 4 Neoliberalism in Japanese*), he also attacked the postwar conservative policy-making traditions. I address the political practice of Koizumi throughout this chapter. During the period of the ‘1955 system’, the LDP developed decision-making traditions that Koizumi openly challenged. In both perspectives – policies and policy-making – Koizumi’s ideology, policy recommendations and political practice presented a new paradigm in Japanese politics.

Several scholars claim that Koizumi was not a populist. Watanabe Osamu applies a definition similar to *interest-guided* populism (Tanaka) and states that Koizumi was not providing welfare to increase his popularity and he was thus not a populist.²³⁹ Hiwatari Nobuhiro argues that several of Koizumi’s decisions were not popular (for instance pension reform and dispatch of Self-Defense Forces to Iraq) and hence he was no populist.²⁴⁰ But, populism is not about making popular decisions or being popular. Rather, it is about fighting established notions of politics and policy – political correctness (conservative orthodoxy) – on the side of the people against the elites. Margarita Estévez-Abe states that Koizumi was not a ‘mediagenic’ populist, because he understood the opportunities in Japanese politics and utilized these for his own purposes.²⁴¹ Instead, it seems that successful populism, for at least *long-term* successful populist movements and parties, requires knowledge and insight into the particular political landscape and the dynamics of politics, government and business.

5.3 The 2001 presidential election – ideology and rhetoric

Prime Minister Mori announced his resignation in early 2001. The LDP therefore held an election in April 2001 – four months before the Upper House election – to elect its new president. The LDP tradition was to choose the leader of the largest faction. Koizumi announced his election participation for the third time and faced Hashimoto Ryûtarô, Asô Tarô²⁴², and Kamei Shizuka (leader of Kamei-Etô faction²⁴³). As Hashimoto – with his experience as prime minister and as the leader of the largest LDP faction (former Tanaka and Obuchi faction) – portrayed among the candidates, the outcome of the LDP presidential election seemed straightforward. The internal solidarity among the Hashimoto faction members was comparatively high.²⁴⁴ In addition, the Horiuchi faction was seen as a sure supporter of Hashimoto due to its status-quo stance. However, due to pressure inside the LDP to include regional LDP representatives in the election, the LDP leadership chose to let each regional district contribute

²³⁹ Watanabe, 2005, p. 26.

²⁴⁰ Hiwatari, 2005, p. 53.

²⁴¹ Estévez-Abe, 2006, p. 649.

²⁴² Asô belonged to the Kôno faction. He was supported by the Kôno faction in addition to a few other parliamentarians.

²⁴³ Kamei established this faction when the Mitsuzuka faction (the same as Koizumi) became the Mori faction.

²⁴⁴ Park, 2001.

with their opinion about the next LDP president.²⁴⁵ This alteration dramatically changed the presidential election campaign since the local representatives opposed faction politics and sought a leader that could safely drag the LDP through the upcoming Upper House election. Now, Koizumi could finally benefit from the populist ideology's massive support among the Japanese electorate.

The henjin, the fighter and the people's man

Koizumi - being the one with the highest public support in the 1998 president election (but no ability to win the election)²⁴⁶ - once again rose to extreme popularity. His clear-cut, populist ideology made its way into Japanese mass media and captured the Japanese people. He emphasized not only his outsider character, but told the public that he was the people's man:

'It has been said that I am a strange one [*henjin*²⁴⁷], but I am actually a person of reform (change). I have things I want to say: after Prime Minister Mori has completed his great duty, I want to investigate the road which is to answer the expectations of the people, and show the position of starting on new start of dissolving-my-party.²⁴⁸

His emphasis on change goes hand in hand with being an outsider. Not only was he projecting a position where he stood outside of the political establishment and where he was ready to take any measure to achieve his reform goals, he was also willing to fight for the people: "When it's time for fighting we must fight! It is cowardly to fear defeat. I believe that would be throwing away oneself. We have to consider policies that are not disappointing to the people."²⁴⁹

It was indeed time to fight. Despite the fact that he had faced defeat twice before, Koizumi again attacked the *honmaru*, the stronghold of government and the bureaucrats. Koizumi showed that he was a man that stood on the side of the people. Along with his long-term attempt to reform the Japanese political economy, he related this to the legitimacy crisis of politics-as-usual: "I want to take back the people's belief in politics."²⁵⁰ He spoke the language people had waited to hear.

The populist ideology of Koizumi is fairly uncontroversial if we agree with Canovan's argument that "[p]opulism is not just a reaction *against* power structures but an appeal *to* a recognized authority. Populists claim legitimacy on the grounds that they speak for *the people*: that is to say, they claim to represent the democratic sovereign, not a sectional interest such as an economic class."²⁵¹

Furthermore, Koizumi promised that he would visit the Yasukuni Shrine: "If I become the prime minister, I will worship officially [at the Yasukuni Shrine]."²⁵² I discuss in more detail the Yasukuni Shrine issue in chapter 6. It is important, however, to note how these visits became a major public issue. Since Class A War Criminals are enshrined here, the Yasukuni Shrine issue was characterized by

²⁴⁵ Find citation.

²⁴⁶ Curtis, 1999.

²⁴⁷ *Henjin* [Engl.: weirdo, stranger]. Linguistically, weirdo (*henjin*) in Japanese is made up of the signs for change and human.

²⁴⁸ Asahi Shinbun, 21.03.2001. p. 2.

²⁴⁹ Asahi Shinbun, 07.04.2001, p. 1.

²⁵⁰ Asahi Shinbun, 19.04.2001, p. 31.

²⁵¹ Canovan, 1999, p. 4.

²⁵² Asahi Shinbun, 17 April 2001, p. 2.

a heated public debate. For many observers, in addition to former colonized countries – in particular China and South Korea - the Yasukuni Shrine represents war ideology, imperialism and support of Japanese aggression and revisionist history interpretation. With his promise to visit the Yasukuni Shrine on August 15, Koizumi utilized a disputed national symbol to thicken his image of a doer – a politician with courage and a man of his words.

Although it would inevitably arouse criticism from China and South Korea, Koizumi questioned rhetorically why he, as the prime minister, could not make such decisions on a domestic basis: “Why am I not supposed to worship [there]? [Concerning the opposition of different neighboring countries, such as China and South Korea] there is no relation! It’s strange to get perplexed [by my visits].”²⁵³ Furthermore, not only was he able to show that he did not answer to China and South Korea - Koizumi challenged the other candidates’ boldness. Did they dare show their respect for the war dead? Indeed, in Koizumi’s own words, you are a ‘coward’ if you are not willing to fight. Hashimoto, his main rival, stated: “I worshipped there [during the time as prime minister]. The result was major trouble and suspension. Originally I wanted to go, but it is so that it stirs up a lot of noise.”²⁵⁴ The promise to worship at the Yasukuni Shrine boosted Koizumi’s image as a fighter, as a real reformer, and his anti-elite status.

Reform-orientation: no pain, no gain

Koizumi stated that his reforms of the Japanese government and economy would imply pain and cause immediate negative impulses to the Japanese economy. Postal privatization, special public corporations and financial restructuring were necessary, however, to provide momentum to the Japanese economy. With his neoliberal reforms, Koizumi promised to end the era of government waste and to reduce the government’s debt. After a decade of attempts to cope with the economic depression, but with few positive developments, every Japanese adult knew the concepts of bad *keiki* (business cycle). Koizumi was not alone in promising revival of the economy, but he spoke as though it was teamwork: “Without structural reforms, the economic conditions [*keiki*] will not improve. Let’s try to improve tomorrow from today! That is the spiritual reforms [*seishin kaikaku*].”²⁵⁵ As we saw in *Chapter 4 Neoliberalism in Japanese* the reform rhetoric did not only focus on the material content, the reforms were also seen in a spiritual light.

While his opponents were not willing to clearly make any public promises [*kôyaku nado de meikaku ni fureteinai*], Koizumi stated: “I make an aim of financial recovery within two, three years through the disposal of bad debt.”²⁵⁶ His campaign was filled with reform proposals, including targets

²⁵³ Asahi Shinbun, 17 April 2001, p. 2.

²⁵⁴ Asahi Shinbun, 17 April 2001, p. 2.

²⁵⁵ Asahi Shinbun, 13.04.2001, p. 11.

²⁵⁶ Asahi Shinbun, 13.04.2001, p. 11.

of economic revival. With a clean background – in comparison to the corruption scandal-haunted LDP leaders – and with a clear message of the necessity of reform, but also the pain that the Japanese economy would enter with his reforms, Koizumi appeared genuine in his reform attempts: “There are no such things as immediate effect policies. Currently, we are maybe in zero or minus, but the position of making necessary policies are very important.”²⁵⁷ There had been so much talk about reform – since the early 1980s – but the political turmoil and stagnation of the 1990s had indeed created opportunities for politicians that successfully projected themselves as able and energetic. Finally, the LDP and Japan had a candidate that seemed honest about reform. Koizumi’s straightforward talks on the relation between economic prosperity and the need to destroy the political establishment in Japan were powerful.

The anti-party position: ‘I will destroy the LDP’

During the LDP presidential campaign, Koizumi envisioned the LDP itself as the main obstacle to his reform implementation. Suddenly, the LDP provided for the president role a candidate who blamed the politicians in the LDP for hindering the revival of the Japanese economy and contributing to a wasteful government. Koizumi repeated again and again that important reform of the LDP and the Japanese economy were two sides of the same coin. In fact, he argued that a LDP that continued with politics-as-usual had no value: “It is good if a party that cannot react to such a voice [the people’s call for reform] ceases to exist.”²⁵⁸ The people themselves, according to Koizumi, understood – as Koizumi also did – that the country needed reform. The implication of not taking this ‘fact’ seriously would mean a party without the *people*’s support: “To not change the LDP is not allowed [*dame*]. As of now, we will be abandoned by the people!”²⁵⁹

Koizumi argued in line with the distrust people had in LDP politics, which was not necessarily distrust towards the political establishment per se, but at least resentment over corruption scandals, back-door decisions and, more concretely, the factional politics of the LDP. Koizumi satisfied the urge for a reform of the LDP’s ‘politics-as-usual’, stating “I will not choose the cabinet based on rules of the factions!”²⁶⁰ Moreover, Koizumi continued his critique of the current situation of the LDP: “I see that the people are disgusted by the condition where there are only factions but no country!”²⁶¹ Koizumi gained trust and support with his perception of the LDP politicians being more concerned with intra-party quarrels instead of taking seriously the problems and struggles that ordinary *people* faced.

Who could change the LDP? The faction boss Hashimoto who was a former prime minister that had abandoned his reform agenda when he faced opposition among *zoku* members? No. Koizumi

²⁵⁷ Asahi Shinbun, 21.04.2001, p. 2.

²⁵⁸ Asahi Shinbun, 19.04.2001, p. 31.

²⁵⁹ Asahi Shinbun, 14.04.2001, p. 14.

²⁶⁰ Asahi Shinbun, 14.04.2001, p. 14.

²⁶¹ Asahi Shinbun, 19.04.2011, p. 31.

represented a more credential alternative when it came to making a new day for Japanese politics and the economy. He presented concrete reform policies and reform targets, he was well-known for his harsh stance towards other LDP politicians and bureaucrats, and he was even willing to sacrifice his own party to reach his goals: “It is good if the party’s character is changed to something new to the degree that the LDP’s change is acknowledged by the people.”²⁶²

5.4 The DPJ – friend or foe of neoliberal reforms?

Koizumi needed allies in addition to his internal reform-friendly politicians. To challenge the ‘forces of resistance’ required a strong team. Koizumi challenged the *honmaru* of Japanese politics, but he spoke as he was doing this together with the people. Also, Koizumi emphasized the need to cooperate with the opposition parties: “DPJ politicians told me: let’s do it together. We are changing Japanese politics.”²⁶³ But leader of the DPJ, Hatoyama Yukio, did not believe in Koizumi’s reform attempts and replied: “The party that really seeks structural reforms is where? I’d like to see that party. Koizumi reinforces the emphasis of the DPJ. It is the LDP that firmly constitutes the forces of resistance.”²⁶⁴

The DPJ leadership did not trust the reform-will of the LDP nor were they interested in supporting Koizumi as long as he was the leader of the LDP and their fiercest competitor. Although I have not made much space for the reading and interpretation of DPJ sources in this thesis, two developments are valuable for understanding the external political environment that Koizumi operated in. First, the Japanese party system developed more and more into a party system with two major parties and several smaller fringe parties. The DPJ began to constitute the major challenger to the LDP, in particular after the inclusion of Ozawa Ichiro’s Liberal Party (LB) in 2003. In the 2003 Lower House election, the two major parties, the LDP and the DPJ, presented their policy recommendations in so-called manifestos. This made the policy orientations of the parties more transparent and easier to compare. Strengthening itself as a potential alternative to LDP government, the DPJ presented in the 2005 Lower House campaign a shadow cabinet – the government Japan would get if the DPJ won the election. All cabinets since 1994 had been coalitions and Koizumi ruled a cabinet consisting of the LDP, Kômeitô and the Conservative Party.²⁶⁵ Thus, the fringe parties played an important role as potential alliance partners. Second, it seems that while the DPJ was overall neoliberal in its reform urge in the beginning of the Koizumi era, the party answered the electoral challenge of Koizumi’s popularity by changing their political stances. The party was critical to the structure of the reforms and the pace they were supposed to be implemented with. Suddenly, Koizumi discovered that the party he

²⁶² Asahi Shinbun, 21.03.2001, p. 2.

²⁶³ Asahi Shinbun, 16.06.2001, p. 3.

²⁶⁴ Asahi Shinbun, 16.06.2001, p. 3.

²⁶⁵ The Conservative Party, established by Liberal Party members when Ozawa Ichirô wanted to leave the LDP-Kômeitô-LP coalition in 1999, was invited to join the LDP in 2005 and thus from 2005 the LDP led a majority government in coalition with Kômeitô only.

had relied on for reform support was not at all interested in that position. Instead, the DPJ became part of the anti-reform camp in Koizumi's rhetoric of fighting the 'forces of resistance'. The DPJ's reaction to Koizumi's conflict-oriented neoliberalism made it an easy target for Koizumi's populist division of the political world into pro- or anti-reformists.

5.5 Scandals during the Koizumi period – storm in a teacup?

Two major scandals challenged Koizumi's popularity. First, Koizumi relieved the Foreign Minister Tanaka from her post in late January 2002.²⁶⁶ Tanaka Makiko – daughter of LDP champion Tanaka Kakuei – had been a popular member of the Koizumi cabinet as she played an important role in the image construction of Koizumi as the man with the ability and courage to challenge the political status quo. But, due to several scandals and ultimately the inability to cooperate with the bureaucracy in MOFA, Koizumi sacked both Foreign Minister Tanaka and Vice Foreign Minister Nogami Yoshiji.

Second, in May 2004, information about politicians' lack of contributions to the National Pension Scheme (NPS) leaked to the press. In the process of disclosure about who was involved, many prominent members of the Koizumi cabinet – including Koizumi himself – were portrayed as lawbreakers. Koizumi claimed that the non-payment happened in a period when enrollment was not compulsory to politicians (prior to 1986). But legal details aside, campaigning on a clean record, the pension scandal hurt Koizumi's projection of fighting the corrupt practices of the political establishment. In addition, being in the midst of preparing a revision of the NPS, the pension scandal was a serious blow to Koizumi's momentum of reforming social security. In addition to Koizumi, Fukuda Yasuo (Cabinet Chief Secretary), Takenaka Heizō (Minister of Economic and Financial Policies) and Tanigaki Sadakazu (Minister of Finance) were also accused for non-payment of their NPS obligation.²⁶⁷ Fukuda resigned and Koizumi lost an important cabinet spokesperson and adviser. The DPJ pursued the pension scandal with Argus eyes, also internally. In the DPJ, seven members resigned their posts as chairmen in committees in the Diet and in the DPJ, among them Ozawa Ichirō and Kan Naoto.²⁶⁸

5.6 Reform attempts – confrontation with the heart of the LDP

As part of his populist ideology and rhetoric, Koizumi promised to fight the status quo of the LDP. Not only was this done by confronting the traditional policy platform of 'conservative orthodoxy' with neoliberal reforms, the Koizumi cabinet also prepared and proposed policies in a different manner than what was expected within the LDP. Koizumi chose his cabinets with less weight on factions and

²⁶⁶ *Japan Times*, January 31, 2002.

²⁶⁷ *BBC News*, May 7, 2004.

²⁶⁸ *Japan Times*, May 19, 2004.

seniority and during his premiership, the ministers were changed to suit his reform plans.²⁶⁹ Second, an important policy mandate was given to Committee on Economic and Fiscal Policy (CERP) – the main Koizumi committee with Minister Takenaka as leader. CERP proposed and pushed for neoliberal reforms. To improve the understanding of Koizumi's political practice, the reform processes are examined. The two major reform processes of the Koizumi Cabinet – privatization of special corporations and postal services – offer insight into the political practice. Although Koizumi's promise to improve the activity of the Japanese economy played an important role in his popularity, his legitimacy as a reformer was based upon efforts to change politics-as-usual.

Due to strong performance in the LDP presidential campaign and the Upper House elections in August, the momentum of the reform project was strong in the latter half of 2001. The Koizumi Cabinet was eager to plan, propose and conduct privatization. Koizumi's neoliberal reform number one – privatization of Japan Post (JP) – was, however, spared from discussions due to an earlier reform stemming from the Hashimoto Cabinet where Koizumi had been a minister.²⁷⁰ During the Hashimoto cabinet, it had been decided that the Postal Services Agency (PSA) was to be established as a government corporation, JP, and function more as a private business.²⁷¹ As long as the process of transforming the PSA into JP, stipulated to 2003, was underway, Koizumi told the public that he placed postal privatization as a long-term goal.²⁷² He wanted to proceed with privatization after the establishment of JP.

Instead the Koizumi Cabinet pushed privatization of the special public corporations to the reform frontier. In October 2001, Koizumi announced that he sought not only to cut public financing to special corporations by one-third, but also to scrutinize the budget application process and restructure it with the purpose of reducing massive debts.²⁷³ The financing for the special public corporations stems from Fiscal Investment and Loan Program (FILP) – “a huge financial organ operated by the public sector.”²⁷⁴ FILP is financed through postal service savings and the public pension scheme, in addition to taxes. The reforms of special corporations and Japan Post were thus connected, as the former spent the money that the latter provided. Privatization was seen as making the corporations subject to the profitability requirement of the market and reduced the politicians' influence on decisions.²⁷⁵

On 19th December 2001, the ‘Reorganization and Reform Plan of Special Public Corporations’ was approved at a Cabinet meeting.²⁷⁶ In June 2002, Koizumi established a committee for discussing the privatization issue – ‘Committee for the Promotion of Privatization of the Four Highway-related

²⁶⁹ Shiraito in the Kabashime Seminar, 2008.

²⁷⁰ Kawabata, 2006, p. 77.

²⁷¹ Kawabata, 2006, p. 77.

²⁷² *Asahi Shinbun*, April 25, 2001, p. 1.

²⁷³ *Nikkei Shinbun*, October 10, 2001.

²⁷⁴ Carpenter, 2004, p. 72.

²⁷⁵ Kawabata, 2006, p. 88.

²⁷⁶ Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transportation, 2005.

Public Corporations' (*dôro kankei yon kôdan min'eika suishin iinkai*, from here Highway Committee) – with the Honorary Chairman of *keidanren* as leader, two academics, two corporate representatives (including a senior expert from McKinsey Japan), a journalist and the writer Inose Naoki. Inose had for several years established himself as a criticizer of waste in the highway construction sector.²⁷⁷ The appointment of Inose was opposed by the *dôro zoku* politicians since he was seen as too radical.²⁷⁸ To appoint reform-oriented non-politicians – academics, authors and businessmen – was enough to provoke the *zoku* politicians. In December the same year, the Highway Committee delivered their proposition for the four highway corporations to the cabinet. The final plan proposed organizing the four highway corporations as five privatized operating companies with a public holding company that would lease the highways to the private companies. With the leasing income, the holding company would pay back the debt. The *dôro zoku* immediately opposed the proposal. MLIT and the *dôro zoku* were concerned with the continuation of the highway construction plan – 2,383 kilometers of a total of 9,342 kilometers were still to be built.²⁷⁹ After a year of discussions between the Koizumi Cabinet, the LDP *dôro zoku* and the bureaucrats in the MLIT, an agreement was reached: a structure where a holding company leasing the highways to *six* privatized highway companies would be set up. In addition, the government expenditure on highways was to be reduced. However, contrary to the reform-oriented Highway Committee's proposal and Koizumi's initial goal, the debt was to be repaid in 45 years instead of 30, a highway plan of building up to 2,300 kilometers was established and funds could be channeled from public sources to the private highway companies.²⁸⁰ The *National Expressway Bill* passed in the Diet in June 2004 and the privatization was conducted in October 2005. The reform has been seen as contributing little to the objective of reducing the construction of inefficient highways and limiting the debt.²⁸¹ Although reform was enacted in theory, Koizumi's plan to make the Japanese public corporations subject to market forces was not completed.

