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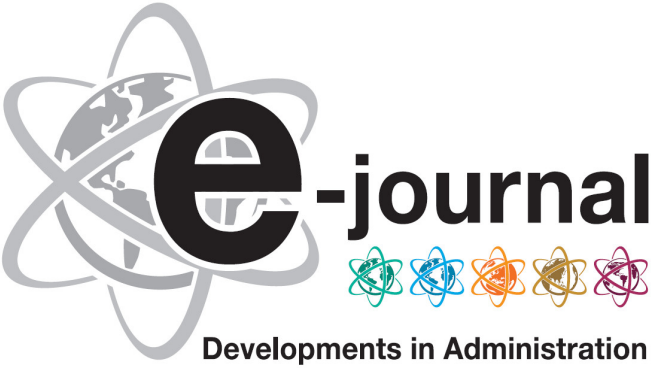

Policy-Making Powers of the Japanese Prime Minister after the 2001 Reforms: Another "Presidentialization" Case?

Susumu KAMIMURA

Japan's central government reforms in 2001 introduced a new approach to policy decision making, by implementing institutional measures that gave the Prime Minister a genuine center of power. These measures included legal clarification of the Prime Minister's power to make proposals at Cabinet meetings, reinforced the Cabinet Secretariat's planning function, and created the Cabinet Office (in particular, the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy). This paper examines the context behind this drastic transformation, and how these changes were implemented. It also documents the consequences of this power shift, by providing numerical evidence of increases in the Prime Minister's staff complement, the augmentation of administrative bodies that report to him, and the extent of the legislative power now under his direct authority. Based on these analyses, this paper concludes that this strengthening of the Prime Minister's power represents a Japanese version of the well-known "presidentialization" framework described by Poguntke and Webb.

INTRODUCTION

The concentration of power in the executives of advanced industrial countries—and particularly at the most senior levels—has been well documented (Peters et al., 2000). Warshaw (1996) describes this tendency in the United States as "the failure of Cabinet Government." Poguntke and Webb (2005) reviewed this practice in 14 countries (11 European countries, the United States, Canada, and Israel), and termed it "presidentialization," which means "to offer far executive power resources to the leader of the executive while, at the same time, giving him or her considerable autonomy vis-à-vis the political parties."

The three faces of this power shift include a) strengthening leaders' power, b) giving leaders more autonomy, and c) personalizing the electoral processes. Japan's central government reforms in 2001 greatly reinforced the Prime Minister's powers, and especially so in the policy-making field,[1] by removing Prime Ministers from the constraints previously imposed by having to address challenges from other ministers, and allowing them resist pressures from their own parties. The author has likened these experiences to the notion of "presidentialization." This paper examines and responds to the following questions:

1. Has the presidentialization phenomenon described by Poguntke and Webb (2005) occurred in Japan?
2. If so, to what extent is the presidentialization framework suitable for Japan's governing process?
3. Has any element in Japan not been anticipated by the presidentialization model?

[1] This reform was particularly significant in Japan's post-WWII history, and included various themes such as the fusion of ministries and the creation of Independent Administrative Institutions (a Japanese version of the UK's administrative agencies). This paper focuses mainly on its "presidentialization" aspects.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section explores each of the three faces or aspects of presidentialization in turn, beginning with the political executive's increasing leadership power and autonomy.[2] Seven indicators were analyzed to quantify this power shift, of which three were found to be particularly important.[3,4] The three faces or aspects are the following:

1. An increase in the resources at the disposal of the chief executive (Indicator 1)
2. An increase in the chief executive's centralized control of and coordination over policy-making (Indicator 2)
3. A growing tendency of chief executives to appoint non-party technocrats, or to rapidly promote politicians without a distinctive party power base (Indicator 3)

The second aspect reflects intra-party presidentialization that means an increase in political parties' leaders' power and autonomy. In this context, the head of the executive is well protected from pressures that might be exerted by his own party. His power to lead depends directly on his electoral appeal, and party activists and factional party leaders cease to be a decisive power base. Increasingly, leaders seek to bypass sub-leaders, and communicate directly with party members in respect to programmatic and strategic questions. The third aspect refers to the personalization of the electoral process. In elections, the leader, rather than party, competes for a popular mandate. All aspects of the electoral process are decisively molded by the leading candidate's personality, whose public appeal and communication skills are decisive in determining which party will win. This paper focuses mainly on the first aspect, namely the strengthening of leadership power bases.

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2 Poguntke and Webb (2005)

3 Ibid.

4 The other four indicators are: trends toward an integrated communications strategy controlled by the chief executive as a means of defining policy alternatives, more personal polling, more cabinet shuffles, a prime minister who increasingly invokes a personalized mandate.

