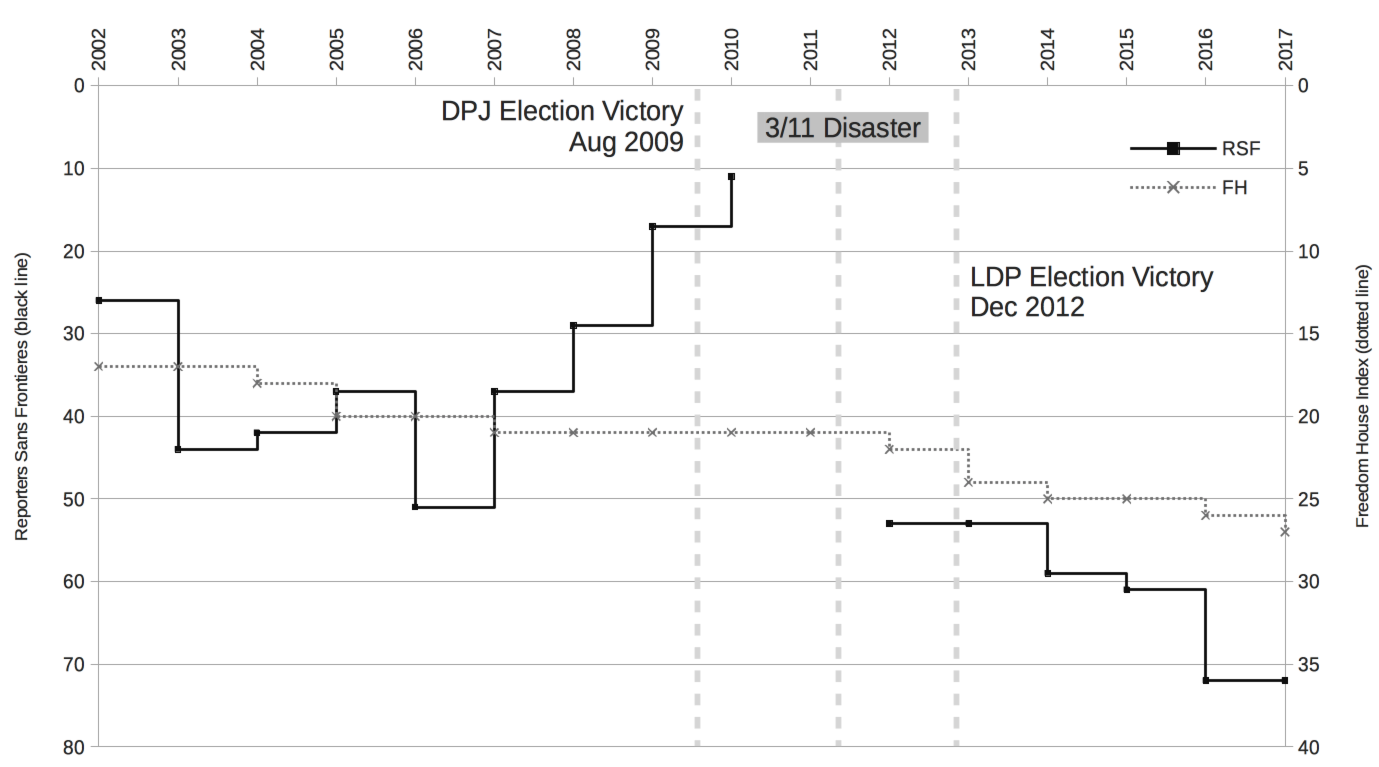
Japan’s parochial press: Journalistic identity as structured weakness

30 Oct 2017

TBD

# Introduction

Japan is home to a vigorous press, both national and local; levels of newspaper readership have traditionally been high, and they remain so, yet despite its apparently healthy state Japan’s press is, in one sense at least, in crisis; Japan has fallen down press freedom rankings over the past few years. Particularly abrupt was the drop in its ranking between 2010 and 2011/12 in the aftermath of the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear disaster in March 2011. The situation for the press in Japan seems to present two different faces; while the industry as a whole seems to be healthier than many around the developed world, Japanese journalism, and the journalists that produce it, is in a much less confident mood.



**Figure 1:** Combined Reporters Sans Frontiéres Press(RSF) Freedom rankings and Freedom House(FH) ‘Freedom of the Press Score’ for Japan, 2002-17. Sources: [RSF](https://rsf.org/en/japan), [Freedom House](https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/japan)

Japan’s press still up there in the ‘free’ zone but its ranking is at the lowest level since the Reporters Sans Frontiéres(RSF) series began in 2002, such a rapid fall - from 11th ‘free-est’ in the world in 2010 to 72nd just six years later - must surely be cause for concern, at least to the extent that a free press is a necessary part of a functioning democracy. Figure shows shows the decline in the Japanese press’ position in both Freedom House and RSF rankings; while the RSF ranking is more volatile, they both show a continual fall in the years after 2011. RSF noted that the precipitous drop after the 2011 triple disaster was in part due to complaints from freelance journalists that ‘public debate was being stifled […] subjected to censorship, police intimidation and judicial harassment.’[[1]](#footnote-25)

These concerns were further exacerbated during the debate over the introduction of the ‘Specially Designated Secrets Protection Law’ in 2013, which Repeta (2014, p. 1) argues ‘poses a severe threat to news reporting and press freedom in Japan’. In July 2015 the International Press Institute’s Director of Advocacy and Communications Steven M. Ellis commented;

We are troubled that LDP members have engaged in acts that appear to have placed improper political pressure on media outlets[…]]Given the fundamental need for independent media in a democracy, we urge Japan’s leaders to ensure that media outlets’ ability to report freely is respected and to take steps to protect that ability.[[2]](#footnote-26)

Mounting concerned regarding the state of the press in Japan led to a visit from the UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, David Kaye, in October 2016. His visit confirmed the existence of a sense of unease within the Japanese press, particularly with regards to its ability to maintain an attitude of independence toward a government taking an increasingly proactive approach to ‘press management’. During a press conference at the end of his visit, Kaye summarised his experience of talking to various actors within the Japanese mass media system as follows;

the problem is, the **system of journalism** and **the structure of media itself in Japan** doesn’t seem to afford journalists the ability to push back against government encroachments, and you see this […] in the example of the *kisha* club[[3]](#footnote-28) system, we learned about serious concern about senior members of the independent media meeting with senior members of the government, we heard these stories repeatedly, and **I would really encourage journalists to organise themselves, to adopt a professional organisation, a union in effect, in which journalists can express media-wide solidarity**, can perhaps enjoy self-regulation through a press council, in short, the media itself has a role to play, the media itself bears some responsibility for this situation (emphasis added)

He identified two particular tasks for those concerned with freedom of the press in Japan: legal reform and ‘organisation’. This paper focusses on ‘organisation’ and looks at Japan’s ‘system of journalism’ and the media structures that Kaye identifies as having a detrimental influence on journalistic autonomy, and the difficulties which tend to block or discourage professional-level organisation.