While the structural reform of highway companies ended in a compromise with the bureaucrats and *dôro zoku*, the *war* on postal services ended in the fiercest battle witnessed in Japanese politics in years. To prepare for the post-2003 period, already in May 2001, Koizumi established Advisory Council to Consider the Modalities of the Three Postal Businesses. At the opening ceremony, Koizumi argued that “[t]he issues of postal services is one of the largest challenges we are facing, having an enormous impact on future administrative and fiscal reforms, and is one of the predominant agenda items to be tackled by my Cabinet”²⁸² and continued with:

²⁷⁷ Inose 1997. For further arguments on highway privatization, see his other contributions: 2001; 2003; 2006.

²⁷⁸ Kawabata, 2006, p. 89.

²⁷⁹ Kawabata, 2006, p. 88-90.

²⁸⁰ Feldhoff in Sorensen and Fruck, 2007, p. 107-08.

²⁸¹ Park, 2011, p. 232; Kawabata, 2006, p. 92; Carpenter, 2004, p. 79.

²⁸² http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/koizumipho/2001/06/04yusei_e.html. Retrieved 25.01.11.

‘Before, it was taboo to touch upon the possibility of privatizing the three state-owned postal services. However, I wish that this panel will undertake discussions over the coming year, including those on privatization, forswearing arbitrary and biased views on the modalities for the postal services after they have been reorganized as public corporations.’²⁸³

Covering his intentions of privatization behind rhetoric of objectivity, Koizumi’s stances on the issue of postal services were well known. His intentions were expressed through the composition of the committee: the Postal Council was set up with professors in economics and business leaders with pro-reform attitudes. The chairman, Morishita Yoichi, was a well-known postal privatization proponent.²⁸⁴ The report that the Postal Council handed over to the Koizumi Cabinet in September 2002 presented three different scenarios for reorganizing the Japan Post: a government-owned special corporation handling mail service, banking and insurance, a private company in the same industries or a private company in mail service and total abolishment of any involvement in the two other industries. Instead of being a report in favor of privatization, it was more of a roadmap for further inquiry and studies. The plan was to present privatization proposals at the same time as the bill for turning the Postal Service Agency into Japan Post was sent to the Diet.²⁸⁵ The *yûsei zoku* opposed the proposals, as they considered the monopoly a guarantee behind maintenance of the postal network.²⁸⁶ Koizumi ordered the MPT to prepare a bill for privatization of the mail delivery service.²⁸⁷ The ministry delivered a draft of the bill in March 2002, but included several conditions limiting the competition.²⁸⁸ These conditions left the largest package delivery company uninterested in competing with Japan Post.²⁸⁹ The *yûsei zoku*, on the other hand, opposed the bill. To avoid the *zoku*, Koizumi did not send the bill draft to discussions in the Policy Affairs Research Council (PARC) and LDP’s General Affairs committee (GAC) – which is custom LDP political practice.²⁹⁰ This was a radical step in LDP policy-making. It was unheard of to not discuss the policy proposals with the LDP politicians in the Diet. Instead, the Koizumi Cabinet finished the proposal and sent the bill directly for voting in the Diet in April.²⁹¹ But the *yûsei zoku* continued their pressure on Koizumi. Nonaka Himaru – the leader of the *yûsei zoku* and an important figure in ‘conservative orthodoxy’ – tried to negotiate with Koizumi. Koizumi was not, however, interested in making compromises.²⁹² In a Lower House session in May 2002, Koizumi stated that the bills were just a first-step to total privatization of Japan Post.²⁹³ But the LDP leaders, including PARC chair Asô Tarô, told Koizumi that the bills would be voted down if he did not amend

²⁸³ http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/koizumipho/2001/06/04yusei_e.html. Retrieved 25.01.11.

²⁸⁴ Kawabata, 2006, p. 80.

²⁸⁵ Kawabata, 2006, p. 80.

²⁸⁶ Kawabata, 2006, p. 80.

²⁸⁷ Kawabata, 2006, p. 81.

²⁸⁸ Kawabata, 2006, p. 81.

²⁸⁹ Kawabata, 2006, p. 81.

²⁹⁰ The system of letting PARC and the General Affairs Council discuss and review policy proposals dates back to the Ikeda cabinet in 1962, and was practically made into a LDP habit during the 1970s. See Mulgan, 2003, p. 78.

²⁹¹ *Asahi Shinbun*, April 26, 2002, p. 1; April 27, 2002, p. 2.

²⁹² Kawabata, 2006, p. 82.

²⁹³ *Asahi Shinbun*, May 22, 2002, p. 3.

on the bills – and Koizumi was then forced to make certain compromises.²⁹⁴ With the bills passing the Diet July 24 2002, the mail delivery market was liberalized – somewhat limited – and Japan Post was established in April 2003.

With major support in the 2003 presidential election, Koizumi proceeded with his privatization plans. He instructed his Minister of Economic and Fiscal Policy, Takenaka Heizô, to proceed with the privatization plans. In the 2003 Lower House election, Koizumi made postal privatization a top priority policy promise to the public. Together with its coalition partners, the LDP won a majority of the seats. Koizumi interpreted the results as a voice for privatization among the people.²⁹⁵ Now, the CEFP continued the privatization proposal research. Already in August 2004, the CEFP delivered the basic plan for privatization – where it proposed to abolish Japan Post in 2007, break the company into five private companies with a government holding company and then sell off shares over a ten-year period. Koizumi reshuffled his cabinet and only allowed reform-oriented ministers. He even made a new ministerial position, Minister of Postal Service Privatization, for Takenaka in addition to being the Minister of Economic and Fiscal Policy.²⁹⁶ In April 2005, Koizumi decided upon a final outline of the privatization bill. Certain changes had been made to the CEFP proposal to tune with the opinion among LDP Diet members.²⁹⁷ There certainly was opposition to the bill. When Koizumi submitted the privatization bill to the Diet, LDP members as well as the opposition parties – including the DPJ – sought to reject it. Through talks with the LDP leadership, Koizumi adjusted the proposal slightly.²⁹⁸ The bill passed the Lower House with only five votes securing majority as 37 LDP members voted against and 14 abstained from voting.²⁹⁹ In the Upper House, however, the bill was rejected – with a full-scaled mobilization by the *yûsei zoku*. Although there were two more years left in the 4-year Lower House period, Koizumi – as he had threatened – dissolved the Lower House immediately on August 8, 2005. The following month, Koizumi campaigned on the election as a means for the people to get rid of LDP's politics-as-usual, the power of the bureaucrats and the influence of vested interests. Koizumi presented postal privatization as the salvation of the Japanese economy and politics.

Over time, it seems that Koizumi calmed the harsh critique of the LDP politics, corruption and factions. Not that he did not talk about his fight against the 'forces of resistance' and anti-reformists, but Koizumi became fully consumed with leading a government with structural reforms first on their priority list. His two main structural reforms – privatization of highway corporations and Japan Post – were demanding policy issues. Also, Koizumi pursued an active foreign policy, with terrorist legislation, the Iraq War and North Korean visits on the menu. Yet, that was prior to Koizumi's

²⁹⁴ Kawabata, 2006, p. 83.

²⁹⁵ Kawabata, 2004, p. 84.

²⁹⁶ The Ikuo Kabashima Seminar, 2008, p. 288.

²⁹⁷ *Nihon Keizai Shinbun*, April 25, 2005, p. 1.

²⁹⁸ *Nihon Keizai Shinbun*, June 29, 2005, p. 1.

²⁹⁹ *Yomiuri Shinbun*, July 6, 2005, p. 4.

decision to dissolve the Lower House. Koizumi's governance experienced a dramatic turn in summer 2005, when it became clear that the privatization of the Japan Post would not be accepted in the Diet. As Koizumi's number one policy goal, for him, it was totally unacceptable that the anti-reformists had acquired enough support to veto the bill. Koizumi threatened thus to use his constitutional right to dissolve the Lower House and call for a new election. He used rhetoric with strong pathos to underline his privatization desire: "[postal privatization] is my belief. I am so prepared that I will conduct it even if I get killed."³⁰⁰ Although few anticipated that he would actually carry out what he threatened, the same evening that the Upper House rejected the privatization bill, Koizumi did as promised. After dissolving the Lower House of the Diet the 8th of August 2005, Koizumi held this speech to the crowd of journalists:

'Today, [I] dissolved the Lower House. I am placing the denial of the postal privatization bill in the Upper House at the reform stronghold [*kaikaku honmaru*]. That is because the Diet makes the judgment that postal privatization is not necessary. In other words, this dissolution is a postal politics dissolution. I believe I want to clearly ask all of the people the question of whether you are agreeing with postal privatization or if you are against.

I have developed the emphasis on privatization since I appeared in the LDP presidential election four years ago. I appealed for the necessity of postal privatization that the LDP and the opposition parties hate, I became the president of the LDP and then I became the prime minister. At the same time as they hate postal privatization and say that they want to replace me, the LDP elected me to president, also after I became the prime minister. Despite this, now they are in opposition to postal privatization. Even the Democratic Party of Japan that argues to leave to the private sector what the private sector can do states that the current state of the public corporations is fine. Isn't that weird?

I believe that in order to conduct real administrative and financial reforms and develop the emphasis on attempting to create efficiency through simplification, decrease public waste [*amari seifu ga kan'yo shinai*] and open the work of government offices for the private sector we need to conduct the privatization of the postal services. Around 400 years ago, Galileo Galilei presented the heliocentric theory that the world moved in the midst of the geocentric theory and he was found guilty. It is said that, at that time, Galileo stated that despite this [he was found guilty], the world moves. I believe the LDP that has become a real reform party that wants to fight the DPJ that opposes postal privatization and [I] want to hear what kind of judgment the people has.'³⁰¹

Stating that a reform stronghold [*kaikaku honmaru*] obstructs the privatization of postal services, Koizumi dissolved the Lower House to enable the people to be heard on this fundamental element in his reform project. Postal privatization was proposed as being necessary for efficiency, to decrease waste and to open for market forces in the Japanese economy. Not only were there anti-reform forces in his party, Koizumi also found the same opinions in the main opposition party. Koizumi had apparently few friends inside the political system and thus the forthcoming election was framed as two-sided conflict - a pro-Koizumi or anti-Koizumi election. Comparing himself with a well-known fighter, Galileo Galilei, the people were asked whether they support the single politician telling the truth or the backwards old-guard.

Koizumi forced Minister of Forestry, Fishing and Agriculture, Shimamura Yoshinobu to resign on the 9th of August, after Shimamura opposed Koizumi's decision to dissolve the Lower House.³⁰²

³⁰⁰ Asahi Shinbun, August 7, 2005.

³⁰¹ Koizumi Jun'ichirō at a press conference [*kisha kaiken*], 8th of August, 2005. Quoted from Uchiyama, 2007, pp. i-ii.

³⁰² The Kabashima Seminar, 2010, p. 290.

Koizumi proceeded by throwing out the LDP candidates that had opposed his bill in the Lower House – including LDP champion Kamei Shizuka. These no-longer-LDP-members started new parties to compete with the LDP in their home constituencies. In response to the question of what he thought about the outlaws’ attempt to start new parties, Koizumi answered in a liberal manner: “These [thrown-outs] are against privatization. How they develop such an emphasis is a matter of freedom, I believe.”³⁰³ In each of the districts of these 37 former LDP members, Koizumi placed ‘assassin candidates’ (*shikyaku kôho*) – either handpicked famous persons or chosen by the local LDP branch – to compete with the independently running outlaws. The benefit of this political move was threefold. First, he got more control over the appointment of the election candidates. Second, the claim that he renewed Japanese politics got more substance – he threw out old anti-reformists and brought in new players. Third, the newcomers relied to a significant degree on Koizumi’s efforts and thus he could assume their interest in supporting his reform cause.³⁰⁴

Everything was at stake for Koizumi in this election. His privatization efforts were based on a high degree of support from the public, as his formal power base in the party was neither stable nor particularly strong. He framed the election as a pro-Koizumi or anti-Koizumi election and argued for the need to involve the people in the choice: “It is an election of support or opposition to postal privatization. I believe that I will receive a judgment of approval from many people.”³⁰⁵ Koizumi would not continue as prime minister if he lost the election: “If the ruling parties are not able to achieve majority, we will not be able to keep power and I will thus resign.”³⁰⁶ The call for a new election offered the public the opportunity to tell the policymakers what they thought about the direction Koizumi steered Japanese politics in.

Koizumi was aware of the need to inform the people: “It is an election of the policy choice of postal privatization, and I want to put in efforts to deepen this understanding [for the voters]”.³⁰⁷ While the DPJ and other parties wanted to discuss a plurality of policy issues, Koizumi focused solely on the privatization issue in the election campaign. He spent most of his time arguing for postal privatization.³⁰⁸ At the same time, postal privatization was not only privatization per se; Koizumi projected the reform in the broader light of reform of Japanese politics and the economy. Koizumi argued: “This election is not only about privatization of the postal services, but the issue is structural

³⁰³ *Asahi Shinbun*, August 17, 2005, p. 1.

³⁰⁴ One of them, Arai Etsuji, faced the former LDP member Koizumi Ryûji (competing for his fourth period in the Lower House) in the 11th district of Saitama prefecture (north of Tokyo) left no doubt that he supported Koizumi: “Postal privatization is a part of the structural reforms. We cannot let the first step of the reforms fail. I feel the wonderfulness of the prime minister’s position and I am really touched by it.” *Asahi Shinbun*, August 14, 2005, p. 25.

³⁰⁵ *Asahi Shinbun*, August 9, 2005, p. 1.

³⁰⁶ *Asahi Shinbun*, August 9, 2005, p. 1.

³⁰⁷ *Asahi Shinbun*, August 14, 2005, p. 2.

³⁰⁸ See for instance *Asahi Shinbun*, August 31, 2005, p. 2. Koizumi spent 81 percent of his time discussing postal privatization, 12 percent of the time he talked about CoolBiz (Japanese government campaign encouraging people to wear lighter clothes, companies to set their air conditioners to 28C, etc.) and the rest on introducing his candidates.

reform of the country!”³⁰⁹ Thus, a vote for Koizumi’s LDP members was a vote for improved economic conditions, less clientelism and structural corruption in politics and a better Japanese society. Koizumi emphasized that the election was about privatization: “this time, it is an election I want as a national referendum on support or negation of postal privatization” and that he asked the *people*: “I want to offer to the people only the option of whether [they] support or oppose [the privatization bill].”³¹⁰

The 2005 September Lower House election resulted in a landslide victory for Koizumi’s party – among the best election in LDP’s history.³¹¹ Referred to as *Koizumi Magic* and the *Koizumi Hurricane*, Koizumi gained momentum to finish his last year as prime minister with postal privatization: “When I look at the results of the election, I react as it is the voice of the people saying: keep on going with the structural reforms! I will complete the law of privatization of the postal services that was opposed by the former parliament.”³¹² Again, pointing to the conflict character of the political process, Koizumi stated, “Opposition and objection have been strong but I will promote the passing [of structural reforms].”³¹³ The political strategies of splitting the political establishment, emphasizing conflict, and asking the *people* to be judges, worked in Koizumi’s favor. Koizumi’s emphasis on a populist ideology provided electoral success again.

5.7 Koizumi’s political practice – building upon Nakasone’s legacy

Kenneth B. Pyle provides a study of Japanese foreign policy-making in *The Japanese Question*. Contrary to what Pyle finds as normal premiership style in Japan – “[t]he Japanese decision-making process always had tended to inhibit a bold, personalized style of leadership”³¹⁴ – he defines the leadership of former Prime Minister Nakasone (1982-87) as containing three characteristics: first, Nakasone “adopted a high-profile, top-down, some would say presidential-style, leadership”, with a “strong personal element.”³¹⁵ Second, Nakasone utilized his office to ‘maximum advantage’, although Pyle also finds that “[t]hough often more rhetoric than reality, more show than substance, more promise than performance, these diplomatic activities gave Japanese foreign policy a more activist cast.”³¹⁶ Third, Nakasone assembled committees to investigate issues of concern. The committees were collected with people that shared Nakasone’s ideological outlook. Advice from the committees

³⁰⁹ *Asahi Shinbun*, September 03, 2005, p. 7.

³¹⁰ *Asahi Shinbun*, August 13, 2005, p. 1.

³¹¹ LDP got more representatives than in the 1986 Nakasone election, but due to changes in the election system, the support is calculated to be around the same. Interestingly, the 1989 election was among the worst in LDP’s history, which somehow resembles the 2007 election.

³¹² *Asahi Shinbun*, 22.09.2005, p. 1.

³¹³ *Asahi Shinbun*, 22.09.2005, p. 1.

³¹⁴ Pyle, 1992, p. 67.

³¹⁵ Pyle, 1992, p. 88.

³¹⁶ Pyle, 1992, p. 88-89.

legitimized Nakasone's views on topics such as "defense, education, the Yasukuni Shrine, and the structure of the economy."³¹⁷

Pyle's characteristics of Nakasone's policy style are remarkably similar to the way Koizumi dealt with the resistance within the LDP. Koizumi's policy strategy was top-down in the sense that the policy proposals were produced in cooperation between the *kantei* (prime minister office) and the cabinet and with input from external non-parliamentary committees. The 'down'-side of the equation, the LDP Diet parliamentarians were not asked for opinions until the laws and budgets were handed to the Diet for voting. This was in conflict with the traditional LDP practice, where the PARC and the GAC had major influence on policy preparation. In fact, the leaders of the PARC and GAC are considered top positions in the LDP hierarchy. Also, Nakasone and Koizumi sought to keep the bureaucracy outside the policy preparation process.³¹⁸ When Koizumi entered the *kantei*, prior reforms by the Hashimoto (1996-98) and Obuchi (1998-00) Cabinets secured a larger role for the prime minister vis-à-vis the parliament.³¹⁹ Advisory committees are a much-used tool for cabinets to investigate policy matters for any cabinet. What stands out in Nakasone and Koizumi's use of committees is the hand-picked committees with few opponents to the prime minister's ideological position.³²⁰ Instead of investigating political issues from several points of views, the reports produced by these committees are meant to argue in favor of the prime minister's position. As we have seen, during the Koizumi period, many LDP members held diametrically different ideological positions. The committees therefore contributed to larger legitimacy of Koizumi's arguments, to more information in the media on Koizumi's arguments and to increased conflict with the anti-reform camp within the LDP and among other parties.

However, Koizumi did not only follow in the footsteps of former Prime Minister Nakasone: rather, he was innovative in his fight against the 'conservative orthodoxy'. Koizumi developed a unique and aggressive populist stance towards his party and declared that he was willing to crush the party. When in power, he handpicked his cabinet to suit the structural reform project. Over time, he reshuffled the cabinet to fit his reform aspirations. It was in 2005 that he made his mark among the list of Japanese prime ministers. Koizumi's eagerness to privatize JP was large. When he understood that the privatization bill might fail to pass the Diet, he threatened to dissolve the Diet. Even though few believed him, in the case of enough opposition, he did as promised. Koizumi went some steps further, however, throwing out the dissidents from the party. This was definitely in conflict with traditional

³¹⁷ Pyle, 1992, p. 89.

³¹⁸ Shinoda, 2007, p. 26.

³¹⁹ See Shinoda, 2007 for further details. That Abe Shinzô became LDP president and prime minister of Japan after having served as Chief Cabinet Secretary under Koizumi shows that the position of the *kantei* had increased in LDP circles.

³²⁰ CERP is similar to Nakasone's second *rinchô* – a committee that identified and pushed for neoliberal reforms in the mid-80s.

LDP politics. Then, he handpicked assassin candidates to outmaneuver the dissidents in the upcoming election. Finally, he did not let the dissidents that were successful in the election reenter the LDP. Some of the more experienced politicians of the LDP were suddenly cut off from the LDP umbrella by the fighter himself. Thus, like Nakasone, Koizumi was a pioneer in terms of developing policy-making to strengthen the Japanese premier's ability to implement policies and to acquire control of the party.

Was the policy-making of Koizumi populist? Not necessarily: we may see a Japanese prime minister using the same methods for policy implementation as Koizumi without sharing the populist ideology. The conflict-oriented, aggressive and innovative political practice was, however, definitely in line with the populist ideology of fighting for the people against the political establishment. If Koizumi had confined himself to traditional politics-as-usual within the LDP, it would have been much worse to legitimate the populist ideology of fighting 'the forces of resistance'. In Koizumi's case, the ideology of populism was also expressed in political practice – not only as rhetoric (written and oral statements). Since Koizumi always initiated the policy debate with radical policy proposals – with great distance from status quo – he was able to be in constant political battle with more pragmatic politicians, the defenders of status quo *and* opponents of neoliberalism. Since the Koizumi Cabinet proposed a variety of reforms in many different areas (as shown in Chapter 4), there was always a reform or more in motion. Defeats – also termed compromises – could therefore be more easily accepted in the short-term to increase the pressure in other policy areas. The 2005 Lower House dissolution and the subsequent assassin candidate selection and dissident ejection represented the ultimate populist action in newer Japanese political history.