The shift toward presidentialization is attributed to four causes or factors: the internationalization of politics, the state's increasing growth and complexity, the changing structure of mass communication, and the erosion of social cleavages(such as religion and class). Poguntke and Webb (2005) emphasize influences from the European Union and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), but these factors have not significantly impacted Japan's politico-administrative situation. Japan, however, is not an exception with regard to the shift toward greater bureaucratic complexity and organizational specialization many countries are experiencing. The two movements that have derived from this phenomenon are:

1. The centralization of power as the core executive seeks to coordinate the state's "institutional fragments"
2. The undermining of collective cabinet responsibilities, as the trend towards "sectorized" policy-making precipitates more bilateral contacts between relevant ministers and the head of the core executive

The third factor, changes in mass communication (especially privatized TV) tends to focus on a party leader's personality, rather than on his or her program, to reduce the complexities associated with exploring political issues. With regard to the fourth factor, coupled with the "end of ideology" or the political context, traditional links between mass parties and their bases of social groups have been eroded, and social group identities no longer dictate voter loyalties, even as the personal qualities of party leaders became relatively more important for conducting election campaigns. The third and fourth points are well known in Japan, and their influences on the country's presidentialization framework are examined in this paper. These factors are also considered in our analysis of the Koizumi administration's success that concludes this paper.

ENHANCING THE SUPREMACY OF THE PRIME MINISTER

The principal reform measures implemented in 2001 to strengthen the Prime Minister's power are analyzed in this section, using Poguntke and Webb's (2005) presidentialization framework. The need for institutional change to Japan's Prime Ministerial powers had long been evident to those worried about governmental malfunctions, and proposed reforms were presented in the Administrative Reform Council's final report. These can be summarized as follows:[5]

1. The long-standing "divided-competence rule" ("each member of the Cabinet has a quasi-independent competence") for implementing policy has impeded crosscutting, strategic, and timely decision-making.
2. Therefore, Cabinet's competence has to be strengthened and made more suitable for its comprehensive and strategic policy-orientation role.
3. To that end, the Prime Minister, the Chief of the Cabinet, must have a legal framework outlining his leadership responsibilities, and thereby ensuring that the Cabinet as an entity manages state politics under the direction of the Prime Minister.
4. Therefore, the Cabinet Act must be revised to clarify the Prime Minister's powers for making proposals to the Cabinet.

These ideas appear to reflect then-Prime Minister Hashimoto's wishes. He had been a member of the Administrative Reform Committee (ARC) of the Liberal-Democratic Party of Japan (LDP) since the 1970s, and was regarded as an expert in this field. Prior to his election as Prime Minister, the widely assumed infallibility and effectiveness of Japanese bureaucrats had been undermined by the 1990 economic crisis, and a series of government-related scandals (Zakowski 2015). Hashimoto thought central ministries' influences were crucial for defining socioeconomic aspects, though the government system was suffering "institutional fatigue," since there had been no substantial reforms since the end of WWII. Japan's governance situation seemed similar to that of governments such as

[5] Final report of the Administrative Reform Council (03/12/1997)

Denmark, where "a strong *Ressortsprinzip* (the norm of ministerial autonomy) gave individual ministers control over their policy area" (Peters et al., 2000). Hence, a central government reform intended to create a new "shape of Japan" seemed appropriate for the twenty-first century (Tanaka 2006).

Chaired by Mr. Hashimoto, the ARC's key objective became creating a new shape of Japan, and the issues discussed in this paper coincide with the above-mentioned second structural cause of presidentialization, namely the growth and increasing complexity of the state.

Legal status of the Prime Minister before 2001

Prior to 2001, there was a in gap the country's legal framework with regard to the Prime Minister's power. Article 65 of the Japanese Constitution states that Executive power shall be vested in the Cabinet. As for the functions of the Prime Minister, the Constitution of Japan stipulates the following: Article 72 states that "The Prime Minister, representing the Cabinet, submits bills, reports on general national affairs and foreign relations to the Diet and exercises control and supervision over various administrative branches".

This article infers that the Prime Minister has a strong power of control and supervision over the ministries. However, the Cabinet Act describes this power under Article 6 as follows: **"**The Prime Minister exercises control and supervision over various administrative branches on the basis of the principles decided by the Cabinet meeting."[6]

Therefore, the Prime Minister can wield this power only with the consent of the Cabinet members who are generally regarded as spokespersons for their ministries. This differs significantly from the French Prime Minister's constitutional powers, where it is the Prime Minister who leads the Government (a collegial body), and not the other way around:

[6] The author translated this article.

> *Article 21 (excerpt).*[7] *The Prime Minister shall direct the actions of the Government. He shall be responsible for national defense. He shall ensure the implementation of legislation. Subject to Article 13, he shall have power to make regulations and shall make appointments to civil and military posts. He may delegate certain of his powers to Ministers.*

In addition, according to the Cabinet Act in effect prior to the 2001 revision, although the Prime Minister was able to preside over Cabinet meetings (from where his or her authority derived), it was unclear if he or she could initiate discussions and influence basic policy directions at Cabinet meetings. The need to revise the Cabinet Act was premised on this context.

