

THE RHETORICAL ORGANIZATION AND IDENTITY OF JAPANESE EDITORIAL WRITERS

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Abstract

The present paper has two purposes. The first is to demonstrate how homogeneous and innocuous editorials in Japanese major newspapers are. Specifically, I will first show that editorials whose political stance is anti-US/anti-government or neutral with respect to the US and Japanese governments' decisions, frequently employ the rhetorical structure¹ which leaves responsibility for solving critical issues to a large political system, and that this rhetorical structure prevents the text from providing the issues with specific and implementable solutions. I will then point out that, regardless of their political stance, Japanese editorials have a strong tendency to comment on events under discussion by raising the same issues at the same time within the framework of the central government's policies. The second purpose is to argue that the elimination of editorial homogeneity and innocuousness requires the abolition of the *kisha* (press) club system.

Keywords: editorials, homogeneity, innocuousness, rhetorical structure, the *kisha* club.

Ilha do Desterro	Florianópolis	nº 50	p. 013-037	jan./jun. 2006
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Introduction

Three Assumptions about Editorial Opinion in Japan

There are three mutually-contradicting assumptions about editorial opinion in Japan. The first is what I call the “homogeneity assumption”. This assumption, which claims that Japanese editorial opinion is homogeneous and innocuous, has been adopted by a number of scholars, journalists and political analysts such as van Wolferen, Freeman, Rausch, Hara, Koitabashi, Iwase, Maesaka, Tase, Uozumi, and Ito.² The second assumption is what I call the “polarization assumption”. This assumption claims that editorial opinion is divided into two groups, i.e., the anti-US/anti-government group led by the *Asahi Shinbun* and the pro-US/pro-government group led by the *Yomiuri Shinbun*. This assumption has been adopted by the *Yomiuri Shinbun* Chôsaikenkyû Honbu (the *Yomouri Shinbun* Bureau of Investigation and Research; “the *Yomiuri* Bureau” hereafter), the *Sanki Shinbun* Ronsetsu Inshitsu (the *Sankei Shinbun* Editorial Board; “the *Sankei* Board” hereafter), and at times by Hara and Kitamura.³ The last assumption is what I call the “diversity assumption”, which claims that Japanese editorial opinion is diversified.⁴

A crucial question needs to be posed: which assumption is correct or the most truthful? Previous studies of Japanese editorials suggest that the homogeneity assumption is more truthful than the other two. Nanri (2001) showed that editorials in Japan’s leading newspaper *Asahi Shinbun* often employ a rhetorical structure which begins the text with the occurrence of a *specific* event and concludes by leaving responsibility for solving the critical issue concerned with the text-initial event to a large political system such as the Japanese government or the United Nations.⁵ Leaving responsibility to a large political system prevents the editorial from presenting specific and implementable solutions to critical issues, since it is the large political system (or a collective political body) but not any specific individual member in that system that is responsible for causing the critical issue. No particular individual is required to take any specific action to solve

critical issues. This, Nanri (2001) noted, makes the editorial innocuous. (For ease of discussion, let us call this rhetorical structure the “specific-to-system” structure.) Nanri (in press) analyzed 84 editorials carried in 18 Japanese newspapers over the period of ten days and showed that the specific-to-system rhetorical structure was employed by not only the *Asahi Shinbun* but also the *Mainichi* and the *Yomiuri Shinbun* as well as many regional and local newspapers. (All of the editorials commented on the September 11 attacks.) Nanri (2004) investigated editorial diversity by following how the 84 editorials developed their comments on the September 11 attacks and subsequent developments, and compared this editorial diversity with that exhibited by editorials in three US newspapers that also commented on the September 11 attacks and subsequent developments over the same period of time. Nanri (2004) concluded that, compared with the US editorials, Japanese editorials are distinctively homogeneous.

But these previous studies are just short of reaching a convincing answer to whether or not Japanese editorials are homogeneous and innocuous for the following reasons:

- (1) Nanri’s (in press) investigation was conducted by summarizing full-length texts into short texts (each of which was divided into the introduction, intermediation and conclusion segment). The specific-to-system structure was identified by focusing primarily on the introduction and the conclusion segments of those summarized texts.
- (2) Nanri (in press) did not fully describe the structure of pro-US/pro-government editorials.
- (3) Nanri’s (in press) investigation took into account some information presented in intermediation segments. But most portions of intermediation segments were not fully investigated.

In the present paper, I will first show the homogeneity and the innocuousness of Japanese editorials by

- (1) investigating full-length editorials and describing how the specific-to-system structure begins and ends,
- (2) showing how pro-US/pro-government editorials are organized, and
- (3) conducting an investigation on the entire texts, including the intermediation segments of the editorials.