5.8 The political culture of Japan – Koizumi as a peculiarity

In the aftermath of his defeat by Koizumi in the presidential election in 2001 Asô Tarô stated that Koizumi won: "because he was the anti-thesis of the traditional LDP politician."³²¹ Koizumi Jun'ichirô was a peculiarity in Japanese politics. As McVeigh comments "within Japan, slight deviations from the orthodoxy invite charges of nonconformity".³²² In the field of national politics, Koizumi was such a deviation. Not only was his hairstyle peculiar, he often spoke freely and informally, unlike other high-profile politicians. He showed up in talk shows, wide shows, sumo matches, ate noodles, and enjoyed Elvis Presley, etc. In other words, Koizumi proved to be less formal and made of a different political material than his predecessors. The social and cultural cleavage between formal officials of the government, e.g. bureaucrats and politicians, and normal people can be large in Japan. Officials represents authority and are distinct men and women in Japan. Koizumi made the difference between *kan* and *min* blurry. By arguing that he was a weirdo, one that did not fit in with the rest of the

³²¹ *Japan Times*, April 25, 2001; Kabaahima and Gill, 2007.

³²² McVeigh, 2004, p. 74.

politicians, he could transcend the division and actually become one of the people. The ideology of populism is in its deepest sense about recreating a perceived (but sometimes also real) division of the political establishment and the people. Koizumi was rather successful in his pursuit of showing that he could identify the problems of the Japanese people and was intent to make a change.

It was easy to understand that Koizumi was honest about his reformist intentions. He told the public over and over, also in the form of often repeated slogans, that reforms were necessary despite the economic downturn it might cause in the short-term and that he was willing to fight for reforms. At the same time, he pointed his moral judgment on the hypocrisy of being political representatives of the Japanese people and at the same time enmeshing in the corrupt practices of the LDP voting machine (construction, highway, postal services) and *amakudari*. Few things were more frustrating in an economy characterized by low growth and increasing job insecurity than corruption and unwillingness to change practices.

Jürgen Habermas argues on behalf of the Western ideal of politics as a process for establishing consensus.³²³ Such a notion of politics shares similarities with the Japanese ideals of politics as well. I believe it is fairly uncontroversial to state that in Japan, decision-making processes, in politics and elsewhere, often have the goal of reaching consensus. This is not to say that there have not been conflicts in Japanese politics or that conflict does not exist in Japanese society. Japanese society and politics have experienced major disagreements, social upheavals, demonstrations, etc. in the postwar period. Also within the LDP, conflict has been visible. In the 1990s, several prominent LDP members left the party due to opposition to the hierarchy and policy preferences and instead promote their own political goals. Hosokawa Morihiro left the LDP, created *nihon shintô* (Japan New Party) and initiated the first non-LDP government since its establishment in 1955. In the same political turmoil, Ozawa Ichirô and Hata Tsutomu defected from the LDP and established *shinseitô* (New Frontier Party) due to conflict within the LDP in the aftermath of Sagawa Kyûbin scandal. Koizumi's companions in the YKK trio – Katô Kôichi and Yamazaki Taku – established their factions in response to difficulties with faction hierarchy. While Japanese politics are characterized by hierarchy, authority and respect, there are also situations where opposition, resistance and conflict occur. But to be perceived as necessary, the conflict is required to be legitimate. Koizumi could therefore radically defect from the ideal of consensus since he fought a 'just' struggle against corruption and undemocratic practices by politicians, bureaucrats and vested interests.

The history of defection (e.g. Ozawa and Hosokawa) showed that staying within the LDP was a smarter choice than leaving. While there was strong anti-reform support inside the LDP, there were also many politicians with inclinations towards neoliberal reform. When Koizumi won the presidential

³²³ See for instance Habermas, 1986.

election in 2001, Koizumi acquired the most important political position in Japan and thus a platform from which to prepare policy change. With the support of *kantei*, various committees with special competence, and a number of reform-oriented ministers, Koizumi could repeatedly provide reform initiatives as attacks on the anti-reform group. It became increasingly visible how attached Koizumi was to reform and how persistent the anti-reformists were to fight back. The 2005 Lower House election gave Koizumi a splendid opportunity to beat the anti-reformists in the LDP and the DPJ. The LDP proved to support, through two presidential elections, a populist with a vision of major change, both in terms of ideology and in terms of policy-making.

While the populist literature (mostly on Western Europe) is willing to characterize populism as an ideology, Japanese scholars refer to Koizumi's populism as a strategy and a method.³²⁴ The Japanese scholars seem to only acknowledge that his conflict-orientation, 'story-telling politics' and moral division of the political landscape into *kan* and *min* were strategies to be supported by the electorate. I do believe, however, that to limit Koizumi politics into being merely a strategy and a method is a failure to grasp the strong ideological content of his project. The populist ideology represents a major ideological attack on 'conservative orthodoxy', on politics-as-usual and the power of *kan*.

While Gluck shows the presence of the *min-kan* dichotomy in the East Asian political thought - but with a new political content through the democratization processes in the late Meiji period - McVeigh argues that the dichotomy has existed since the Meiji restoration. There seems to be a latent potential for political populism in Japanese society, due to the relationship between the authority of the government and people's influence on politics. The potential differs in time however. Taggart discusses the conditions for populism and states that: "Populism is not the politics of the stable, ordered polity but comes as an accompaniment to change, crisis and challenge."³²⁵ Also in Japan, the percussive power of populist ideology and rhetoric seems to be strengthened in times of crisis, perceived or real. When Koizumi entered the presidential campaign in 2001, the feeling of crisis, both within the LDP and in society was arguably pronounced.

There are major differences in the political circumstances in the long historical period of modern Japanese history. The late Meiji state and the state under the Taishô democracy sought to be non-political, i.e. immune to the political struggle that came along with parliamentary democracy.³²⁶ In fascist Japan, the government *was* politics, in the sense that the authoritarian state sought total control over politics, i.e. the state sought totalitarianism. In the postwar period, however, the construction of democratic institutions, e.g. the parliament, a free press, and the freedom of thought, speech and

³²⁴ This is the position of Ôtake Hideo. He is the main contributor on Koizumi's populism.

³²⁵ Taggart, 2004, p. 275.

³²⁶ Gluck, 1985.

organization, was supposed to create a public space that could check and balance the government. A symbiotic relationship between the bureaucracy and politicians in the LDP developed (the iron triangle), however, and suppressed the image of politicians as men of *min*. Instead, the people's representatives were to a large degree to be seen as *kan*. *Kan* belonged, however, to a different social and cultural, not to say socio-economic, layer of society, and thus the perceived cleavage between *kan* and *min* has been large. As long as the legitimacy is in place, *kan* may be rather immune to populist arguments and attacks. The challenge appears when the legitimacy is lost.

In this perspective, it was this particular postwar configuration of politics and government that Koizumi attacked. What ultimately constitutes his populism is this fight against *kan* in the name of *min*. Neo-liberalism was thus Koizumi's means to destroy the *kan*'s authority and power over *min*'s lives. He and his supporters, including the assassin candidates, sought to be presented as the democratic ideal of politicians as the *people*'s – or *kokumin* in Koizumi's language – representatives.

6 Nationalism and Foreign Policy

Koizumi was not only engaged in economic reform politics. Rather, Koizumi created some of his major media headlines with his reactions to events on the international scene and the way he treated the relationship with Japan's neighbors and Japan's most important alliance partner – the U.S. The proposals to send the navy to Afghanistan and the armed forces to Iraq to support the U.S. in the War on Terrorism, the active approach towards Japan's largest direct threat in East Asia – North Korea – and his staunch stance on his visits to the Yasukuni Shrine resemble Koizumi's domestic political program. Koizumi stepped outside the political establishment and challenged political norms, established perspectives and most of all political correctness. When he first became the main actor in executing Japanese foreign policy and nationalist-oriented issues, Koizumi's proposals, actions and speeches showed a statesman with strong opinions on the relevant matters.

Japan is among the largest economies in the world, it is an important player in the global capitalistic system and it is situated in an area – with South Korea, North Korea, Russia, China and Taiwan in close proximity – involving a variety of economic, geopolitical, military and historical interests and ambitions. Although Japan's ability to act freely in its foreign affairs initiatives and moves is limited by the structure of the international order, Japan's history, its alliances and its neighbors, Tokyo has a certain degree of freedom and options in the execution of its foreign policy. Koizumi and his cabinet made use of several opportunities to color Japan's position in the world order. In addition to supporting the U.S. in its War on Terrorism and to securing Japan from foreign threats, Koizumi sought to strengthen the loyalty of the Japanese nation through Yasukuni Shrine visits and a more nation-oriented education system. His nationalist orientation connects the foreign policy and domestic issues.

6.1 Overview of the chapter

In this chapter I examine Koizumi's foreign policy and nationalist approach to war memorial, Yasukuni worshipping and education reform. The themes are connected in the sense that Koizumi sought to secure the Japanese nation in an unsecure world at the same time as he sought to guide the nation in a direction he preferred. The purpose of the chapter is to identify the ideological placement of Koizumi's policy towards security issues and the nation. First, I look at Koizumi's foreign policy outlook as it was displayed in his early days as prime minister. The 9/11 terrorist attacks changed the international circumstances dramatically. I proceed by investigating the Koizumi Cabinet's reaction to the U.S.-initiated War on Terrorism, to the invasion of Afghanistan and to the Iraq War and Occupation. Then, I identify Koizumi's North Korea policy. In light of his speeches and policy preferences, I discuss the most disputable concepts in Japanese security discourse – the relationship to the U.S. and use of force. To place Koizumi's position in relation to traditional Japanese policy-

making in an ideological space, I draw upon theoretical understandings of nationalism. The literature on nationalisms and nations is vast. This holds also for the more specific topic of Japanese nationalism and nation. To grasp the nationalism inherent in Koizumi's speeches and actions, I explore theoretical contributions as well as more empirically oriented studies. With such an ideological positioning, I develop arguments on Koizumi's Yasukuni Shrine worshipping. Finally, I investigate the developments on education policies that did eventually materialize into the highly disputed reform of the Fundamental Law of Education (FLE) implementation during the next LDP prime minister's (Abe Shinzô – 2006-07) period.

6.2 Diplomatic outlook: U.S.-Japan alliance, peace and security

As the prime minister, Koizumi had responsibility to initiate policies on Japan's relationship to foreign countries and the U.S.-Japan alliance. Shinoda Tomohito provides an impressive account of how Koizumi, helped by prior administrative and Kantei reforms, could play a significant role in the foreign policy-making.³²⁷ The policy style in the area of foreign policy resembled Koizumi's attempts to reform the Japanese political economy. Koizumi put forward provocative policy proposals, established agreement among the Cabinet and the coalition partners but created conflict with the opposition in the LDP and DPJ. After major disputes, Koizumi could show willingness to compromise to achieve support for the main outlines of the original policy plans.

Koizumi had mainly focused on domestic issues during his political career, and he had less diplomatic experience.³²⁸ He could therefore have become yet another prime minister with little personal devotion to foreign policy. Instead, however, Koizumi was one of the most active prime ministers in Japanese foreign affairs post-WWII.

A day after his start-up as prime minister of Japan, on April 27, Koizumi presented his views on foreign policy, Japan's WWII responsibility and the U.S.-Japan relationship. Koizumi's press conference provides valuable insight into his initial thoughts on these topics:

'I believe that during the post-war period, in order for Japan to develop peacefully, the most important thing has been to reflect first on the Second World War, from which has come the realization that Japan must never again wage war. A policy for the future of Japan of the utmost importance is how to encourage the creation of a peaceful and respectable nation, through endeavors of the people of Japan. If the question were to be directly asked as to why Japan plunged itself into war, I believe that the most appropriate answer would be to say that Japan isolated itself from the international community. In order to see to it that never again does Japan wage war, it is of the utmost importance that the country never again isolates itself from international cooperation and the international community. From this perspective, I consider the basis for the future of Japan's diplomacy to be the friendly functioning of the Japan-United States relationship, which to date has been the most important foundation from which Japan operates. While never forgetting this foundation of Japan's diplomacy, I am convinced that through friendly and close cooperation between Japan and the United States, we can create a cooperative structure with the other countries of the world. In particular, it is of the greatest importance to maintain close and warm relations with other countries in the region, including the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation. Founded on sound relations with these countries and the

³²⁷ Shinoda, 2007.

³²⁸ Shinoda, 2007, p. 7.

foundation provided by the Japan-U.S. relationship, I believe we can further improve and develop Japan's international relations, a point that should underpin Japan's diplomacy.'³²⁹

For Koizumi, Japan's WWII participation was an error; war shall never happen again. Instead, Japan shall strive for a peaceful and prosperous Japan and international community. The solution to never wage war again is to be found in international cooperation, because the main reason behind Japan's WWII participation lies in the desolation of the country in the 1930s. The U.S.-Japan relationship plays a fundamental role in Koizumi's understanding of Japanese foreign affairs. Other countries are important as well – China, South Korea and Russia – but the U.S.-Japan relationship constitutes the ground on which relationships with other countries are premised. Thus, while Japan shall strengthen its relations with other countries, the U.S.-Japan relationship is, beyond discussion, Japan's number one.

6.3 Japanese foreign policy – the Yoshida Doctrine and the neoconservative turn

Japan's prevailing postwar foreign policy strategy was what eventually developed into a Doctrine – the Yoshida Doctrine. The doctrine is named after Prime Minister Yoshida (1948-52), who skillfully guided Japan into a postwar era with new interests, new alliances, and new cleavages on the international scene. In addition to the primacy of the U.S.-alliance, the fundamental pillars of the Yoshida Doctrine have been minimal spending on defense, no involvement in international conflict, and, most importantly, a national concentration on economic reconstruction and industrialization to maximize the economic growth.³³⁰ The Yoshida Doctrine also included suppression of political nationalism, since the tight, unequal alliance with the former arch-enemy presupposed less weight on the pride in Japanese culture (and race).³³¹ The Yoshida Doctrine has been a strong element in the ideology of 'conservative orthodoxy,' since the mainstream LDP politicians have been reluctant to international military operations and increased military spending, and have instead they have focused on the catch-up economic development of Japanese industries. Japanese scholars often term the development of a mainstream LDP as the 55' system, which refers to a party system of one strong party with a few left-wing opposition parties; a political orientation towards economic growth; the development of strong ties between certain industries (construction, highway, postal services, agriculture), the bureaucracy and LDP politicians.³³² The 55'-system, the Yoshida Doctrine and the 'conservative orthodoxy' are, in a sense, three sides of the same coin – the political and ideological hegemony of postwar Japanese politics.

While Koizumi fought this hegemony, he was not the first. Yonehara Ken shows that a negative view of the Japanese postwar state – expressed as the merchant state (*jûshô kokka*) – developed in the

³²⁹ Press conference, April 27 2001: http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/koizumispeech/2001/0427pressconference_e.html

³³⁰ See for instance Pyle, 1992. Later on, the three non-nuclear principles (*hikaku san gensoku*) have been included – no possession, production or transportation of nuclear weapons on Japanese territory.

³³¹ Pyle, 1992.

³³² See for instance Uchiyama, 2007. 55' refers to the year that LDP was established.

1980s and became popular among the political elite.³³³ The perception that Japan did not participate internationally in line with its economic power increased with Japan's economic growth. Kenneth Pyle argues that Nakasone Yasuhiro made the final breakthrough for political nationalism in postwar Japan as he strived for a more active (international) Japanese foreign policy and explicitly struggled to make pride for Japan's strengths legitimate among Japanese people and in Japanese politics.³³⁴ Pyle finds that Prime Minister Nakasone (1982-87) challenged the mainstream LDP politicians and the Yoshida Doctrine with his 'liberal nationalism' since he was an open advocate of nationalism and wanted Japan to play a larger role internationally.³³⁵ With his active foreign policy, Yasukuni visits and education reform, Koizumi followed in the footsteps of Nakasone politics. Similarly to Yonehara, Uchiyama Yû argues that Koizumi opposed the 55' system and the mercantilism (*jûshô shugi*) of the traditional LDP with his active foreign policy.³³⁶ Since Koizumi's period as prime minister involved several of the most critical events in Japanese foreign affairs in years, he had the chance to pursue his reformist approach to foreign policy and his attacks on the 'conservative orthodoxy'.

6.4 War on Terrorism: Counter-Terrorism Laws, Afghanistan War and Iraq War

Only five months after Koizumi's inauguration as prime minister, the most dramatic international event in the post-Cold War era took place. The 9/11 Al-Qaida terrorist attacks on U.S. soil (World Trade Center and Pentagon) and the U.S. government's response had far-reaching consequences for international politics. The U.S.-led 'War on Terrorism', including the military attack and occupation of first Afghanistan and then Iraq, had profound military implications for the world's only superpower and its allies. The Bush Administration's division of the international community in allies and foes ('either with us or against us') and its unilateral approach (willing to invade Iraq without the sanctioning of the UN) brought complicated ethical, military and political considerations to all of the traditional allies of the U.S. Not least for Japan, which on the one hand exercised an intimate security policy with the U.S., but on the other hand faced severe restrictions on topics such as military invasions, use of force and collective defense.

The Japanese postwar Constitution – more specifically Article Nine – states that Japan shall be a peaceful nation without a military.³³⁷ The actual implication for the Japanese military and foreign policy of this particular article has been debated and has been subject to change throughout the postwar period. During the Cold War period, Tokyo's main security strategy was the Yoshida doctrine. The end of the Cold War represented a grand shift in the structures of international politics that Tokyo had adjusted their security policy to. For the U.S.-led reply to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, Japan

³³³ Yonehara, 2011; Uchiyama, 2007.

³³⁴ Pyle, 1987; 1992.

³³⁵ Pyle, 1987.

³³⁶ Uchiyama, 2007.

³³⁷ Pyle, 1987; 1992.

continued its 'checkbook diplomacy' with a financial contribution (\$13 billion). In the 1990s, the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (linguistically not a military) were dispatched in UN operations in Cambodia and Mozambique. Entering the 2000s, however, Article Nine still imposed major limitations on the use of military force and collective defense. Though politicians can change the Constitution - and the desire to change Article Nine has been proposed by many politicians, including Koizumi - a change has yet to be conducted. It was thus within the framework of Article Nine that Koizumi and his cabinet had to exercise their foreign policy.

Anti-terrorism legislation

Koizumi and his cabinet responded fast to the terrorist attacks in the U.S. Only forty-five minutes after the attacks on World Trade Center, an emergency task force was established in *kantei* (the prime minister's office).³³⁸ After a week, on September 19, the Koizumi cabinet proceeded by proposing to send SDF airplanes and ships to assist the United States, strengthen the protection of the U.S. bases in Japan and emergency economic aid to Pakistan and India to ensure their support.³³⁹ On September 25, Koizumi met with President Bush in the U.S. where he assured his intentions of a speedy implementation of the plan.³⁴⁰ On the same day, the three ruling parties agreed upon an outline for a law: support for the U.S. in the Indian Ocean, humanitarian assistance to refugees, and the prime ministerial decision of dispatch of the SDF (a Diet approval was to be required within 20 days after dispatch).³⁴¹

As with the domestic reforms, Koizumi attempted to gather enough support for his policies prior to sending the legislation to the Diet. He needed support from his coalition partners, in particular Kômeitô. Shinoda argues that to adjust to their coalition partner, Kômeitô, the Koizumi cabinet emphasized that the Anti-Terrorism Law did not break the limits of the Constitution.³⁴² To avoid constitutional adjustment arguably also eased the acquisition of a certain level of public acceptance. As the political organization of *Sôka Gakkai* – a Buddhist sect with millions of followers in East Asia – Kômeitô takes a pacifist stance in foreign policy. On the other hand, Shinoda also argues that the Kômeitô was afraid of being left out of the coalition and therefore sought to compromise with the LDP and exclude the DPJ from any negotiations with the LDP.³⁴³ Koizumi let the opposition parties and the LDP *zoku* (policy sub-groups) review the basic content of the law³⁴⁴, but the Kômeitô forced Koizumi to hand the law to the Diet without any confirmations either from the opposition parties nor the LDP beforehand. The DPJ and its leader, Hatoyama Yukio, were ready to accept the law with a few

³³⁸ Midford, 2011, p. 114; Shinoda, 2007, p.

³³⁹ Shinoda, 2007, p. 92.

³⁴⁰ Shinoda, 2007, p. 93.

³⁴¹ http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/policy/2001/anti-terrorism/1029terohougaiyou_e.html. Retrieved 17.05.12.

³⁴² Shinoda, 2007, p. 94.

³⁴³ Shinoda, 2007, p. 97.