The Prime Minister's power to make proposals within the Cabinet

Of the 2001 reforms, those regarding the Prime Minister's and his or her Cabinet Secretariat's legal status have had numerous impacts on Japan's political-administrative processes. After the ARC submitted its final report, the Basic Law of the Central Government Act (1998) added the following stipulations:

> *Article 6. It shall be expressed clearly in the legislation that the Prime Minister will be able to make a proposition concerning basic state policy (important policies such as foreign and national security affairs, basic principles of administrative and fiscal measures, overall economic policy and budget compilation, administrative organization and personnel affairs) at Cabinet meetings.*

Consistent with this provision, the Cabinet Act was finally revised and enacted in 2001 with an additional phrase (underlined) in Article 4, Clause 2.

> *Article 4. Official Powers of the Cabinet are exercised by the Cabinet meeting.*

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[7] Original text : Le Premier ministre dirige l'action du Gouvernement. Il est responsable de la défense nationale. Il assure l'exécution des lois. Sous réserve des dispositions de l'article 13, il exerce le pouvoir réglementaire et nomme aux emplois civils et militaires.

Il peut déléguer certains de ses pouvoirs aux ministres.

> *2. The Cabinet meeting is presided over by the Prime Minister. In this case, the Prime Minister is able to propose basic principles for important Cabinet policies or other subjects.*[8]

This revision might not seem to invoke a dramatic change, since the Prime Minister had always had clear primacy over other Cabinet members. Now he or she is no longer a mere "primus inter pares" (senior member of a group) as was the case prior to WWII. He or she now appoints the ministers, presides over Cabinet meetings, controls all government branches, and decides on the dissolution of the House of Representatives. In Cabinet meetings, he or she has the right of veto over any agenda item, since the Prime Minister is the only member responsible for all governmental issues.

The objective here might have been to change ministries' attitudes toward the Prime Minister, since they had lost the leverage to challenge his or her influence. Consequently, this change is regarded as having influenced today's "Supremacy of KANTEI" (official residence of the Prime Minister) phenomenon. To some extent it mitigated the silo-effect that characterized the government, and allowed the Prime Minister—who no longer had to wait for discussions in the lower agencies to be concluded—to carry out top down decision making. As a result, policymaking has become timely, and detached from particular ministries' interests on important issues such as the privatization of the National Post Office (Kawabata 2006).

Revisions to the Cabinet Act clarified that the Cabinet Secretariat—the body that most directly assists the Prime Minister—was competent to plan and draft the "basic principles" for important Cabinet policies. The Cabinet Secretariat was also given "comprehensive coordination" powers for important policies. According to the Poguntke-Webb (2005) framework, these revisions could be viewed as increasing the resources available to the Prime Minister, and thereby satisfying the criteria for Indicator 1.

[8] Translation and underlining by the author.

Expansion of the Cabinet Secretariat[9]

The Prime Minister required additional high-ranking staff members to fulfill his increasing responsibilities. Three Special Advisors were increased to five, and the positions of three Assistant Cabinet Secretaries, a Cabinet Secretary for Public Relations, and a Cabinet Secretary for Information Research were created or upgraded. Those who were augmented in number were all political-appointees. Rose (1976) argued that one of the major barriers to the ability of "party government" to make and implement policy was the relatively small number of political officials relative to the size of the organizations they were meant to control. In practice, these political-appointees work closely with the Prime Minister, and under the Abe administration, they are forming a sort of "Team Abe" that underpins his supremacy. This development also satisfies Indicator 1.

Apart from his or her close collaborators and advisers, the staff employees working directly under the Prime Minister are his or her most important resources, as represented by Indicator 1. As Peters observed, if the chief executive's staff numbers are increasing rapidly, and the support for individual ministers is not increasing at an equivalent rate, this suggests that there has been a concentration of power in favor of the chief executive (Connaughton et al 2008).

The permanent staff number (based on the budget and Cabinet Order) in Japan's Cabinet Secretariat has increased about three times, from 377 (FY 2000) to 1098 (FY 2016). In addition, the number of staff concurrently appointed from the ministries and attached temporarily to the Cabinet Secretariat were 1645 in 2016, relative to 445 in 2000 (Table 1). These numbers may not be negligible, compared to the number of major European parliamentary system executives. For example, the German Chancellor employs fewer than one hundred people. Even following substantial

[9] Source: Cabinet Office "about the Cabinet Secretariat" (04/07/2012), March 11, 2017. http://www.cao.go.jp/sasshin/kondan/meeting/2012/0704/pdf/s1.pdf
Institute of Administrative Management "Organization of The Government of Japan" (2016).

increases in the UK's Blair government, the UK Cabinet Office employed only a few hundred people (ibid.,).

Table 1. Numbers of Staff Members in the Cabinet Secretariat and the Cabinet Office

		2000	2016
Cabinet	Fixed	377	1098
Secretariat	Temporary	445	1645
Cabinet Office	Fixed	2,245	2,324
	Temporary	202	about 600 (2014)

Source: Official websites of the Cabinet Secretariat and the Cabinet Office, as of March 11, 2017.

There is also evidence of a proliferation of institutions with special missions (headquarters, councils, special administrations) in the Cabinet Secretariat. In 2000, the Cabinet Secretariat had only one such council (National Security Council), but the number of these bodies continues to grow. In 2012, there were 13 (such as IT Strategic Headquarters and Global Warming Prevention Headquarters). The most recent number is 22.

