

Japan: The Prime Minister and the Japanese Diet

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Traditionally, executive leadership has been considered weak and largely irrelevant in Japanese politics. The prime minister from 1955 to 1993 was selected from the dominant Liberal Democratic Party and was constrained by the strong internecine factional conflict in his party and, for much of the 1970s and early 1980s, a razor-thin parliamentary majority. Since 1993, coalition politics have become the norm. While most scholars suggest that coalition politics would constrain the executive even further, the decline of factionalism and increased efficacy of 'going public' has allowed a greater potential for executive leadership in Japan.

In parliamentary cabinet systems, parliament bears responsibility for all government actions, thus facilitating the fusion of power that provides the public with an opportunity at election to choose a government. This fusion of power makes the representative government accountable to the public.¹ Executive performance relies not least on whether the cabinet has a stable parliamentary base, which determines the ability of the cabinet to get the desired legislative proposals through the parliament. At the same time, whether or not the general public supports the cabinet may have an independent impact on how successful the government can be in enacting legislation and implementing policies. Ultimately, the power base both inside and outside the parliament may significantly affect the conditions under which the executive demonstrates leadership qualities.

Although Japan has had the key characteristics that scholars of comparative politics have focused on as leading to strong executive leadership – stable parliamentary majorities and centralised government not limited by internal or external constraints – studies of executive leadership in Japan have traditionally emphasised the weakness of the prime minister. Japanese politics has been described as a pyramid without a peak,² and as suffering from a

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generalised leadership deficit,³ while the prime minister has been described as a 'missing leader'⁴ doomed to 'reactive' leadership⁵ – to the extent that the role has any capacity for leadership at all.

However, the conditions that have limited the leadership capacity of the Japanese executive have been changing. While the formal powers and resources of the prime minister have been intentionally enhanced in recent years, it is suggested here that the capacity for leadership by the Japanese prime minister is, as it has been in the past, largely dependent on the prime minister's relationship with parliament and the public.

The following sections explore the relationship between executive leadership and the Japanese parliament, focusing first on the selection and dismissal of the prime minister and cabinet. The second section examines the executive's role in the dissolution of parliament and parliamentary elections. The third section examines government duration and the final section focuses on the executive and legislative law-making. The conclusion offers a summary of the findings and a brief discussion on the conditions under which a prime minister demonstrates leadership in Japan.

THE SELECTION AND DISMISSAL OF THE EXECUTIVE

In Japan, the prime minister is designated from among the members of the Diet by a resolution of the Diet. The constitution recognises the precedence of the House of Representatives (Lower House) over the House of Councillors (Upper House) regarding the designation of a prime minister. By law, the decision of the Lower House will become the decision of the Diet if the two houses disagree on the designation of a prime minister and no agreement can be reached through a conference committee of both houses or if the Upper House fails to make a designation within ten days after the Lower House has made a designation.

Only twice, in 1948 and 1989, have the two houses disagreed in their selection of a prime minister. For the vast majority of the post-war period, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has had stable majorities in both houses of parliament, and from 1955 to 1993 whoever was the LDP president always served as prime minister. The LDP is a factionalised party, generally with five major formally organised factions that possess significant resources. Factional politics largely determined who was chosen as party president (and thus prime minister), as factional leaders bargained with each other to gain the support of other factions for their candidacy as party leader. In the 1950s and 1960s 'mainstream' factions that supported the candidacy of the successful prime minister were over-represented in the cabinet, but in the 1970s cabinets became 'wall-to-wall', representing all factions proportionate to their size.

With the loss of the LDP Lower House majority in 1993, coalition governments have become the norm. After the brief Hosokawa and Hata

governments, the LDP returned to power in 1994 with a succession of smaller parties as coalition members. Although it is generally felt that coalition governments weaken the potential for strong prime ministers, as they are constrained by the need to bargain with other coalition members, in Japan this has not equivocally been the case. Under the LDP majority, the prime minister was greatly constrained by the need to consider other factions within the LDP, but in the past decade the strength of factions in the LDP has declined,⁶ so some have suggested that the prime minister has simply traded one set of constraints for another.