³⁴⁴ Shinoda, 2007, p. 95.

requirements (the SDF should not transport weapons and ammunition on foreign territory, only at sea).³⁴⁵ As the Koizumi cabinet let the law be based on UN resolutions, the law would not inflict constitutional challenges.³⁴⁶ The law passed in the Diet in only three weeks.

The war in Afghanistan broke out October 7. In Operational Enduring Freedom, U.S. and U.K. forces cooperated with other anti-Taliban groups (among them the Northern alliance) to fight the Taliban regime and hunt terrorists. Koizumi sought to provide aircrafts and Aegis destroyers to the Indian Ocean in addition to other SDF naval support. Paul Midford shows how difficult the process from bold policy statements to implementation could be for Koizumi, even with his high popularity records.³⁴⁷ Three attempts were needed to push the decision of the Aegis destroyer dispatch to the Indian Ocean.³⁴⁸ Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda Yasuo even legitimized the dispatch not on military grounds but on how it improved the situation of the sailors on other ships.³⁴⁹

The Iraq War and dispatch of the SDF

While the terrorist attacks and the war in Afghanistan created difficult policy challenges for Koizumi and his cabinet, the U.S. decision to invade Iraq represented the climax in Japanese foreign policy debates in years. How should Japan respond to calls for support of a preemptive invasion of a country? The Iraq dilemma included questions on the U.S.-Japan relationship; the degree Japan was willing to support its most important ally; terrorism; threats of weapons of mass destruction (WMD; biological, nuclear and chemical); stability in the Middle East (where most of Japan's oil imports stem from); as well as the constitutional restrictions on the use of force collective defense, and the operational use of the SDF. Koizumi's decision to support U.S. military attack on Iraq by dispatching the SDF to Iraq in an ambiguous post-war condition created massive media attention, discussions and critique.

The same day that U.S. and British forces invaded Iraq, March 20 2003, Koizumi stated his support of the actions.³⁵⁰ When Koizumi was to present his decision to support the U.S. to the public, he discarded the premade speech due the bureaucratic language made by government officials and presented instead a speech in his own words.³⁵¹ Koizumi, relying on the public support for his premiership, was placed in a difficult situation when he supported the U.S. and President Bush since he knew that the dispatch of the SDF would create strong opposition among ordinary Japanese. He was ready to fight politicians and bureaucrats, as we have seen in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, but only so with strong support from the electorate. As Shinoda notes: "Koizumi's concern was legitimate; his support

³⁴⁵ Shinoda, 2007, p. 97

³⁴⁶ Shinoda, 2007, p. 94.

³⁴⁷ Midford, 2011.

³⁴⁸ Midford, 2011, chapter 7.

³⁴⁹ Midford, 2011, p. 120.

³⁵⁰ Shinoda, 2007, p. 109.

³⁵¹ Shinoda, 2007, p. 115.

did decline.”³⁵² The invasion had been planned for a longer time, but Koizumi had actually been hesitant with expressing his support.³⁵³ But as Okamoto argues, Koizumi stayed loyal to his decision of support throughout his period as prime minister.³⁵⁴

The Koizumi Cabinet started outlining a plan for dispatch of the SDF to Iraq for reconstruction purposes when President Bush declared that the Iraq war ended on May 2 2003. The Iraq legislation was presented to the Diet on June 13. The LDP and the two other coalition partners sought to acquire support from the DPJ. The DPJ, however, desired to be counted as a responsible party also in foreign affairs, and therefore, the DPJ presented their own Iraq legislation.³⁵⁵ The major difference was that the DPJ questioned the assumption that the dispatched SDF would operate in a non-combat zone and did not acknowledge the need for SDF dispatch. Also, the DPJ wanted the legislation to be based on UN Security Council Resolution 1483 where the UN requested that the international community support Iraq’s reconstruction instead of including resolution 678, 687 and 1441 as the LDP did. The three latter resolutions legitimized the American attack on Iraq.³⁵⁶

Since the Anti-Terrorism Law was to be extended after two years had passed, the Lower and Upper House suddenly were to debate and decide upon both the Iraq legislation and the Anti-Terrorism legislation. Although the Koizumi Cabinet sought a fast approval of both legislations in the Diet, Koizumi chose to await the approval of the revised Anti-Terrorism legislation.³⁵⁷ The Iraq legislation was an urgent matter. The opposition parties were satisfied with neither the SDF dispatch nor Koizumi’s replies in the Upper House deliberations. The coalition parties, however, approved the legislation after three weeks of debates.³⁵⁸

Iraq did not develop to a secure place to dispatch SDF troops to for humanitarian and reconstruction purposes. On August 20, a large-scale terrorist attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad with 23 casualties, resulted in a UN proposal for a multinational force under U.S. control.³⁵⁹ The U.S. followed up with a UN Security Council resolution. Shinoda notes that Japan was in a particularly favorable position to lobby Syria’s support as the U.S. and Syria exercised a hostile relationship.³⁶⁰

The situation in Iraq did not stabilize. In November, the number of casualties since President Bush declared the end of war on May 2 surpassed the casualties taken during the invasion. In addition, Shinoda states that the Italian forces were attacked in Nasiriyah, which is only 100 kilometers from

³⁵² Shinoda, 2007, p. 115.

³⁵³ Okamoto, 2003, p. 7.

³⁵⁴ Okamoto, 2003, p. 7.

³⁵⁵ Shinoda, 2007, p. 123.

³⁵⁶ Shinoda, 2007, p. 122.

³⁵⁷ Shinoda, 2007, p. 124.

³⁵⁸ Shinoda, 2007, p. 124.

³⁵⁹ Shinoda, 2007, p. 125.

³⁶⁰ Shinoda, 2007, p. 125.

Samawah. The dramatic situation in Iraq, as well as the increasing domestic opposition to a hasty dispatch of the SDF in Iraq, represented obstacles for Koizumi's dispatch plans. The DPJ and its leader, Kan Naoto, pressed Koizumi in the Diet to answer on questions about SDF presence in war areas, if Koizumi still would send the SDF at the end of the year and ultimately if Koizumi would term Samawah a combat zone.³⁶¹ Koizumi answered that he was not able to know whether there was a combat or non-combat zone. Midford suggests that Koizumi may have even planned to participate in the Iraq war, not only the occupation in the aftermath of the war.³⁶² Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda, as well as other close supporters of Koizumi, however, argued against wartime participation.³⁶³

Daniel Kliman states that the popularity of the SDF's presence in Iraq increased in early 2004.³⁶⁴ He argues that the reason was not Koizumi's leadership, despite his attempts to convince people that the dispatch was necessary, but relates the increased support to the positive media coverage of the SDF in Samawah and the zero casualties the SDF experienced while in service in Iraq. This argument of an increasingly positive Japanese public is similar to Paul Midford's argument that the 1992 dispatch of minesweepers to the Indian Ocean made the Japanese public more convinced that the Japanese SDF can in fact contribute positively in international affairs.³⁶⁵

The Kômeitô was pulled between their pacifism and its responsibility as a coalition partner. The party leader, Kanzaki Takenori, asked Koizumi to be cautious in his policy outline. The leader himself travelled to Samawah – the area the SDF planned to be dispatched to – and reported that he thought the area was relatively safe.³⁶⁶ As long as the ruling parties were consulted, whenever a SDF contingent was dispatched, Kômeitô could compromise on SDF dispatch.³⁶⁷ The advance SDF was dispatched on January 16.³⁶⁸ According to some returning members of the Ground SDF, the situation in Samawah was stable. Thus, on January 26, Kômeitô agreed with the LDP to dispatch approximately 600 GSDF troops.³⁶⁹ The opposition parties in the Lower House complained that there had not been enough discussion and that the coalition partners forced through the dispatch legislation. Moreover, in the Upper House, on February 2 2004, the opposition parties boycotted the discussion due to the felt enforcement of the legislation in the Lower House. After returning a few days later, the legislation was approved on February 9. Finally, Koizumi could send the GSDF to unite with the advance unit in Samawah. Humanitarian relief and reconstruction of Iraq awaited the Japanese Self-Defense Forces.

³⁶¹ Shinoda, 2007, p. 126.

³⁶² Midford, 2011, p. 130.

³⁶³ Midford, 2011, p. 130.

³⁶⁴ Kliman, 2006, p. 137.

³⁶⁵ Midford, 2011.

³⁶⁶ <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/New+Komeito%27s+Kanzaki+checks+safety+in+Iraq,+OKs+SDF+dispatch.-a0111501441>. Retrieved 19.05.12.

³⁶⁷ Shinoda, 2007, p. 130.

³⁶⁸ Shinoda, 2007, p. 130.

³⁶⁹ Shinoda, 2007, p. 131.

In the fall of 2005, Koizumi announced that the Ground Self-Defense Forces would return to Japan in 2006. With Koizumi's support in the September election, it may seem contradictory that he wanted the SDF to return. Paul Midford argues that the return was announced to give political support to his follower's ability to revise Article 9 in the Japanese Constitution.³⁷⁰ The Air Self-Defense Forces continued for two more years to provide transportation between Kuwait and Iraq.³⁷¹

Koizumi was not able to let the SDF participate in the wartime operations. Nor was he able to let the SDF participate in policing and security measures. Instead, the SDF participated only in humanitarian relief and reconstruction work in a post-war situation. Due to strict limitations on the use of force, the SDF was protected by other countries' military engagement in Iraq; first the Dutch, then the Australians. Although Koizumi was willing to challenge the opinions of ordinary Japanese in his foreign policy, he backed down on his breakthroughs. It was, anyways, in matters concerning public waste, financial resurgence and individual freedom that Koizumi had his main interests. The 2005 Lower House election had proved that when he focused on these topics as a fight against the dominant political elites in Japanese policy-making, his own beliefs found resonance among ordinary Japanese. In opposition to the 2005 Lower House election, when Koizumi's populist ideology reached its zenith, the 2004 Upper House election campaign was dominated by the issues of pension reform and Iraq dispatch. In this election, the electorate punished Koizumi for his offensive foreign policy and neoliberal reduction of the government's responsibility for people's social security and welfare.³⁷² Ishibashi argues that: "Although most Japanese opposed the SDF's dispatch to Iraq, they were more interested in domestic economic issues at the time of the November 2003 lower-house election."³⁷³ In addition, Ishibashi reminds us that the North Korean threat showed the Japanese the value of the U.S.-Japan alliance, and many acknowledged that Japan was required to contribute to the Iraq occupation as a means to achieve reciprocity.³⁷⁴

North Korea: normalization, rachi mondai and nuclear weapons

While the Iraq policy took a significant toll on Koizumi's electorate support, the North Korea policy provided a new and different space for the populist doer. In 2002, Koizumi announced that he was to visit Pyongyang in person. The visit was supposed to be a meeting to negotiate the normalization of relations between North Korea and Japan. Tokyo moved independently to seek improved relations with its North Korean neighbor – a pariah in the international community. Koizumi sought both to normalize the relations, to increase the communication between Tokyo and Pyongyang and to

³⁷⁰ Midford, 2011, p. 141.

³⁷¹ Midford, 2011, p. 141.

³⁷² Midford, 2011, p. 139.

³⁷³ Ishibashi, 2007, p. 788.

³⁷⁴ Ishibashi, 2007, p. 788.

ultimately reduce the threat that North Korea constituted for Japanese security. The move was highly popular within Japan.

Although Japan normalized its relation with South Korea already in 1965, the Cold War and the North Korean communist regime's hostility towards the former colonial power prevented any normalization attempt during the Cold War. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Japan hoped for improved relations with North Korea, but in the 1990s the relationship worsened.³⁷⁵ The LDP politician Kanemaru Shin – a prominent member of the political current that I have termed 'conservative orthodoxy' – visited North Korean leader Kim Il-Sung and returned with a vision of convincing the LDP and MOFA to normalize relations with North Korea. However, reports on the North Korean abduction of Japanese nationals (*rachi mondai*) in the Japanese press and the subsequent investigations by Japanese police in 1992 damaged the opportunity for political support in Japan for normalization.³⁷⁶

During the 1990s, several attempts to normalize the relations failed to be completed. North Korea acted aggressively – with a Nodong missile launch in 1993, U.S. revelations of a North Korean nuclear program, and a long-distance Taepodong missile launch above Japanese airspace. At the same time, the 1990s saw the fall of the Social Party, who was pro-Pyongyang and the fall of several important LDP policymakers with an inclination to normalize the relationship.³⁷⁷

In the light of the nuclear issue and nuclear launches, Tokyo sought to normalize the relationship with North Korea. Koizumi's decision to visit Kim Jong-Il in 2002 represented "a major diplomatic initiative to normalize relations".³⁷⁸ The meeting seemed to be a major success in terms of making East Asia a more secure place, as the Japanese prime minister and North Korean signed the Pyongyang declaration, Japan agreed to supply food and pharmaceutical products, and North Korea promised to strive for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Kim Jong-Il also confirmed that the North Korean regime had abducted Japanese citizens in the 1970s:

'if Kim and Koizumi had calculated that Kim's revelation would put an end to the abduction issue, they were gravely mistaken, because it rather made the North Korean regime look even more evil in the eyes of the Japanese people. The Japanese public was enraged by the fact that more than half of the abductees were reported as dead and that the information revealed about their deaths seemed inaccurate. The issue has since received almost hysterical treatment in the media.'³⁷⁹

Suddenly, the situation, where the populist travelled directly to a threatening country to talk in person with the dictator to reduce the threat level, had turned upside down. The public reaction to the *rachi mondai* confirmation coupled with the intellectual and political right's attack on the normalization process made it impossible to continue along the lines prescribed by the treaty made by Koizumi and

³⁷⁵ Green, 2003, p. 116.

³⁷⁶ Green, 2003, p. 118-119.

³⁷⁷ For instance, Kanemaru Shin, a prominent LDP member within the 'conservative orthodoxy'.

³⁷⁸ Akaha in Hagström and Söderberg, 2006, p. 21.

³⁷⁹ Hagström and Söderberg in Hagström and Söderberg, 2006, p. 6.

Kim Jong-Il. Even Koizumi's close allies in the cabinet argued for a tougher policy line towards North Korea. Abe Shinzô, Chief Cabinet Secretary from 2005, increased his political capital within the LDP through his harsh stance on the *rachi mondai*. As Akaha notes, the nuclear challenge is a multilateral issue involving many countries, while the abduction issue is a bilateral problem that Japan and North Korea could have handled themselves.³⁸⁰ He continues by stating that the "public outcry in the country over this issue has been exploited by right-wing elements in Japan and has frustrated the normalization process."³⁸¹ What seemed to have been a historical chance to finally normalize the relations with North Korea, turned out to be a political difficulty for Koizumi. Several of the abducted Japanese came to Japan, but were not allowed to return to North Korea, despite such an agreement between Koizumi and Kim Jong-Il. The North Koreans felt that promises were not kept, and the relationship cooled. In 2004, Koizumi made an attempt to normalize the relations between North Korea and Japan by a new visit to Pyongyang. The North Korean regime however had returned to their nuclear program. Tokyo turned more towards the U.S. hostile approach to North Korea. The Bush Administration had already in 2002 pronounced North Korea as the third country in the 'axis of evil' together with Iraq and Iran.

Koizumi's attempt to normalize relations with North Korea represented an independent move by a Japanese prime minister to solve a threat in Japan's neighborhood. Prime Minister Koizumi's political capital in Washington was extensive since he had been such an ardent supporter of the U.S., both within Japan and in U.S. meetings with President Bush. In Koizumi's understanding, Tokyo was free to move independently on North Korea, but needed the U.S.-alliance to strengthen Japan's power to do so. His strong support for the U.S. War on Terrorism was also based on a belief that the U.S. was needed to provide a stable and peaceful situation in East Asia. The fear of abandonment was an important argument for Koizumi when he decided to go against public opinion on the issue of supporting the U.S. war in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The two axis of dispute: the U.S. alliance and the use of force

In the postwar period, the two major debates on foreign policy in Japanese politics concern the relationship to the U.S and the use of force.³⁸² Generally speaking, the Japanese discourse on foreign policy can be divided into four lines of arguments: cooperation with the U.S. but denial of Japanese use of force (middle-power internationalists); cooperation with the U.S. and support of use of force (normal nation-alists); distance from the U.S. and support of pacifism (pacifists); distance from the U.S. but support of military strength (neo-autonomists).³⁸³ Any politician dealing with diplomacy,

³⁸⁰ Akaha in Hagström and Söderberg, 2006, p. 21.

³⁸¹ Akaha in Hagström and Söderberg, 2006, p. 21.

³⁸² Nagai, 1983; Mochizuki, 1983/84. See also Takashi, 2006; Samuels, 2007.

³⁸³ Samuels, 2007. See also Uchiyama, 2007, for a similar argument.

international relations and foreign policy in Japan is situated in a discursive conflict involving a variety of opinions around these two axes.

The U.S.-Japan alliance constitutes one of the main pillars of Japanese postwar foreign policy. Japan's main security doctrine in the postwar period – the Yoshida doctrine – emphasized the importance of the U.S. alliance. Instead of providing for its own security, Japan was to focus on economic restoration and development and let the U.S. military hegemony and nuclear umbrella secure Japan. This position is referred to as economic nationalism, as the glory of Japan was to be achieved through economic development, growth and trade, rather than a Japan playing a greater role internationally.³⁸⁴ It was a compromise within the LDP that faced stark opposition both from the left (communists and socialists) and the right (including Prime Ministers Kishi Nobosuke and Hatoyama Ichirō)³⁸⁵, but the successes of holding military expenditures low, keeping Japan out of international conflicts and enabling the government's focus on economic growth and export increase led to a situation where “the consensus became deeply enrooted.”³⁸⁶

Great ambivalence to the U.S. has been present in Japanese politics. This is due to several reasons. First, the U.S. defeated Japan in World War II, used two nuclear bombs in Nagasaki and Hiroshima, occupied Japan from 1945 to 1952 and wrote the Japanese Constitution. The U.S. still has many military bases on the Japanese archipelago. Nationalist attempts to strengthen Japan internationally may therefore find it peculiar that the U.S. still plays a vital role in Japanese security. Second, the U.S. is a superpower with global pretensions. The fear of being dragged into wars – the fear of entrapment – has led to arguments that Japan should reduce the alliance commitment or opt out of the alliance completely. The third reason, which is totally opposite of the second, is the fear that the U.S. is not committed to the alliance and will, in the case of a serious Japanese security threat, refrain from supporting Japan. The fear of abandonment may lead to a desire to independently be able to protect Japan but may lead to calls for a strengthened relationship with the U.S.

Already in his first foreign policy speeches, Koizumi emphasized the importance of the U.S.-Japan relationship. In fact, to Koizumi, relations with any other country were premised on Japan's relationship with the U.S. With 9/11 and the War on Terrorism, Koizumi stayed committed to the U.S.-relationship. His total support of the Bush Administration - to the extent that he promised military support of the alliance- was a clear message of Koizumi's stance in the debate on U.S. attachment. He made several visits to the U.S., including one to President Bush's Texas ranch. Although people were critical of Koizumi's foreign policy, President Bush' embrace of Koizumi contributed to increasing his popularity. It seems that many Japanese are concerned with how Japan is perceived in foreign

³⁸⁴ McVeigh, 2004; Pyle, 1992; Rose, 2000.

³⁸⁵ Kishi Nobosuke (Abe Shinzō's (2006-07) grandfather) returned to postwar politics despite being sentenced to prison for his war participation, Hatoyama Ichirō (Hatoyama Yukio's (2009-10) grandfather) was also a political nationalist.

³⁸⁶ Pyle, 1992, p. 36.

countries. In particular, it is of importance to be considered in a positive light in the U.S. since the U.S. is so important when it comes to economy, international politics, but also culturally. Similar to the private relationship between Nakasone and President Ronald Reagan – popularly termed the Ron-Yasu relationship – Koizumi was able to create a good relationship with President Bush. It is important to note that Koizumi did not support the U.S. necessarily because it suited the U.S. Instead, Koizumi supported the U.S. because he thought the relationship with the U.S. was of highest importance to the Japanese nation. The relationship with the U.S. benefited Japan in its search for a secure East Asia. In particular, the U.S. military hegemony provided Japan with improved negotiation conditions vis-à-vis the North Korean regime.

The second axis of Japanese foreign policy discourse concerns the use of force. Already in late September, Koizumi raised a discussion of “It is out of the question to not let the SDF enter dangerous areas”³⁸⁷ Acknowledging the difficulty, if not impossibility, of changing Article Nine and of making Japan able to use force in their international operations, Koizumi changed his strategy: “Japan is not able to use force. For issues such as diplomacy, refugee support, economic issues, through other means than the use of force, we should to the greatest extent spare no effort.”³⁸⁸ If not able to participate in military operations, Japan and the SDF should be able to participate constructively to ensure that Japan is a responsible partner for its ally.

