

A Study of Changes in Japanese News Coverage in Newsweek

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Abstract

Copies of Newsweek were examined for three consecutive years, from 1982 to 1984, and for a further period of three years from 1992 to 1994. There was a total of 153.8 pages devoted to articles on Japan in the former years, and 284.9 pages in the latter period, an increase of 131.1 pages or 85.2% over the first three year period. The average number of pages for each article was 0.55 and 1.1 pages respectively. The dramatic increase in the total number of pages and in the average length of each article shows much more attention is being paid to Japan than ten years earlier.

In the former period, the greatest number of articles was related to the economy. Such articles can be divided into a variety of fields among which 'trade with the U.S.' is of greatest concern, with the Japanese production of automobiles ranking second. Another topic of great interest was changes in the Japanese economy. In the more recent period, the greatest concern has been politics, where dramatic changes in the Japanese political scene have attracted the attention of the world. The second largest topic related to politics was relations with Korea and China, and a further concern has been political scandals.

Thus, there is clear evidence the Japanese economy is not always the center of attention in Newsweek, though some critics have claimed this is the case. When Japanese politics are unstable, raising concern among people all over the world, politics can attract the greatest attention.

Key words: Japan, change, Newsweek, economy, politics

INTRODUCTION

International attitudes toward Japan and the image of Japan in the world have drastically changed over the years. I would like to investigate these changes in international mass media. For my data of this paper, I will select Newsweek, for it is one of the most widely read magazines in the world, having a circulation of 3.8 million. According to Johnson,¹⁾ the image of Japan in the 1950s and 1960s was a feminine and artistic one with its depiction of geishas, cherry blossoms and chrysanthemums, and in the late 1970s and 1980s, a more masculine and assertive one associated with shoguns, ninjas, swords and business practice. Then what was the shift that took place in the imagery used to depict Japan from the 1980s to the 1990s? We shall have to wait till the end of the 20th century to have the whole data for the '90s. So in this paper I will identify changes in international attitudes toward Japan and the image of Japan over

the decade from the early 80s to the early 90s.

Critics have studied such changes appearing in various forms of mass media and many of them have identified changes based on the Japanese economy.²⁾ Kume, focusing on Time and Newsweek has pointed out that these magazines overemphasize economic aspects when describing Japan.³⁾ We cannot deny that the Japanese economy draws worldwide attention, but in this paper, I would also like to examine whether the economy is really of the greatest concern.

METHOD

Copies of the weekly news magazine Newsweek were examined for three consecutive years from 1982 to 1984 and for a further three years from 1992 to 1994. The magazine was first screened for articles on Japan, which were subsequently classified into the following topics: economy, technology, politics and 'other.' The number of articles and the number of pages devoted to each category were counted.

Each category was then calculated as a percentage of the total number of articles on Japan.

The study then compared the total figures for the two groups: 1982 to 1984 and 1992 to 1994. The differences between the two groups show the changes in the way Newsweek reported on Japan over the ten year period.

RESULTS

The total number of articles on Japan was 278 from 1982 to 1984, and 259 from 1992 to 1994, a decrease of 19 articles during the latter three years. The number of pages, however, reached a total of 153.8 pages in the first three years and 284.9 pages in the more recent three year period, an increase of 85.2 %. And the average number of pages per article was 0.55 in the period from 1982 to 1984 and 1.1 in the more recent years. Table 1 shows a comparison between the two time periods with regard to the type of article found.