In general, the degree to which factional and coalitional politics have constrained the executive depends on the degree to which the interests of the actors have aligned. Ironically, when the LDP majority was strongest, factional rivalries were least checked by the need to act collectively to ensure continued electoral majorities. Whereas, when the LDP majority weakened, party members saw a greater need for collective action, giving the executive and party as a whole greater ability to exhibit leadership.

The formal rules for dismissal of the executive mirror those of selection, giving priority to the Lower House. The existence of the cabinet is solely dependent on the confidence of the Lower House. If the Lower House passes a resolution of no confidence in the cabinet, or defeats a confidence resolution, the cabinet must resign *en masse*, or the cabinet may dissolve the Lower House within ten days and call an election.⁷

A no confidence vote, while a mechanism by which the executive is held accountable, is a blunt instrument for the parliamentary majority, one that entails certain risks and costs. In fact, no confidence votes are generally a tactic of the opposition, who know that the motion is unlikely to pass.⁸ The Lower House has passed a resolution of no confidence in the cabinet four times: Yoshida (1948 and 1953), Ohira (1980) and Miyazawa (1993). None resulted in the resignation of the cabinet, as in each case the cabinet dissolved the Lower House and called an early election.

Also, the cabinet may either voluntarily resign or dissolve the Lower House before taking a vote on the proposed no confidence motion. Yoshida in 1954 and Hata in 1994 both resigned to pre-empt a vote of no confidence. And there are other unusual circumstances that may lead to no confidence resolutions introduced but not voted upon. The case of Miyazawa in 1992 is perhaps the most unusual – a confidence vote was passed and therefore no further action was taken on the no confidence resolution proposed by the opposition.

Resignations by prime ministers have been quite frequent in Japan compared to most parliamentary democracies. Prime ministers have resigned because of scandal or to take responsibility for poor performance in elections, but most commonly they have resigned when their term as party leader is over.

The hierarchical factionalised structure of the LDP has meant that there are generally alternative party leaders available who are interested in the post. In fact the party rules of the LDP have generally limited an individual to holding the party presidency, and thus the post of prime minister, for only two terms (originally four years). Although these party rules have been frequently changed, the expectation since the 1970s has been that a prime minister will be in power for a few years at most, and that cabinet reshuffles will occur even more frequently – averaging once a year – in order to accommodate demand for positions.

In understanding the relationship between the executive and legislature in Japan it is important to note that even when based on a stable one-party legislative majority – as was the case in the late 1960s and into the 1970s – the executive was significantly constrained by intra-party politics and had few resources to use in exercising domestic leadership. The next section examines how the prime minister's influence on elections may provide a counterbalance to the constraints on the executive imposed by parties in parliament.

THE PRIME MINISTER AND ELECTIONS

The cabinet may dissolve the Lower House at will, although the emperor formally performs the dissolution. Thus, the cabinet's prerogative to dissolve the Lower House is not contingent on parliamentary confidence in the cabinet or upon approval by the head of state as in the case of some European countries.⁹ The constitutionally determined period between elections is a maximum of four years. However, the time between elections has only once run the entire four years. The 2003 election was the 21st under the 1947 constitution, and the average time between general elections has been a little under three years.

The opportunity to dissolve parliament at the whim of the prime minister creates the opportunity for economic manipulation and the strategic timing of elections based on considerations of the ruling party or coalition's electoral prospects.¹⁰ In Japan, among the first to suggest that this has been the case was Inoguchi.¹¹ Analyses on this subject all suggest that there has been strategic timing of elections and strategic manipulation of monetary and fiscal policy in Japan to coincide with elections.¹²

More important to understanding executive leadership is the impact the prime minister may have on elections. Most studies of voting behaviour and elections in Japan have ignored the potential impact of prime ministers and other party leaders on elections, until quite recently – the major exception being Kawato.¹³ Studies were primarily focused on teasing out the effect of the personal vote and party label in the candidate-centric SNTV electoral

system. The prime minister was hardly covered in the mass media, and was generally considered irrelevant to elections.