A remarkable example is the Japan Post Privatization Headquarters. It was this body, not the Ministry of Internal Affairs that had responsibility for Japan Postal Affairs, developed strategies, and drafted bills to reform Japan Post. For issues of such political magnitude and complexity, one cannot overemphasize the significance of having this team report directly to the Prime Minister (Takenaka 2006).

Creation of the Cabinet Office

Prime ministerial power lies in the prime minister's ability to draw on institutional and personal resources that complement and advance his or her formal and informal powers (Heffeman 2003). In this context, institutional reform is especially significant, for "it entails the strengthening of the prime minister's power-base by furnishing them a department of their own" (Poguntke and Webb 2005).

Since 1970, the UK Prime Minister's Office and the Cabinet Office have fostered an increasing inter-connectedness, and there now exists "an increasingly integrated core which operates as the central point in the key policy network of the British state". In Japan's case, the Cabinet Office was created in 2001 to support the Prime Minister (he is also the head of this organization). While the Cabinet Secretariat assumes essentially a "strategic role," this office, which was conceived by ARC as a "center of wisdom and knowledge," has greatly helped the Prime Minister achieve centralized control and crosscutting coordination of policy-making (Indicator 2). Its principal policy functions include economic and fiscal, decentralization, deregulation, science and technology, intellectual property, space exploration, disaster prevention, Okinawa and northern-territories' affairs, convivial society and children, decoration, and gender equality.

Each office has numerous director generals (bureaus), headquarters, councils, administrative bodies, and other institutions. If we liken the Cabinet Secretariat to the White House in the United States, the Cabinet Office is roughly equivalent to the President's Executive Office. Unlike the ministries, there are several ministers of state for special missions (such as the Minister of State for Economic and Fiscal Policy) in the Cabinet Office. They are not the heads of ministries, yet share the functions of the Office. These are among the measures that strengthened the Prime Minister's power.

Staff numbers in the Cabinet Office have not increased at the same scale as the number of its functions. The number of permanent staff employees have increased modestly from 2245 (FY 2000) to 2324 (FY 2016), and even declined slightly since 2009 when there were 2360. This decline has occurred primarily at the Okinawa General Bureau that supervises public works on-site

in Okinawa prefecture. About 600 temporary staff were attached to the Cabinet Office in 2014, three times more than the 202 in 2000. However, this number is not as large as the approximately 1600 in the Cabinet Secretariat. This relatively small temporary staff seems to reflect constancy in the Office's functions[10].

As for the bodies, the number of committees, offices and/or institutes has risen from five (such as the Economic and Social Research Institute) in 2000, to 16 (such as the Food Safety Commission) in 2012. Among various organs and institutions within the Cabinet Office, the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy (CEFP) is the most powerful. It can set agendas and define the alternatives at issue. The Prime Minister's policy-making supremacy flows mainly from this council. Thus, the CEFP has become a symbol of the Prime Minister's powers of leadership and coordination (Indicator 2).

The 2001 reforms have given birth to a new type of institution called "councils for important policies." With one exception, they are chaired by the Prime Minister, and exist only in the Cabinet Office. Their members are cabinet ministers and content experts from the private sector. They are substantial decision-making entities that develop policy principles and future plans. There are currently five such councils for matters including economic fiscal policy, science, technology and innovation, national strategic special zones, disaster management, and gender equality.

These councils' discussions and reports are treated as baselines for further policy formulations, and many of their recommendations and much of their advice appears in Cabinet decisions unchanged. There is no mystery about their "binding powers," because the Prime Minister leads the council's discussions and all concerned ministers participate. In particular, Prime Minister's short keynote speech that precedes the dialogue at each meeting and his concluding remarks influence the direction the arguments take. Thus, the Prime Minister has acquired another powerful policy-making tool. The most privileged and dominant of these councils is, undoubtedly, the CEFP.

[10] In contrast, the Cabinet Secretariat deals with strategic themes on short deadlines, unlike the Cabinet Office, which explains the Secretariat's tendency to rely on external temporary staff.

Its members include five Ministers (Finance, Economic Policy, Industry, Internal Affairs, and Chief Cabinet Secretary), and it represents a mini-ministerial committee on economic issues.

The Governor of the Bank of Japan who is responsible for the country's monetary policies, and two well-regarded economists participate in these policy discussions. Two representatives of the business world represent the private sector. This council has more status than the other councils, including the ministries that are supposed to enact its decisions. Tamaru (2005) explained this arrangement as follows:

> *The ministries don't accept the policy-line of the CEFP because this Council has a superior position. They rather react in a halfhearted way to the CEFP considering that since the Council's policies are based on the instructions of the Prime Minister or his entourage, there is no way to resist them.*

The CEFP's main functions are to carry out surveys and initiate discussions on important economic and fiscal policies in response to inquiries from the Prime Minister. It also formulates the Basic Budget Principles, evaluates the consistency of various economic policies, and ensures their coordination.