Table 1 Totals for 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1992, 1993, 1994
1982, 1983, 1984

Category	Number of Articles	Total Number of Pages	Percentage of Total Number of Pages devoted to Articles on Japan
Economy	97	52.9	34.4%
Technology	83	24.1	15.7%
Politics	41	34.6	22.5%
Other	57	42.2	27.4%
Total	278	153.8	100.0%

1992, 1993, 1994

Category	Number of Articles	Total Number of Pages	Percentage of Total Number of Pages devoted to Articles on Japan
Economy	65	89.8	31.5%
Technology	18	8.2	2.9%
Politics	76	107.2	37.6%
Other	100	79.7	28.0%
Total	259	284.9	100.0%

From 1982 to 1984, the largest number of articles was devoted to the 'economy,' whereas from 1992 to 1994 'politics' was the dominant topic. Each category is characteristic of the two periods, as Dunham points out, "significant similarities exist between the current, important issues covered by the mass media and the issues that most people think are currently important."⁴⁾ In other words, most people in the world considered the Japanese economy to be most important in the early 1980s and Japanese politics ten years later. So we will focus on the 'economy' in the first period and 'politics' in the more recent years.

From 1982 to 1984 we can find 97 articles on the economy, totaling 52.9 pages, which represents 34.4% of the total number of pages of articles on Japan. The articles are subdivided into a variety of categories of which the main ones are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Sub-categories of Articles Concerning the 'Economy' in 1982, 1983 and 1984

Sub-category	Number of Articles	Number of Pages
Trade with U.S.	27	12.8
Auto Production	10	3.6
Changes in the Economy	7	4.8
Investment	6	2.5
Yen-dollar	6	1.7
Japanese management system	4	6.5

The topic of 'trade with the U.S.' was of the greatest concern in Newsweek at that time. In 1981, "Japan's trade surplus with the United States had soared 92.5 percent to a record \$ 13.4 billion."⁵⁾ This fact made the Japanese appear overly proud and arrogant, and angered not only the U.S. but European countries and even Korea. The president of a Korean corporation even said, "I find them (the Japanese) insolent... more arrogant than before. They take a higher posture than they used to."⁶⁾

Sanctions were levied against such Japanese arrogance. In 1982, we can find articles on trade sanctions and charges against Japan from the U.S.:

In the first formal trade sanctions it has imposed against Japan, the Regan Administration last week cut back sharply on the amount of fish that Japanese boats will be allowed to catch in U.S. waters. The decision, which affects fishing in waters up to 200 miles off Alaska, is aimed at pressuring Tokyo to open its markets to products from U.S. fish-processing companies.⁷⁾

The Regan Administration also wants trade concessions from Japan... and is taking several financially punitive steps to get them.⁸⁾

In yet another move that is likely to heighten trade friction between the United States and Japan, the North Coast Export Cooperative, a group of California-and-Oregon-based lumber companies, filed an antitrust suit last week against 27 Japanese paper and trading firms.⁹⁾

Charging that the Japanese undertook to dominate the U.S. machine-tool market, Florida-based Houdaille Industries, Inc., has asked the Regan administration to resurrect an obscure provision of the U.S. tax code. If approved, Washington could withhold tax credits from U.S. companies that buy Japanese-made machine tools - dealing a sharp blow to the Japanese producers themselves.¹⁰⁾

For years, American tobacco manufacturers have charged that the Japanese were waging an illegal campaign to keep foreign cigarettes off their home market.¹¹⁾

Thus in 1982, Japan faced a number of charges and various sanctions. The articles above, however, are written from the American point of view. Naohiro Amaya, a senior adviser to MITI Minister, Shintaro Abe, discusses the problem:

As far as the overall trade balance is concerned, our trade surplus has been decreasing since late last year and we have done a lot of things to improve the situation- accelerated tariff cuts, simplified import procedures and so on. But our headache is that the yen is still too low because of high U.S. interest rates.¹²⁾

In 1983 and 1984, Japan put a great deal of effort into opening its markets and limiting exports to America just as Amaya mentions, and this fact is

approved of in the following articles:

In the United States, the Japanese have agreed to extend the current limit of 1.68 million on passenger-car exports... the U.S. - Japan high-tech trade understanding is intended to cool anger among American companies over what they contend is state-subsidized competition from Japan.¹³⁾

Japan...unveiled a package of measures designed to stimulate domestic demand and boost imports.... In an effort to reduce its huge trade surpluses and ease frictions with trading partners, Japan will cut or eliminate tariffs on more than 40 items, ranging from bananas to semiconductors.¹⁴⁾