I will then relate the issue of editorial homogeneity and innocuousness to the institutional environment where the “elite” editorial writers are produced, and will argue that the *kisha* club, the most crucial institutional factor of editorial homogeneity and innocuousness, must be abolished.

Data Selection

The data selected for the forgoing purposes are taken from Nanri (in press). But I have narrowed the scope of text analysis down from 84 editorials (in 18 newspapers) to 42 editorials carried in six Japanese major newspapers, the *Asahi*, the *Yomiuri*, the *Mainichi*, the *Hokkaidô*, the *Chûnichi*, and the *Nishinippon Shinbun*.⁶

The Editorial “Diversity” in the Data

For the sake of discussion, let me talk about the editorial ‘diversity’ found in the data. Immediately after the September 11 attacks, the US government took the attacks as an act of war against the US and expressed its determination to bring the terrorists to justice. The Japanese government soon expressed its support of the determination by the US government and later decided to dispatch Japan’s Self Defence Forces (“SDF” hereafter) overseas to assist the US forces. The issue of US military action and that of the despatch of the SDF broke down the six newspapers into three groups. The first group was the anti-US/anti-government (“anti-US” hereafter) group, which (in principle) opposed both US military action and the dispatch of the SDF. The *Asahi*, the *Hokkaidô*, and the *Nishinippon Shinbun* were the members of this

group. The second group was the neutral group, which eventually neither agreed nor disagreed with US military action and the dispatch of the SDF. This group had only one member, the *Mainichi Shinbun*. The third group was the pro-US/pro-government ("pro-US" hereafter) group, which supported both US military action and the dispatch of the SDF. The *Yomiuri* and the *Chûnichi Shinbun* were the members of this group.

Text Analysis

I will first focus on the initial and the final segment of the text. By investigating the first one or two and the last one or two paragraphs of the text, I will describe (the most crucial parts of) the specific-to-system structure and then a variant form of this rhetorical structure. These structures are frequently employed by the anti-US and neutral newspapers. I will then investigate the reversed version of the anti-US rhetorical structure, which I will refer to as the "system-to-specific" structure. This rhetorical structure, which makes the text look critical, is preferred by pro-US newspapers. After describing these rhetorical structures, I will investigate how the entire text is organized. The homogeneity and innocuousness of Japanese editorials will be made clear as the text analysis proceeds.

Text-Initial and -Final Segments

The Specific-To-System Structure. A typical anti-US or neutral editorial begins with an indication of the occurrence of a specific event or the existence of a specific state of affairs, and concludes with the suggestion or the demand that a large political system is responsible for solving the critical issue concerned with the text-initial specific event or state of affairs. *Asahi's* Day Three (1) editorial⁷ states:

[1] *Asahi's* Day Three (1) Editorial (the first two and the last one paragraph)

Initial Segment: Fifty thousand people had been working in the collapsed skyscrapers in New York. Twenty thousand people work in the Pentagon on the outskirts of Washington. //⁸ The number of dead and injured people caused by the terrorist attacks is estimated to reach thousands.

Final Segment: Even the countries that the US has classified as countries that harbour terrorists have criticised the terrorist attacks. In order to expand a united front to fight terrorism in the international community, isn't it necessary to view terrorism as an international crime [to be punished in the court], rather than to deal with it by declaring war?

The text begins with a description of the extent of the damage caused by the September 11 attacks (a specific state of affairs), where it refers to the types of the buildings attacked, the number of people whose daily routine should have directly been affected by the attacks, and an estimated number of victims. This text concludes with the suggestion that a united front in the international community (a large political system) should handle the critical issue concerned with the text-initial specific state of affairs. The text-initial critical state of affairs is eventually navigated to the text-final recommendation of a large political system as an (or the ultimate) agent to solve the critical issue concerned with the text-initial state of affairs. Here are two more examples of the specific-to-system structure:

[2] *Nishinippon's* Day Two Editorial (the first and the last paragraph)

Initial Segment: Hijacked planes burst into flames in succession after crushing into the skyscrapers in New York and the Pentagon on the outskirts of Washington. President Bush said, "Thousands of lives were lost instantly." It was nothing but a nightmare to watch the planes crushing into two one-hundred-ten-story buildings and the buildings collapsing in succession.

Final Segment: The formation of a system for international cooperation is urgently needed in this new international climate

to cope with terrorism and [negative effects on] the world's economy.

[3] *Mainichi's* Day Two Editorial (the first and the last paragraph)

Initial Segment: A bottomless dreadful impact has overwhelmed the world. The terrorist attacks, which were aimed at New York's World Trade Center, Washington's Pentagon and other targets, are unprecedented and the worst crimes in their intensity and criminality.