Recent studies have suggested that in the 2000 and 2001 national elections the impact of voter evaluations of the prime minister were quite significant. Most notably, survey analysis by Kabashima and Imai suggest that Prime Minister Mori's unpopularity hurt the LDP significantly in the 2000 election.¹⁴ Party leader evaluation had an effect on the votes of both LDP supporters and non-supporters most especially in the proportional representation districts. The inverse – positive impact of popular prime ministers – was strongly suggested by national newspaper and polling reports in the 2001 Upper House election, when Prime Minister Koizumi's popularity was identified as key in affecting voter decisions.¹⁵

Krauss and Nyblade have suggested that the electoral influence of prime ministers, although generally ignored until recently, is not an artefact of the past few years or the 1994 electoral reforms.¹⁶ They trace significant electoral 'coattails' for prime ministerial popularity back to at least the early 1980s, whereas the electoral impact of the prime minister in the 1960s and 1970s was minimal at most. They suggest that Japan has not been left out of the broader trend towards the 'presidentialisation' of parliamentary democracies at least in terms of the electoral impact of the prime minister.¹⁷

This is of course a double-edged sword for prime ministers. 'Going public' gives prime ministers an opportunity to cultivate a power-base outside their relationship with parliament to use in attempting to lead their party and advance their agenda vis-à-vis parliament, it also makes them more vulnerable to the vagaries of public opinion.¹⁸ Whereas a popular prime minister has greater potential to exhibit leadership, unpopular prime ministers are more vulnerable than in the past.

In the following sections, the two aspects of the executive–legislative relationship are examined, namely, cabinet stability and legislative productivity. In particular, the importance of the inter-party power balance is considered as this may significantly affect the ability of the majority to handle parliamentary business, given the constitutional design of the parliamentary cabinet system that in principle works to ensure majority control in the legislature. At the same time, the possibility that executive performance may independently rely on the popularity of the cabinet among the general public is also considered.

EXECUTIVE DURATION

How long a prime minister can stay in power is one of the measurements of executive performance, and has been extensively studied in European countries.¹⁹ Table 1 lists the Japanese prime ministers under the 1947

TABLE I
PRIME MINISTERS AND THEIR TERMS IN OFFICE

Prime Minister	Term		Days
Katayama, Tetsu	24/5/1947	10/3/1948	292
Ashida, Hitoshi	10/3/1948	15/10/1948	220
Yoshida, Shigeru	15/10/1948	10/12/1954	2,248
Hatoyama, Ichiro	10/12/1954	23/12/1956	745
Ishibashi, Tanzan	23/12/1956	25/2/1957	65
Kishi, Nobusuke	25/2/1957	19/7/1960	1,241
Ikeda, Hayato	19/7/1960	9/11/1964	1,575
Sato, Eisaku	9/11/1964	7/7/1972	2,798
Tanaka, Kakuei	7/7/1972	9/12/1974	886
Miki, Takeo	9/12/1974	24/12/1976	747
Fukuda, Takeo	24/12/1976	7/12/1978	714
Ohira, Masayoshi	7/12/1978	12/6/1980	554
Suzuki, Zenko	17/7/1980	27/11/1982	864
Nakasone, Yasuhiro	27/11/1982	6/11/1987	1,806
Takeshita, Noboru	6/11/1987	3/6/1989	576
Uno, Sosuke	3/6/1989	10/8/1989	69
Kaifu, Toshiki	10/8/1989	5/11/1991	818
Miyazawa, Kiichi	5/11/1991	9/8/1993	644
Hosokawa, Morihiro	9/8/1993	28/4/1994	263
Hata, Tsutomu	28/4/1994	30/6/1994	64
Murayama, Tomiichi	30/6/1994	11/1/1996	561
Hashimoto, Ryutaro	11/1/1996	30/7/1998	932
Obuchi, Keizo	30/7/1998	5/4/2000	616
Mori, Yoshiro	5/4/2000	26/4/2001	387
Koizumi, Jun'ichiro	26/4/2001	—	—