The dispatch of ships and personnel to Afghanistan and Iraq was a totally different policy than what the Yoshida Doctrine represented. Among the ‘conservative orthodoxy’, strong opposition to Koizumi’s policies existed.³⁸⁹ Koizumi knew he was in conflict with many Japanese on the question of participation in U.S.-initiated wars – or in the use of force.³⁹⁰ Paul Midford shows – contrary to beliefs of a widespread pacifist sentiment in Japan - that beliefs of anti-militarism and fear of entrapment make the Japanese people less skeptical to defense of the Japanese archipelago, but extremely reluctant to participate in any offensive war.³⁹¹ When the political nationalists argue for a greater international role for the SDF, increased military expenditures, the ability to use force internationally, etc., they seem to be in conflict with the majority of Japanese citizens. Koizumi explicitly announced that he was not following public opinion on the War on Terrorism. It is important to note, however, that, just as in his domestic, structural reforms, Koizumi pursued policies that he believed in. He thought it was important to support the U.S. in the War on Terrorism and sought to implement laws that enabled Japan to support its ally with more than financial means. He sought therefore to convince people that

³⁸⁷ *Asahi Shinbun*, September 25, p. 2.

³⁸⁸ *Asahi Shinbun*, September 26, p. 2.

³⁸⁹ Shizuka, 2003. See also Midford, 2011, for how Gotôda Masaharu, a former prominent LDP politician argues against military operations in relation to the first Gulf War due to the fear of a lack of civilian control of the military in Japan. He argues that if Japan begins using its military, the consequences can be fatal.

³⁹⁰ Midford, 2011.

³⁹¹ Midford, 2011. See also Midford, 2003; 2006 for the development of the arguments over time.

his stances were legitimate and in accordance with most people's sense of justice. At a press conference on December 9, 2003, Koizumi expressed: "First of all, this dispatch of SDF is for humanitarian and reconstruction assistance in Iraq. They will not engage in the use of force. They will not participate in combative activities. They are not going to war."³⁹² The statement must be understood as participating in a peculiar Japanese discourse on the use of force. The Iraq dispatch was not use of force, but rather a humanitarian and reconstruction attempt. He continues with a legitimization of SDF dispatch on the basis of the international community:

'Indeed, I believe that the international community is calling upon Japan, and the people of Japan to act in accordance with the ideals of our Constitution. I call upon the members of the SDF to undertake activities that conform to the spirit and ideals of the Constitution. This is fully justified and shows the fact that we are not thinking only of our nation. The stability and peaceful development of Iraq is essential for Iraq itself, as well as necessary for Japan. Indeed, it is necessary for the security of the world.'³⁹³

To Koizumi, despite criticism, the dispatch of the SDF to Iraq is in accordance with the Constitution. Also, world security relies on Japan's dispatch of the SDF. The discourse on use of force has traditionally been split between a pacifist left, an economic nationalist 'conservative orthodoxy' and an internationalist political right. Due to the major opposition to offensive wars, Koizumi attempted to avoid the use of force argument and rather to point to that the SDF's engagement in Iraq would contribute to an improved situation for the Iraqi people. On a radio program (national channel no. 38) on June 21 2003, Koizumi again stated that dispatch to a post-war Iraq is not participation in war, and that the dispatch to Iraq will be part of a long series of dispatches to the value of the countries receiving them:

'I have stated from the time before the war in Iraq, that although Japan does not participate in war actions, ... I want to do what we can do regarding post-war reconstruction. Japan does not at all participate in war actions. On the other hand, I want to contribute as much as possible to humanitarian relief, reconstruction and to the maintenance of safety in Iraq. There are people saying that dispatching the SDF and war are connected, but this is an argument that jumps too far. Until the present, the SDF gentlemen [*shokun*] have maintained peace and put great efforts into nation building in Cambodia, the Middle East Golan Heights, and also in East Timor, even female members of the SDF have participated, and the activity has been very valuable. Because I have filed a law for the sake of Iraq reconstruction aid, I think we should put in efforts to a fast completion. Then, together with many countries, we are supporting as best we can for the sake of Iraq reconstruction.'³⁹⁴

On another occasion, Koizumi discussed the opinion among people on the Iraq dispatch:

'By far, I believe this issue [dispatch of SDF to Iraq] holds the most interest among the people. Concerning the dispatch of the SDF to Iraq, the controversy splits the people. I believe we can say that the people that support and the people that oppose have been split into two parts. This condition is somewhat similar to the *bakumatsu* [end of the Tokugawa shogunate (1852-68)] and *Meiji ishin* [Restoration of the emperor (1868), introducing the Meiji imperial age (1868-1912)] that took place exactly 150 years ago. During this time too, a dispute [*ronsō*; lit. war of argument] took place that split the public opinion [*kokuron*] on the question of Japan's course - of whether to continue *sakoku* [policies of exclusion of foreigners] or opening the country... Now, asking me, for the sake of realizing world peace and security, I believe that it is not a question of *sakoku* or opening up the country, but instead whether standing-alone-pacifism [*ikkoku heiwa shugi*] is good or that international cooperation is good. I think Japan alone is not able to preserve Japan's security.'³⁹⁵

³⁹² http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/koizumispeech/2003/12/09press_e.html

³⁹³ MOFA: http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/koizumispeech/2003/12/09press_e.html

³⁹⁴ 38th national channel, June 21 2003: <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/koizumiradio/2003/0621.html>

³⁹⁵ 38th national radio channel, January 24 2004: <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/koizumiradio/2004/0124.html>

Koizumi presented his policy of dispatch as a dichotomy, support or not support of the dispatch. Then, he compared it to one of the most important historical periods in modern Japanese history - the starting point of modern Japan; the historical point where Japan in a sense chose to not be a feudal, agricultural society but instead to be an industrialized power house on par with the West.

Koizumi was initially interested in using force – sending ships and personnel to a combat zone in participation with the U.S. Given the major opposition, Koizumi turned the arguments and focused instead on humanitarian purposes and stated over and over again that the dispatch did not include the use of force. It is remarkable that even the strong, populist leader was not even close to achieving what he initially desired in terms of military participation when Japan's closest ally fought its War on Terror. Koizumi succeeded eventually with his dispatch, the Japanese SDF did not use force (but others had to use force to defend them), and the SDF did, in fact, provide humanitarian aid and support for the reconstruction of Iraq.

6.5 Nationalism in Japanese politics

Nationalisms are ideologies concerning the nation, i.e. the defining character of the nation (race, blood, culture, history, language, etc.), in- and out-groups, the goal of the nation and other aspects of the nation. To understand nationalist ideology, a central concept is the *nation*. According to Benedict Anderson, the nation is 'an imagined community', where people identify with each other even though they have and will probably never meet.³⁹⁶ Frank B. Tipton further explains: "Members of a national community share an ability to picture themselves belonging with and feeling a bond to every other member of their nation."³⁹⁷ Nationalism is thus about creating a feeling of being a nation *together*. Examining the different meanings of the nation in Japanese modern history, Kevin Doak stresses that nationalism is "a matter ultimately of elevating the "nation" to the central principle of social and political life."³⁹⁸ He argues further that:

'Nationalism, always and everywhere, is an effort to place the people in a conceptual, political and social order that makes sense for those who espouse that nationalism. Nationalism, then, is both cause and effect of this conception of a collective group of people as a nation. It both shapes them into a nation, and represents the effects of thoughts and actions taken on behalf of that nation. At the same time, nationalism is an ideological effort to erase the gap between the historical emergence of the nation (which may precede or postdate the state) and the political structures that claim to speak and act in the name of the nation.'³⁹⁹

³⁹⁶ Anderson, 2006.

³⁹⁷ Tipton in Wilson, 2002, p. 149.

³⁹⁸ Doak, 2007, p. 5

³⁹⁹ Doak, 2007, p. 34.

Through the modernization processes (from the Meiji period in the case of Japan), creation, re-creation and revision of the notions of nation, nationhood and nation-state have taken place. The success of nationalist intellectuals, state and government institutions, and social movements in inventing nationhood and shaping a national consciousness among ordinary people has been tremendous. In fact, according to Bruce Stronach:

‘... nationalism is one of the most fundamental elements of political culture in the modern world. It has become such a basic component of modern life that it is hard to imagine individual people who do not think themselves to be part of a nation, just as it is equally hard to imagine a world that is not divided into nations.’⁴⁰⁰

In his prominent book, *Banal Nationalism*, Billig argues that nationalism constitutes a major ideological force in contemporary societies.⁴⁰¹ He shows that nationalist ideology is reinforced through often simple and disguised ways. Billig’s contribution pays attention to how the state continuously contributes to the shaping of the national consciousness. The state plays a significant role in the creation and re-creation of feelings of nationhood as political leaders, government officials and state institutions profess a nationalist message through a variety of channels. The relationship between the state and the nation is still ambiguous in the sense that nationalist ideologies may be state-oriented or hostile to the concept of modern government. The relationship between the rise of the modern states and the evolution of nations has been characterized by both conflicts and symbiotic cooperation. This holds for Japan as well. From the Meiji Restoration, political elites have constantly struggled to define the state as a nation-state and to reinforce the notions of nation. In her seminal book *Meiji Myths*, Carol Gluck explores the diversity of the elites’ attempts to create a nation and a nation-state with unified goals. The book also displays the difficulty of the ideological process of constructing national politics, the nation and the relationship between them in the late Meiji period. Furthermore, Brian C. McVeigh shows how many social movements and interest groups have tried to move within a civil society free of the influence of the state.⁴⁰² The attempts to avoid politicization have been difficult, however, since state-society boundaries are ‘blurred’ in Japan.⁴⁰³ I examine the ideological content and ideological practice of the prime minister. Hence, a state-nationalism is under scrutiny; a nationalism that seeks to create an image of the state as the political and administrative architecture for the nation and to blend the interests of the nation with those of the state – a nation-state.

In the immediate postwar period, political nationalism was suppressed from being expressed through independent security policies, a symmetric relationship with the U.S. and rearmament. Instead, economic nationalism flourished as Japan tried to catch-up with the Western industrial production.⁴⁰⁴ The economic success of the 1960s and 1970s, however, nourished a greater confidence in the

⁴⁰⁰ Stronach, 1995, p. xiv-xv.

⁴⁰¹ Billig, 1995.

⁴⁰² McVeigh, 2004.

⁴⁰³ McVeigh, 1998.

⁴⁰⁴ Pyle, 1992; Rose, 2000.

Japanese culture.⁴⁰⁵ The Ôhira Group and Prime Minister Nakasone sought to reject the Yoshida Doctrine and to develop new foreign and domestic policies that “Japanese must attain a sense of self-confidence and national pride.”⁴⁰⁶ The new nationalist movements in Japan did not fade after Nakasone’s premiership ended. Rather, the 1990s saw a strengthening of (neo)-nationalist intellectuals, groups and movements.⁴⁰⁷ Historical revisionism, textbook debates, Yasukuni Shrine visits, the official acceptance of the national anthem and flag – all these political nationalist symbols played a greater role in the politics of the 1990s and continued into the 2000s. Moreover, the 1970s and 1980s provided a different type of nationalism. The *nihonjinron* (theories of Japanese) literature demonstrates the homogeneity and uniqueness of the Japanese people, defined by geography, race, language and culture.⁴⁰⁸ Although *nihonjinron* is concerned with cultural and psychological aspects of the Japanese nation, the strong influence in Japanese society suggests great gains for political nationalism in the currency of larger legitimacy. A strong national consciousness leads to political debates in which much valuable information is shared implicitly among Japanese.

In his examination of nationalisms in Japan, Brian J. McVeigh argues that Japan’s encounter with modernity created a reaction to renovate Japanese society: “it is almost as if, since Meiji, Japan has been on a continuous programme of national-state construction and improvement, or what might be called in other places “reform nationalism”.”⁴⁰⁹ McVeigh terms the ideology ‘renovationist nationalism’. The dynamics of renovationism are based on ideas of inferiority and hence the perceived need to reform the Japanese state and society. In the process of adapting Western institutions and methods, a perception of losing the traditional Japaneseness appears. Coping with this lack of authenticity requires more modernity, and thus the feeling of being not modern enough develops (again).⁴¹⁰ Both the economic nationalism of Prime Ministers Yoshida, Ikeda, Satô and Tanaka and the political nationalism of Prime Ministers Hatoyama, Kishi, Nakasone and Tokyo governor Ishihara are understood as conservative renovationist attempts to cope with the modernization forces (globalization, industrialization, internationalization), and the international pressure from the U.S. and the Western world.⁴¹¹ In the light of McVeigh’s notion of ‘conservative renovationism’, Koizumi’s project of neoliberal economic reform can be interpreted as yet another ‘reformist’ attempt to reduce Japan’s inferiority to the West.⁴¹² The ideology of conservative renovationism shed light on the nationalist content of Koizumi’s speeches and actions I examine below.

⁴⁰⁵ Rose, 2000.

⁴⁰⁶ Pyle, 1992, p. 95.

⁴⁰⁷ Rose/Takahashi (Seaton)/Shimazu in Shimazu, 2006.

⁴⁰⁸ Befu, 2001; Sugimoto, 1999.

⁴⁰⁹ McVeigh, 2004, p. 11.

⁴¹⁰ The process is explained in detail in McVeigh, 2004, pp. 68-69.

⁴¹¹ McVeigh, 2004, pp.

⁴¹² McVeigh mentions explicitly Koizumi’s poster - “Change the LDP. Change Japan” – as an example of conservative renovationism.

War responsibility

Issues of Japan's war responsibility and war memory have haunted Japan since World War II. While Koizumi was a political nationalist, he did not, however, offer revisionist interpretations of the Japanese war history: he was an apologist.

The prime minister is among the most important positions in Japanese politics and his opinions regarding war responsibility represent, to a large degree, Japan's official views on such matters. Prime ministerial utterances on war responsibility and memory are, therefore, scrutinized carefully by the media, intellectuals, people and neighboring countries. Koizumi was an apologist: "His annual August statements on the occasion of the commemoration of the end of the war always contained sincere remorse over what Japan did before the war and determination never to repeat it again."⁴¹³ But Koizumi did provide some unique perspectives on the history of Japan.

In the aftermath of World War II, the Japanese state and society were in a devastated condition.⁴¹⁴ The outcome of the Pacific war and Allied bombardment of Japanese cities was Japanese people suffering from hunger, war injuries and lack of basic supplies and housing. In addition, the repatriation of millions of Japanese from former colonies took place. The government (and the U.S. Occupation forces) thus concentrated on the restoration of the economy and on the construction of new, democratic institutions. With the Cold War, East Asia was divided into capitalist countries (first world and U.S.-oriented) and communist countries (second world and Soviet-oriented). Suddenly, former Asian colonies were either indirectly allies (South Korea, Taiwan) or foes (China). The question of war responsibility was therefore overshadowed by more urgent matters in international politics.

The dominant and government-backed version of the war was the one served by the Tokyo tribunal: the war was a product of the political leaders' aggression (excluding the emperor) and represented, as such, a conspiracy against an innocent Japanese population. After the Tokyo tribunal punishment of the criminals, Japan could temporarily complete the issue of war responsibility. Over time, however, a plurality of opinions has developed in the public debate on Japan's war responsibility. Philip A. Seaton shows that there are mainly five discursive positions on war responsibility: progressive, progressive-leaning, conservative, nationalist and 'don't know and don't care'.⁴¹⁵ Koizumi falls under the category 'conservatives' since he stresses 'patriotism', sentimentality for the war generation and the spirits of the dead. At the same time, Koizumi is an apologist and terms the war as one of aggression.

⁴¹³ Togo, 2010, p. 84.

⁴¹⁴ Dower, 1999.

⁴¹⁵ Seaton, 2007, p. 19.

The question of war responsibility relates to many issues, in particular Japanese military's use of comfort women, the Nanking massacre and the Yasukuni Shrine. While the comfort women issue and the Nanking massacre are matters of historical understanding and interpretation, the Yasukuni Shrine is a place for mourning the war dead, including war criminals. I discuss the Yasukuni Shrine in depth below. Regarding historical interpretation, the debate on history textbooks used in Japanese schools are a heated debate in Japan. In 1982, during Nakasone's reign, the first major discussion took place. Entering the 1990s, historical revisionism in terms of producing textbooks became a political force in Japan. Although the debate started again in 2002 when Ministry of Education accepted a revisionist textbook, Koizumi reduced the topic to a decision that was to be made by the bureaucrats. Regarding his usual approach to the bureaucracy, this argument of making historical revisionism non-political is somewhat peculiar.

On August 15, 2005, the 60th anniversary of the Japanese defeat, Koizumi "offered perhaps the most concrete interpretation of Japan's war and postwar responsibility by any Japanese head of state to this date."⁴¹⁶ Koizumi touched upon the usual connection between postwar economic prosperity and the sacrifices of the Japanese during the Pacific war: "On the 60th anniversary of the end of the war, I reaffirm my determination that Japan must never again take the path to war, reflecting that the peace and prosperity we enjoy today are founded on the ultimate sacrifices of those who lost their lives for the war against their will."⁴¹⁷ He continued with a section on his deep remorse for the 'colonial rule and aggression':

'In the past, Japan, through its colonial rule and aggression, caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations. Sincerely facing these facts of history, I once again express my feelings of deep remorse and heartfelt apology, and also express the feelings of mourning for all victims, both at home and abroad, in the war. I am determined not to allow the lessons of that horrible war to erode, and to contribute to the peace and prosperity of the world without ever again waging a war.'⁴¹⁸

The most interesting passage, however, was when Koizumi argued, "Japan's postwar history has indeed been six decades of manifesting its remorse on the war through actions."⁴¹⁹ As Franziska Sepharim correctly points out; while "this speech accentuated the concerns of the opposition and Japan's Asian neighbors rather than those of the nationalist right", Koizumi's passage on the postwar period as showing remorse is a particular ideological stance in the debate on war responsibility. According to Philip Seaton, the lack of consensus on the war responsibility and war memory has led to a never-ending postwar period.⁴²⁰ Seaton shows the complexity in different perspectives and arguments on responsibility and memory in the Japanese society and politics in the period from World War II to the present.

⁴¹⁶ Seraphim, 2006, p.

⁴¹⁷ MOFA: http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/koizumispeech/2005/08/15danwa_e.html. Retrieved 15.05.12.

⁴¹⁸ MOFA: http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/koizumispeech/2005/08/15danwa_e.html. Retrieved 15.05.12.

⁴¹⁹ MOFA: http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/koizumispeech/2005/08/15danwa_e.html. Retrieved 15.05.12.

⁴²⁰ Seaton, 2007.

Koizumi ends the apologist speech by reinforcing the peace message he has portrayed as one of the fundamental features of the Japanese government under his leadership: “On this occasion marking the 60th anniversary of the war’s end, Japan, as a peace-loving nation, expresses here again that it will work to achieve peace and prosperity of all humankind with all its resources, together with all the nations of shared aspirations.”⁴²¹

The Yasukuni Shrine Worshipping

While Koizumi was an ‘apologist’ and over and over again tried to convince Japanese people, as well as the immediate neighbors of Japan, that he sought a peaceful and stable Japan and international community, to a large degree, his efforts were unsuccessful due to his Yasukuni Shrine visits. The massive media attention that Koizumi was able to attract with his determination to annual worships at the Yasukuni Shrine contributed to his image of a conflict-seeker, a doer and a person that did not step down from his public promises. As with his other campaigns, Koizumi served rather simple but ‘common sense’ arguments. Although many Japanese were critical or indifferent to the Yasukuni Shrine visits in the first place, it seems that the attention and the critique from media, intellectuals and neighboring countries strengthened Koizumi’s image-building as a populist.

The conflict hurt the diplomatic relationship between Japan, South Korea and China; few high-level bilateral political meetings occurred between the countries during Koizumi’s premiership. It may be that Koizumi desired a compromise, and, to a smaller degree, he did indeed adjust to the criticism. Only in 2006 did Koizumi visit the shrine on the promised date - August 15th.

Already in the LDP presidential campaign in 2001, Koizumi stated that he would worship at the Yasukuni Shrine: “If I become prime minister, however much criticism there is, I will definitely worship on August 15.”⁴²² Five times – dates – Koizumi worshipped at the .Koizumi was criticized for the visits – both domestically and from abroad. Domestically, Koizumi was criticized for mixing religion and state. People even went to court to make him stop his visits. The critique was not only found domestically, however. South Korea and China claimed that Koizumi legitimated the war with his visits as class A criminals are enshrined at Yasukuni. As a result, few bilateral meetings at top leadership level took place between the countries during the Koizumi period.

To understand the Yasukuni Shrine conflict, I provide an examination of the political meaning of the shrine. I also place Koizumi’s shrine visits in a historical perspective. Then I look into Koizumi’s own arguments for worshipping at the shrine. His comments on worship provide valuable insight into a prime minister that was mostly interested in structural reform of the Japanese political economy.