Final Segment: The world must unite together and deal with terrorist organizations that attempt to destroy the foundation of the international community with indiscriminate violence.

Nishinippon's Day Two editorial begins with the event of hijacked planes' burst into flames (a specific event), and concludes with a demand for the formation of "a system for international cooperation" (*kokusaitekina kyôchô taisei*, a large political system) to solve the text-initial terrorist issue. *Mainichi's* Day Two editorial begins with a fear overwhelming the world after the September 11 attacks (a specific state of affairs), and concludes by demanding that "the world" (*sekai*, a large political system) solve the terrorist issue symbolized by the "fear".

The pro-US *Yomiuri Shinbun* also employs the specific-to-system structure in its Day One editorial. The editorial begins with the declaration that the terrorist attacks were an act of war (a specific state of affairs), and concludes by demanding that "the entire world" (*zensekai*, a large political system) must handle the terrorist issue. The editorial states:

[4] *Yomiuri's* Day One Editorial (the first and the last paragraph)

Initial Segment: This is an act of war without a declaration of war. The US suffered gruesome attacks. [We] are furious with this unprecedented mass murder by terrorists. This is a savage act that cannot be tolerated.

Final Segment: It is important for the entire world, including Japan, to hunt down the terrorists. [We] must make them realize that terrorism does not pay.

It should be noted that the text-final recommendation of a large political system can be made by demanding that a particular entity such as a country act as a member of a large political system. *Hokkaidô's* Day Two editorial is an example of this. It states:

[5] *Hokkaidô's* Day Two Editorial (the first and the last paragraph)

Initial Segment: A large-scale terror that aimed at the nerve centre of the US, which has the world's greatest military power and has stood at the summit of the world economy, took place.

Final Segment: [The US] should identify the cause of frictions that it has had with other civilizations that have different [cultural] values, and should find a way to coexist with them. This is what [the US] is expected to do in the international community as the world's only superpower.

The text, begun with the indication of the occurrence of "a large-scale terror" (a specific event), demands that the US act as a member of the community composed of different civilizations (a large political system) to solve the international crisis caused by the text-initial large-scale terror.

Chûnichi's Day Four editorial,⁹ which also employs this rhetorical structure, concludes by demanding that the Japanese government should make a maximal contribution under the limits of the Constitution as a member of the international community (a large political system)¹⁰ to solve the terrorist issue introduced in its text-initial segment.

The specific-to-system structure is employed by more than a half of the editorials in the anti-US and neutral newspapers as shown in Table 1. The specific-to-system structure functions as a factor of editorial homogeneity. But it is not just a factor of editorial homogeneity. It is also a factor of editorial innocuousness for the following reason. The recommendation of a large political system as an agent to solve critical issues obscures the locus of responsibility. "A united front" in [1], "a

system for international cooperation" in [2], "the world" in [3], "the entire world" in [4], and the international community composed of different civilizations in [5] are all abstract entities. We are not told what exactly composes these large political systems and who exactly in the large political systems is expected to take action. Where there is no specific actor, there is no specific and implementable solution. The text-final recommendation of a large political system as an agent to solve critical issues offers no specific and implementable solution.

A Variant of the Specific-to-System Structure. There is one variant form of the specific-to-system structure. As exemplified by the conclusion in *Hokkaidô's* Day Two editorial, the promotion of a large political system makes sense only when that system is united through mutual respect. The unity of the large political system founded on mutual respect is interlocked with the promotion of diplomacy and calm and sensible response to critical issues. The variant structure begins with the indication of a specific event or a specific state of affairs and concludes with the promotion of calm and sensible diplomacy that seeks mutual respect among the members of a large political system such as the international community. There are five editorials that employ this variant structure. All begin with the indication of a specific event or state of affairs, and *Asahi's* Day One editorial concludes by demanding that the US should respond calmly to the attacks. *Asahi's* Day Three (2) editorial concludes with the proposal that Japan, as a friend of America, should preach to the US that military retaliation will earn the US nothing. *Hokkaidô's* Day Even editorial concludes with the suggestion that military retaliation must be a means after exhausting diplomatic measures. *Hokkaidô's* Day Nine editorial concludes by demanding that Japan should take the initiative in diplomacy at the UN (to persuade the Taliban regime to hand over the prime suspect of the September 11 attacks, Mr. bin Laden). *Mainichi's* Day Four editorial concludes with the argument that military confrontation alone cannot solve the terrorist issue and the world should respond calmly and sensibly to the attacks. *Nishinippon's* Day 8 editorial concludes

by arguing that Japan must not be carried away with anger in dealing with the terrorist issue.

I will briefly comment on this variant structure. It is no doubt important to deal calmly and sensibly with critical issues. But vital information is missing in these text-final remarks: i.e., what exactly must be done by responding calmly and sensibly to critical issues. The five editorials provide no specific answer to this question, which makes them innocuous.