The United States and Japan settled a major trade dispute last week by agreeing to extend - and loosen - restrictions on Japanese auto imports to America for a fourth year.¹⁵⁾

A Japanese effort to soothe America's protests over trade barriers proved successful last week when the two economic superpowers reached an agreement on American exports of beef and citrus.¹⁶⁾

After many sanctions and accusations, and with great effort on the Japanese side, the U.S. and Japan settled their trade dispute. Trade between Japan and the United States meets the needs of both countries, and the relationship between the two countries was finally 'ideally suited.' This ideal relationship is described in the article, 'A Marriage of Convenience':

In fact, Japan returns most of the dollars the United States spends on its goods - and the trade relationship as it now stands may be ideally suited to the economic needs and priorities of both countries. "On purely economic grounds... the U.S. - Japanese relationship is very nearly perfect."

"Some people even joke that Japan is becoming the 51st state, and that the Bank of Japan is becoming the Tokyo branch of the Federal Reserve."¹⁷⁾

The second greatest concern with regard to the 'economy' was the production of automobiles. Among all the Japanese industries, the automobile industry drew the greatest attention from all over the world. Interestingly, Japanese automakers and their American and British counterparts joined

forces, which represents another marriage of convenience we can see in the following articles:

America's General Motors Corp. has turned to Japan for its latest small car. The largest U.S. automaker announced last week that Japan's Isuzu Motors, Ltd., will develop and produce a sub-compact car that is expected to replace GM's Chevrolet Chevette.¹⁸⁾

Smith (GM chairman) and Toyota join forces in California: General Motors signs up an old rival for help in the small-car race¹⁹⁾

Nissan Motor Co. of Japan agreed last week to begin building cars in the United Kingdom.²⁰⁾

Mazda Motor Corp. announced plans last week to build a \$450 million auto plant in Flat Rock, Mich.²¹⁾

Another characteristic of the 1982-1984 period was the change in the Japanese economy. Japan began to decline as an economic super power and this phenomenon already presented itself in 1982. Kume argues that the image of Japan as an economic superpower in the 70s and 80s did not begin to change until the 90s.²²⁾ However, we can already observe this change in 1982 in the following articles:

But will that success continue? It might not - for the strengths of Japanese organizational patterns could turn into weaknesses.²³⁾

Asia's biggest economy (Japan) grew by just 3.8 percent a year - the smallest GNP increase in years.²⁴⁾

... (Japan's) economy posted its first drop in almost seven years as the real gross national product fell 9 percent in the last three months of 1981.²⁵⁾

In 1992, 1993 and 1994, Newsweek turned its attention to 'politics.' There were 76 articles on politics, with a total of 107.2 pages, representing 37.6% of the total number of pages devoted to articles on Japan. Table 3 below shows the categories of such articles on politics.

Table 3 Sub-categories of Articles Concerning 'Politics' in 1992, 1993 and 1994

Sub-category	Number of Articles	Number of Pages
Changes in Japanese Politics	29	56.9
Relations with China and Korea	12	14.2
Scandals	7	5.6
Relations with the Press	3	2.7

The greatest number of articles concerned changes in Japanese politics. Political power changed drastically in this period. The Liberal Democratic Party, whose leading role had been unbroken for nearly 40 years, lost its power. The country saw three short-lived, non-LDP prime ministers, Hosokawa, Hata and Murayama. The Japanese political world was in chaos.