Note: Yoshida was also a prime minister (22/5/1946–24/5/1947) prior to the promulgation of the 1947 constitution. Ito, Masayoshi, the chief cabinet secretary under Ohira, served as an acting prime minister (12/6–17/7/1980) after Ohira's sudden death. Koizumi has been in office for 858 days as of 31 August 2003.

constitution. Sato served as prime minister for the longest term of 2798 days, which is roughly seven years and eight months, while Hata served for the shortest period of 64 days. Prime ministers' time in office averages approximately 820 days.²⁰ However, it is important to keep in mind that the duration as prime minister can be artificially curtailed. For example, both Ohira and Obuchi died suddenly while they were in office. Similarly, Ishibashi and Ikeda resigned because of their illness and their terms might have been longer if their health had allowed them to remain in office.

Nakasone, although popular among the public, stepped down after fulfilling his terms as the LDP president. However, with the exception of Nakasone, those who stayed in power relatively longer were the prime ministers of the period prior to the 1970s. In particular, Kishi, Ikeda and Sato in the early period of the LDP one-party dominance were remarkable in terms of their ability to remain in office. The period when these three prime ministers

took office coincided with the 15 years in which two-party politics was dominant and as opposition fragmentation began making steady headway – the golden era of LDP dominance. Once entering into the era of power balance in the 1970s, the parliamentary basis of the LDP further eroded, and the cabinets formed thereafter were relatively short-lived. Sato, who stayed in power the longest of all Japanese prime ministers, was blessed with the historic economic growth that occurred in Japan in the 1960s, and a relatively stable power base in parliament and within the LDP. He was allied with Fukuda, the second-generation leader of the Kishi faction,²¹ and their factions formed the mainstream of the LDP for this period.

Whereas in the 1960s and 1970s, prime ministers were not viewed as being very distinct from their party, there was an increasing divergence between prime ministerial approval and the LDP support rates after Nakasone took office. Prime ministers like Nakasone, who are popular among the general public, can stay in power relatively longer even if their parliamentary and factional support base is not strong. According to the monthly polls done by Jiji press since 1960, the cabinet approval rating generally decreases the longer the prime minister remains in office. In contrast, the approval rating for Nakasone was relatively low at the beginning of his term and then increased gradually over time. A similar pattern of approval ratings can only be found in the cases of Kaifu and Obuchi, both of whom stayed in office for short periods, although in the latter case this was due to Obuchi's untimely death.²² At the same time, it is clear that public popularity alone does not form the foundation of prime ministerial power, as indicated by the cases of Tanaka, who became prime minister by overcoming the intensified factional rivalry with Fukuda, and Hosokawa, who led the first coalition government after the demise of LDP one-party dominance. Their approval ratings were more than 60 per cent at the beginning of their terms, although these fell dramatically in the course of their terms. On the other hand, Koizumi has had unprecedented popularity among the public and enjoyed an average approval rate of more than 50 per cent. He seems to have the potential of becoming the Nakasone of the new century, despite his weak power base inside the LDP.²³

THE EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATION

The Diet is the sole law-making organ of the state.²⁴ Diet members are entitled to propose bills to the house to which they belong, although most bills that are discussed in the Diet are drafted within the administrative agencies.²⁵ Under Japan's parliamentary cabinet system, the prime minister, representing the cabinet, submits bills to the Diet.