Table 1. The Rhetorical Structures of the Editorials

			Specific-to-System (%)	Variant Structure (%)	System-to-Specific (%)	Other Structures (%)
<i>Asahi</i>			Days 2, 3(1), 7, 10 (50%)	Days 1, 3(2) (13%)	n/a	Days 4, 5 (25%)
Newspapers	Anti-US	<i>Hokkaidô</i>	Days 2, 3, 4, 10 (67%)	Days 7, 9 (33%)	n/a	n/a
		<i>Nishinippon</i>	Days 2, 3, 4, 10 (67%)	Day 8 (17%)	n/a	Day 6 (17%)
		<i>Mainichi</i>	Days 2, 3, 8, 9 (67%)	Day 4 (14%)	n/a	Days 7, 10 (29%)
		<i>Yomiuri</i>	Day 1 (17%)	n/a	Days 2, 3, 5	Days 7, 10 (33%)
	Pro-US					(50%)
		<i>Chûnichi</i>	Days 4, 5 (22%)	n/a	Day 1 (11%)	Days 2, 3, 7, 9, 10(1), 10(2) (67%)

The System-to-Specific Structure. The pro-US newspapers often employ the system-to-specific structure, the reversed version of the specific-to-system structure, as already noted. The text that employs this rhetorical structure emphasizes in its initial segment that a large political system is responsible for solving the critical issue introduced at the beginning of the text, and concludes with the presentation of a

specific solution. *Yomiuri's* Day Three editorial employs this rhetorical structure. It states:

[7] *Yomiuri's* Day Three Editorial (the first two and the last paragraph)

Initial Segment: The attacks that caused an extensive damage to America's nerve system are a grave challenge not only to the US but also to the entire free world. // The international community must unite together to prevent [these terrorist attacks] from happening again and must face cruel and diabolic terrorism.

Final Segment: It is the police's duty to guard US military facilities [in Japan under the current law]. But the Self Defence Forces should be prepared to carry out this duty if necessary. This would enhance the relationship of mutual trust between Japan and the US. [We] would like to encourage the lawmakers to discuss [this possibility] in depth in the extraordinary Diet.

The text begins with the existence of a grave challenge to both the US and the free world (a critical state of affairs). It then immediately proclaims that the international community (a large political system) must solve the international crisis caused by this "grave challenge". Having said that, the text concludes with a specific solution to the crisis. It urges the lawmakers to amend the existing law so that the SDF (specific actors) can guard US facilities in Japan (a specific solution). The system-to-specific structure is also employed by *Yomiuri's* Day Three and Five, and *Chûnichi's* Day One editorial.

Unlike the specific-to-system structure, the system-to-specific structure can make the text look specific and critical. But this does not mean that pro-US editorials are very different from anti-US and neutral editorials and not innocuous. When the entire text is scrutinized, it is revealed that texts with the system-to-specific structure are no more critical than texts with the specific-to-system structure, which I will look at in the next section.

The Organization of the Entire Text

I have investigated text-initial and -final segments. I will now investigate the organization of the entire text and attempt to demonstrate that Japanese editorials are homogeneous and innocuous regardless of their political stance. I have three pieces of evidence.

Evidence 1: Issue-Topic Listing. A Japanese editorial presents four or five issues or topics to be viewed. The text is thus crammed with those issues-topics, leaving no room for critical discussion of each issue-topic. *Asahi's* Day Two editorial, for instance, is organized as represented below. The "discussion" of each issue-topic is summarized in a statement or statements between the parentheses.

[8] The Organization of *Asahi's* Day Two Editorial

P1-3:¹¹ *Despicability of the Attacks.* (The September 11 attacks were a despicable crime.)

P4-5: *Identity of the Terrorists and the Impact on the World.* (There must have been a terrorist network behind the attacks, which rocked the world.)

P6-8: *Necessity to avoid confrontation and respond calmly.* ([We] must respond calmly to the attacks, investigate why the attacks took place, and refrain from military retaliation to avoid a vicious circle of retaliation.)

P9-11: *Unconventionality of the Attacks.* (Terrorism has been proved to be an unconventional form of warfare.)

P12-13: *Necessity to Leave Responsibility to a Large Political System.* (Terrorism is a common threat to the international community and should be handled by the community with wisdom. The US should seek a way to cooperate with international organizations such as the United Nations.)