The Yasukuni Shrine is a Shintô shrine constructed in 1869 to provide a spiritual place for worshipping soldiers and killed people in Japan’s wars, now ranging from the Boshin war in 1868 to

⁴²¹ http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/koizumispeech/2005/08/15danwa_e.html. Retrieved 15.05.12.

⁴²² April 18, 2001. Quoted from Wakamiya and Watanabe, 200x, p. 94.

the Pacific War (1937-45). In 1978, 16 Class A criminals from the Pacific War – including Prime Minister Tōjō Hideki and General and War Minister Itagaki Seishirō - convicted by the Tokyo tribunal in 1945, were enshrined at the Yasukuni Shrine. Notwithstanding the fact that Class B and C criminals were already enshrined in 1978, Yasukuni Shrine visits became an international issue after Class A enshrinement.

Not only is the enshrinement of war criminals contributing to making the Yasukuni worships controversial, but the war museum at the site – *Yûshûkan* – provides a revisionist historical interpretation. In the museum, the Pacific War (World War II) is presented as the Greater East Asian War (*dai tōa sensō* - a term used by the Japanese during the war), the imperialist and colonialist policies of Japan as Asian liberation and the attack on Pearl Harbor explained by U.S. policies of isolation.⁴²³

Domestically, however, the major debate on the Yasukuni Shrine relates to the separation of state and religion. In Helen Hardacre's words:

'The issue centers on the distinction between cabinet visits in official and nonofficial capacities. ... If the prime minister acts as a representative of the state, then he violates the separation of religion and state by paying tribute at a religious institution, and if he further makes an offering from public funds, then he violates Article 89. If, however, the prime minister visits a religious institution as a manifestation of his personal religious beliefs, then he is merely exercising his constitutional right to religious freedom. The problem, therefore, is how to distinguish between the prime minister's actions in his private and public capacities.'⁴²⁴

Izokukai – the Association of War-Bereaved Families – has played an important role in attracting LDP politicians to visit the shrine. While the association initially fought for social welfare policies (military pensions, widow pension, etc.), *izokukai* changed to struggle for restoring the Yasukuni Shrine to its 'wartime status' and to convince the Japanese government to provide national ceremonies for the war dead.⁴²⁵ *Izokukai* has played an important role in the discourse on Japanese war memory and the restoration of political nationalism as a successful current in Japanese politics.

Former Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro was a stable worshipper at the shrine, also during his premiership (1982-87). When he visited the shrine as prime minister in 1985, however, China criticized the Japanese government. Nakasone "intended to use his official visit to establish the identity of the nation-state (*sengo-seiji-no-sokessan*) by diluting the post-war Japanese separation of state and religion imposed by the occupation forces and upheld by Japanese centrists and leftists."⁴²⁶ The reasons were Nakasone's own experiences as a participator in the war and, since he also lacked a formal position inside the LDP, Nakasone needed the support of the *izokukai*.⁴²⁷ Nakasone refrained, however, from official visits during the rest of his time in government.

⁴²³ Visit at *Yûshûkan*, 08.12.08.

⁴²⁴ Hardacre, 1989, p. 144.

⁴²⁵ Sepharim, 2007, p. 82.

⁴²⁶ Shibuichi, 2005, p. 206. See also Masumi, 1995, p. 163.

⁴²⁷ Shibuichi, 2005, p. 206.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, only a few prime ministers have visited the Yasukuni Shrine. Prime Minister Hashimoto visited on his birthday in 1996, but the international response made him stop worshipping formally. Koizumi again attracted attention with his Yasukuni promise. It was a provocative promise, drawing massive media attention. At the same time, the Yasukuni promise could be utilized to show vigor and determination: The promise was a simple means of invitation to conflict with intellectuals, media commentators, and leftists. In addition, Koizumi could show that Japan's neighbors were not allowed to intervene in issues concerning domestic Japanese politics.

It has been hinted that Koizumi used Yasukuni Shrine worshipping as a means to satisfy conservative layers of the electorate.⁴²⁸ More specifically, Shibuichi argues that both "Koizumi and Nakasone were pressured by JABF [*izokukai*]"⁴²⁹, but Koizumi, in contrast to Nakasone, was not pressured by right-wing activists.⁴³⁰ I do not know the real intentions of Koizumi's Yasukuni worshipping. On many occasions, not even the actors know the real reasons behind their actions. The Yasukuni Shrine visits provide, however, important insight into the ideology of Koizumi and his political practice. Under the headline 'The Spirits of the War Dead [*senbotsusha no irei*]', Koizumi blogged about his Yasukuni Shrine worshipping August 3rd 2006:

'Japan has maintained peace since the end of the War without participating in war even once, and without being involved in war either. The present peace and prosperity of Japan are built on the precious sacrifices made by people who lost their lives during the War. I sincerely mourn the war dead with thoughts of respect and gratitude. ... Since assuming the office of Prime Minister, I have visited Yasukuni Shrine once a year for the express purpose of sincerely mourning those who unwillingly lost their lives to the War.'⁴³¹

For Koizumi, in accordance with his apologist stances on Japanese war responsibility, the suffering of the war dead is linked to peace and Japanese postwar prosperity. Mourning of the war dead is therefore an act for peace. Note also that he again mentions that the war dead lost their lives unwillingly. His interpretation of war history is one where the soldiers and others did not find the goal of Japanese imperialism worth dying for. He continued with a section on mourning is a matter of freedom:

'In any country and at any time, I believe it is natural to mourn the loss of those who died in war. Article 19 of the Constitution of Japan says that, "Freedom of thought and conscience shall not be violated." I think that offering sincere condolences for those who died in war in whatever style is a matter of individual freedom.'⁴³²

While criticized for visiting a shrine with Class A criminals, Koizumi emphasizes the naturalness of mourning war dead in general. Then, Koizumi's populist ideology comes to the fore in a passage where he answers to the massive critique about his stubbornness on the Yasukuni issue:

'I visit Yasukuni Shrine based on my own thoughts and do not force anyone to do the same. Nor do I myself visit Yasukuni Shrine under coercion. I am aware that there are people within the mass media and among those known as intellectuals who criticize my visits to Yasukuni Shrine. I am also aware that some nations are critical of my visits to Yasukuni Shrine. As for the opinions of these mass media commentators and intellectuals who

⁴²⁸ Watanabe, 2005.

⁴²⁹ Shibuichi, 2005, p. 212.

⁴³⁰ Shibuichi, 2005, p. 210.

⁴³¹ Koizumi, 2005.

⁴³² Koizumi, 2005.

criticize me, I cannot help but think that in essence they add up to the contention that I should stop visiting Yasukuni Shrine because China opposes such visits. Or in other words, it is better not to do things that China does not like. I wonder how these mass media commentators and intellectuals perceive freedom of thought and conscience? Is it not a good thing to express feelings of respect and gratitude to the war dead, or is there something wrong with that?⁴³³

The dichotomist division of ‘intellectuals and media commentators’ and China on the one side and Koizumi as a sincere, freedom-lover on the other resembles his populist struggle against politicians and bureaucrats on economic reforms. His rhetorical questions effectively simplify the complex Yasukuni Shrine worshipping issues into a matter of expressing ‘respect and gratitude to the war dead’; neither acknowledging the critique of merging religion and politics, nor war cultivation.

On China as a political and economic partner, Koizumi is positive; he seeks greater economic cooperation, more investments and trade. The Chinese decision to obstruct any high-level meetings with Koizumi, however, is not understandable:

‘I am ready to meet the Chinese leadership at any time. However, China takes the position that they would not conduct summit meetings with Japan as long as I continue to visit Yasukuni Shrine ... I do not understand the logic of this. If I were to say that I would not hold summit meetings because another country's ideas were different from my own ideas or from Japanese ideas, would you criticize the other party, or would you criticize me? Probably many would criticize me.’⁴³⁴

Koizumi ends the blog emphasizing that “such brutal war should never be repeated” and that the “peace and prosperity of today’s Japan is built upon the precious sacrifices of the war dead.”

The Yasukuni Shrine visits may have satisfied certain groups of voters, such as supporters of *izokukai*. Moreover, the ideological content may have been much more than what Koizumi uttered; worship at Yasukuni is enmeshed in a complex ideological construction of historical revisionism (*Yûshukan*, Class A criminal enshrinement), nationalism (prime ministerial mourning of the war dead *for* the nation, Shintô as a genuine Japanese religion), and blurring the relations between state and religion (official visits by the prime minister violate the Constitution).

At the same time, however, Koizumi boosted his populist message that he did not deviate from his promises despite heavy criticisms from neither ‘intellectuals’, ‘media commentators’ nor Japan’s neighbors. His populist conflict-orientation suited perfectly with the visits. The Yasukuni Shrine visits represented a major blow to political correctness. Everyone knew the political implications of such visits. But Koizumi did not only announce it publicly in front of the first visit, he made his an annual trademark of his struggle against political correctness. In the end, even former Prime Minister Nakasone – who himself had made the Yasukuni visits a major piece in his attempts to restore political nationalism – asked Koizumi to defer from further visits due to the deterioration in the Sino-Japanese relationship.⁴³⁵

⁴³³ Koizumi, 2005.

⁴³⁴ Koizumi, 2005.

⁴³⁵ Koizumi, 2005.

Initiating a nationalist education policy

Immediately after his inauguration, Koizumi emphasized the importance of reforming Japanese education system: “This Cabinet is striving to create education reform that cultivates awareness and pride in Japan’s traditions and culture, as well as an appreciation of the meaning of being Japanese. On the other hand, such reform should also facilitate deeper understanding of international society.”⁴³⁶ He continued with his promise to reform education in the 151st session of the Diet on May 7 2001: “Educational reform is necessary in order to engender in youth both pride and self-awareness as Japanese, as well as help develop skills critical for rebuilding Japan. My goal is to promote a national debate on how to proceed with a review on the Fundamental Law of Education (FLE).”⁴³⁷ At the same time as he sought neoliberal reforms of the education system (as discussed in Chapter 4), Koizumi wanted to initiate a debate on the content of teaching in Japanese schools. His opinions regarding the content were clearly nationalist as he sought to cultivate a notion of Japaneseness and feelings of pride of Japan among Japanese youths. The eagerness to reform the Fundamental Law of education among the political right was not new however. Neither was his emphasis on both nationalist and internationalist content in Japanese education.

When Kenneth B. Pyle discusses Nakasone and his political nationalism, he also finds that education policies were an important part of Nakasone’s fight against the Yoshida Doctrine and his eagerness to let Japan play a larger role internationally.⁴³⁸ Saito Hiro shows, however, that the eagerness to revise FLE among conservatives in the LDP has roots back to the early 1950s.⁴³⁹ Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru himself argued in 1952 that the postwar education system was failing to “thoroughly teach youths that the history of Japan is unparalleled and that the Japanese land is the most beautiful in the world, for the purpose of cultivating a love of the nation [*aikokushin*]”.⁴⁴⁰ The attempts in the 1950s to revise the FLE, however, failed due to the urgency of other reforms and the strong opposition among the left and media.⁴⁴¹ Then, the advent of high-ranking bureaucrats becoming prime ministers (Kishi, Ikeda, Satô) introduced an era of more cooperation between the government and MOE instead of FLE reformism.⁴⁴² While moral education was introduced in the 1960s, two world events in the 1970s – the breakdown of the Bretton Woods system (1971) and the oil shock (1973) – led to a focus among Japanese policymakers to implement education content that taught pupils the importance of the international community.⁴⁴³ When Nakasone acquired the premiership, he sought on the one hand ‘internationalization’ (*kokusaika*) to increase Japan’s willingness and ability to play a

⁴³⁶ *Asahi Shinbun*, April 27, 2001; Okada, 2002, p. 437.

⁴³⁷ *Asahi Shinbun*, May 7, 2001; Okada, 2002, p. 437.

⁴³⁸ Pyle, 1992.

⁴³⁹ Saito, 2011.

⁴⁴⁰ *Mainichi Shinbun*, September 1, 1952; Saito, 2011, p. 134.

⁴⁴¹ Saito, 2011, p. 134.

⁴⁴² Saito, 2011, p. 135.

⁴⁴³ Saito, 2011, p. 136.

greater role internationally and on the other hand “Nakasone believed that the Japanese must attain a sense of self-confidence and national pride” – a fusion termed ‘cosmopolitanism-nationalism’⁴⁴⁴ and ‘new liberal nationalism.’⁴⁴⁵ Hence, Koizumi’s desire of FLE reform that went along the long historical attempt to increase the nationalist content of teaching in Japanese schools.

The 1990s was a period of much political turbulence and fewer attempts to change the education policy. At the end of the decade, however, two major reform attempts rose to the surface of LDP politics. First, in line with the so-called neo-nationalist wave in Japanese politics and society, it was decided to designate the national flag as *hinomaru* and the national anthem as *kimigayo* and force schools to celebrate important school events using these nationalist attributes.⁴⁴⁶ Second, the National Commission on Education Reform (NCER) was established to examine the need for reforms on education. Along with the mediocre results in the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) survey, NCER offered a crisis diagnosis of Japanese education that led to massive debates in Japanese media on the condition of Japanese education in the early 2000s.

Although the Koizumi Cabinet initially expressed interest in the revision of FLE, they did not progress with revisions of FLE until after the landslide victory of 2005. In fact, David Rear finds in his discursive study of the prime minister’s Diet speeches that Koizumi was among the ones that spoke the least on education.⁴⁴⁷ Analyzing Koizumi’s speeches, Roar argues that Koizumi was expressing neo-liberal but also conservative ideas on education.⁴⁴⁸ I found that his education policies were neo-liberal in Chapter 4. Here, however, I suggest that Koizumi’s emphasis of a moral and patriotism content in the education is a different kind of ideological construction. Instead of a libertarian and neo-liberal policy orientation, in debates on FLE reforms Koizumi provides arguments that are nationalist in character. The reform proposal the Koizumi Cabinet delivered to the Diet in May 2006 was an attempt to include teaching of love for one’s birthplace (*kyôdo*) and country to the FLE. He details the content of what to love one’s country (*kuni wo ai suru*) means:

‘I believe that to love one’s country includes this country’s history, traditions, culture, people and family, the entirety. Regarding the place I was born and raised, I believe everyone held the love [for this place]. The state may be in each and everyone’s thoughts, but as the emotional attachment [*aijakushin*] of patriotism [*aikokushin*] naturally sprouts in everyone, isn’t it so that this is nurtured in the education of our daily lives?’⁴⁴⁹

As with many other issues, Koizumi was concerned with deliberation. By calling upon the public to debate – “since the deliberation on the Fundamental Law of Education has just started, and since we will discuss it every day, I believe many people will start to hold an interest”⁴⁵⁰ – he created an image

⁴⁴⁴ Saito, 2011.

⁴⁴⁵ Pyle, 1987; 1992.

⁴⁴⁶ Saitô, 2011, p. 138.

⁴⁴⁷ Rear, 2011.

⁴⁴⁸ Rear, 2011, p. 136.

⁴⁴⁹ Discussion in Lower House, May 16 2006: http://www.shugiin.go.jp/index.nsf/html/index_kaigiroku.htm

⁴⁵⁰ Discussion in Lower House, May 16 2006: http://www.shugiin.go.jp/index.nsf/html/index_kaigiroku.htm

of a politician that sought the voice of the people on the topics that concerned him, although, from the very start, he had very specific point of views regarding education and other reforms.

The historical background of fascism, ultra-nationalism and imperialism prior to World War II is still visible in political debates in Japan. The eagerness to include nationalism and moral education in teaching faces opposition from not only the leftists (SDP and CP) and the DPJ, but also from within the LDP and *Kômeitô*. The *Kômeitô* agreed to Koizumi's proposal when the nation (*kuni*) was understood as non-state and respect of other countries and the international community was included.⁴⁵¹ An LDP member expressed concern of the relation between war and patriotism. Koizumi replied:

'In democratic societies, because a plurality of opinions exist, it is emphasized that these [opinions] are okay and those [opinions] are okay. Ultimately, I think a lot of Japanese people ask how decisions are made, and based on reflections of the war, we have developed as a peace state (*heiwa kokka*). Besides, in the Fundamental Law on Education, a position of cooperation with other countries is clearly highlighted. Then, it stands on the importance that we together have an attitude of loving one's country and think about our country with pride. From the fact that other countries' people love their countries, more than being a misunderstanding (*gokai*), it is an misconception (*kyokkai*) that the law is about trying to push on for war based on the respect for each other. ... The government and the ruling parties' law stresses education, and recognizes anew the new education principles of a new era. Since [the majority of the people] expect sufficient advancement in the midst of today's law deliberation on an outline/target of the law that links the development of Japan and the raising of the future's splendid human resources, I believe that, in the future, as a government, we want to make enough activity [to see this goal achieved].'⁴⁵²

DPJ's Fujimura asked Koizumi if he sees the substantial difference between placing importance on your country [*taisetsu ni suru*] and loving your country [*ai suru*]. Koizumi answered that:

'To place importance on something is related to loving something – what is the difference between loving something and placing importance on something? There are people that love antiquities and that place importance on products. I believe the choice of words is rather difficult. But I think [the phrases] placing importance on that person and loving that person is not very different.'⁴⁵³

Koizumi did not want to spend time on a discussion over words. Instead, he was a doer. When Koizumi received leftist critique of the implementation of loving the country as a violation of the Constitutional right of freedom of thought (Article 19), Koizumi replied with pathos and compared the Communist Party ideas with those of the former Soviet Union's:

'I get a small feeling of discomfort when anxiety is expressed from CP's Shii Kazuo for this FLE reform proposal to make the country enforce a plundering of things like the freedom of intention (*kokoro*) and the freedom of mind (*seishin*). The former Soviet Union and one-party dictatorships do not recognize freedom of speech (*genron*) and religious freedom. [Japan] is not such a country. [We] recognize the people's freedom of mind (*seishin*) and the freedom of religion. Furthermore, the FLE has been in place for a 60 years period and the times have greatly changed. Therefore, it is definitely not so that our target is to change FLE to strengthen one idea [*kannen*] or one sense of values [*kachikan*].'⁴⁵⁴

Koizumi places the naturalness of nationalist sentiments along with the political right's struggle to make the national attributes – the flag and the anthem – legitimate:

⁴⁵¹ Saito, 2011, p. 140.

⁴⁵² Discussion in Lower House, May 16 2006: http://www.shugiin.go.jp/index.nsf/html/index_kaigiroku.htm

⁴⁵³ Discussion in Lower House, May 16 2006: http://www.shugiin.go.jp/index.nsf/html/index_kaigiroku.htm

⁴⁵⁴ Discussion in Lower House, May 16 2006: http://www.shugiin.go.jp/index.nsf/html/index_kaigiroku.htm

‘Normally, everyone develops a heart that loves his/her country and an attitude that loves his/her country from the fact that he or she is born in Japan, is raised in Japan, and receives education in Japan. I believe it is a natural position to hold a love for one’s family, a love for one’s hometown [*kyôdoai*] and the so-called patriotism. At the same time, it is natural to respect the national flag and anthem - the fundamental human attitude topics. If a person does not know this, this person should travel to another country - what kind of reception does he/she receive? ... If there are teachers who ridicule the national flag and anthem, I think this is a problem. As a topic for the previous law, the fundamental education [*shitsuke*] topic [*mondai*] is in human societies to respect each other, to respect other people, and be respected.’⁴⁵⁵

Instead of seeing his arguments as a year-long struggle from the political right to change the content of Japanese teaching to a nation-oriented and Japan-celebrating curriculum, Koizumi argues that the current society is different than the past sixty years and that the present situation requires a different content. In this way, Koizumi stands out as a reformer or *renovater*; a person who acknowledges that the times have changed and that important societal institutions need to be renovated to suit these times. It is worth noting, though, that the times required nationalist elements in the education. The right-wing populist answer to globalization was more nationalism.

6.6 Nationalism and populism

Canovan provides a typology of the people populists claim to represent: they may represent the ‘united people’ as in nation or country against forces that attempt to split it, the populists may represent ‘our people’, defined ethnically, or the populists may speak on behalf of ordinary people against an exploitative elite.⁴⁵⁶ In comparison to for instance, Tokyo governor Ishihara or Osaka governor Hashimoto, Koizumi’s populism was not critical to migrants nor was it ethnically aggressive towards Japan’s neighbors. The notion of *people* found in Koizumi’s right-wing populism was at the one hand similar to the nation (except the political establishment) but at the other hand the notion shared similarities with *people* as in ordinary people.

When Koizumi exercised his foreign policy, the main target was to secure the Japanese nation according to beliefs. As such, he was a nationalist. As Stronach reminds us, nationalism is an ideology of . Research should therefore pay attention to the specific discursive and ideological construction of nationalism expressed. I have in this chapter showed that Koizumi again proved to be a peculiarity. While he was in line with the ‘political nationalists’ and the ‘conservatives’ on the use of force, education policy and the Yasukuni Shrine, Koizumi was also empathizing the war responsibility of the Japanese state. Moreover, he was willing to try to implement his views on foreign policy and use nationalist symbols to a greater extent than any of his predecessors.