When a bill is presented to the Diet, the presiding officer of the house concerned refers it to the committee under whose jurisdiction it falls. Upon

the completion of the committee examination of the bill, the committee chairman makes a report on both the course of the deliberation and the result, and submits it to the presiding officer of the house concerned. A bill passed by one house generally goes through the same stages of deliberation in the other house. As a general rule, a bill becomes law after being passed through both houses.

Bills are mostly examined during either of the two types of Diet sessions: ordinary and extraordinary. An ordinary session of the Diet is convened once per year, currently in January, with its term set at 150 days. The cabinet may decide to convene an extraordinary session of the Diet whenever it is deemed necessary or at the request of a quarter of the total members of either house.²⁶ Since the Diet Law revision made in 1958, the extension of the term of a session is limited to once only in the case of an ordinary session, and twice in the case of an extraordinary session.²⁷

In practice, the Diet is in session for approximately 200 days per year. Plenary sessions are customarily held on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays in the Lower House, while Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays are the regular days in the Upper House. Nevertheless, the presiding officer of each house is authorised to convene a plenary session on a non-scheduled day if it is deemed that there exists an urgent need. By precedent, committee meetings are also limited to twice or three times a week on fixed days. Consequently, the actual working days of the Diet are cut down to roughly 100 days per year.

Furthermore, matters that fail to come to a resolution while the Diet is in session do not survive into ensuing sessions. Unresolved matters are discarded at the end of the session unless the house concerned resolves to continue deliberation at the committee level while the Diet is not in session. This principle of 'inter-session discontinuity' sets the time dimension of the legislative process in which agenda-setting becomes of paramount importance for the ruling majority seeking the passage of its desired bills, given the limited number of actual working days.

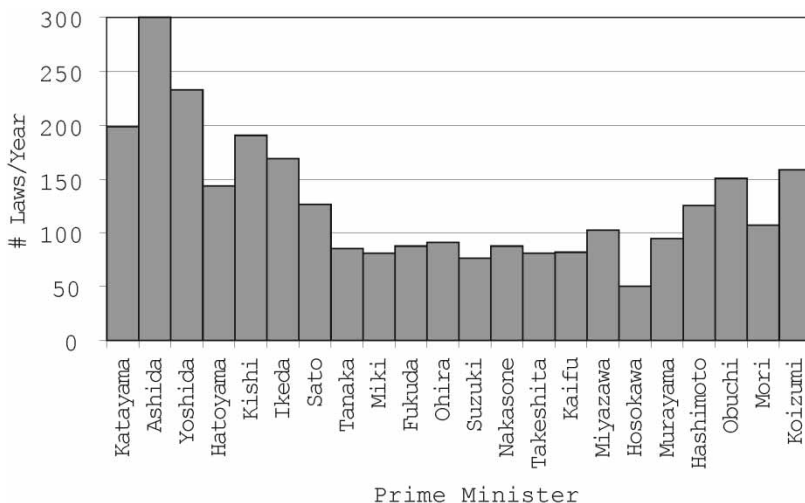
In the Diet, law-making comes down to a matter of how the ruling majority controls agenda-setting. The post-war Diet is modelled on the legislative process of the US Congress, but the constitutional principle of the Diet follows the fusion of power in the British Parliament. The ruling majority, of course, must get over the parliamentary hurdle set by the distinct second chamber and the decentralised committees. Nevertheless, agenda power is institutionally designed to lie in the hands of the ruling majority as long as it commands a majority in both houses and in committees.²⁸

Thus, whether or not the prime minister appears actively involved in introducing policy initiatives may not have an obvious consequence on legislation at the macro level. With this caveat in mind, the legislative productivity of

post-war prime ministers is considered below. Legislative productivity is defined here as the number of government-sponsored laws, namely those submitted by the prime minister, divided by the number of his term in days, multiplied by 365.²⁹ As seen in Figure 1, legislative productivity was remarkably high for the prime ministers of the early post-war period, and it remained at a relatively high level for the period prior to the 1970s when the prime ministers stayed in power for a significantly longer period of time.