The CEFP's best-known document is "Basic Policies for Economic and Fiscal Management and Reform," which is revised every summer. This document sets the framework for economic policies, and outlines budgets for the current and subsequent years. It also discusses wide-ranging economic and social programs. In the 2016 version, it dealt with issues such as economic and fiscal reform, social security reform, and social infrastructure—its principal role. It also included other themes such as recovery from the Kumamoto Earthquake and the Great East Japan Earthquake, marriage-birth-childcare matters, gender equality, Industry 4.0, measures related to the Trans-Pacific Partnership, regional revitalization, fortification of the infrastructure, regulatory reform, strategic diplomacy, public security, natural resources and energy, and the greenhouse effect.

It seems that many "hot button issues" are packed together in this process, so getting this document adopted is one of the most critical times

of the year for Japanese bureaucrats. It is crucial for all government sections, since next year's budget determines whether their programs will be funded or not, and if they are included in the document, how they are described. Consequently, the ministries now harness the Council's power to ensure their programs get approved, by taking their issues directly to the Council. Once they get Council approval, their programs will easily win in a contest with other ministries. Thus, the Council has also become a seat of power in which difficult controversies are settled (Tamaru 2005).

Another of the Council's key roles is the budget. Prior to the 2001 reform, the Ministry of Finance dominated the budget compilation process. Since the Council was created, some important parts of this process have been transferred to the CEFP. Every year, the CEFP decides "the Overall Perspective of the Budget" before the budget process begins. The Ministry of Finances then submits a draft of budget request guidelines, also known as "Budget Ceiling," to the CEFP for approval. These guidelines set the limits for government expenditures, and the CEFP usually adopts the Basic Principles of Budget Formulation in November.

The influence of the Cabinet Bureau of Personnel Affairs

Included in the Civil Service Reform (and not the 2001 reforms), was the creation of the Cabinet Bureau of Personnel Affairs in 2014, which further enhanced the Prime Minister's powers. In Japan, government officials are appointed by the ministers to whom they report. After this Bureau was created, it had to approve appointments. Although this type of de facto cabinet approval system has long existed, under the Bureau this system was formalized, and the number of officials concerned expanded from about 200 (director-general level) to 600 (deputy director-level).

According to Poguntke and Webb's (2005) framework, the power of appointment constitutes a Prime Minister's formal resource, and they cite the British experience under the Blair government as an example. In that example, there were several instances in which some officials (especially in

the Foreign Office) were not promoted thorough traditional and approved channels, but seemed to attain top positions by obtaining Blair's attention (Poguntke and Webb 2005).

There are many similar examples in Japan, including the post of the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Finance (MOF), which is regarded as the most prestigious post in the Japanese civil service. Traditionally, each post for a permanent secretary of ministries was occupied by only one top elite official selected from among those who had entered the ministry in the same year ("Douki" in Japanese). In this case, three officials who had entered the MOF in the same year (1977) were consecutively appointed to this post. No official explanation for this irregular practice was given, but it was widely known that one of these officials had once served as private secretary to Prime Minister Abe. After witnessing several such appointments, executive officials in the ministries lost the courage needed to resist his leadership and assert their own ministerial interests.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE STRENGTHENED POWER OF THE PRIME MINISTER

Simply enumerating the practices that have advanced presidentialization will not adequately quantify the results of presidentialization, and the "inputs" documented in the previous section must be transformed into "outputs" in the terminology of policy evaluations. This section will attempt to provide an output-based evaluation using two types of variables, namely the number of pieces of legislation proposed by the Prime Minister, and the number of tasks assigned to him.

Augmenting the number of bills passed appears to be the most suitable approach for assessing the real impacts for two reasons:

1. It will allow us to empirically observe before and after effects
2. Almost all important policies are executed on the basis of legal texts in Japan, so the importance and hegemony of governmental bodies tends

to be measured by the quantity and content of their legislation[11]

Table 2 illustrates a sharp contrast in regard to the amount of legislation within the Cabinet Secretariat's jurisdiction before and after 2001.[12] Before 2001, the Secretariat had only three highly scattered laws for its services, namely, the Cabinet Act (1947), the Act for Establishment of the National Security Council (1986), and the Basic Act on the Formation of an Advanced IT Network Society (2000). After the 2001 reform, that number rose to 32 (2.13 per year).

Table 2. Laws of the Cabinet Secretariat and the Cabinet Office (before/after 2001)

	1947–2000		2001–2016	
	Total	Annual Average	Total	Annual Average
Cabinet Secretariat	3	0.06	32	2.13
Cabinet Office	44	0.83	41	2.73