It has been pointed out that Koizumi did propose policies that went contrary to many Japanese people’s point of views. While this is a characteristic of Koizumi politics in general, it was peculiar that Koizumi argued that he was fighting against public opinion. On structural reforms, for instance, a

⁴⁵⁵ Discussion in Lower House, May 16 2006: http://www.shugiin.go.jp/index.nsf/html/index_kaigiroku.htm

⁴⁵⁶ Canovan, 1999, p. 5.

major point was that he stated that people wanted these reforms. It shows that Koizumi was committed to his political views. This strengthened his populist image of being a fighter.

Chapter 7 Explaining Koizumi's Success: right-wing populism

In this thesis I examine the ideology, the political strategies and the rhetoric of Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichirô and his cabinet. I seek not only to investigate the ideology and political practice of Koizumi politics, but also to identify *why* Koizumi was successful. In the light of the frequent changes of prime ministers in the 1990s, Koizumi represented a rather unique political phenomenon. Thus, this chapter is dedicated to an investigation into *why* Koizumi was successful. A treatment of the reasons behind Koizumi's success requires explaining *why* Koizumi became president in the LDP and then *why* he achieved sustainable support rates among the Japanese electorate.

7.1 Summary of findings in the three research chapters

In Chapter 4, I examined the structural reform project and concluded that it was a neoliberal attempt to slim the Japanese government's participation in the economy, to reduce the government's responsibility for social security and increase the space for market forces in Japan. The project was based upon a libertarian view on human beings and individual responsibility for one's life situation, with an emphasis on individual effort to achieve improved opportunities. In Chapter 5, I continued with an investigation into the field of domestic politics and discovered that the structural reform project was as much an expression of the populist fight against the political establishment as a genuine reform project. Koizumi was able to project an enemy image of professional politicians and bureaucrats by dividing the political landscape into reform supporters and anti-reformists. Although Koizumi continued to express the ideology of populism, I argued that the most refined periods of populist ideology were during the LDP presidential campaign in 2001 and before the 2005 Lower House election campaign. To ensure a complete investigation into the politics of Koizumi, in Chapter 6 I looked into Koizumi's foreign policy, war responsibility, the Yasukuni Shrine visits and the process of changing the Fundamental Law of Education. I discussed nationalism as an ideology and concluded that, although Koizumi himself paid little attention to the ordinary issues for 'nationalists', e.g. the flag, the national anthem, historical revisionism, etc. Koizumi's policies and actions were nationalist. On foreign policy, I placed Koizumi's opinions within discourses on the use of force and the relationship with the U.S. On educational policy, I found that Koizumi sought to change the laws in favor of more nationalist content.

7.2 Right-wing populism as an ideology – a synthesis of neoliberalism, populism and nationalism

In the three research chapters (4, 5 and 6), I have discussed the ideological content of Koizumi's political project, his political practice and rhetoric. I defined the ideologies as neoliberal (structural economic reform of the Japanese political economy) and nationalist (the education policies, the strengthening of Japan's military responsibility and the Yasukuni visits), but in particular, I argued that Koizumi acted upon a populist worldview. Taken together, I propose in this thesis to identify the

ideology of Koizumi as a synthesis of neoliberalism, populism and nationalism – what I term *right-wing populism*. The term *right-wing populism* consists of two elements: *right-wing* and *populism*.

The latter element – *populism* – refers to a specific ideology of the protagonist's fight against the political establishment on behalf of the *people* (Latin: *populus*; German: *Volk*; Jap.: *kokumin*). Koizumi's harsh critique of corrupt and inefficient political and bureaucratic practices and his division of the political landscape into pro- and anti-reform forces established an image of himself as an outsider and a fighter for the people of Japan against the political elite. The major reform attempts of the Koizumi Cabinet – privatization of highway corporations and Japan Post – revealed how politicians, bureaucrats and vested interests resisted the economic recovery of the Japanese economy and the reduction of government spending. His Yasukuni Shrine visits and Koizumi's eagerness to support the U.S. with Japanese SDF contributions in the War on Terror in Afghanistan and Iraq (including establishing Counter-Terrorism Laws for domestic purposes) contributed further to a polarized domestic debate. Moreover, the strong Chinese and South Korean reactions to the prime ministerial visits to the Yasukuni Shrine again offered opportunities for Koizumi to stand firm in his beliefs and public promises, despite heavy international criticism. The official worshipping at the Yasukuni Shrine created conflict and effectively divided the public, opinion leaders, and politicians. Koizumi himself offered rhetoric on the Yasukuni Shrine as a domestic matter solely, the visits as acts of peace, the government promise to mourn fallen soldiers fighting for Japan and the major challenges to democracy in China and South Korea. Despite - or maybe even due to - the large opposition among academics, media and business organizations, Koizumi dispatched naval ship support to the Afghanistan attack, dispatched Japanese Self-Defence Forces to Iraq, and continued his Yasukuni Shrine visits (the sixth and last visit was conducted on the 15th of August, the day Japan surrendered in WWII).

The former element – *right* – has many politico-ideological meanings, both in a Western reality and a more specific Japanese sense. The LDP had participated in every single cabinet in Japan, with only one exception (in 1994), since the establishment of the LDP in 1955. A plurality of ideologies and policy orientations has been expressed by LDP politicians. Instead of examining the differences between the Japanese parties, an equally fruitful or even more fruitful approach may be to investigate the different approaches found *inside* the LDP. One of the purposes of the thesis is to understand the placement of Koizumi's ideological expressions within the LDP, on the Japanese right, and in the Japanese political system. Here, I clarify shortly why I choose to term Koizumi's political project and political practice *right-wing*. First, I use right as in *right* on the positioning towards capitalism. Koizumi represented an embrace of competition, less state regulation and spending, and increased space for market forces - in terms of a withdrawal of the state in state-business relations, in terms of

reducing the size of the Japanese welfare state and in terms of organizing the government according to market forces-resembling habits (New Public Management).

Related to the first usage, the second use of right is the libertarian perception of human beings expressed in Koizumi's argument on individual responsibility for its life situation, individual efforts and benefits and the equality of opportunity doctrine.⁴⁵⁷

Third, and somewhat in contrast to the two former ideological elements, Koizumi acted upon an ideology of nationalism. The ideology of nationalism was in contrast since libertarianism and neoliberalism do not leave much space for ethnicity, nation-states and communitarian sentiments and identities. Koizumi acted upon implicit, but also at times explicit, assumptions of the Japanese people as a communitarian unit, of the Japanese peninsula as the geographical location of the Japanese nation and nation-state and the Japanese state as the legal and political expression of the Japanese people. The Yasukuni Shrine visits and his arguments in the Yasukuni debates were explicit expressions of such nationalism as the visits ensured the respect of the dead soldiers fighting for Japan, the visits represented acts of peace, etc. The process of changing the Fundamental Law of Education was started under the Koizumi Cabinet (but finalized under the following Abe Cabinet (06-07)). One of the changes was the inclusion of a nationalist section: "Foster a disposition to respect Japanese tradition and culture, love the country and homeland that nurtured them".⁴⁵⁸ Nationalism has often been confined to the political right. But it is true that leftist movements have, in different times and spaces, embraced nationalism and nationalist causes. In Japan, the left has been remarkably nationalist in its conceptual understanding of the Japanese people. In the 2000s, it is hard to imagine a serious political actor that does not take as a starting-point a nationalist worldview. The *rightness* in Koizumi's nationalist ideology is linked to the communitarian understanding of *people*, i.e. its harmonic definition and its lack of any concepts of cleavages separating his *people*.

Fourth, Koizumi proposed a Japan - as a geographical space, as a political construction and as a communitarian unit – that was able to play a larger military role on the international scene. In Japan, the left has been critical to the use of force – in the prewar years as communist, anti-fascist critiques of Japanese imperialism and aggression and then in the postwar years as critiques of the U.S.-Japan alliance and as defenders of the pacifist Constitution. The Japanese right has been divided on the issue of the US alliance and the use of force. The Yoshida doctrine and support for maintenance of Article Nine in the Constitution developed into an integral part of mainstream LDP – the 'conservative orthodoxy'. Following the footsteps of the 'neoconservatives' – as Kenneth B. Pyle term them - the Koizumi Cabinet represented a major attempt to break down this postwar Japanese stance on foreign policy. First of all, the Koizumi Cabinet dispatched JSDF in Iraq. Second, Koizumi expressed

⁴⁵⁷ See Koizumi, 2005.

⁴⁵⁸ <http://japanfocus.org/data/ed.law.file.pdf>. Retrieved 12.03.12.

unusually positive attitudes towards the U.S. Despite being Japan's closest ally, the U.S. has an ambiguous position in the Japanese security discourse due to its history as an enemy and occupation power, Japan's subservient position in the asymmetric relationship and the cultural and political differences between the U.S. and Japan. Also, Foreign Minister Asô Taro and Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda Yasuo even proposed to investigate the need for nuclear weapons – a particularly sensitive element in the use of force discourse in Japan. The strengthening of Japanese military capability and legitimization of the use of force belongs to the *right*. Note however that the Japanese right contains a plurality of opinions regarding these questions.

The role of enemy images

The creation and reiteration of enemy images is an important ideological feature of political conflict. Koizumi paid particular attention to the enemies of the Japanese people – the political establishment. Koizumi referred initially other LDP politicians and bureaucrats as 'forces of resistance'. Over time, the largest opposition party, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), was also placed among the anti-reform and special interest-protecting enemies. Also, through the massive reactions to his Yasukuni Shrine, Koizumi was able to picture China and South Korea as enemies in a political sense. Interestingly, Koizumi was remarkably positive considering the industrial competition Japan experienced from South Korea and, in particular, China. Indeed, he welcomed the investment opportunities, the push to Japanese producers to increase efficiency as a means to counter tougher competition from low-cost countries.⁴⁵⁹ China and South Korea were only enemies as the political leadership tried to influence political decisions Koizumi saw as domestic issues (the Yasukuni worship). When it comes to North Korea, Koizumi did in fact attempt to normalize the relationship. On his first visit in 2002, Koizumi went as the first Japanese prime minister in the postwar period and, as such, he projected a picture of himself as the rescuer and the one who struggled to make Japan secure. The normalization attempt failed completely, however, in the aftermath of Kim Jung-Il's revelation that the rumor of North Korean kidnapping of Japanese citizens in the 1970s was indeed true. The *rachi mondai* led to a massive media and public uproar and strengthened the demands to take a more hardline approach to North Korea, defense questions and the nuclear issue. The image of North Korea as a security threat developed further during the Koizumi reign.

Koizumi's ideology of the individual

Ideology is views on the social world. Views on human beings, on society, on the state and the relations between these concepts are inherent in understandings of the social world. The view on human beings in Koizumi's ideology is a very concrete type of libertarian understanding: Individuals act and they are responsible for the making of their own lives. The Koizumi utopia is a society where

⁴⁵⁹ See Koizumi, 2005.

people are free to make choices based on their individual preferences, where people have equal opportunities based on skills and competence and where they receive social returns in accordance with individual effort. Koizumi's libertarian view on human beings legitimized the neoliberal reforms of the political economy. Market forces, competition and more private initiative offered individuals greater opportunities, larger return for individual effort and increased social justice. This was a libertarian attack on the notion that society, local community or family, or any other social structure, are responsible for a person's life situation. Indeed, to Koizumi, the life conditions are mainly decided by everyone's individual efforts. The state view on economic matters was straight-forward neoliberal: the state has a minor role in production of goods and services, but is required to ensure the education of productive labor and to provide the necessary infrastructure and investments to facilitate the continued technological development of Japanese industry. In the cultural space, however, the state has a heavy responsibility: educating Japanese citizens with an emphasis on producer ethics and a mind for the Japanese nation-state. Also, in the international community, Koizumi sought to enable Japanese military capacity to be used for collective self-defense purposes, to ensure the tightening of the U.S.-Japan alliance and to increase the influence of Japanese opinions in accordance with its economic strength. A communitarian belief in the Japanese people did actually coincide with libertarian individualism because Koizumi separated between the economic and cultural space. The Yasukuni visits on behalf of the Japanese nation, tight connections with the U.S. to ensure U.S. involvement in the insecure surroundings of the Japanese peninsula and major attacks on the political elite as a fighter for the communitarian *people* did not oppose the view on individuality. Libertarianism and neoliberal economics on the one hand *and* communitarian nationalism and populism on the other hand have in common harmonious perceptions of social relations within a group.

In short, right-wing populism is the populist approach to the political world – domestically and internationally – combined with libertarian perception of individual responsibility, efforts and benefits, neoliberal economic policies and nationalist strengthening of the nation, the people and the state in an insecure world. It is an expression of Japanese ideology, but shares similarities with political right ideologies in Western Europe and the U.S.

7.3 Models of explanations

In this thesis, I do not only analyze the ideological content of Koizumi politics and the relationship between ideology and political practice. I also seek to explain Koizumi's success of becoming the LDP president and the longevity of his premiership (the second longest continuous premiership in the postwar era). Compared to the tumultuous cabinet dynamics in post-bubble Japan, Koizumi's ability to achieve high support rates among the electorate and, in particular, the landslide 2005 Lower House victory represent a distinct historical period. An investigation into the explanations behind Koizumi's

success is required. *Becoming* and *staying* the president of the LDP is mandatory to keep the premiership. Then, the LDP needs to stay in power through *electoral success*. Explanations need to, explicitly or implicitly, address one or more of these elements in the success story.

Koizumi, his reform project and his foreign policy have drawn extraordinary attention in the literature – in fields such as political science, history, sociology, linguistics, media studies and Japanese studies. The studies on Koizumi and his politics offer explanations on political developments in the Koizumi period. I review studies that offer explanations not only of Koizumi's success (*sufficient* explanations) but also studies that provide explanations for changes facilitating Koizumi's rise as the LDP president (*necessary* explanations). Several levels of explanations exist in the literature: on the political actors; dynamics in the political party; relations between the political parties; the political and electoral system; and societal levels.

Personality, political leadership and language

On the political actor level, three explanations have been forwarded. First, Koizumi was a charismatic person: he was 'telegenic', he had an unusual hairstyle, he was entertaining and he was able to communicate well with the electorate.⁴⁶⁰ The charisma argument makes particular sense if it is understood in relation to the ideologies Koizumi professed: his charisma was also a product of the major resonance of his political message in among the Japanese people. Second, it has been argued that Koizumi exercised political leadership⁴⁶¹ and had a political vision.⁴⁶² Koizumi was indeed a peculiar personality and a politically outspoken person compared to former prime ministers, although Nakasone (1982-87) and Hashimoto (1996-98) were distinctive leaders with provocative and clearly formulated reform agendas. The third argument on person stems from socio-linguistics. Scholars argue that through the choosing of words, formality, distance and directness, language can be used for specific political purposes.⁴⁶³ It is argued that Koizumi was able to speak directly to the electorate, created a sense of closeness and projected a personal engagement through impulsive, colloquial and non-formal Japanese. Others argue that the distinction of *honno* (informal, private) and *tatema* (formal, public) fits the political world as well.⁴⁶⁴ While traditional LDP politicians are said to be vague and superficial on political issues (*tatema*), Koizumi broke with this tradition as he stated his own opinions; he was conflict-oriented and he spoke in an informal way. In addition, whereas the use of slogans is a usual exercise for Japanese prime ministers⁴⁶⁵, Koizumi's spent time on reiterating the basics of his policies

⁴⁶⁰ Krauss and Pekkanen, 2010; Park and Vogel, 2007; Envall, 2008a; 2008b; Stockwin, 2007; Lam in Lye and Hofmeister, 2011; Oka, 2011, p. 126; Christensen, 2006. Indirectly, these authors also argue for Koizumi's charisma: Green, 2009; Kaihara, 2010.

⁴⁶¹ Gaunder, 2007; Kabashima and Gill, 2010; Shinoda, 2007.

⁴⁶² Gaunder, 2007.

⁴⁶³ Azuma in Feldman and De Landsheer, 2000; Azuma and Tsuji in Khanittanan and Sidwell, 2004; Maynard, 1997;

⁴⁶⁴ Feldman in Feldman and De Landsheer, 1998.

⁴⁶⁵ Feldman in Feldman and De Landsheer, 1998.

through slogans in the media. Compared to his predecessors, Koizumi's slogans were direct attacks on his enemies and the implications of his political slogans were easy to interpret. These person-focused explanations are all pointed towards the fact that Koizumi became and stayed popular among the populace - not so much why he succeeded in the internal LDP battle for leadership and policy direction.

Intra-party explanations

Several explanations belong to the inside-the-party explanations. Contrary to the person-focused explanations, these tend to explain why Koizumi was successful internally in the party, and in particular the 2001 LDP presidential campaign. The LDP presidential election is, by definition, an internal matter for the party. Since the LDP ruled as the major party in a three-party coalition, the LDP president would also automatically become the prime minister in Japan. A short summary of the 2001 election suffices to sum up the explanations. Four politicians participated in the campaign: Koizumi, Hashimoto Ryûtarô, Aso Tarô and Kamei Shizuka. Hashimoto was the definite favorite, because he was the most experienced high-level LDP politician, he led the largest faction and he was initially backed by several other factions. Koizumi had fought Hashimoto in the 1995 LDP presidential election, but, at that time, Koizumi was supported by only a handful. In 2001, however, the LDP had chosen to change the election rules, so that not only the Diet members but also district party members joined the election (to a larger extent than usual). Koizumi achieved very high support rates among the district members. Although the parliament members still held a majority of the votes, the signal from the district members could not be omitted. Koizumi also achieved high support in the media and among ordinary Japanese. While he was supported by the Yamazaki and Katô factions as well as the Mori faction (which he formerly belonged to), the surprising popularity among grass root LDP members changed the election dynamics. Not only did Kamei and Aso decide to back down from the campaign, but they also flagged their factions' support of Koizumi's candidature. Hashimoto thus found himself only supported by his own faction. Hence, Koizumi achieved a major electoral victory.

There was indeed a feeling of crisis in the LDP prior to the 2001 presidential election. The sitting Prime Minister Mori (2000-01), was haunted by public scandals and the dissatisfaction with both him and the process of making him prime minister is well-known.⁴⁶⁶ Moreover, the DPJ had won more support in urban areas than the LDP⁴⁶⁷ and, as the main opposition party increased their electoral popularity, the rule of the LDP seemed more uncertain. The LDP leaders thus sought to increase the popularity of the LDP by making the internal LDP election more transparent and more interesting to media exposure. To broaden the electorate geographically and include more grass root members were the LDP leadership's solutions. Notwithstanding the choice to change the LDP presidential election

⁴⁶⁶ Lincoln, 2001, p. 51.

⁴⁶⁷ Mishima, 2007, p. 736.

rules, Koizumi, with his ability to draw support among the urban electorate, experienced a strengthened position within a party with problems drawing the support among a more and more important urban stratum.⁴⁶⁸ Related to the feeling of crisis inside the LDP is the argument that ‘politics as usual’ was ‘discredited’ (due to corruption, scandals and the distrust to politicians) and thus no insider could win the votes of local politicians.⁴⁶⁹

But this points out a very important inside-the-party explanation – namely the strength of the other candidates. Indeed, Hashimoto was the head of the largest faction and according to LDP tradition Hashimoto should then have been the new leader. But he represented everything the electorate disliked – faction politics, structural corruption and political elitism. Aso and Kamei were never serious rivals, as they only represented small factions. The question for the district members and the Diet members was who could restore LDP dominance in Japanese politics. Furthermore, but somewhat neglected in the literature, in any election, not only are the rival candidates important, but as well, we need to understand who did not participate. In Japanese politics at the time, the YKK trio (Yamazaki, Katô and Koizumi) represented a new generation of reform-oriented politicians. Katô, but also Yamazaki, had been placed outside the political center of LDP politics due to their coup attempt against Prime Minister Mori in 2000. Thus, two of the ‘rising stars’ with a clear agenda and personal popularity were not eligible as presidential candidates. Instead both Yamazaki and Katô (and their respective factions) were limited to support Koizumi.

Party system level

At the party system level, we find new perspectives on why Koizumi was successful. Since the breakdown of the 1955-system in 1993-94, Japanese politics have been characterized by coalition politics.⁴⁷⁰ In 1998, a ruling alliance between the LDP, the Kômeitô and the Conservative Party was established. In particular, the electoral relationship between Kômeitô and the LDP developed symbiotically: with major support in certain urban constituencies, and thus complimentary to LDP’s lack of urban support, Kômeitô told voters to support LDP candidates in the many constituencies Kômeitô provided no candidates. The symbiotic relationship continued even after the 2005 Lower House election when the LDP alone secured a majority. Without this coalition practice, the LDP was not ensured to keep its premiership, and thus Koizumi would have been nothing more than the leader of the LDP. If the party system was construed in a different manner, the LDP may have lost the premiership without majority in the Diet. Given Koizumi’s dependence on the popularity among the

⁴⁶⁸ Mishima, 2007, p. 736.