In the early post-war period, however, there was extra demand for new legislation to create a legal system consistent with the democratic constitution and suitable for drastically changing social conditions. Also, the government made a cabinet decision in 1963 requiring related legislative proposals to be combined into a one-package bill, and ordinances to be issued for matters that are deemed unnecessary to be enacted into law. Thus, the downward

FIGURE 1
LEGISLATIVE PRODUCTIVITY BY PRIME MINISTER



Note: Legislative productivity is defined as the number of government-sponsored laws per year, which is calculated by the following formula:

$$\frac{LAW_i \cdot 365}{DAY_i}$$

where LAW_i denotes the number of government-sponsored bills passed in the second chamber in the Diet during prime minister i 's term, and DAY_i is the number of days that a prime minister i remained in office. The prime ministers whose term is less than three months are not included. For Koizumi, the end of the 153rd session in 2001 is used to determine his prime ministerial term.

trend of government legislation may be less a function of declining legislative productivity and more related to institutional and social changes.

From the 1970s through to the mid-1990s, the number of government-sponsored laws remained below 100 per year. The only exception to this is Miyazawa, whose legislative productivity just barely exceeded 100 laws per year. However, there has been a substantial upward trend in legislative productivity in the late 1990s. The relatively high level of legislative productivity after Hashimoto took office may be a reflection in part of the fact that the LDP has been successful in regaining seats in the Lower House, and the eventual collapse of the conservative–socialist alliance, which led to a more ideologically compact coalition of the LDP and centrist parties.

It is worth noting Koizumi's success in legislation, despite his vulnerable support base inside his own party. While the other recent prime ministers have had a stable factional support base, Koizumi has not. This may imply that, as with executive stability, the success of the executive in enacting legislation and implementing policies depends on whether or not the general public supports the prime minister, and not just upon his parliamentary support. Both the decreased vote share of the LDP and the increasing percentage of the public less attached to any particular political party serves to make the prime minister's own image in the public more crucial for his success in both remaining in office and enacting legislation. Krauss and Nyblade show that prime ministers have been more active in leading special policy committees and panels, and attempting to have top-down influence on the policy-making process at the micro legislation level.³⁰ More active prime ministers have become successful in furthering their policy agenda through personal involvement while simultaneously gathering media coverage and attempting to influence their public image.

CONCLUSION

Much of executive leadership may not be directly observed or measured. It is often exerted primarily in private meetings with other political actors and, in particular, when the interests of the executive and legislature align, it may be difficult to determine to what extent the executive is leading parliament, or vice versa. Executive leadership may be most noticeable in cases when the prime minister is popular among the general public and uses this to overcome resistance in his party (or coalition) to enact his preferred policies. However, this has not occurred much in Japan, though Nakasone (and perhaps Koizumi) stand out as exceptions to the norm.

The traditional view has been that the prime minister in Japan has been incapable of demonstrating actual leadership in most areas. Although some scholarship points to greater leadership by Japanese political elites than has

been normally accepted,³¹ it is clear that there have been systematic changes in the capacity for executive leadership in Japan over the past two decades.³²

This article has reviewed the relationship between parliament and the executive by focusing on four areas: the selection and dismissal of the prime minister; the dissolution of parliament and role of the prime minister in elections; government duration; and legislative productivity. Executive leadership has been strengthened by changes in both the party and electoral systems, and further administrative reforms should only serve to give prime ministers more resources in exerting leadership in Japan. While the Japanese prime minister may still be weaker than many other executives, the position has been strengthened over the past two decades and especially in recent years.