In 1992, we were very concerned as to whether the Miyazawa government would be able to continue or not:

Miyazawa's supporters have started to worry that his two-year term could be cut short. At the very least, his effectiveness is sure to be impaired. And if the LDP takes a serious loss in the July elections for the Upper House of the Diet, Miyazawa could pay for the defeat with his position.²⁶⁾

In 1993, a motion of no confidence in the government of Miyazawa was passed and the LDP's long reign came to an end after losing its majority in the Lower House:

On Friday evening, the Lower House of Japan's Parliament passed the motion of no confidence by 255 votes to 220... Miyazawa stood ashen-faced, bowed stiffly to the rest of the chamber and left.²⁷⁾

They were scenes of sudden, irrevocable and unexpected change, the direct consequence of the historic election last Sunday, when Japan's ruling party - and the aging men who dominate it - lost majority control of the all-powerful lower house of Parliament for the first time in 38 years.²⁸⁾

Following this, Hosokawa's government, a non-LDP government began:

On a hot August day last week, Morihiro Hosokawa and the members of his new cabinet gathered on the lawn of the prime minister's residence in central Tokyo and posed for the history books... It had been 38 years since an opposition government had taken power in Japan.²⁹⁾

But after only 5 months, Hosokawa was defeated over electoral reform and he was no longer able to control his fragile coalition.

The vote was 130 against, 118 in favor, an unexpectedly large margin of defeat. Hosokawa's run of luck was over, and Tokyo's politics were thrown once again into turmoil.³⁰⁾

Hosokawa finally resigned and Japan had a new prime minister, Hata:

Hata was finally nominated last week by a badly divided coalition to be Japan's next head of government, a position he will be elected to by the legislature this week.³¹⁾

Hata, however, didn't last long and resigned:

The resignation of Prime Minister Tsutomu Hata is one more tremor in the long earthquake splitting the country along its ideological fault line... Hata did what seems to come naturally to Japan's prime ministers these days: he resigned. He had been in office for just 59 days, the second shortest tenure in postwar history.³²⁾

Unbelievably, the LDP returned to power and installed a socialist prime minister, Murayama:

(Murayama) was accepting congratulations in the Diet from the men who had just helped him become only the second socialist prime minister Japan has known since World War II: his once - and probably future - political enemies in the conservative Liberal Democratic Party. Japanese politics has become so thoroughly unhinged that the incredible seems just a new shading of normality. The LDP... has now returned as the dominant partner in government - without the inconvenience of having to fight an election.³³⁾

The second greatest concern regarding Japanese 'politics' in Newsweek is Japan's relations with other Asian countries, especially Korea and China. In the case of Korea, many Korean women had been

forced to provide services to Japanese soldiers as so-called 'comfort ladies' during World War II, and with the Koreans now angry about their unresolved grievances, Japan faced an outcry over its wartime crimes. The Japanese politicians finally admitted the government's involvement in comfort women, but appeared unlikely to offer any compensation:

Miyazawa is unlikely to offer any compensation for the victims, but press reports in Tokyo last week said he may at least express Japan's belated regrets. Most of all, Miyazawa hopes to send a message simply by making Seoul his first foreign destination.³⁴⁾

Later Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe also admitted government involvement (in comfort women). The new evidence could force Tokyo to think again about its refusal to pay damages to the women.³⁵⁾

In view of this attitude, President Roh Tae Woo 'urged the Japanese government to take follow-up steps.'³⁶⁾ Han Sung-Joo, a professor at Korea University, discusses the relation between the two countries as follows:

It is true that Koreans tend to cling to the issues of the past longer and more persistently than Japan's other neighbors, who were also victims of its aggression... Ultimately, the leaders of both countries must recognize the roots of the problem and deal with them... The Japanese leaders could have been, indeed should have been, more resolute and forthright in accepting the responsibilities of the past. The Korean leaders have failed to warn the people of the consequences of their uncalculating emotions.³⁷⁾

Relations with China are quite different from Korea and even though Chinese women were also abducted and forced to provide sex to Japanese soldiers during the war, the Chinese attitude was different:

China has no plans to seek Japanese compensation. China apparently wants to let bygones be bygones at a time when it is cultivating trade with Japan.³⁸⁾

In response to such a generous Chinese attitude

and to an invitation extended by Party Chief Jiang Zemin, Japan sent the Emperor on a goodwill mission to China in the hope of burying the painful past. The visit was a great success:

More than anything, the Akihito trip confirms that both sides have powerful incentives to minimize their mutual grievances.³⁹⁾