⁴⁶⁹ Kabashima and Gill, 2011, p. 77.

⁴⁷⁰ Mulgan in Amyx and Drysdale, 2003b.

public, he would have had a hard time achieving the goodwill of the party without the media exposure, the ability to initiate policies and deciding the political agenda in Japan.

Another explanation on the party system level is the development of the DPJ – the main opposition party. Although I am not focusing on DPJ in this thesis, I discovered that the DPJ passed through a major ideological transformation during the Koizumi period: from expressing clear-cut neoliberal policy stances to a more reluctant critique of Koizumi's structural reforms. Koizumi's initial political flirting with the DPJ turned into a placement of the DPJ on par with the anti-reformists inside the LDP. It seems that the DPJ experienced a hard time in producing an independent policy program and in positioning the party in a highly divided political landscape where most political attention was pointed towards the pro- and anti-reform forces inside the LDP.

Political scientists have been interested in the electoral system.⁴⁷¹ The electoral reform that took place in 1994 has been a subject for extensive research, hypotheses and arguments.⁴⁷² In the pre-1994 election system, Japan had a Single Nontransferable Vote system where each voter threw one vote for an individual candidate (not party) but within a constituency sending several candidates to the Diet. This system led to large *intra*-party competition, the need for massive finances, and the creation of factions. Although LDP politicians competed with other LDP politicians in the same constituency, they were not allowed to show ideological difference but rather distance themselves by personal traits, promises of construction projects to local communities, etc.⁴⁷³ The change to a Mixed-Member Majoritarian system – with both proportional representation constituencies and single-member district seats – has led analysts to predict and explain several developments in the Japanese political system. The most important changes are the party structure (new parties, others declined, two-party system), coalition politics (cooperation instead of competition in single-seat district is preferable among coalitions), *intra*-LDP changes (decline of factions, party centralization).

7.4 Four perspectives – or grand narratives - on historical developments in Japanese society and politics

Few studies have attempted to investigate whether Koizumi's political message was popular among Japanese. Several just assume that people desire neoliberal change. It is hard, if not impossible, to identify the popularity of ideology from a text analysis. Yet, one may find hypotheses that can be further studied on a later stage. This is the purpose of this section. Here, I seek to examine the structure of Japanese society, economy and politics to hypothesize *why* Koizumi's ideology and political practice found resonance among Japanese.

⁴⁷¹ Ramseyer and Rosenbluth, 1993; Rosenbluth and Thies, 2010; Krauss and Pekkanen, 2004; Pekkanen, Byblade and Krauss, 2006.

⁴⁷² For instance: Ramseyer and Rosenbluth, 1993; Rosenbluth and Thies, 2010; Krauss and Pekkanen, 2004; Pekkanen, Byblade and Krauss, 2006.

⁴⁷³ Rosenbluth and Thies, 2010.

An attack on the iron triangle

Koizumi's right-wing populism may be understood as an attack on the political elites in Japan – Diet politicians and Tokyo bureaucrats. The populist belief in the *people* resonated well with the neoliberal attack on political decision-making processes. Koizumi explicitly criticized the relationship between politicians, bureaucrats and business - the Japanese 'iron triangle'. To understand this critique we need to assess the Japanese political economy, the power structure of the LDP and the benefits harvested by the political elite.

Politicians, bureaucrats and business constitute the 'iron triangle'.⁴⁷⁴ While business has only an indirect influence on political decisions, a major debate in studies of Japanese politics concerns who is the most influential participant among bureaucrats and politicians. Two poles in the debate are claimed by Chalmer S. Johnson, who argues that the bureaucrats wield the power to govern the Japanese political economy, and by Mark Ramseyer and Frances Rosenbluth, who believe that bureaucrats are subordinate to the Diet politicians.⁴⁷⁵ Kato finds that the Ministry of Finance was playing the main protagonist for the imposition of the consumption tax. Richard Samuels, on the other hand, questions the bureaucrats' ability to enforce policies when it goes against business interests - in the case of energy policy.⁴⁷⁶ Aurelia Mulgan and John Babb, however, state that both bureaucrats and politicians have strong influence on political decision-making and that the outcome of political processes will be created in conflict and cooperation between the two groups. For us, it suffices to analyze the Japanese political system as *corporatist* and *sectionalist*. On the one hand, Japanese policies are proposed, discussed and made through interaction between politicians, bureaucrats and business (corporatism). But inside each these groups, different interests, preferences and understandings of what is the best policy choice exist. To grasp the interaction, we need to acknowledge that the Japanese political system is also *sectionalist*, in the sense that each group is divided in terms of what policy they strive to implement and find allies the other groups. In inter- and intra-group conflict and cooperation, the ability to enforce a preferred policy depends on the power vis-à-vis other stakeholders. Hence, in the postwar Japanese political system, a complex set of institutions, practices and relations have developed. Koizumi pointed his attacks on some of these.

Koizumi's neoliberalism was a direct criticism of elements in the Japanese political economy, in particular the government's inability to regulate and guide the economy, how the government wastes tax money, how the political parties serve vested interests, and how political groups benefit from the structure of the political economy. Kawabata Eiji states that the Japanese economy can be divided in

⁴⁷⁴ Sugimoto, 2003; Sakakibara, 2003; Carpenter, 2001; Mulgan, 2002.

⁴⁷⁵ Chalmer, 1982. See also Kato, 1994. Ramseyer and Rosenbluth, 1993.

⁴⁷⁶ Samuels, 1987.

two sectors: a developmental and a distributive sector.⁴⁷⁷ While the *developmental* sector is efficient, profitable and is able to face international competition without political involvement, the *distributive* sector is uncompetitive, unprofitable and the sector survives on political protection. The distributive sector is dependent on redistribution of the profits made in the developmental sector. Koizumi sought to reduce the size of the distributive sector (construction, highway, postal services, agriculture) and make it more efficient through introduction of private initiative and to make the sector subject to the rules of the market. In a different but related approach, Kaihara shows that the Japanese government's business engagement may be separated into 'money in' and 'money out' activities.⁴⁷⁸ The postal services (as one of the largest banks in the world) provided the Japanese government with the sufficient economic muscles (money in) to spend (money out) on highway roads, construction projects and mail services. Koizumi argued that the postal savings should be spent differently, serving the tax payers *and* the postal savers' interests better. He thus proposed to separate the decision-making on the postal savings from the use of the money.

The problem, as Koizumi saw it, was that the protected industries, the public corporations and the postal services were enmeshed into politics through the LDP's electoral machinery. LDP had developed a web of corrupt practices where industries such as construction, infrastructure and communications supported electoral campaigns and gathered votes for the LDP, while LDP politicians provided expansion of the postal offices and lucrative infrastructure projects. Koizumi argued that this practice of clientelism and particularism led to wasteful use of public capital and inability to cope with the economic recession. The corruption scandals revealed in Japanese media made the opportunities for individual gain on the expense of society that were inherent in the 'iron triangle' clear to the public. Not only were politicians harmed by such revelations; bureaucrats were also heavily involved in structural corruption. Koizumi explicitly criticized *amakudari*.⁴⁷⁹

Koizumi's right-wing populism represented a frontal attack on the 'iron triangle'. As long as Japanese perceived the system of politics-government-business relations as unjust and inefficient, the attack on this may contribute to an understanding of why Koizumi achieved popularity.

The battle on the 'conservative orthodoxy'

More than the iron triangle, Koizumi attacked what I have termed the 'conservative orthodoxy'. As pointed out in chapter 5, this political current within the LDP has supported the 'development state', and *doken kokka*, the development of a welfare regime providing a security net and redistributing the

⁴⁷⁷ Kawabata, 2004; 2006. See also Sakakibara, 2001.

⁴⁷⁸ Kaihara, 2008.

⁴⁷⁹ *Amakudari* (lit.: descendants of heaven) refers to the practice of ministry bureaucrats retiring into beneficial positions in public and semi-public corporations operating within the same industry as the bureaucrat had experience from in the ministry. With their knowledge of the industry and their well-developed network, the bureaucrats attained high salaries and bonuses.

wealth produced in central areas to rural districts. Hence, support of subsidies to postal services, highway construction and agriculture plays an important role in the conservative orthodoxy. However, these politicians' redistribution network has also offered them access to money, voter machines in rural districts and extensive contact and partnership with bureaucrats in the ministries. Include then the Yoshida Doctrine (focus on economic growth, small military expenditure and non-involvement in international operations) and the main components of this ideological configuration are mentioned.

When Nakasone and the political nationalists – whom Kenneth B. Pyle term 'neo-conservatives' due to their eagerness to dismantle the 'developmental state' – argued for neoliberal reforms, internationalization and derogatively refer to the postwar state as the merchant state, it was the 'conservative orthodoxy' they fought. Koizumi continued this in a sense. The 'conservative orthodoxy' had arguably received setbacks during the 1990s. The financial policies to increase growth and reduce deflation – the counter-cyclical policies – had not been successful, at least in terms of growth numbers, unemployment rates. The only expressions of the counter-cyclical policies were a mounting public debt and new construction projects in rural areas. Add the financial situation of the banks, i.e. 'bad debt': only the neoliberals, such as Prime Minister Hashimoto, seemed interested in dealing with the consequences of the bubble.

Although the neoliberal reform wave Koizumi surfed on had historical roots dating back to the late 1970s and in particular from the 1980s, his right-wing populism represented the fiercest attempt to change the political practice and improve the economic conditions in Japan. Not the opposition, not the LDP, not even the most prominent members of the LDP could calm his reform eagerness. The main antagonist to Koizumi's political project was the 'conservative orthodoxy'. The longer Koizumi was able to continue his reform process, the more the resistance within the conservative orthodoxy grew. Due to the extreme provocations in Koizumi's political practice and ideological position, politicians within the conservative orthodoxy reacted with major opposition. Hence, Koizumi was able to personalize his enemy images of the iron triangle, the conservative orthodoxy and the 55' system. If the popularity of the old regime was low, Koizumi achieved to turn the unsatisfied demands of the Japanese voter to his favor.

The 1990s as a crisis decade

In *Think Global, Fear Local*, David Leheny argues that events that took place during the 1990s created a sense of crisis in Japanese society.⁴⁸⁰ Leheny provides an account that the financial problems of the post-bubble era, the Hanshin earthquake, and the Aum Shinrikyo terror attack on the Tokyo subway – and in particular the politicians' inability to handle and solve the challenges – turned into a vague anxiety in Japan. By examining conservative political pressure to change laws in the fields of child

⁴⁸⁰ Leheny, 2006.

pornography and counter-terrorism, Leheny finds that politicians were able to push Japan to the right by playing on the new sense of fear.

If Leheny is right, we may improve the understanding of the rise of Koizumi. Koizumi's success can indeed be explained as a reaction to the crisis sentiment in Japan at the turn of the twentieth century. In relation to the *kan-min* cleavage, the *kan* is required to be perceived as legitimate. If *kan* fails to meet the demands of the people, the consequence over time is reduced legitimacy. Gerald Curtis argues that the image of the bureaucracy as possessing "high morale, a sense of mission, and a reputation for competence and integrity" radically changed in the 1990s through revelations of corrupt practices and the inability to cope with the economic depression.⁴⁸¹ If we add Leheny's arguments on events such as the *Hanshin* earthquake, the *Aum Shinrikyô* terror attack and the North Korea missiles, the bureaucrats experienced serious blows to the strong perception of a competent and efficient bureaucracy in the 1990s.

The right-wing populist attack on political decision-making, i.e. the inefficiency to deal with the disasters, the security threats and the economy, may have provided a reasonable alternative to the Japanese. Neoliberal critique of government, public regulation and waste provided an answer both to how to restore the Japanese economy and to how to change policy-making into a less corrupt and elitist exercise. Combined with his robust and honest fight to keep his promises (structural reforms, Yasukuni Shrine visits), Koizumi's right-wing populism served as a safe haven in times of political distrust, disasters and insecure international conditions.

The challenge from globalization, the development of a post-industrial society and late capitalism

The fourth grand narrative is found in the literature on the rise of right-wing populism in Western Europe. Although the political, economic, cultural and social situation is different in Western Europe than in Japan, the areas share similarities. Hans Georg Betz finds that the new right has risen under specific social conditions: "For the past two decades, the advanced industrial societies have been confronted with a crisis of the postwar socioeconomic model which had been characterized by dynamic economic growth, rapidly growing affluence, and an unprecedented level of material security."⁴⁸² The new reality facing Western European citizens have included a 'marked trend decline in productivity', increased unemployment numbers and increased social inequality.⁴⁸³ Globalization, increased international competition and loss of traditional industrial workplaces have indeed threatened the life situation and opportunities for working class people in Western Europe. Betz notes that "most new parties and movements of the right propagate a radical transformation of the socioeconomic and sociocultural status quo. This means above all an attack on the postwar political settlement and what

⁴⁸¹ Curtis, 1999, p. 5.

⁴⁸² Betz in Betz and Hammerfall, 1998, p. 5.

⁴⁸³ Betz in Betz and Hammerfall, 1998, p. 5.

has come to be known as the social-democratic consensus.”⁴⁸⁴ Although the social-democratic consensus constitutes a large-scale social welfare state and the emphasis on a multicultural society, and differs significantly from the Japanese postwar political consensus – the ‘conservative orthodoxy’ – both social-democratic politics and conservative politics in Japan are reactions and adjustments to an industrial-capitalist society. If the new right (right-wing populism, new extreme right, etc.) challenged the political consensus in Western Europe in the 1970s and 1980s on the basis of socioeconomic developments, it may be that Koizumi’s right-wing populism also achieved sufficient popularity among Japanese due to similar economic processes.

Globalization has led to major changes in the economic and social reality in Japan. As experienced in Western Europe, the 1950s and 1960s represented a period of technological progress, industrialization, and (almost) full employment levels in Japan. The 1960s are usually referred to as the ‘economic miracle’ due to high growth rates and a doubling of the living standards. From the 1970s, however, a post-industrial society has developed through the rise of the service sector, an industrial shift to low-cost (labor) countries in Southeast and East Asia, and new work habits. At the same time, a bubble economy developed in the 1980s and in particular so in the aftermath of the Plaza Accord meeting and the strengthening of the yen currency. When the Nikkei Stock Exchange crashed in 1990/91 and the property market burst some years later, the Japanese economy entered a phase of recession that - in many senses - still exists. The results of the ‘lost decades’ include bankruptcies, ‘bad debt’, increased unemployment levels, reduced job security and increased inequality. Suddenly, the ‘iron triangle’ and the government’s strict control of competition, markets, finance and international trade (which had been praised as the reason behind the ‘economic miracle’) was now seen as the problem of the Japanese economy. A politician who spoke about new ideas on economic recovery, who lacked the wrapping of clientelism and corruption, who promised *renovation*, and who dared to remind the rising power China that tolerance for others’ opinions is a democratic and totally legitimate demand was maybe what the Japanese desired in an age of insecure economic conditions and of political institutions which seemed unable to cope with a new situation.

David Held et al. argue that globalization challenges the nation-states and their ability to control domestic economic, political and cultural processes.⁴⁸⁵ If this is correct, it is less of a mystery why the Japanese government and the ‘iron triangle’ – *kan* – have been less successful in their governing of economic and political processes in Japan the past 20-30 years. Still, if globalization lessens the government’s ability to live up to the demands and expectations of *min*, populism has a stronger potential in Japanese society to become a political force.

⁴⁸⁴ Betz in Betz and Hammerfall, 1998, p. 4.

⁴⁸⁵ Held et al., 1999.

7.5 Conclusive remarks

Koizumi's politics were an expression of Japanese right-wing populism. The ideological expression was a synthesis of populism, neoliberalism and nationalism. This ideology seems to have been a response to the particular challenges of the Japanese state and society in the 1990s and 2000s. Through his peculiar appearance, his rhetorical skills, his use of media and his innovative political practice, Koizumi's right-wing populism became an important political current inside the LDP and in Japanese politics.

The explanations put forward in the literature on Koizumi's success range from the agent level through the intra-party and party system level to the societal level. Although attempting to explain his political and electoral success, they fail to acknowledge the importance of the disappointment towards *kan* and the socioeconomic developments taking place in Japan (and the West) since the 1970s. To supplement the explanations, I have, in this thesis, developed four perspectives that I hypothesize have relevance for our understanding of why Koizumi's ideology and political practice acquired resonance among Japanese.

8 Epilogue

Koizumi stepped down as promised when his second term as LDP president ended in September 2006. Five years and three months of Koizumi politics came to an end. His right-wing populism was an electorate success, resulting in one of the best LDP election results in the party's history.

His successor, Abe Shinzō, inherited a vast majority in the Lower House and a structural reform project in momentum, but also troublesome relations with China and South Korea. In several ways, Prime Minister Abe resembled Koizumi: he sought educational reform, he argued in favor of the structural reforms and he supported the Yasukuni Shrine visits. During the Koizumi period, Abe increased his popularity through a tough stance on how to treat North Korea. He was predicted to have a bright future in Japanese politics. However, Abe was not a right-wing populist. The critique of the party and politics vanished with Koizumi. Abe sought consensus within the LDP and invited back the anti-reform politicians Koizumi had thrown out. With his pedigree⁴⁸⁶ and neo-nationalist agenda (revisionist history, Yasukuni support, education reform) it was hard to not be seen as yet another nationalist in the political elite. If one had thought Koizumi was popular due to nationalism solely, one was wrong. Abe's premiership lasted a year.

Abe's LDP successors did not prove to be any more successful. While Fukuda Yasuo (2007-08) stepped down due to inability to cooperate with an Upper House with an LDP minority, Asō Tarō (2008-09) faced total defeat in the 2009 Lower House election, resulting in the first DPJ government ever. None of Koizumi's successors were even close to achieving the political excitement that had taken place during the Koizumi period. In fact, all of them – Abe, Fukuda and Asō - had been much more successful *in* the Koizumi Cabinet, working in the shadows of a real giant in Japanese politics. Leadership transfers are, according to Taggart, a 'self-limiting quality' of populism.⁴⁸⁷ He could not be more right.

The Koizumi legacy left a vulnerable LDP. The LDP was vulnerable because Koizumi had exposed how the configuration of government-politics relations developed in the '55 system challenged the democratic ideals of politicians as *min*. LDP was the definite symbol of this problematic blend. Koizumi's from-within fight had shown that corruption, factions, and vested interests, not to mention the political establishment in general, were not indestructible, but rather products of human practices. I do not argue that Koizumi was successful in every reform attempt, or that he succeeded in completely changing the operational mode of politics. His substantial efforts and endurance showed, however, that change was possible. When the successors retreated back to politics-as-usual and kept

⁴⁸⁶ Abe's grandfather, Abe Kan, and father, Abe Shintarō were prominent politicians. Abe's grandfather on his mother's side was Kishi Nobosuke and his great-uncle was Satō Eisaku.

⁴⁸⁷ Taggart, 2004.

only the nationalist right elements in Koizumi's ideological construction, the popularity was almost doomed to be reduced.

The contemporary image of the Koizumi period is not only positive. Rather, during the last part of Koizumi's premiership and in particular after his resignation, the notion that the structural reforms have led to increased inequality in Japan developed. Suddenly, instead of only being viewed as fresh, efficient, and leading to economic improvement, the neoliberal structural reforms were criticized for destroying an equal Japan. This link between social inequality and neoliberal reforms has increased the opposition to such reforms. Neoliberalism played an instrumental role for the legitimacy and justification of the attacks on the 'conservative orthodoxy' and their 'development state' but such claims of inequality are powerful in reducing the probability for a populist attempt with neoliberal reforms. It seems therefore that Koizumi's right-wing populism is difficult to copy.

My thesis argues that a latent *kan-min* dichotomy exists in Japanese society. The political potential for populism stems from the ambiguity of whether a politician is a representative of the *government* or the *people*. When order, responsibility, and consensus are high on the agenda, the perception of politicians resembles the understanding of a bureaucrat or a government official. With emphasis on conflict, opposition and resistance to the government, the populist potential of the *min-kan* cleavage is exploited. The legitimacy of the government among Japanese is a crucial variable to whether populism has political success potential.

Two factors are important when fighting the political establishment with populist ideology. First, the degree of crisis sentiment among Japanese plays a major role. Today's Japan seems to be vulnerable for populist ideology. That is not saying that every Japanese lives her or his life in despair or fear. Rather, Japan is a very peaceful and safe place to live. But throughout mass media, literature, politics, and government institutions, a notion of a Japan in crisis – economically, culturally, socially, politically, and/or demographically – is spread on a continuous basis. Second, the populist attack on the establishment must be understood as an honest, democratic attempt to reform, or in McVeigh's words to *renovate*, Japanese society and politics. Koizumi entered the center of Japanese politics in a time of political and social upheaval and his right-wing populism was by many considered to be a proper and just attack on an unfortunate and unethical mix of interests among politicians, government and business.

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