NOTES

1. See G. Cox, *The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the Development of Political Parties in Victorian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) and G.B. Powell, *Elections as Instruments of Democracy: Majoritarian and Proportional Visions* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000) on the electoral importance of the executive–legislative relationship.
2. K. van Wolfreren, *The Enigma of Japanese Power: People and Politics in a Stateless Nation* (London: Macmillan, 1989), p.5.
3. A. Mulgan, 'Japan's Political Leadership Deficit', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 35/2 (2000), pp.183–202.
4. J. Massey, *Youth and Politics in Japan*, (Lexington: Lexington Books Inc., 1976), pp.27–31.
5. K. Hayao, *The Japanese Prime Minister and Public Policy* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993), pp.3–27.
6. G. Cox, F. Rosenbluth and M. Thies, 'Electoral Reform and the Fate of Factions: The Case of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party', *British Journal of Political Science*, 29 (1999), pp.33–56.
7. The Upper House is not empowered to pass a no confidence resolution, and the cabinet is not authorised to dissolve the Upper House.
8. M. Masuyama and B. Nyblade, 'An Analysis of the No-Confidence Votes in the Japanese Diet', paper prepared for the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, Sept. 2003, examines why the opposition makes a no confidence motion with little hope of passage.
9. See M. Gallagher, M. Laver and P. Mair, *Representative Government in Western Europe* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992), pp.173–84, and K. Strøm and S.M. Swindle, 'Strategic Parliamentary Dissolution', *American Political Science Review*, 96/3 (2002), pp.575–91; T. Bergman, W.C. Müller, K. Strøm and M. Blomgren, 'Democratic Delegation and Accountability: Cross-national Patterns', in K. Strøm, W.C. Müller and T. Bergman (eds.), *Delegation and Accountability in Parliamentary Democracies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) provides the most comprehensive discussion of these requirements in Europe.
10. See A. Smith, 'Election Timing in Majoritarian Parliament', *British Journal of Political Science*, 33/3 (2003), pp.397–418.
11. T. Inoguchi, *Gendai Nihon no Seiji Keizai no Kozu: Seifu to Shijo* (Tōkyō: Tōyō Keizai Shimposha, 1983).
12. M. Kohno and Y. Nishizawa, 'A Study of the Electoral Business Cycle in Japan: Elections and Government Spending on Public Construction', *Comparative Politics*, 22/2 (1990), pp.151–66; T. Ito, 'The Timing of Elections and Political Business Cycles in Japan', *Journal of Asian Economics*, 1/1 (1990), pp.135–56; T. Cargill and M. Hutchinson, 'Political Business Cycles with Endogenous Election Timing: Evidence from Japan', *Economic and Statistics*, 73/4 (1991), pp.733–9.