The majority of the editorials in the data are composed of thirteen to twenty paragraphs, each of which is composed of one to three short sentences. Under these limits of space, each issue-topic is *viewed* just in a few short sentences. In short, those issues-topics are just listed. Issue-

topic listing does not just characterize the *Asahi Shinbun*, but it also characterizes all the other newspapers, including *Yomiuri*'s editorials with the system-to-specific structure. *Yomiuri*'s Day Two editorial, for instance, is organized as follows:

[9] The Organization of *Yomiuri*'s Day Two Editorial

P1-3: *Despicability of the Attacks and Necessity to Leave Responsibility to a Large Political System.* (The death toll is expected to reach thousands. We support Mr Bush's determination to win the war on terrorism. The international community must summon all powers to solve this terrorist issue.)

P4-6: *Unconventionality of the Attacks, the Identity of the Terrorists and the Impact on the World.* (Terrorism is a new threat to the international community. The attacks were well-worked out and have had a grave impact on the US economy and the global transportation system.)

P7-10: *Necessity to Tighten Security.* (The US was not able to prevent the attacks. This would give us an important lesson. The US must tighten up security even further, check airport security, and identify holes in aircraft safety measures.)

P11-13: *Japan's Military Role.* (While the US is determined to return to normal, the Japanese government has put forward anti-terrorism guidelines. Japan is urgently required to strengthen its own counter-terrorism measures.)

Evidence 2: Issue Sharing. The second piece of evidence is that virtually none of the issues¹² raised by the six newspapers is uniquely raised by any one of those papers. Those issues are shared and often recycled by the six newspapers.

Consider Texts [8] and [9] again. Text [8] (*Asahi*) leaves ultimate responsibility for solving the terrorism issue to the international community, offering no specific and implementable solution to the text-initial critical issue. In contrast, Text [9] (*Yomiuri*) provides the text-initial critical issue with a specific solution. The two editorials

may look very different from each other. But a careful comparison of the two texts reveals that they view the September 11 attacks from the same angles or the perspective of the same issues, i.e., the despicability of the attacks, the unconventionality of the attacks, and the necessity to leave responsibility to a large political system. The viewpoints for commenting on the September 11 attacks are shared by the two newspapers.

Issue sharing by *Asahi* and *Yomiuri* continues up to Day Ten, when the two newspapers comment on the Japanese government's action plan to join the war on terrorism. Both texts, in the first three paragraphs, note that the heads of the European nations are visiting Washington to offer military cooperation. The remainders of the texts comment on the Japanese government's plan. *Yomiuri* supports the plan, claiming that Japan will be isolated from the rest of the world if it does not join the war on terrorism. In contrast, *Asahi* refuses to recommend the action plan, arguing that joining the war on terrorism would cause the Self Defence Forces to assimilate with the US forces, which is way above the limits of the Constitution. The two newspapers view the September 11 attacks (and subsequent developments) from the perspective of the same issues.

Of the 42 editorials, only four raise unique issues, i.e., *Asahi's* Day Five and *Nishinippon's* Day Six, and *Chûnichi's* Day Three and Ten editorials. The entire texts of the first two praise New Yorkers' effort to reconstruct their city. The first of the last two refer to Pakistani president Musharaf's role as a key person in the Afghan crisis (caused by the allegation that the Afghan regime is hiding the prime suspect of the September 11 attacks, Mr. Bin Laden) and the second to Afghan refugees. All of the other issues raised by the six newspapers can be reduced to one of the eight issues listed below.

- (1) Despicability of the attacks.
- (2) Necessity to avoid confrontation, act (or respond) calmly, and/or leave responsibility to large political systems such as the international community.

- (3) Necessity to tighten security.
- (4) The US's unilateral behaviour in the international community.
- (5) Unconventionality of the attacks.
- (6) Necessity to collect information and/or to supply information to the US.
- (7) Necessity for the US to show evidence of Mr. Bin Laden's involvement in the attacks.
- (8) Japan's military assimilation into US forces and constitutionality.

The following also should be noted. The sharing (and recycling) of these issues over the period is summarized in Table 2. This table shows not only that the issues are shared by the six newspapers, but also that there is the strong tendency that the six newspapers raise the same issues at the same time. The "despicability of the attacks" is raised on Day 1 or 2 by all of the six newspapers. Issue (2) is raised constantly by all of the newspapers except for *Yomiuri*. Issue (3) is raised between Days 1 to 3. Issue (4) is raised on Day 1 or 2 except for the pro-US *Yomiuri* and *Chûnichi Shinbun*. Issue (5) is raised on Day 2 by all of the three national newspapers, *Asahi*, *Yomiuri* and *Mainichi*. Issue (6) is raised on Day 3 by all of the six newspapers. Issue (7) is raised by all of the newspapers (except *Yomiuri*) on Day 7 or 10. Issue (8) is raised by all of the six newspapers on Days 9 to 10.

The issue sharing by the six newspapers can be likened to an avalanche. When it starts, it overwhelms all.