## Background

Japan must be understood as a (in this case genuine) special case: The mainstream media in Japan is highly dominant in a very isolated market, Japanese readers, unlike (for example) readers of English in the UK, do not have the luxury of turning to say the US, Australian or even Russian press for alternative views. Japanese media firms are virtually the only producers of Japanese-language news and information.[[4]](#footnote-30) The seven *zenkokushi* (newspapers with national daily reach[[5]](#footnote-32)) employ just under 20,000 staff, about half of these in editorial roles[[6]](#footnote-33). Between them they have daily sales of roughly 30 million copies, that is they supply daily news to over half of Japan’s 52 million households.[[7]](#footnote-35) Add to this the influence of the main news agencies, Kyodo News ([Kyōdo Tsūshin-sha](http://www.kyodonews.jp/english/)) and Jiji Press ([Jiji Tsūshin](http://jen.jiji.com/)), who supply news to newspapers, and radio and television broadcasters(Dentsu Soken, 2015, p. 59) (CITATION! RAUSCH? (Rausch, 2012)), it can be seen that there is little scope for alternative, ‘left-field’ or even ‘non-mainstream’ voices.[[8]](#footnote-38) Kyodo claim over 170[[9]](#footnote-40) national outlets as clients, Jiji another 140[[10]](#footnote-41).

It should also be noted that the possibilities for alternative journalistic forms that have arisen with the spread of the internet have not affected the mainstream media in Japan as they have many other media systems around the world. In 2010 Martin Fackler, the *New York Times’* Tokyo correspondent wrote:‘No online journalism of any kind has yet posed a significant challenge to Japan’s monolithic but sclerotic news media’(Fackler, 2010, 20 Jun).[[11]](#footnote-42) His assessment is born out by the fact that web-native, citizen-journalist and participatory news services such as JanJan(2002-2010), PJNews(2005-2012) and OhmyNews Japan(2006-2008) — despite the enthusiasm and hopes for their transformative role in Japan’s media environment that accompanied their springing up in the early to mid ’00s(Hadl & Hamada, 2009, pp. 72–3) — have not lasted in Japan. Thus the structures that shape the way the *mainstream* media report events, and in which the mainstream press is particularly implicated, matter perhaps more deeply in Japan than in many other modern industrial states.

As far as broadcast news is concerned, the picture is similar; the most watched news program, the *Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai* (NHK) early evening news programme (*Nyūsu 7*) is regularly watched by 16-17 million people, news on commercial channels brings in combined audiences of over 30 million; the top-rated commercial news shows, TV Asahi’s *Hōdō Station* and NTV’s early evening *news every* regularly have 12–14 million viewers.[[12]](#footnote-43) These are all national programs and the only local programming to gain similar ratings is that produced by NHK for the Greater Tokyo region (*shutōken*), home to just under a third of Japan’s population.

It should be noted that it is these major media companies — six Tokyo-based television networks, the five major national daily newspapers, and the two national news agencies — that make up the core 13 members[[13]](#footnote-45) of many of the ‘press clubs’.

## Aims

Ultimately the question this paper seeks to address is: Why, given the obvious concern with independence and what Kaye describes as the deep commitment to freedom of speech and expression in Japan, and the obvious concern of many journalists, have news-workers in Japan not organised in the way he suggests?

Also review bodies in Japan for reporters and those involved in news. Brief review of reporting organisations.

REMEMBER: **‘systems’ and ‘structures’** TODO

This paper argues that the root causes of this failure to organise, can be found in a) the nature of the professional education of journalists, and b) the nature of employment structures for journalists in Japan. The effects of these social institutions can be observed manifested as the ‘professional ideology’ of journalists in Japan, this paper uses certain aspects of this ideology as proposed by Deuze (2005).

This has led to a situation where reporter identity is centred on entities - companies as employers - which are required (at least as far as rhetoric is concerned) to be in a relationship of ‘fierce competition’.

Are Japanese journalists equipped to push back against the forces that pressure them? Can the ‘professional identity’ of the journalist be seen as a protective barrier, a layer of insulation, which allows journalists a psychological cushion and promotes the kind of activity and relationships expected of the ethical journalist. Does the lack of this cushion contribute to the state of journalism in Japan at the current time?

This paper will not deal with the influence if the *kisha kurabu* ‘press club’ system, probably the most widely documented aspect of journalism in Japan, as it has been dealt with extensively elsewhere (see for example de Lange, 1998; Freeman, 2000; Iwase, 1998; Yamamoto, 1989), but it is worth summarising the effects of press club journalism; the collective responsibility implied by press club membership leaves the press open to pressure both from peers - to not rock the boat and upset relations with sources - and from sources who can deny access more or less at will. Given the possibilities offered by social media for politicians to simply bypass the mainstream media, it is difficult to see how the traditional ‘balance of power’ for control of access (press to politicians, politicians to the public) can be maintained. Japanese politics has been rather late to the social media jamboree with the use of online campaigning in general elections prohibited until 2013, but this will change (Osaka, 2014, p51).

## Systems and Structures

Journalism may well be best ultimately described in terms of a set of norms, ideas and beliefs that might adequately be characterised with the term ideology (for example, see Deuze, 2005). The exact contents and structures of this ideology will vary across systems and across periods; this paper looks rather at the structures and groups within which this set of ideology is learned, the process of identification through which it becomes internalised by the individual journalist. Specifically it looks at the structures and systems identified by Kaye (see above) as being inimical to the Japanese journalist’s ability to push back against political pressure.

Discussion of the elements of the nature of the journalistic identity has been an integral part of academic understandings of news and news-gatherers since the very early days of the field (eg?). Deuze(2005) sums up the essential features of what he refers to as the journalistic ideology as ‘public service’, ‘objectivity’, ‘autonomy’ and a sense of both ‘immediacy’ and ‘ethics’(Deuze, 2005, p447). Where and when are the norms, values and beliefs about journalism acquired?

Some of Minami’s interviewees point toward their experiences of formal education as a fundamental site for the acquisition of their understanding:

those who have a degree in journalism say they learned what journalists should be through journalism education in college (Minami, 2011, p. 214)

*ANSWER THIS FOR THE GENERAL CASE*

What has been the effect of a strong bureaucratic tradition on the role of professional ideas in journalism in Japan?