Another feature of the 1992-1994 period was political scandals. Shin Kanemaru, vice president of the LDP and the shadowy power behind the shaky throne of Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa, admitted receiving bribes and was finally arrested:

Kanemaru, 77, admitted receiving an improper \$4 million cash payment from Hiroyasu Watanabe, the former head of a delivery company who is under indictment for aggravated breach of trust.⁴⁰⁾

...(Kanemaru) admitted that he had received 500 million yen in unreported donations from a company called Tokyo Sagawa Kyubin Co.... That admission placed Kanemaru at the center of what may turn out to be the most scorching political scandal in modern Japanese history.⁴¹⁾

Last Saturday evening, Tokyo prosecutors arrested on charges of tax fraud ... Shin Kanemaru, the "don" of Japanese politics.⁴²⁾

Noboru Takeshita, the former prime minister and the future political kingmaker was also ensnared in the Sagawa Kyubin affair:

...it's Takeshita's turn to be caught in its eye. The former prime minister is ensnared in Sagawa Kyubin as a result of his successful 1987 bid to become prime minister in a tough three-way race with Miyazawa and the late Shintaro Abe.⁴³⁾

And we can find other bribery cases in relation to construction payolas:

The allegation came two days after the dramatic arrest of Shimizu's 75-year-old chairman, Teruzo Yoshino, on charges that he personally delivered a 10 million-yen bribe to the governor of Ibaraki Prefecture, Fujio Takeuchi, in hopes that the governor would look favorably on Shimizu's bids for local construction contracts.⁴⁴⁾

Last week, Tokyo law enforcement officials arrested former construction minister and now opposition M.P., Kishiro Nakamura, on charges of bribery. Nakamura is alleged to have pressured Tokyo's antimonopoly agency to back off from an investigation of Japan's most powerful construction firm, Kajima Corp., in return for a payoff from the company.⁴⁵⁾

DISCUSSION

1) Changes in attitude toward Japan

The world became more concerned with Japan than ten years earlier. We can prove this from the changes that can be seen both in the quantity and quality of articles on Japan in Newsweek.

a) Changes in quantity

There was a total of 153.8 pages of articles on Japan in 1982, 1983 and 1984, and 284.9 pages in 1992, 1993 and 1994, showing an increase of 131.1 pages or 85.2% over the earlier period. The average number of pages in each issue of Newsweek in the former period was about the same as in the latter period - about 52 pages. By a simple calculation, therefore, we can see that articles on Japan represented 1.9 % of the total number of pages in Newsweek in the former and 3.5% in the latter years. This dramatic increase in the number of pages clearly shows that Japan was given much more attention than ten years earlier.

b) Changes in quality

The average number of pages per article was 0.55 in the period from 1982 to 1984 and 1.1, exactly double the number, in the more recent years. This fact shows that articles on Japan became much "richer" in content than ten years earlier. Table 4 shows a comparison between the two time periods with regard to the type of article. According to Table 4, the greatest number of pages per article was on politics in the latter period. We can infer that the content of the articles on politics in the latter period was more important and richer than

any other in either period, and that the quality was also higher.

Table 4 Pages per Article

Category	1982, 1983, 1984	1992, 1993, 1994
Economy	0.55	1.38
Technology	0.29	0.46
Politics	0.84	1.41
Other	0.74	0.80
Total	0.55	1.10

The most "symbolic" article was the 6-page 'Reform in Retreat,' the longest article in the whole 6 years covering the two periods. This article describes the fall of Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa, and at the same time discusses Japan's fractured politics. It also lists the names of the politicians responsible:

Scandals or loss of political support have forced one Japanese prime minister after another out of office over the past five years and has tarnished powerful behind-the-scene politicians. Below, a portrait gallery of the downfallen.... Noboru Takeshita, Sousuke Uno, Toshiki Kaifu, Shin Kanemaru, Kiichi Miyazawa, and Morihiro Hosokawa...⁴⁶⁾

This article is symbolic of the great concern the world has towards Japan. When Japanese politics were unstable, it aroused concern among people all over the world, and the editor of Newsweek compiled a longer and more substantial article accordingly.