Table 2. Issue Sharing by the Six Newspapers

	National Newspapers			Regional Newspapers		
	<i>Asahi</i>	<i>Yomiuri</i>	<i>Mainichi</i>	<i>Hokkaidô</i>	<i>Chûnichi</i>	<i>Nishi-nippon</i>
(1) Despicability of the attacks	Days 1, 2	Days 1, 5	Day 2	Day 2	Days 1, 2	Days 2, 3
(2) Necessity to avoid confrontation, act calmly, and/or leave the matter to the international community	Days 1, 2, 3(1), 3(2), 4, 7, 10	Day 1	Days 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10	Days 2, 3, 4, 7, 10	Days 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10(1), 10(2)	Days 2, 3, 4, 8, 10
(3) Necessity to tighten security	Days 1, 2	Days 2, 3	a/n	Day 3	Day 1	Day 3
(4) US unilateral behaviour in the international community	Day 1	a/n	Day 2	Day 2	Day 5	Day 2
(5) Unconventionality of the Attacks	Days 2, 3(1)	Days 2, 5	Day 2	a/n	a/n	a/n
(6) Necessity to collect info and/or to supply info to the US	Days 3(1), 3(2), 10	Days 3, 10	Day 3	Days 3, 10	Days 1, 3, 4, 5	Days 3, 8
(7) Necessity for the US to show evidence of Mr Laden's involvement in the attacks	Days 4, 7	a/n	Days 4, 10	Day 7	Day 10(1)	Day 10
(8) Japan's military assimilation into US forces and constitutionality	Days 3(2), 7, 10	Days 7, 10	Days 8, 10	Day 9	Days 4, 9	Days 8, 10

Evidence 3: Adoption of the Government's Framework.

The issues raised by the six newspapers were shared by not only the six newspapers but also the Japanese government. Issue (1) was raised by the Japanese prime minister in the press conference held at 0.50 am on Day One (Japan Standard Time) (Shushô kantei, 2001a). At 9.30 am (JST) of the same day, the National Security Council of the Japanese government raised issues (2), (3), and (6) (Shushô kantei, 2001b). Issues (5) and (8) (as well as issues [2], [3], and [6]) were raised by the prime minister on Day Eight (Shushô kantei, 2001c). Considering the fact that issues (4) and (7), both of which were ignored by the government and by the pro-US *Yomiuri Shinbun*, can be regarded as antitheses of issue (2); it is reasonable to think that Japan's six major newspapers commented on the September 11 attacks within the framework of the government's foreign policies.

Summary

The majority of the anti-US and neutral newspapers employs the specific-to-system structure or its variant structure and obscures the locus of responsibility for solving critical issues. The system-to-specific structure may enable the text to present specific and implementable solutions to critical issues. Yet, Japanese editorials are homogeneous and innocuous. This is because Japanese editorials just list issues-topics, do not discuss them critically, raise the same issues like an avalanche, and adopt the framework of the government's foreign policies.¹³

The final question ought to be posed. Is there any way to eliminate homogeneity and innocuousness from Japanese editorials?

Institutional Cause

The homogeneity and innocuousness of Japanese editorials is not just a rhetorical issue. It is an institutional issue. I will argue that the elimination of editorial homogeneity and innocuousness requires the abolition of the *kisha* (press) club system.

Who Writes Editorials. Editorials are written by senior journalists called “*ronsetsu iin*” (editorial board members), who are appointed by the president of the company (Hara, 1997, p.169). The editorial board, which appears to consist of fifteen to nearly forty members,¹⁴ decides the themes and points of the editorials for the morning issue of the following day, and asks one or two members of the board to write them (Inagaki, p. 88; Hara, p. 169; Hara et al., 2004, p. 22). The editorial reflects the opinion of the editorial board, and the board’s opinion often reflects the opinion of the president of the company (Inagaki, p. 40; the *Yomiuri* Bureau, p. 11; Takada, n.d.). The editorial reflects the mentality of elite journalists, as it were. The mentality is molded in a long and systematic process of political assimilation secured by the *kisha* club system.

Political Assimilation. Most newspaper journalists in Japan begin their career as a crime reporter (or *satsumawari*) of a local branch (Inagaki, 1996, p. 35). The young reporters become a member of the *kisha* club of a local police station, and write news stories based on police releases (provided at the *kisha* club) without checking their credibility (Asano, 1987, pp. 186-190). To report crimes in detail, they attempt to establish a close relationship with detectives and police officials by visiting their private residence early in the morning and at night. Crucial details of criminal news stories are often leaked to the journalists during these private visits (Asano, 1989, pp. 196-204; Asano, 1997, pp. 379-380; Kôno and Asano, 1997, pp. 12-13; Hôshô bangumi chôsakai, 1999; the *Nishinippon Shinbun*, n.d.; the *Chûgoku Shinbun*, n.d.). It is thus essential for crime reporters to maintain a good relationship with police. The reporters do not reveal news sources in reporting crimes, where information provided by police is presented as if it were established facts witnessed or directly investigated by those reporters (Asano, 1993, p. 5). The reporters assist police investigation by disseminating the police’s accounts of crimes (e.g., Asano, 1997, pp. 34-37).