‘Sectionalism’ (Shimizu?) *Tate-wari*

# Journalism in Japan

LIT REVIEW in here

Japan has a history of journalism stretching back to its emergence from under the control of the Tokugawa Bakufu in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Early journalism was often politically sponsored and overtly partial, the individuals considered japan’s first modern journalists — Yanagawa Shunsan[[14]](#footnote-49) (1832-70) publisher of the *Chūgai +sb*, and Fukuchi Gen’ichiro, well known for his work at the *Tōkyō Nichinichi +sb*(Huffman, 1997: 32) — had ‘close personal ties to the *bakukfu* shogunate’ (Schäfer, 2012, p9).

Japan’s press in many ways reproduced similar changes, those driven by the growth of cities and changes in printing and distribution technologies, that had happened in other developed countries around the world (see, for example McChesney & Schiller, 2003, pp. 3–4); it was as the twentieth century entered its second and third decades that, with the adoption of the ‘objective’ mass circulation model and the production techniques that made them possible, that the press began to require something like the ‘professional’ journalist — an objective, detached observer — rather than the partisan supporter and advocate. The trauma and reconstruction of pre- and postwar decades

Shibata (2003: 12–3) suggests that the current worrying state of journalism in Japan began to take place in the aftermath of the Vietnam War; during this period newspapers in Japan had maintained an ‘opposition party spirit’ (*yatō seishin*) and had been critical of both US and Japanese foreign policy in Southeast Asia. From the mid-‘70s the *Sankei +sb* broke ranks and began to take a more government (Liberal Democratic Party / *Jimintō*) friendly line, it was followed in the ’80s by the *Yomiuri* with its pro-Reagan/Nakasone stance. This led to the current situation with the *Asahi* and *Mainichi* on the oppositional side and the *Yomiuri* and *Sankei* being conservative, pro-(LDP)government. As Shibata states, it is perfectly reasonable, and indeed desirable, for newspapers to offer different point of view to their readers, but, he argues, the shifts in the attitudes of two of Japan’s largest papers fundamentally affected the ability of the press to perform their ’watchdog’ function.QUOTE better?

## Development of journalism as a trade

The first move to give form to journalism as a trade in Japan was the (Schäfer, 2012: 10) 1875 formation of the Alliance of Newspaper Reporters (*+sb Kisha Rengō*) in reaction to increasingly restrictive laws which affected the press and protection against libel.[[15]](#footnote-51)

Graduates of Japan’s first universities, the University of Tokyo (1877) and Waseda (1882) began to move into journalism during the 1880s and the number of graduate journalists has gradually increased since. During the 1920s, economic recession meant a dearth of graduate employment opportunities at a time when the popular press was expanding and looking to increase the quality if its content by employing better educated reporters.(Schäfer, 2012: 36)

During the years of political turbulence between the 1880s and the first decade of the 20th century, the nature of the relationship between politics and the press underwent a series of changes involving adjustments of the relationships between newspapers, politics and an expanding ‘public’. Kawabé (1921) relates his view of these changes from a vantage point at the start of the 1920s; one recurring theme in his narrative of these changes is the way that journalists in these years acted together to oppose policies they thought acted against their interests, or impede their ability to carry out their work, and thus, to keep their publics informed. It seems that the now much-criticised ‘press clubs’ were, during this period, a focus for journalistic action. (see especially Kawabé, 1921, pp. 155–9)

The *+sb Kisha Kyōkai* established in Tokyo in December 1920 seems to have been primarily conceived of as a way of putting pressure on employers to improve working conditions and pay. This organisation’s attempt to contribute to the status of reporters by introducing a examined qualification[[16]](#footnote-52) based on a similar proposal made by ex-reporter and Illinois Lieutenant Governor Barratt O’Hara, was rejected by the majority of working reporters, primarily on the basis of doubts over whether the skills necessary for reporting could be meaningfully ‘examined’ and whether any such qualification would actually lead to any improvement in the quality of journalism. On the other hand, voices raised in favour saw it as a way of heading off government interference.(Kawasaki, 2006, pp. 124–5)

However along with this shift toward employing individuals who had passed through the system of imperial universities - and reducing the number of ‘enthusiasts’ - who saw themselves as ‘educators of society’ - came an increase in the number of ‘company employees’. In 1917, Motoyama Hikoichi[[17]](#footnote-53) had characterised this shift with the following words,

a journalist, just like a salaryman of any other profit-oriented company, needs to spare no efforts in favor of his company. (Schäfer, 2012: 37) citing (Ono, 1971: 52)

The journalist was increasingly seen as primarily a company employee like any other. And the *shimbun-gaku* ‘newspaper studies’ departments established at universities were aimed at providing potential journalists with the requisite knowledge to allow them to gain employment at newspapers on graduation. It took until 1929 for a Tokyo Imperial University to establish a ‘Newspaper Research Seminar’ as part of its literature department.(Schäfer, 2012 p40)

Ono Hideo was the prime motivator in the establishment of this body, he saw the professional training he sought to offer as a way to push back against the ‘degeneration’ of the press he perceived in the 1920s, and to raise journalists who would again act as educators of society, ensuring that expert and specialist opinion would be made available to the newspaper’s mass audience (Schäfer, 2012 p45–5).

It can be seen that discussion of the role of formal journalistic education has not been lacking in Japan; nevertheless, despite what seems to be an acknowledged consensus on the part of educators that such an education would be beneficial (they would say that wouldn’t they) few Japanese tertiary institutions offer any sort of practical journalism, probably due to the lack of enthusiasm on the part of potential employers who continue to place little value on specialist knowledge.

(de Lange, 1998; Huffman, 1997)

## Education of Journalists

Deuze, in his typology of global journalism education approaches, categorises the Japanese system as characterised by

[p]rimarily on-the-job training by the media industry, for example through apprenticeship systems (Austria, Japan; Great Britain and Australia started this way, as this is a typical feature of the Anglo-Saxon model).(Deuze, 2006 p22)

It should be noted that the US is not included in the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ model, instead being grouped with countries which prefer:

[t]]raining at schools and institutes generally located at universities (see e.g. Finland, Spain, United States, Canada, South Korea, Egypt, Kenya, Argentina, the Gulf States, increasingly in Great Britain and Australia …)

It should be noted that the Japanese press’ attitude towards its work, and its wider role within society, and indeed some its it fundamental regulatory structures (see BROADCAST LAW), is based on the ‘objective’ model established in the US in the early part of the 20th century, yet the way it educates and trains its journalists is still close to the systems which emerged in the highly politicised and openly partial press found in the UK and Australia. REFME

See parts of…

(Cooper-Chen & Takeichi, 1997; Fujita, 2004; Hanada & Hiroi, 2003; Hashimoto, 2003; Ikuta, 2004; Iwabuchi, 2003; Seijirō Tsukamoto, 1993; S. Tsukamoto, 2006)

Also refer to Aldridge & Evetts (2003).

