

早稲田法学部 THEME 16 秋

PA.C. O'CONNOR THE IDEA OF JAPAN (II)

WEEK 11

- Beyond the Bubble
- Media schadenfreude
- Three faces of Japan

FIFTY YEARS AFTER • WHAT AILS JAPAN?

Reading 1: 1945 + 50 = ?

1995 WAS FULL OF JAPAN NEWS, BUT NONE OF IT WAS POSITIVE In January, the Kōbe earthquake (Hanshin daishin). In March, the Sarin attack on the Tokyo underground. Then in August came the 50th anniversaries of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the 50th anniversary of Japan's defeat in the Pacific War. The world press reporting of the earthquake showed lamentable bureaucratic inflexibility in Kōbe and Tokyo, and this led to a reinterpretation of Japan at national level. The Aum incident made Japan's institutions look out of touch, and Japan as a whole look a lot more dangerous.

THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PACIFIC WAR did Japan few favours either. As we saw in coverage of the 1971 Imperial visit to Europe, memories of Japanese ill-treatment of soldiers and civilians remained fresh, whatever *The Times* might say in amelioration. 1995 brought out a latent hostility towards Japan in Britain and the United States, but this was only partly rooted in War memories. In Britain, the press were keen to assert Britain's moral superiority in discussions of Japan's 'failure to apologise' for the war, and in the fact that the United States, not Britain, bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In January 1995, the John Major government in Britain decided not to send Japan the same invitation to the Victory over Japan celebrations as it would later send to Germany for the Victory in Europe celebrations. Major was keen to establish a compensation fund for British Prisoners of War and veterans of the Pacific War, but met with no success in Tokyo. A series of articles in Britain's conservative press promoted the Major campaign:

"THIS MAN REPRESENTS JAPAN. HE WILL BE AN HONOURED GUEST AT THE VE-DAY CEREMONIES. THIS MAN WAS TORTURED BY THE JAPANESE. HE WILL NOT BE INVITED TO THE VE-DAY CEREMONIES" (*DAILY STAR* 22 JANUARY 1995)

"JAPAN MUST BE MADE TO APOLOGISE" (*DAILY MAIL*, 23 JULY 1995)

"SAY SORRY TO POWs, MAJOR ORDERS JAPAN" (*DAILY EXPRESS*, 29 JUNE 1995)

"JAPAN ON VERGE OF APOLOGY" (THE *GUARDIAN*, 8 AUGUST 1995)

Japan had been apologising for fifty years, but when in August another official apology came, it was treated as a victory:

"VETERANS WELCOME JAPAN'S APOLOGY FOR PRISON CAMPS" "TRIUMPH AFTER YEARS OF CAMPAIGNING" (*DAILY EXPRESS*: 12 AUGUST 1995)

This reaction was prompted by a letter of apology written by Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi to John Major, but then the *Guardian* maintained that it was the wrong apology, as Japan should have apologised "for going to war in the first place" (14 August 1995). There were also complaints that Murayama's letter only repeated what Hosokawa had said in his 1993 apology. Interestingly, Murayama's letter had been sent before the Hiroshima and Nagasaki anniversaries, but not published by the British Government until afterwards, which allowed the press campaign for apologies to gather force during the most sensitive period (Hammond and Stirner 1997: 104-5).

READING 2: MORE OF THE SAME (1998)

JAPAN'S WARTIME GHOSTS: UGLY MEMORIES OF THE PAST HAVE BEEN SUBJECT TO COLLECTIVE AMNESIA, says Paul Abrahams

"THE LIVING AND THE DEAD of the second world war returned to haunt Japan this week. During the first visit to Japan by a Chinese head of state, Keizo Obuchi, prime minister, was unable to sign an apology for Japan's military atrocities in China during the 1930s and 1940s after diplomats failed to find a wording that was acceptable to both sides.

On the same day, a Tokyo court dismissed a suit by 20,000 former Allied prisoners demanding an apology and compensation. A British veteran spat on the steps of the Diet, saying there was "no justice in Japan".

Even more extraordinary, at yesterday's summit meeting in Tokyo with Jiang Zemin, China's communist leader, Hiromu Nonaka, Japan's chief cabinet secretary, claimed that only a "small group of militarists" was responsible for Japan's invasion of China - an episode that included mass murder in Nanjing and other cities. "Isn't this a finished problem?" asked Mr Nonaka.

No, it is not. These diplomatic gaffes served as a reminder of Japan's inability to make peace with itself or its neighbours over its role in the second world war.