After the period of two to three years of training at a local branch, crime reporters are transferred to the (or a) head office. Promising young journalists are often transferred to the political department (*seijibu*) of Tokyo head office (in the case of the three national newspapers). The young political journalists become members of the *kantei kisha* club or the press club of the prime minister's official residence (Shushô kantei, 2004) and are assigned to the prime minister as a *ban* reporter (Ito, p. 204; Inagaki, 1996, p. 45; Asano, 1997, p. 380). The *ban* reporters follow the prime minister from morning until night and report his movements back to the head office (Inagaki, p. 45). After the assignment to the prime minister, while changing their base-camp *kisha* club, the political journalists are assigned to the offices of opposition parties, the ministry offices of the central government, and then the bosses of the factions of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) (Inagaki, pp. 45-46). Their assignment to those bosses is crucial for their career, because their political influence within the company grows if the faction which they are assigned to becomes dominant within the LDP (Inagaki, p. 45; Ito, 2004, pp. 204).

As they used to do when they were crime reporters, the political journalists spend a great portion of their days establishing a cozy relationship with politicians. They visit the assigned politicians' private residences in the morning and at night, and attend private meetings (*kondan*) arranged by those politicians for possible scoops. The political journalists in turn help politicians by giving them political and economic advice and information about other politicians and faction leaders (e.g., Tase, 1994, pp. 38-49, pp. 88-99; Asano, 1997, pp. 379-382; Iwase, 2001, pp. 266-280).

When they turn forty, the political journalists are promoted to assistant editors (*desuku*) and start being involved in management and administration in the company. Later some of them are appointed as editorial board members (Inagaki, p. 35).

The Kisha Club. The *kisha* club has functioned as probably the most important place for newspaper journalists to meet their news

sources. This place for news gathering has allowed journalists only from selected media organizations to join and excludes all the other journalists (e.g., Iwase, 2001, pp. 20-56). The exclusive *kisha* club has encouraged the journalists to be subservient to their news sources, where they, as already noted, cannot or do not scrutinize remarks and data provided by the authorities. The exclusive and subservient characteristics of this information cartel have made the journalists assimilated into political power.

The assimilation is then consolidated by the journalists' financial dependence upon the host organizations of *kisha* clubs. The host organizations often provide their club with rooms, desks and chairs for free. They also pay electricity, gas and water bills for the clubs, and even salary to telephone receptionists working exclusively for the clubs. The financial dependence is often extended to luxurious banquets and holiday trips (e.g., Iwase, 2001, pp. 20-100).

The *kisha* club has provided the newspaper journalists with a black box, where the journalists have attempted to maintain a symbiotic relationship with politicians in politicians' territories. The elite newspaper journalists, a variant form of politicians, have thus emerged in Japan. The *kisha* club must be abolished, if the Japanese "journalists" wish to be identified as journalists independent from political power, and if they wish to make their editorials critical.¹⁵

Concluding Remarks

I have shown how Japanese editorials are homogeneous and innocuous by investigating 42 editorials carried in six Japanese major newspapers from the viewpoint of rhetorical organization and the pattern of issue raising. I have then referred to the relationship between elite newspaper journalists and their news sources, police and governmental officials. Finally, I argued that the *kisha* club must be abolished to eliminate homogeneity and innocuousness from Japanese editorials. It must be a hard decision for the Japanese journalists to

abolish the *kisha* club system. However, if Korea has abolished its *kisha* club system, why cannot Japan do the same?