Employer indifference to journalistic education has been a continuing feature of the Japanese system since at least the immediate post-Occupation period:

There was a pressing need for journalism education after the war. But this does not necessarily mean that students with training in journalism are assured of employment after graduation from college. In the first place, education in journalism is not appreciated by newspaper publishers as an asset to reporters. It is true that most of the daily newspaper in the country employ only college graduates but their publishers still hold … ‘The only place one can learn to be a journalist is in a good newspaper office.’ They want to train their cub reporters in their own shops to their own liking. Hence college graduates could not expect to draw any advantage out of their professional training when they go out of school. (Chiba, 1952, p. 326)

Indeed, outside employment there is little opportunity for potential journalists in Japan to acquire knowledge, skills and experience of their chosen trade. Splichal & Sparks (1994, p. 135) surveyed students in journalistic education in 22 countries in the mid 1990s, they found that 90 per cent of Japanese respondents had no experience of engaging in any sort of journalism before entering their course, the highest proportion of any of the countries surveyed. The average rate for all countries was just over 60 per cent.

As a route to employment an education in journalism can be all but irrelevant, as Cooper-Chen & Takeichi (1997: 22) suggest, company recruitment relies on testing general skills (general knowledge, literacy) so a degree from *any* department in a prestigious university may be worth more than specialist knowledge from a less prestigious institution. Theses attitudes and the expectations of media employers - virtually no value attached to any sort of university-based journalistic education (Fujita, 2004: 1) in Japan seems to go back to at least the 1930s (Uchikawa, 2003: 14).

Willnat, Weaver, & Choi (2013, p. 167) found that over 95 per cent of journalists in Japan had a college degree, among the highest rate of countries surveyed, yet the proportion of those with a degree specifically in journalism was the second lowest at just 15 per cent. Japan also had the oldest average age for journalists at 53, seeming to indicate that, unlike many other countries, journalists in Japan tend to stay in their work longer. An overwhelming majority of Japanese journalists surveyed for this work recognised training as an area requiring improvement:‘(82.9%) noted that there is a clear need to improve journalism education and training in Japan’ (Oi, Fukuda, & Sako, 2012, p. 62).

Fujita (2004) points to changes in the environment as a cause of the growing perception that the ‘on-the-job training’ (OJT) system was not producing the desired results, this led to a renewed debate about the role of university-based journalist education in Japan in the later 1990s and early ’00s - the increasing use of technology at all levels of newspaper production and the increased pressure on workers which left little time for senior reporters to train new staffers.(Fujita, 2004: 3)

This debate took place in reaction to a number of incidents (plagiarism[[18]](#footnote-55), invasions of privacy, ‘overheated’ herd reporting (*media sukuramu*), libel)(Ikuta, 2004: 1). Ikuta also identifies the pressures of adapting to new technologies as a root cause in the drop in journalistic standards.

Ikuta describes the actual content of OJT at the *+as*; new employs spend four or five years at a local office where their development can be overseen trained by experienced reporters, traditionally the local office would be a mix of new, middle career and ‘veteran’ reporters. However Ikuta argues that this system broke down due to the HR policy of concentrating middle-career reporters in the head offices, which led to an over-reliance on early-career reporters in local bureaus. (ibid. p224/1180) This breakdown seems to be confirmed by one of the junior journalists interview by Minami (2011, p. 242), ‘Shota’ explains;

In the past, editors or managers would take care of young reporters in their departments. They had time and room to do that. They used to take young reporters out for drinks or something after work. But nowadays, their workload has also increased so that they have lost such leeway. So, they can’t pay close attention to what young reporters are doing. It’s kind of a vicious cycle.

A significant effect of a primarily OJT-based system might be that it becomes more difficult to have any external standard (what kind of standard?); if the measure of professionalism is how closely one approximates the work of one’s mentor then it is easy for *practical* understandings of how one does journalism — rather, how one does the job of journalist — to become prioritised over how should (according to some exterior abstract measure - whether a code, an exemplar or whatever) journalists set about doing their work. It might also be readily supposed that such a system might turn out to be more ‘malleable’ from the political sources’ point of view with the local (in time and space) understandings of the necessities of practical reporting being passed on, and thereby taking on the status of ‘common sense’, within a single generation.

## Sources of Ethics

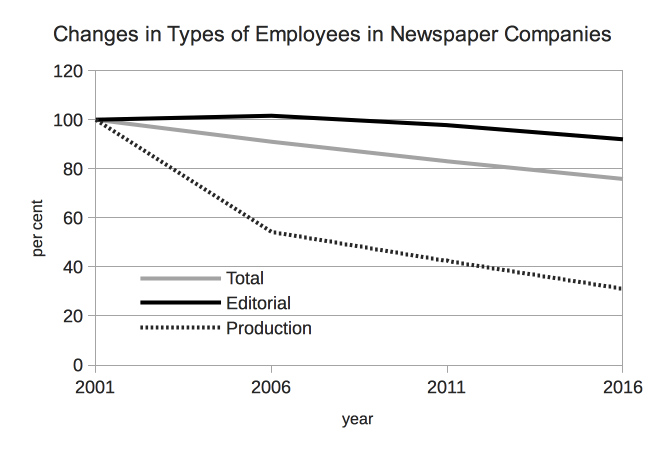
A shared understanding of what it is that a journalist does, and what separates those who can justify a claim to be journalists from those whose claims can be refuted, is linked to the possibility of claiming to be acting in accordance with an understood set of ethical rules, specifically one formulated by a recognised arbiter of journalistic activity.

Both the creation of codes of ethics and the emergence of formal education and training for journalists fostered a shared culture among journalists. (Tumber & Prentoulis, 2005, p. 66)

What are the sources of ethical understandings in Japan? How widely are these shared across groupings within the industries in which journalism takes place? Section below covers this (see [below](#ethics))

## Journalistic Employment in Japan

The The Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association (+nsk[[19]](#footnote-58)) carries out annual surveys of employment within the newspaper industry; according to these surveys there are approximately 20,000 ‘reporters’, this number has remained more or less constant over the past 15 years (see figure N). In the same period the total number of newspaper employees has dropped from 54,565 in 2001 to 41,396 in 2016. The proportion of employees engaged in reporting work has thus increased from 38 per cent of the total newspaper workforce in 2001 to 46 per cent in 2016.[[20]](#footnote-60)



Change in employee numbers in the Japanese newspaper industry; percentage change taking 2001 as index value. Source [NSK Website](http://www.pressnet.or.jp/data/employment/employment02.php)

A government survey from 2016 counts 7 national dailies, 245 regional and local papers, and 4 ‘sports’ papers, as well as 514 specialist and industry journals. The national, regional/local and ‘sports’ press in total employ 44,331 people, 9508 women. Just over a fifth of the newspaper workforce is female. 36,293 are full-time employees (*sei-shain*), this includes 6044 (apx.17% of total) female workers. Newspaper work is an overwhelmingly male undertaking.