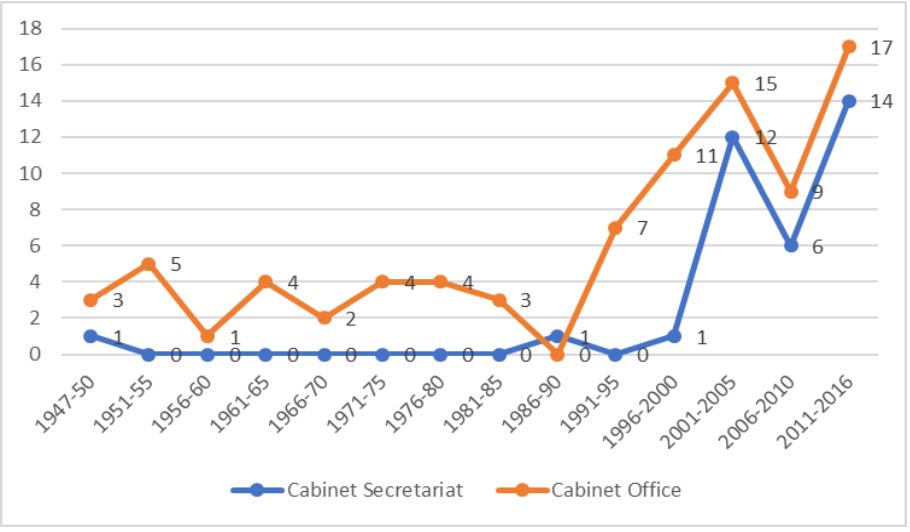
Figure 1 also clearly illustrates this 2001 "singularity point". These laws can be classified according to the expanded functions of the Secretariat. The first group is related to the national security domain: the Act for Supporting the Victims of Abduction Committed by the North Korean Authorities (2002), the Act Concerning the Measures for Protection of the People in Armed Attack Situations (2004), and the Act on the Protection of Specially Designated Secrets (2013). The second group concerns IT development: the

[11] Over 80% of the bills adopted in Japan have been proposed by the government, that is to say the ministries.

[12] Legally, the leader of this body is the Chief Cabinet Secretary (Minister of State). In practice, its real leader is the Chief of the Cabinet, namely the Prime Minister.

Act on Utilization of Telecommunication Technologies in Document Preservation (2004), and the Basic Act on Cybersecurity (2014). The third group deals with administrative and institutional reform: the Postal Service Privatization Act (2005), and the Social Security System Reform Act (2012). The fourth group is for important policies, namely The Act on Promotion of Women's Participation and Advancement in the Workplace (2015).

Figure 1. Laws of the Cabinet Secretariat and the Cabinet Office (enactment years)



Source: Official Websites of the Cabinet Secretariat and the Cabinet Office, as of March 11, 2017. http://www.cas.go.jp/jp/hourei/ (Cabinet Secretariat) and http://www8.cao.go.jp/hourei/hou.html (Cabinet Office)

In 2001, a number of organs—including the Prime Minister's Office, the Economy Planning Agency, the Okinawa Development Agency, the Science and Technology Agency, and the National Land Agency—were merged to

create the Cabinet Office.[13] The number of bills previously proposed by these agencies must be compared to those proposed by the newly created Cabinet Office. Forty-four laws were drafted by these former agencies prior to 2000, and 41 laws were enacted within the Office's jurisdiction after 2001 (Table 2 and Figure 1). On average, 0.8 laws a year were approved in the Diet before 2000, and 2.73 laws a year after 2001. Although the contrast shown in Figure 1 is not as extreme as in the Secretariat's case, the upward trend is nonetheless impressive.[14] This corresponds with the growing importance given this body as "the center of knowledge and wisdom," and policy-makers benefitting from close relations with the Cabinet Secretariat.

Concerning policy domains, Table 3 shows an equally interesting contrast before and after the 2001 reform. Disaster prevention issues have always required the most laws; this field had 12 laws before 2000, and 7 laws after 2001. After the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake (1995) and the Great East Japan Earthquake (2011), certain special laws about reconstruction and victim support were added to the group of basic laws. As for the other domains, there are rather steep upward and downward trends. Among them, three domains have experienced considerable augmentation: Child Affairs (+5), Science & Technology (+4), and Economic and Social Affairs (+4). Although the number of pieces of legislation proposed does not necessarily reflect the government's degree of concern, these three fields seem to properly represent the most imminent challenges faced by Japanese society. No policy is currently more important than support measures for child rearing in Japan, where its low birth rate is threatening the country's sustainability. There is also broad consensus about the need for fundamental economic restructuring, to exit the long-lasting depression. Finally, no one can deny that Japanese society's prosperity depends on scientific development and technological innovations. Thus, it is not merely a coincidence that the

[13] The Prime Minister is legally designated the chief executive of this body.

[14] Some of the increase in numbers in the 1990s was related to the enactment of laws for disaster recovery after the Great Earthquake of Hanshin-Awaji (1995).

Cabinet Office, which reports to the Prime Minister, is dealing with these key areas.

Table 3. Legislation Drafted by the Cabinet Office

Policy Domain	1947–2000 (A)	2001–2016 (B)	Difference (B–A)
Disaster Prevention	12	7	-5
Okinawa & Northern Territories	6	2	-4
Youth/ Woman/Elderly/Disabled	4	3	-1
Children	0	5	+5
Nuclear Affairs	4	0	-4
National Land Development	2	0	-2
Decentralization & Regional Revitalization	2	5	+3
Science & Technology	0	4	+4
Economy & Social Affairs	2	6	+4
Consumer Affairs	0	2	+2
Others	12	7	-5
Total	44	41	-3

Sources: Official websites of the Cabinet Secretariat and the Cabinet Office, as of March 11, 2017. http://www.cas.go.jp/jp/hourei/ (Cabinet Secretariat) and http://www8.cao.go.jp/hourei/hou.html (Cabinet Office)

The second variable is derived from a time-series comparison of the number of functions legally attributed to the Prime Minister. That signifies how many tasks are concentrated around the Prime Minister, and here a Cabinet Office example will be examined.