The extent of Japan's disarray is evident from the fact that the Japanese cannot even decide what to call the conflict. It is referred to as the "Pacific war", the "greater east Asia war", the "China incident", the "Japan-China war", and the "15-year war". There is also controversy over when it began. Did it start in 1941, when the Japanese attacked the American fleet at Pearl Harbor, or in 1931, when Japan seized Manchuria?

From the cabinet to the classroom, Japan is in denial. This is particularly true over the behaviour of the Japanese Imperial army. As recently as August, Shoichi Nakagawa, the newly appointed agriculture minister, claimed it was not certain the army had forced Asian women into prostitution, even though the government had already admitted this to be true in 1993.

That senior politicians can make such statements is not surprising given the sanitised way this period is taught in Japanese schools..."

The Financial Times November 28 1998

BRITISH VICTIMS OF JAPAN'S WARTIME BRUTALITY VOW TO FIGHT ON Jonathan Watts in Tokyo

"ANGRY BRITISH VICTIMS of Japan's wartime brutality vowed to fight on yesterday after losing the first round of their legal battle for compensation from the Japanese government.

The seven plaintiffs' claim for an apology and Dollars 22,000 (Pounds 14,000) for each of 25,000 survivors of Japanese internment camps was rejected by the Tokyo district court, which upheld the Japanese government's argument that the issue of compensation was settled by post war peace treaties. Under those treaties, former prisoners of war received Pounds 76, while civilians internees were given Pounds 45. Silence greeted chief judge Shigeki Inoue as he announced his ruling in terse two sentence statement in Japanese. 'I find against the plaintiffs. The plaintiffs must pay costs'

The Guardian November 26 1998

Reading 3: 1995: What ails Japan?

IN THE MID-LATE 1990S, THE WORLD BEGAN TO DESPAIR OF POST-BUBBLE JAPAN. Japan had 'lost the plot'. Japan couldn't do it anymore. It was just an ageing Asian society, mired in corruption, unable to pull itself out of fixed habits of thinking. Japan was increasingly compared to China, where phenomenal growth rates and the apparent jettisoning of the limitations of a socialist planned economy met with considerable Western approval. This picture of Japan as an ageing bum on a park bench was an exaggeration, obviously, but it did reflect serious frustration in economic reporting of Japan.

THE CHIEF CRITICISM was that Japan seemed so unwilling to confront her financial problems. The problems in the banking sector seemed particularly to demand unblinking attention, but nobody seemed willing to deal with the banks as seriously as they should be dealt with. Time after time, the government stepped in to shore up a bank's bad debt and buy its stocks. Ultimately, the nation itself looked increasingly bankrupt as it took on more and more privately incurred debt. These images are from the London *Economist*, 1995-8. The story was of disappointment, of a nation prostrate, and ultimately about to drag the world down with it.



READING 4: THREE FACES OF JAPAN: OBUCHI KEIZO



GROUND for one of the most confusing periods in the political life of Japan had been laid during the 1998 ballot to select the new LDP leader, and thus the new Japanese prime minister. In the course of a TV chat show, one political insider described the contest as a fight between a *bonjin* [mediocrity], a *gunjin* [militarist] and a *henjin* [crackpot]. The *bonjin* was Obouchi Keizo. The *henjin* was Koizumi Junichiro. The speaker was Tanaka Makiko.

The victory of the *bonjin*, Obuchi Keizo Obuchi, a notably bland party man was no surprise considering his political mentor, former Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita,



local supporters in Nakanojo in central Japan, who gave him hearty banzais. Meanwhile the world's press openly wondered whether the amiable Obuchi had what it takes to lead Japan out of its financial crisis.

TO THE WORLD'S PRESS, A BIG PART OF THE PROBLEM was the political system which seemed incapable of producing effective leaders. In 1998-2001, Japan seemed to have hit a particularly low point with prime ministers, Obuchi Keizo and Mori Yoshiro. The world was particularly underwhelmed by Obuchi, who seemed about as exciting as 'cold pizza'. **THE**

MR. COLD PIZZA WINS JAPANESE ELECTIONS!

**FOR A
DULL TIME,
CALL ME!**



▪ By 6:15 GMT – just 15 minutes after Obuchi's election was confirmed, the yen had slipped to 141.70 against the dollar, from 140.93 just minutes before. "The yen was sold in disappointment that Obuchi won," said a Bank of America currency dealer. He seemed to be right when the stock market fell 417.5 points on the first day of trading after Obuchi's selection on Friday, July 24.