For purposes of comparison, the US newspaper industry in 2001 employed 411,800 people, this figure had fallen to 174,709 by September 2016. (Source: US Bureau of Labour[[21]](#footnote-63))

What are their backgrounds? Who are they?

See Kawasaki (2006) for historical background. TODO

Average career length?

Typical career development?

Careers develop largely within a single company, or companies and organisations within the same group, or ‘somehow’ affiliated. E.g. senior editorial staff may, towards the end of their working lives, find themselves in senior positions on the boards of local television broadcasters.

check interlocking boards?

Minami (2011)

*Tenshoku*?

Chiba Yūjiro, a reporter for the *Asahi +sb* during the 1930s and later a senior academic working at the Newspaper Research Institute at Tokyo University, writing at the end of the US occupation in 1952, pointed to the relationship between employment structures and the development of a shared professional - in the sense of paid employment - identity:

In the second place, lack of solidarity on the profession operates as a barrier to the transfer of journalists from a local newspaper to a metropolitan newspaper, where openings are limited. (Chiba, 1952, p. 326)

## Press Clubs

The role of the ‘press club’ (*kisha kurabu*) shoudl also be mentioned as this where much journalistic activity takes place and is a primary site for interactions between journalists across company lines, that is *as journalists rather than as employees*.

Press clubs, while much vilified (rightly so), are a situation where cooperation, of certain types, between journalists is taken for granted. Indeed in the past these clubs have acted as a focus for journalistic solidarity crossing company lines:

By about 1930, the clubs themselves had expanded enormously and had begun to act independently of the newspaper companies. Sometimes, when a financially troubled newspaper would try to reduce its staff or a paper would try to fire an incompetent reporter, the club as a whole - including, of course, reporters from other newspapers - would rise up to demand that its member be rehired. (Yamamoto, 1989, p. 386)

The newspaper industry and journalistic work were, in the 1930s, far less professionalised and the landscape of media companies was in the process of development and less ossified than it is today. In this sense, given the power of the company today, it may be difficult for the press club to recapture its role as a site of cross-firm cooperation. However, it would be unwise to entirely overlook them as a possible site for expanded types of cooperation.

Realistically, skeptically perhaps, it is easier to see the *kisha kurabu* as yet another fracturing element of journalistic identity: Freeman (2000, pp. 70–1) lists the various *kisha kurabu* attached to central government agencies and ministries in Tokyo, the majority of them are host to more than once club, the Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry for International Trade and Industry both have seven different clubs listed for them.

# Sources of Autonomy

This concept at the core of the argument presented in this paper.

What is it that allows the journalist this autonomy? Identity as a professional that extends beyond the fact that they work for a company which ‘does news’. Basis for maintaining the ‘chinese wall’ between business and editorial, insulation from source pressure etc.

The Japanese journalist, as a result of the diversity of educational backgrounds - surely a strength in terms of diversity of knowledge - lack a strong external power base (Soloski, 1989, pp. 212–3)

To be autonomous invites suspicion - to be outside a publicly legitimised organisation - the reputation of trades unions, other than the ‘company unions’ prevalent across much of Japanese industry is as ‘trouble makers obsessed with Marxist doctrine’(CHECK!) - is to lose a credibility and social trust. Thus, without some sort of legitimate (by whose standards?) body to which they can refer, journalists are effectively restricted to acting within the bounds of the vertical company-based structure. The ‘media-wide’ cooperation that David Kaye referred to necessary to effect a concerted push back against top-down pressure is near impossible.

ジャーナリストというより朝日新聞社員としての仕事をしている図式です

quote from - 新聞協会賞を2度受賞した*依光隆明*朝日新聞社編集委員 (JCEJ Unei Iin, 10 Aug 2014)

Then there is the question of industry autonomy from government power. The structures of the mass media (and in the broader economy in which media companies exist), gradually put in place over the 70 years since the end of WW2, has turned out to be a double-edged sword. The sections below focus on the linkages between legislation/regulation and media industries which can be seen as political pressure points, which are none the less so for not being employed as such.

### The Broadcast Act

Identified by Kaye as an obvious political pressure point. Takaichi Sanae statements during 2015/6.

Kaye suggests some third party regulator equivalent to the US Federal Communications Commission(FCC). Such a body, the Radio Regulatory Commission (RRC), did exist for just over one year during the period between the passing of the Broadcast Act and the end of the US occupation; the body’s two most significant acts were to grant a broadcast licence to Japan’s first commercial broadcaster, Nippon TV, and then to dissolve itself, returning control of broadcasting to a ministry (at that time the Ministry of Posts, *Yūsei-shō*).(M. Ito, 2010, p. 41) So, while there is a precedent for such a body, it is not an altogether promising one.

What are the problems with the Broadcast Act?

Article four is divided into two sections, the first deals with programming content, the second with encouraging broadcasters to provide services for the visually impaired. It is the first section (see below) which Kaye refers to.

**Article 4**

(Editing and Other Matters of the Broadcast Programs of Domestic Broadcasting, etc.)

The broadcaster shall comply with the matters provided for in the following items when editing the broadcast programs of domestic broadcasting or domestic and international broadcasting (hereinafter referred to as “domestic broadcasting, etc.”):  
(i) It shall not harm public safety or good morals;  
(ii) It shall be politically fair.  
(iii) Its reporting shall not distort the facts;  
(iv) It shall clarify the points at issue from as many angles as possible where there are conflicting opinions concerning an issue.

The other article with direct relevance to the current debate is article 174 which holds out (for some at least) the possibility of governmental action to sanction broadcasters.

**Article 174**

(Suspension of Operations)

If the broadcaster (excluding terrestrial basic broadcasters) has violated this Act or an order or disposition based on this Act, the **Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications shall set a period within three months and shall order the suspension of the operations of the broadcasting**. (emphasis added)

According to arguments put forward in *Hōsō Repōto* the government may not actually be justified in using the Broadcast Act in this way (Hara, 2016, 2017). Any interpretation of the relevant articles which sees them as a basis for regulatory interference on the part of government undermines the basic tenets of the Broadcast Law which assures that broadcasting should be ‘free and independent’ (*hōsō no jiyū to jiritsu*) (Matsuda, 2016, p. 3)

Indeed in submissions to a committee looking at broadcast related laws in 1964[[22]](#footnote-67), bureucrats from the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunication (*Yūsei-sho*, MPT) stated that:

… in practical terms, these are ‘goals to be aimed for’, as for the actual effects of the law, [we] consider that they go no further than being moral guidelines (*seishinteki kitei*) (author’s translation)