Cabinet Office functions have been increasing continuously (Igarashi 2006). In 2001, the original Establishment of the Cabinet Office Act listed 60 permanent functions. Thirteen years later, this number was 90. Important files including "Private Finance Initiative," "Revitalization of the Regions," "Official Document Management," "My Number (National ID)," "Aid for Crime Victims," and "Suicide Prevention" were added to their responsibilities during this period (Igarashi 2006). Including temporary functions in the additional clauses, that number would reach 104.

As has been numerically verified, the Prime Minister's supremacy has become obvious in Japan's political-administrative scene, revealing three major tendencies. Firstly, the officials are more obedient to the Prime Minister's or his entourage's instructions than their ministers. Secondly, the center of policy-making has shifted from the ministries to the Prime Minister. Important bills and tasks that might have been completed by each ministry before 2000 are now the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretariat or the Cabinet Office, and each ministry seems to assume the operational role of minor policy-planning for major political cabinet issues. Thirdly, Japanese Prime Ministers with more power resources and autonomy are now able to achieve their desired political aims much more easily than their predecessors. Consequently, previously unimaginable political issues have been realized by the Prime Ministers, as in the Right of Collective Self-Defense legislation (Mr. Abe), and the privatization of Japan Post (Mr. Koizumi).

THE KOIZUMI ADMINISTRATION

Poguntke and Webb (2005) argued that presidentialization of the core executive does not necessarily occur by the augmentation of their powers, and the decline of party influences may be far more crucial. Former Prime Minister Koizumi's (2001–2006) administration seems to exemplify this argument, considering his struggles with LDP members to achieve his political goals. Mr. Koizumi was one of Japan's most pro-reform leaders. Apart from privatizing Japan Post, he successfully undertook many other

controversial reforms that included limiting the issuance of National Bonds, reforming public corporations, privatizing the Public Highway Corporation, reducing the Regional Delivery Tax, and cutting public infrastructure spending.

Mr. Koizumi served as Prime Minister for five years, which was exceptionally long by Japanese standards. How could he succeed while managing various and politically difficult reforms that his predecessors had not even imagined? Using our three indicators from section 1, Koizumi's reforms might be classified as follows:

> *Indicator 1 (the growth of resources): Mr. Koizumi took full advantage of the 2001 reforms, and relied on the newly introduced power to make proposals at Cabinet meetings to speed up the decision-making process. This top-down decision-making style smothered resistance from the ministries.*
>
> *Indicator 2 (centralized control and coordination): The CEFP allowed him to skip tedious administrative coordination procedures. Having no strong foothold in the ruling LDP party, Mr. Koizumi alleviated the antipathy of Diet members with special interests. Once the key policies had been decided in the CEFP, they became a sort of "accomplished fact," and considerably weakened any possible political resistance (Takenaka 2006).*
>
> *Indicator 3 (appointment of non-party person): The minister responsible for the CEFP at that time was Mr. Takenaka, a former university professor.[15] As he was not a politician, and the post is independent from any ministry, he was free to design a reform plan and control the policy making process. This served as another measure for avoiding party influences.*

Mr. Koizumi also used media to enhance his personality-centered tendencies. Lacking the backing of factions in the ruling LDP party, he addressed the voters directly to obtain their support. He also skillfully harnessed the media during elections, and became a "star," thanks to his good looks and style, was very popular at the polls, and ultimately gained a firm foothold in the party.

[15] Minister of State for Economic and Fiscal Policies.

Decreasing ideological conflicts in modern society have blurred political parties' standpoints and programs. Hence, presidentialized leaders govern past their parties and the social forces that support them (Poguntke and Webb 2005). Mr. Koizumi not only by-passed the party machine, but struggled with his own party on the privatization of Japan Post, because this reform would damage the traditional party's base and weaken many politicians supported by this group.

Peters (2008) has stated that individual characteristics shape behavior, and the successes and failures of presidents and prime ministers. As for British Prime Ministers, Kaarbo (1997) concluded that their leadership style had a significant influence on their political decision-making. Mr. Koizumi was an intransigent man of conviction, with foresight, vision, and eager for political-administrative reforms. That made him a truly unique politician in Japan's political history, and the success of his reforms has quite often been attributed to these characteristics. With regard to Koizumi's personality factor, Tsunekawa (2008) observed that although the structure they worked under was the same as Koizumi's, his two less-charismatic successors—Mr. Fukuda and Mr. Aso—were not able to survive more than one year.