13. S. Kawato, 'Shū-San Dōjitsu Senkyo to Nakasone Ninki', *Hokudai Hōgaku Ronshū*, 39/2 (1988), pp.432–90.
14. I. Kabashima and R. Imai, 'Evaluation of Party Leaders and Voting Behavior: An Analysis of the 2000 General Election', *Social Science Japan Journal*, 5/1 (2002), pp.85–96.
15. See, for example, the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 30 July 2001.
16. E. Krauss and B. Nyblade, 'Presidentialization in Japan? The Prime Minister, Media and Elections in Japan', *British Journal of Political Science*, forthcoming 2005.
17. Compare A. Mughan, *Media and the Presidentialization of Parliamentary Elections* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), and T. Poguntke and P. Webb (eds.), *The Presidentialization of Democracy: A Study of Comparative Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming, 2004).
18. Compare S. Kernell, *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership* (Washington: CQ Press, 2nd edition, 1993).
19. For the controversy on government survival, see E. Browne, J. Frendreis and D. Gleiber, 'An "Events" Approach to the Problem of Cabinet Stability', *Comparative Political Studies*, 17/1 (1984), pp.167–97; K. Strøm, 'Party Goals and Government Performance in Parliamentary Democracies', *American Political Science Review*, 79/3 (1985), pp.738–54; G. King, J. Alt, N. Burns and M. Laver, 'A Unified Model of Cabinet Dissolution in Parliamentary Democracies', *American Journal of Political Science*, 34/3 (1990), pp.846–71; P. Warwick, *Government Survival in Parliamentary Democracies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). In particular, L. Martin, 'Coalition Politics and Parliamentary Government' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, 1999) argues that government survival hinges systematically on public opinion 'shock' in addition to both the structural and stochastic factors determining the survival of the government.
20. The calculation does not include Koizumi, who is currently in office, and Ito, who served as acting prime minister for a few weeks after the sudden death of Ohira. Koizumi has been in office for 858 days as of 31 August 2003.
21. Sato was a younger brother of Kishi, who was adopted in his boyhood.
22. See M. Masuyama, 'Shushō no Jinin to Shijiritsu: Zainin Kikan no Seizon Bunseki', *Kōkyō Sentaku no Kenkyū*, 37 (2001), pp.14–24, for the details of the monthly cabinet approval rate done by the Jiji Press. Also, see I. Miyake, Y. Nishizawa and M. Kohno, *55 Nen Taiseika no Seiji to Keizai: Jiji Yoron Chōsa Deta nō Bunseki* (Tokyo: Bokutakusha, 2001) for a time-series analysis of the monthly polls.
23. For the period that the Jiji data is available, the average approval rate is approximately 35.8 per cent. Masuyama, 'Shushō no Jinin to Shijiritsu: Zainin Kikan no Seizon Bunseki' shows that prime ministerial duration gets longer as the power balance shifts in favour of the majority in the Lower House, while it is also dependent on the popularity of the prime minister among the general public.
24. Legislative acts by the executive branch are limited to executive orders (decrees issued by the executive branch for the purpose of administrative laws passed by the Diet) and delegated orders (decrees issued on matters delegated to the executive branch by law). Exceptions include the constitutional right of the two houses of the Diet and the Supreme Court to draw up the rules of conduct for their own institutions and members, and the right of local governments to issue ordinances and regulations.
25. Since the Diet Law revision made in 1955, a Diet member introducing a bill must be supported by at least 20 members in the Lower House and at least ten members in the Upper House. In the case of a bill affecting the budget, the Diet member must secure the support of 50 or more members of the Lower House and 20 or more members of the Upper House.
26. Prior to 1992, the ordinary sessions were convened in December. There is another type of Diet session, which is a special session that must be convened within 30 days of a general election that is called within 40 days from the date of Diet dissolution. The length of an extraordinary or a special session is determined by concurrent resolution of both houses. If the resolutions of both houses fail to agree, or if the Upper House fails to pass a resolution, the term of the session is determined by the resolution adopted by the Lower House.

27. Prior to this revision, there were no limits on the number of times that a session could be extended. The extension of the term of a session is determined by concurrent resolution of both houses.
28. See M. Masuyama, 'Is the Japanese Diet Consensual?', *Journal of Legislative Studies*, 6/4 (2000), pp.9–28, that classifies the Diet into categories in each of the agenda control criteria proposed by H. Döring, 'Time as a Scarce Resource: Government Control of the Agenda', in H. Döring (ed.), *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1995), pp.223–46.
29. More precisely, this number counts the government-sponsored bills passed in the second chamber in the Diet during the term of the prime minister in question. There are 8242 government-sponsored bills submitted to the Diet during the period beginning with the 1st session in 1947 and ending with the 153rd session in 2001, 7267 of which became law. Also, the prime ministers (Ishibashi, Uno and Hata) who stayed in power less than three months are not included in the analysis. For Koizumi, the end of the 153rd session in 2001 is used to determine his prime ministerial term.
30. E. Krauss and B. Nyblade, 'The Changing Public Image of Japan's Prime Minister' Manuscript, San Diego, University of California, 2003.
31. R.J. Samuels, *Machiavelli's Children: Leaders and Their Legacies in Italy and Japan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).
32. Krauss and Nyblade, 'Presidentialization in Japan?'