This stance was repeated by senior ministry bureaucrat, Ishikawa Teruo? in responses to a Diet Upper House Committee question on 27 April 1977. The interpretation changed some time in the mid-1980s in response to what was seen as an increasingly overt licentiousness in overnight commercial programming, and perhaps triggered by the broadcast on TV Asahi’s *Afutanūn Shō* (Afternoon Show) of (what turned out to be) a fake news story about the lynching of a junior high-school girl. From this point on regulators at the MPT were to repeatedly state that - in contrast with what had been the position previously - Article 4 of the Broadcast Law could now be taken taken to offer a basis for regulatory sanctions, *gyōsei shidō* (administrative guidance), of the sort common in Japanese governance, for example the issuing of *keikoku* (‘warning’) or *genjū-chūi* (‘strict caution’)　(Hara, 2017, p. 57) However, what seems to have broadcasters concerned is not necessarily this gradual re-interpretation of the Broadcast Law but the apparent shift, signalled by Takaichi Sanae in 2015, in the scope of its possible applicability. Rather then broadcasters being sanctioned for repeated ‘violations’, that is, the failure to self-regulate efficiently and promptly, Takaichi raised the possibility of regulatory sanction for *individual programs* which in the opinion of government failed to meet the standards of Article 4. (Hara, 2017, p. 57)

### Newspaper Sales

* Weakness of JFTC
* Pricing cartel
* *Saihan seido*

The *tokushū shitei* status of newspapers is a purely regulatory matter, the JFTC could decide to rescind it at any point. Occasional government reassessments of its social value serve to remind the newspaper industry of this.

## Ethics

Also see Society of Professional Journalists Ethics Guide.[[23]](#footnote-70)

### The +nsk Ethics Guide

The +nsk is one source of guidance on journalistic ethics[[24]](#footnote-72), its Canon of Journalism[[25]](#footnote-73) was most recently updated in June 2000. When compared to similar sets of guidelines provided by organisations in other countries, numerous differences are immediately apparent. The +nsk guide offers little in the way of practical advice for journalists it’s articles consisting primarily of high-flown exhortations to, for example, ‘put a high value on individuals’ honor and give serious consideration to their right to privacy’ - what this might entail in practice for the journalist going about their everyday work is not outlined. More important for the topic of this paper, it should also be noted that the *subject* of the +nsk code is more often ‘the newspaper’(*+sb*), ‘the member company’(*kamei-sha*) rather than the individual journalist, the term for journalist or reporter (*kisha*) appears only twice. This again would seem to point to the central role of the company - here subsuming the individual reporter and taking on ethical responsibilities - in journalism in Japan. This is in direct contract to ethical guidelines issued by such organisations as the UK’s national Union of Journalists(NUJ)

### Company Guides

It is important to emphasise the role of the `company’ as a primary source of identity for employees in Japan.

Also the way the company is conceived - no division between workers and management - all one ‘family’? Why would one do anything to harm one’s family, if the only people to gain might be one’s competitors (or some abstract group of people one had never met, like ‘readers’ etc…) RW

This is entirely logical, there has never been a site where an industry-wide identity can develop. It makes no sense for journalists to make sacrifices (the possibility of exclusion from a story etc - see press clubs) for the sake of a non-existent ‘journalistic’ principle.

Limited to the company motto!

Asahi: [Asahi Koryo](http://www.asahi.com/corporate/guide/outline/11051801)

Yomiuri: [Stance](https://info.yomiuri.co.jp/group/stance/index.html)

Discussing the reaction of the New Delhi correspondents of the major Japanese media during the media restrictions which were part of the Emergency (1975?), and the reaction of the mass media in Japan when government took the decision to intervene in the 1994 *Tsubaki Hatsugen*[[26]](#footnote-78) incident (Berger, 1995).

日本人ジャーナリストが全員、ジャーナリストとしての使命に生きるよりも、私企業の倫理に従った (Yamashita, 1996, p37) –>

All the Japanese journalists, to a man, followed the ethical guidelines of their company rather than living up to their mission as a journalist (Yamashita, 1996, p37)

This is the big difference between journalists inside and outside Japan. For instance, those who work in the US media, the attitude that before they are employees of a particular media outlet, they are and individual journalist, is strong. (Uesugi, 2008: 115)

Uesugi also tells the tale of how an +NYT exclusive interview with then Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi, was stymied — with the collusion of the PM’s office — by the related *kisha kurabu*. The grounds given for the press club’s actions were that the *Times* was not a member and any interview with the PM could only go ahead once they had made an application to join (which would be refused!) and been accepted (which wouldn’t happen!) (Uesugi, 2008: 95–6) The notion that the prime minister should be questioned by an important representative of the foreign press seems to be a lesser priority than maintaining the political-hierarchical position of the press club.

# Discussion

The inability of Japanese press to act for common good: Yamashita India Emergency anecdote (Yamashita, 1996, p35–6), also perhaps the profusion of microphones that one sees in front of speakers at a press conference in Japan[[27]](#footnote-80) attest the unwillingness (or lack of desire) of Japanese media companies to cooperate, even where the benefits are obvious, and the gains from non-cooperation negligible to nil.

Does the newspaper press prefer a long decline into oblivion to any effort to reform? Backward-looking, attempt to revert to golden era, rather than dealing with a changed world and being pro-active in defining a new and relevant role.

Some kind of equivalent of the National Council for the Training of Journalists[[28]](#footnote-81) ?

## Non-company journalistic groups

There are a number of bodies already established in Japan which could theoretically act as a focus for concerted action. However, to abuse Andy Tanenbaum’s famous dictum - ‘The nice thing about standards is that you have so many to choose from’ - the problem may be that the ‘ethical and professional body’ is ultimately *too* fragmented for any one body to gather a critical mass of journalists which can be agreed on as forming a representative understanding of the journalistic profession.

Having said this, the enthusiasm with which the current government has taken to proactive management of the press makes it increasingly unlikely that any one body would stick its head above the parapet and risk becoming a focus for either press agitation or government action.

### Nihon Shimbun Kyōkai(NSK)

Has roots stretching back to the era of prewar press management and control associations, the *+sb Renmei* and *+sb Kyōkai*. Primarily an industry group. Focussed largely on promoting the business interests of newspaper publishers; encouraging readership, surveying the effectiveness of advertising, monitoring copyright, and lobbying for continuation of legal privileges. It also issues the *Shimbun Rinri Kōryō* 新聞倫理綱領 (Principles of Newspaper Ethics);

### Japan Congress of Journalists(JCJ)

*Nihon Jānarisuto Kaigi*

Formed in 1955, currently claims a membership of 800.

Unlikely to be able to perform a uniting role as the focus of it’s activity seems to be political rather than journalistic. This is — however just the causes they choose might seem to be — likely to alienate journalists who see themselves as being first and foremost ‘objective’ observers of, and reporters on society, rather than advocates for a particular cause.