2) Changes in the image of Japan

The image of Japan in the world has drastically changed over the years. As Johnson points out, American attitudes toward Japan have rapidly and frequently changed:

Whereas American novels and nonfiction of the 1950s and 1960s brought us geishas and cherry blossoms, the novels of the late 1970s and early 1980s brought us shoguns and ninjas. Suddenly,

large numbers of books were being published in the United States that analyzed Japanese business practice and recommended them to American companies. One of these - William Ouchi's *Theory Z* - even became a best-seller.⁴⁷⁾

If one recalls that Ruth Benedict called her famous study of Japan *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, then it is fair to say that in the early postwar period Americans concentrated on the chrysanthemum, seeing Japan as an artistic, somewhat feminized nation; in the late 1970s and 1980s, however, Americans began to focus more on the sword, recalling Japan's more masculine, assertive, samurai tradition.⁴⁸⁾

It is often the case that people in the world, especially in the western world, see the character of a nation through American mass media and publications, in other words, through American eyes. American attitudes do not differ greatly from the attitudes of various people in the world. We can infer that the image of Japan in the 1950s and 1960s was a feminine and artistic one with its depiction of geishas, cherry blossoms and chrysanthemums, and in the late 1970s and 1980s, a more masculine and assertive one associated with shoguns, ninjas, swords and business practice.

Then what was the shift that took place in the imagery used to depict Japan from the 1980s to the 1990s? We shall have to wait till the end of the 20th century to have the whole data for the '90s. According to the results of this paper, in the early 1980s, the largest number of articles was devoted to the economy and in the early 1990s to politics, where the focus of most articles was on changes that took place in Japanese politics. Interestingly enough, such political changes in government have exactly the image of shoguns, ninjas and swords! We can say from the results of this study in Newsweek that in both of the periods examined, Japan was portrayed with a more masculine image. The period of shoguns, ninjas and swords, however, was in the early 1990s, while the early 1980s were, rather, a period represented by an image of business. The imagery did not really execute a

180-degree turn, but made a remarkable change. As I have only investigated Newsweek in the early 1980s and early 1990s, I would like to complete my research into the image of Japan for the whole of the 1980s and 1990s at some future date.

CONCLUSIONS

Copies of the weekly news magazine Newsweek were carefully examined for three consecutive years: 1982, 1983, 1984, and for a further three years: 1992, 1993 and 1994. The dramatic increase in the number of pages, 85.2% over the earlier period clearly shows Japan was given much more attention than ten years earlier. And the fact that the average number of pages in the more recent years was exactly double the number of the earlier period shows that articles on Japan became much "richer" in content than ten years earlier.

The largest number of articles referred to the 'economy' in the former years and to the 'politics' in the latter years. In the earlier years, we can find articles subdivided into various categories of which 'trade with the U.S.' was of the greatest concern, with Japanese production of automobiles coming second and changes in the economy also attracting a great deal of attention. In the latter years, Japan's dramatic political changes attracted the attention of the world. The second largest topic in politics in these more recent years was relations with Korea and China, with political scandals also attracting attention. Thus, we can see that the economy is not always the center of attention in Newsweek, though some critics claim this to be the case. As we have seen, when Japanese politics are unstable and people in the world feel anxious, politics can be given the most attention.

As for the imagery used to depict Japan, Japan was portrayed with a more masculine image in both of the periods. The early 1980s, however, were a period represented by an image of business, while the early 1990s shoguns, ninjas and swords. The imagery did not really execute a 180-degree turn,

but made a remarkable change.

Newsweek covers current issues the world thinks important and is an opinion leader often having great impact on people all over the world.⁴⁹⁾ It is hoped, therefore, that my conclusion may help to illustrate international attitudes toward Japan and the direction in which the world sees this country going. I will pursue this kind of investigation and study changes in the image of Japan as reported by the overseas media.

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(Accepted March 5, 1997)