Notes

1. I will employ the term 'rhetorical structure' to refer to Martin's 'text structure' or 'schematic structure' (Martin, 1992, p. 505).
2. Former president of the Kyôdô News Agency, Hara Toshio, notes that Japanese editorials are very opportunistic and rarely present unique and critical opinions (Hara, 1997, p.100). Koitabashi notes that editorials in Japanese major newspapers are packed with suggestions that are too general and obvious to be falsified (Koitabashi, 1997, chapter 9). Former deputy chief of the Information and Investigation Bureau of the *Mainichi Shinbun*'s Tokyo head office states that the news gathering system *kisha* club (which will be detailed later in the present paper) has deprived Japanese newspapers of editorial diversity, causing them to produce almost identical news stories (Maesaka, 1996, p. 139, pp. 146-147). Iwase Tatsuya (2001, pp. 266-280) writes that political journalists of major newspapers are so assimilated into the inner circles of politicians and bureaucrats that the journalists can hardly criticize those politicians and bureaucrats. Tase Yasuhiro, journalist of the *Nihon Keizai Shinbun* (the Japanese equivalent to the *Wall Street Journal*), criticizes the Japanese mass media for their shallow investigation and emotional political criticisms that hardly contain any informational values (Tase, 1994, p. 13). Freelance journalist Uozumi Akira sees opportunism deeply encoded in both the anti-government *Asahi*'s and the pro-government *Yomiuri*'s editorials (Hara, Tatsura, Uozumi, and Kitamura, 2004, p. 23). Political analyst Ito Atsuo (2004, p. 204) says that political stories disseminated by Japan's mass media are almost identical, while editorial diversity is just superficial. The editorial homogeneity and innocuousness is also pointed out by van Wolferen (1989, p. 96), Freeman (2000, pp. 102-141), and Rausch (2002).
3. According to the *Yomiuri* Bureau, editorial opinion in Japan has been split into two groups since 1980 (the *Yomiuri* Bureau, 2002, pp. 42-43). The *Sankei* Board claims that the *Mainichi Shinbun* and most of the regional and local newspapers like the *Asahi Shinbun* take an anti-government/anti-US stance (the *Sankei* Board, 2002, p. 109). Hara says that most local newspapers take an anti-*Yomiuri* stance (Hara, Tatsura, and Shû, 2002, p. 21). Kitamura notes that editorial opinion in Tokyo-based newspapers has been split into the *Mainichi-Asahi* group and the *Yomiuri-Sankei* group (Hara et al., 2004, p. 21).

4. The diversity assumption is adopted by Maezawa (2000, pp. 179-181), the *Sankei* Board (2002, pp. 1-3), and Kitamura (2003, p. 128).
5. The analytical notions of 'specific' and 'system' was first proposed by Nanri (2001) after a review of some Japanese cultural theories from the 1960s to 2000.
6. All of the editorials were written in Japanese. They were translated into English by the present author.
7. For ease of text analysis, I will refer to September 12 as Day One, September 13 as Day Two, and so on, up to September 21 as Day Ten. The number between the parentheses after the issue date appears when the newspaper on that date carries two editorials both of which are concerned with the September 11 attacks. The number refers to the order of the editorial mentioned. '*Asahi's* Day Three (1) editorial' means that the editorial is the first one of the two editorials (concerned with the September 11 attacks) carried in the Day Three (i.e., September 14) issue of the *Asahi Shinbun*.
8. A paragraph boundary is indicated by the symbol '//'.
9. There was a misclassification of editorials in Nanri's (in press) investigation. *Chûnichi's* Day Eight, Nine and Ten editorials in Nanri (in press) were correctly *Chûnichi's* Day Nine, Ten (1) and Ten (2) editorials.
10. Nanri (in press) does not analyze *Chûnichi's* Day Four editorial as realizing the specific-to-system structure because it does not end with the recommendation of a large political system but with the demand that Japan should act under the limits of the Constitution.
11. 'P' stands for 'paragraph'. 'P1-3' means 'Paragraphs 1 to 3'.
12. If the sentence indicates the necessity to solve anything at all in either a modal statement or a question, I analyze that sentence as presenting an issue.
13. However, I should note that a comprehensive picture of Japanese editorials is yet to be painted, since editorials with other themes need to be analysed, which I have not been able to do in the present paper.
14. As far as I know, the *Hokkaidô Shinbun* is the only major newspaper that reveals the number of editorial board members, which is fifteen (Takada, n.d.). Considering the fact that the *Hokkaidô* and the *Nishinippon Shinbun* are the

smallest of the six newspapers, it is reasonable to set the minimum number of an editorial board at 15. Ikeda Tomotaka, editorial board member of the *Mainichi Shinbun*, says that this smallest national newspaper has nearly thirty editorial board members (Ikeda, 2002), which suggests that *Yomiuri* and *Asahi* (the largest and the second largest newspaper in the world in terms of their circulation) have more than thirty members. In fact, an investigation that I conducted on November 11 and 12, 2004 by making use of the search engine Google identified as many as 39 people who acted or have acted as *Asahi*'s editorial board members between January 1, 2000 and November 10, 2004. The number I identified with the *Yomiuri Shinbun* for the same period of time was 38. Thus I set the maximum number at 'nearly forty'.

15. It is possible to discuss this discursive issue from a cultural perspective as Nanri (2001) did. But I ignored this perspective in the present paper deliberately. The reason is that we must start from somewhere to make Japanese editorial critical, and that starting point, I firmly believe, should be the abolition of the *kisha* club system.

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