### Free Press Association of Japan (*Jiyū Hōdō Kyōkai*)

The Free Press Association of Japan[[29]](#footnote-86) was formed with an initial burst of enthusiasm in early 2011. August 2009 DPJ government formed after election victory during Naoto Kan’s premiership. Followed on from general freeing up of access to government press conferences during 2010-2011 DPJ administrations (Hatoyama/Kan/Noda). Led to a brief spurt of interest in taking a renewed look at the future of the press club system; survey of the state of access to ministerial press conferences by Waseda University’s graduate journalism students.[[30]](#footnote-88) and such works as Asano (2011) and Uesugi (2010) which documented the recent changes and predicted unprecedented change in the Japanese ‘system of journalism’. Failed to maintain momentum or grow as an organisation, communications via the FPAJ website seem to dwindle after 2012 though it still presents regular journalistic prizes. Activity seems to be largely driven by ex-NHK journalist Onuki Yasuo and author, journalist and freedom of speech campaigner, Uesugi Takashi. ]

### Japan P.E.N. Club

More focussed on independent writers with literary aims. Still concerned with ‘human rights’, ‘world peace’, ‘freedom of speech/expression’ etc but not really at the level of the everyday activities of journalists. [P.E.N.](http://www.japanpen.or.jp/about/activity/)

## International solidarity

Might this provide the impetus for Japan’s journalists to organise?

Within 30 years fo the Meiji Restoration representatives of the still dynamic Japanese press industry attended the 4th International Press Congress, held by the International Union of Press Associations in Stockholm in 1897 (Björk, 2016, pp. 44–48). Japan was the only Asian nation to attend any of the international events organised between 1894 and the pause in the IUPA’s activities during World War 1.

International P.E.N.?

[IFJ](http://www.ifj.org/en/members/asia-pacific/)? (*Minpōren* (commercial tv company unions), *+sb Rōren* (Newspaper company workers unions), [Nippōrō](http://www.nipporo.com/) (NHK Non-management Union, about 7000 people, 70% of NHK workers) are member organisations)

IOJ?International Organization of Journalists - Association of Korean Journalists in Japan was a member in 1966 - now… who knows. Also in 1978 - only source [wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Organization_of_Journalists)!

[IPI](http://ipi.media/national-committees/)- represented by head of +nsk. Kojiro Shiraishi, head of +nsk, president of *Yomiuri +sb*.

Parochialism rampant, seems unlikely that this would happen in any significant way. Media companies are almost exclusively focussed on domestic matters and have few interests outside Japan. If Uesugi’s experiences, as a Japanese working for the foreign press in Tokyo, are anything to go by, relations between domestic journalists and foreign correspondents are characterised by mutual misunderstanding, distrust and, at least on the Japanese side, a feeling that all foreign reporters do is rock the boat, upsetting the comfortable and painstakingly cultivated reporter-source relationships essential to much reporting in Japan. Uesugi (2008, pp. 92–8)

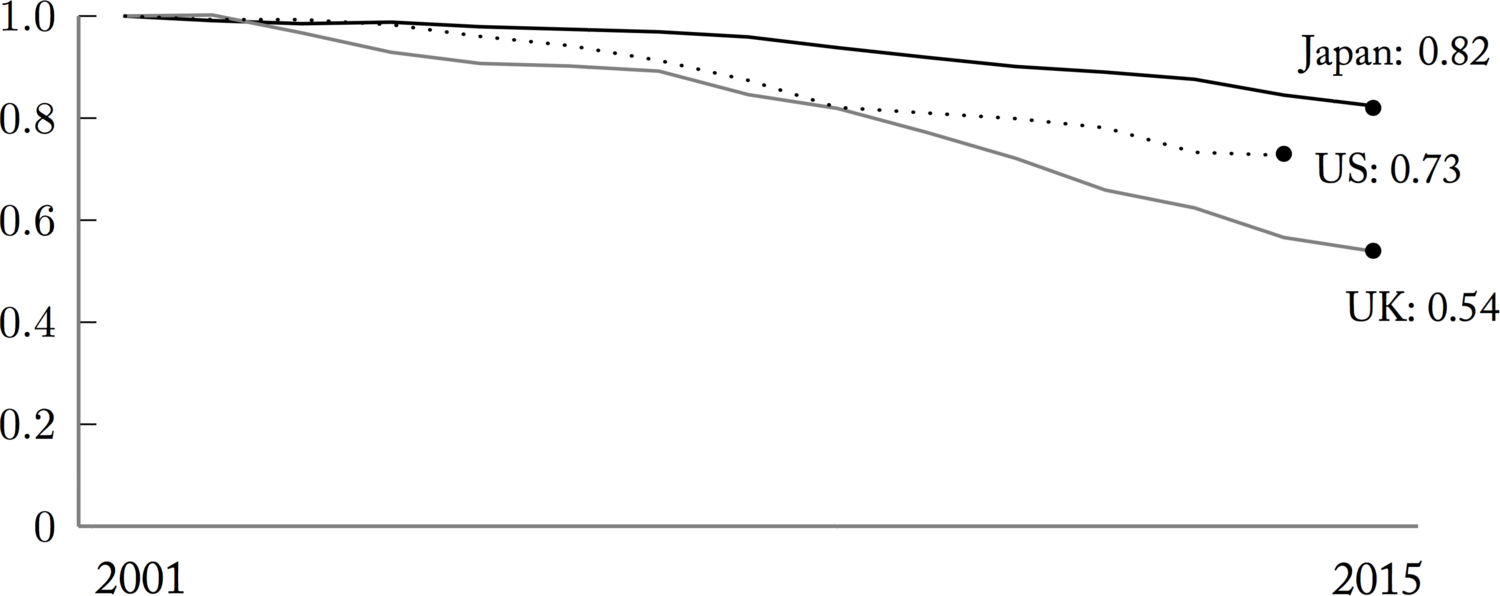
### Specialist Groups

[JMS - Motorsports](http://www.jms.gr.jp/2sc)

# Conclusions and Summary

Mainstream media companies in Japan have seen their audiences gradually slip away as other forms take their attention, in this sense they are experiencing the same worrying transitions as media in other developed countries. However, the pace of loss has been significantly slower in Japan; newspaper readership is still at over 80 per cent of its 2001 levels whereas the US and UK industries have more typically seen declines closer to 30 per cent, for the US or even 50 per cent, for the UK industry. For press-as-business then, any talk of crisis seems overblown, and without crisis continuity will prevail.

Television audiences are ???