The political reforms of 1994 also strengthened the powers of party leaders. One example is the introduction of the single-seat constituency system. Prior to that reform, each constituency had had plural seats, and LDP faction leaders could nominate their own "protégés" as candidates in each district. The reform concentrated the nomination of one-candidate-for-each-constituency function toward the party leader. The enactment of the Political Party Subsidies Act, to prevent corruption by forbidding unofficial party funding, was another reform that further weakened the clan chiefs' who had controlled money flows into the party and intervened in party leaders' decision-making processes.

CONCLUSION

As illustrated, Poguntke and Webb's (2005) presidentialization model is generally applicable to Japan's politico-administrative situation since 2001. The 2001 reforms that strengthened the Prime Minister's powers mirror the first aspect of presidentialization (government leadership). The drastic augmentation of staff and bodies reporting to the Prime Minister and the power shift from the MOF to the Prime Minister are noticeable, compared to other countries' experiences.

The second aspect (party leadership) is also evident in the supremacy of the CEFP and the political reforms of 1994. Mr. Koizumi's personalized style of electoral campaign might serve as an example of the third aspect (party leader centered campaign). Future research is needed to confirm this supposition.

This paper found that the presidentialization movement has been observed in Japan since the 2001 reforms, and that Poguntke and Webb's (2005) framework has largely been consistent with Japan's context and reform efforts. The paper's second question relates to whether the presidentialization framework is relevant to Japan. Though there are similarities, there are also some differences, especially with regard to the causes of presidentialization. Of the four causes for presidentialization cited, three (state growth, changes of mass communication, and diminishing social divisions) were quite suitable for explaining the backdrop of Japanese experiences. However, Japan's presidentialization was less influenced by the internationalization of politics relative to European countries. This may reflect its relatively slow-paced globalization and the lack of direct impacts from the European Union's policies. Indeed, after 2001, the political issues directly addressed by the Prime Minister related to economic and fiscal problems, such as the case of Mr. Abe's so called "Abenomics" policy.[16]

[16] The Prime Ministers also led some diplomatic and security issues such as the North Korea related abduction case (Koizumi), and legislation dealing with the right of collective self –defense (Abe). These issues were closely influenced by Japan's geopolitical situation (its perilous relationship with neighboring countries), and did not truly result from the internationalization of politics.

The third question posed was whether Japan's experience revealed factors that were not anticipated by the presidentialization framework. Rather than formal-institutional factors, Poguntke and Webb (2005) emphasized the importance of contingent and structural factors as the driving force that pushes modern democracies toward a more presidential working mode. In many countries, these processes have occurred without significant institutional or organizational reforms (Tsunekawa 2008). Japan's case is quite different, and one of the objectives of the 2001 reform effort was to institutionalize the strong Prime Ministerial system. So, Japan's case could be thought of as a deliberate presidentialization, rather than a natural consequence as occurred in many other countries. Japan's presidentialization is an "artificial product" that required numerous legislative changes and organizational restructurings. It seems to reflect Japan's peculiar politico-administrative situation as a remnant of prewar Japan's weak cabinet political regime, as seen in the provisions of the Cabinet Act that dominated all government functions. So, Japan's experiences could also be understood as a process leading toward "normalizing" the Prime Minister's power, rather than "fortifying" his position, as has occurred in other countries.

Contingent factors (such as a leader's personality) were crucial for the success of Mr. Koizumi's presidentialized style reforms. However, without the 2001 reforms, Koizumi would not have been able to achieve his goals. Regarding the importance of structural factors, Mr. Abe's case is a good example. Unlike Mr. Koizumi, incumbent Prime Minister Abe does not have Mr. Koizumi's strong personal qualities. Nonetheless, his tenure as Prime Minister has already exceeded Prime Minister Koizumi's.[17]

The fact that the less colorful and more traditional Mr. Abe is able to stay at his post longer than Mr. Koizumi suggests that long-term structural causes are more important for bringing about real changes in politics than contingent causes (Poguntke and Webb 2005). Indeed, Mr. Abe has fully harnessed the

[17] As of May 2017, Prime Minister Abe's tenure exceeded Mr. Koizumi's (1980 days) and by 2020 is expected to exceed that of his post-WWII predecessors.

2001 reforms to reach his political goals, and made a number of important decisions such as postponing the VAT (consumption tax) raise and epoch-making legislation on national security on his own initiative.

These measures have given Prime Minister Abe the image of a strong man of action, which is thought to be a reason for his high popularity and quasi-unanimous support within the ruling LDP party.[18] In March 2017, the maximum term of the LDP President (the Prime Minister) was extended from six to nine years, which is longer than the maximal tenure of the US President. Hence, by 2020, Japan will have had a prime minister with the longest tenure since WWII, Mr. Abe, assuming he is still Prime Minister, and the fourth longest tenure, Mr. Koizumi. This would truly mean that the 2001 reforms have enabled a new type of Japanese Prime Minister with a "personalized mandate," and cleared the path to a Japanese version of presidentialization.

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[18] The Jiji-Press poll reported the reasons for this popularity as follows: 1) there is no other candidate (21.3%), 2. he provides leadership (15.6%) (Feb. 10–13, 2017). However, his popularity began to decline following after a scandal reported in the media in the spring of 2017.

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