▪ About the only people who welcomed Obuchi's election as prime minister enthusiastically were 300 of his long-time

READING 5: THREE FACES OF JAPAN: **MORI YOSHIRO**



On April 5 2000, Mori Yoshiro , the newly appointed president of the Liberal Democratic Party, was elected as prime minister in a House of Representatives vote. He replaced Obuchi Keizo, who has been hospitalized in critical condition since suffering a stroke on April 2. At a press conference immediately following his appointment, Prime Minister Mori announced he would strive for continuity and stability, retaining all members of the Obuchi cabinet in their present posts and carrying forth Obuchi's economic and other policies.

IN MAY 2000 Prime Minister Mori Made Controversial Remarks Infringing the Constitution. 'We would like all the Japanese people to firmly understand that Japan is a nation of Gods with the Emperor as its core.' His remark infuriated the opposition parties and civic groups and

revived memories of wartime ideology and state Shinto. Mori gave a sort of non-apology: "I am sorry if I have caused a misunderstanding and I would like to offer my apologies," he said the prime minister. Then Mori told reporters that he would not retract the remark, after all, as it was meant to reflect "Japan's eternal traditional culture." "We doubt Prime Minister Mori's competence," said the *Asahi Shinbun*. The *Nihon Keizai Shinbun* pointed to the premier's "lightness" and described him as an "anachronism."

INSENSITIVE Prime Minister Mori was enjoying a popularity rating of 3% bad luck caught up with him while he was playing golf. It seems the PM was in fine form that day and even had some money riding on the game when news of the collision of a Japanese sail training boat with the U.S. submarine came to him. He decided to finish the game.

MORI ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE Before the Okinawa Conference, Prime Minister Mori received basic English conversation training before he met President Bill Clinton. His English instructor told Mori: "Prime Minister, when you shake hand with President Clinton, please ask, "How are you". Then Mr. Clinton will say "I am fine, and you?" Then you should say "Me too." Afterwards the translators will do all the work for you."

When Mori met President Clinton, the conversation went like this:

1. Mori to Clinton (shaking hands): "**Who Are You?**"
2. Clinton (surprised): "**Well, I am Hilary's husband.**"
3. Mori: "**Me too!**"

MAY 2000. *Mainichi Shinbun* The Mori Cabinet's approval rating dipped to 15 percent, according to a telephone poll conducted last weekend. The Cabinet's approval rating has remained under 20 percent for three consecutive months, and its disapproval rating has soared to a record high of 62%. 70% of all respondents, and as many as half of the respondents who support the ruling coalition, want Mori to resign.

April 2001: Mori Resigns: Koizumi Junichiro becomes Prime Minister

READING 6: THREE FACES OF JAPAN: KOIZUMI JUNICHIRO



AF

Tuesday, 24 April, 2001: **HAIL KOIZUMI! A new day for Japan**

"The earth is shaking" – this is how **Junichiro Koizumi**, described his apparent triumph over the old party bosses who have dominated the country since the end of World War II. His election as President of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party is a turning point not only for Japan, but for the whole of East Asia.

Japan's new prime minister, Junichiro Koizumi, is a 59-year-old political maverick from the traditional party of government, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

Mr Koizumi secured a clear-cut victory over his main rival, former prime minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, in elections for the LDP leadership held in Tokyo on Tuesday. Mr Koizumi has proved to be a breath of fresh air for Japan.

Politicians there are mostly a cautious and conventional lot. But Mr Koizumi is unusual. He is divorced and single. He is a colourful character, who advertises his love of pop music and loves to sing karaoke. He is instantly recognisable to voters with his mop of unkempt hair.

ECONOMIC REFORM He has also broken the basic rules of Japanese politics. They are that a leader should look solemn in public and speak only in generalities. In the campaign Mr Koizumi has been visibly excited, and has spoken of his plans to tackle the main causes of Japan's economic malaise.

He has said he would force commercial banks to write off their bad debts, and privatise Japan's postal savings system. This latter is so huge that it is sometimes called the government's "second budget" and has long fuelled Japan's money-driven and secretive politics.

Mr Koizumi says he will shake up his country's politics by promoting more women and younger figures to posts in the cabinet.

'Let Washington sit up and take notice: the real threat to its regional hegemony is not China, but the land of the rising sun. Japan is finally getting up off its knees – and it's about time!'

That was in 2001. Koizumi's situation has changed since, and with it Japan's image under his leadership.

QUESTIONNAIRE	CLASS NAME	WEEK No.
NAME	STUDENT No.	DATE
1. WHAT WAS THIS CLASS/FILM ABOUT?		
2. WHAT ARE THE MAIN QUESTIONS IT RAISES?		
3. WHAT IS IMPORTANT ABOUT THIS SUBJECT?		
4. ANY OTHER COMMENTS?		