Relative decline in daily national newspaper circulation in Japan, the US and the UK, 2001-2015 (Oct 2001=1). Data Sources: *Nihon Shimbun Kyōkai* ( +nsk ) website, UK ABCs (Guardian Newspaper website), Newspaper Association of America (latest NAA data available is for 2014).

The Japanese media, in the sense that it has managed to preserve itself (as ‘business’) in the face of competition from new media, is a success. Why would media businesses want to change?

Another aspect worth considering is the fact that newswork is becoming increasingly desk-bound, meaning journalists have less contact with people outside their own organisation.(CITATIONS)

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1. https://rsf.org/en/world-press-freedom-index-2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
2. [IPI Jul 2015](https://ipi.media/pressure-on-japanese-media-raises-concerns/) [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
3. This paper uses the words ‘press club’ as a translation of the Japanese term, *kisha kurabu*. However it should be noted that the highest-profile ‘press club’, the Japan National Press Club (in Japanese, *Nihon Kisha Kurabu*), is entirely different from typical *kisha kurabu* in its aims, membership and journalistic function. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
4. Some exceptions - such as news sites catering for Japanese overseas communities in Asia and the Americas, e.g. [http://www.nikkeyshimbun.jp/]. The 海外日系新聞放送協会 OJPA claims 20 members, the majority of whom are based in South America.[OJPA](http://www.jadesas.or.jp/shinbun/) - 4 Jan 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
5. This report does not identify which newspapers it considers *zenkokushi*; these are probably the five main national dailies mentioned previously plus *Akahata*, produced by the Japan Communist Party, *Seikyō +sb*, produced by the religious group Sōka Gakkai, or the English-language *Japan Times*. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
6. [METI Special Service Business Report 2015](http://www.meti.go.jp/statistics/tyo/tokusabizi/result-2/h27.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
7. http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/nenkan/66nenkan/index.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
8. the repeated failed attempts at ‘public journalism’ (see, for example, T. Ito (2005)) and the mobilisation of the ‘citizen reporter’ (see [Fackler](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/21/world/asia/21japan.html)) also seems to point to this dominance, and also perhaps a lack of interest on the part of audiences for ‘alternative’ sources. MyNewsJapan etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
9. http://www.kyodonews.jp/company/members.html [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
10. http://www.jiji.com/c\_profile/about\_us.html [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
11. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/21/world/asia/21japan.html [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
12. This adopts the rough approximation, 1 per cent = 1 million viewers, suggested by Torigoe (2002, p. 29). This estimate is close to the estimate offered by Ozeki Kōji, torishimariyaku at Video Research in an interview with TV Asahi (*Hai! Terebi Asahi desu*) broadcast on 19 Feb 2017. Figures compiled from Autumn 2016 ratings data - [Video Research](https://www.videor.co.jp/data/ratedata/backnum/2016/index.htm) [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
13. Broadcasters: NHK, TV Asahi, Nippon TV, Fuji TV, Tokyo Broadcasting Systems(TBS) and TV Tokyo. Newspapers: Yomiuri +sb, Asahi +sb, Mainichi +sb, Sankei +sb and Nihon Keizai +sb (Nikkei). News agencies: Jiji Tsūshin and Kyōdō Tsūshin. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
14. Japanese names are given in traditional surname-first order except where the individual is well known by the surname-last version. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
15. *shimbunshi jōrei*, *zanbōritsu* [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
16. called the *shimbun-shi* (新聞士), synonymous with the *gakushi* (学士), or ‘bachelor’s degree’. See Kawasaki (2006, pp. 122–133) for details. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
17. journo at *Osaka Shinpō*, then *Jiji Shinpō*, 1888 reorganised *Osaka Mainichi SB*, became pres in 1903: Advocate of foundation of newspaper studies depts at univs and later president of *Osaka Mainichi* newspaper (Schäfer, 2012: 36n). [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
18. About one-third of an article in the 8 Jun 2000 edition on the *Asahi Shimbun* was found to have been plagiarised from the local *Chugoku Shimbun* by a reporter in the Hiroshima office.(Shibata, 2003: 137) [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
19. This body also refers to itself by the acronym NSK, formed from the initial letters of its Japanese language name, the *Nihon Shinbun Kyokai*, literally, Japan Newspaper Association. [JNPEA/NSK website](http://www.pressnet.or.jp/english/) This paper uses +nsk throughout. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
20. http://www.pressnet.or.jp/data/employment/employment03.php [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
21. https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2017/newspaper-publishers-lose-over-half-their-employment-from-january-2001-to-september-2016.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
22. *Rinji Hōsō Kankei Hōsei Chōsa-kai* (see Hara (2017), 56) [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
23. https://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
24. 新聞倫理綱領  
    2000（平成12）年6月21日制定  
    　21世紀を迎え、日本新聞協会の加盟社はあらためて新聞の使命を認識し、豊かで平和な未来のために力を尽くすことを誓い、新しい倫理綱領を定める。  
    　国民の「知る権利」は民主主義社会をささえる普遍の原理である。この権利は、言論・表現の自由のもと、高い倫理意識を備え、あらゆる権力から独立したメディアが存在して初めて保障される。新聞はそれにもっともふさわしい担い手であり続けたい。The citizen’s right to know is the unshakeable principle upon which the democratic society is built. It is only with a media independent of all power and equipped with a string sense of ethics based in the freedoms of debate and expression, that this right is guaranteed. [We desire that] newspapers continue to be the most suitable means for this.  
    　おびただしい量の情報が飛びかう社会では、なにが真実か、どれを選ぶべきか、的確で迅速な判断が強く求められている。新聞の責務は、正確で公正な記事と責任ある論評によってこうした要望にこたえ、公共的、文化的使命を果たすことである。[…] The duty of the newspaper is to respond to the desire [for speedy and accurate decisions in choosing truth from the welter of information now available] to carry out its public and cultural mission.  
    　編集、制作、広告、販売などすべての新聞人は、その責務をまっとうするため、また読者との信頼関係をゆるぎないものにするため、言論・表現の自由を守り抜くと同時に、自らを厳しく律し、品格を重んじなければならない。All newspaper workers - editorial, production and advertising - to fully perform this duty, and in order to ensure that an unshakeable bond of trust with readers, at the same time as ensuring they safeguard freedom and speech and expression, must maintain a strict self-control and value dignity (of what?) [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
25. [Canons](http://www.pressnet.or.jp/outline/ethics/index.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
26. Explain this [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
27. It is common practise in many countries for the host of the press conference to provide feeds of the main microphone audio to all camera crews via a ‘break-out box’ positioned near to the designated camera position. Among other advantages to this system is that it helps reduce visual clutter in front of the speaker. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
28. NCTJ: http://www.nctj.com/ [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
29. [FPAJ](http://fpaj.jp) [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
30. [Spork](http://spork.jp/?p=746) [↑](#footnote-ref-88)