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**Master's Thesis**

**Media-Politics in Japan:  
The coverage of LDP in times of political defeat**

일본의 미디어정치: 정치적 패배의 시기에  
자유민주당 보도에 관하여

**February 2020**

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# **Media-Politics in Japan:**

**The coverage of LDP in times of political defeat**

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## **Abstract**

Among the democratic countries Japan is known for its particular political context, the country has been governed quasi-uninterruptedly by one political party: the Liberal Democratic Party. Considering this unique political setting, it is fair to assume that the modern Japanese media industry has developed in a mono-party environment. Previous literature on the relationship between the long-dominant party and the media has produced opposing perspectives on whether the media industry is biased or neutral.

In attempt to confirm the biased relation between LDP and the fourth state, this research has focused on the extent of the tonality bias in media's portrayal of LDP during the political defeat of the party against DPJ in the 2009 election. To assess the tonality bias, 4,525 newspaper articles depicting the two parties have been gathered and analyzed through the sentiment analysis methodology.

By comparing the sentiment scores of LDP and DPJ, the analysis has revealed that independently from the LDP political condition(ruling party or opposition party) the party benefited from a more positive portrayal than its political competitor. The electoral period has seen a better portrayal of DPJ, however this outcome has been interpreted as an exceptional and ephemeral condition with precise underlying reasons. Although media bias comes in different forms and is in nature very complicated to determine, this inquiry seems to confirm that from a tonality perspective media in Japan are somewhat slanted toward the long-dominant LDP.

**Keywords:** LDP, media-politics, media bias, sentiment analysis, Japanese politics

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## **Chapter I. Introduction**

With the increasing mediatization of politics, the connection between media and politics has become a primordial aspect in shaping the public life of any type of regime. The question of whether the mediatic system is independent or subservient towards the political word has been widely investigated in a variety of contexts. In retrospective the general literature on the relation of media and politics seems to confirm that there are many instance of political influence on the media and vice versa; in the frame of this research this brings us to question: what about the case of Japan? Plenty of studies on the configuration of media partisanship in democratic systems can be found for the Western context, many of which suggests that media neutrality is not a given . In the case of Japan few research has been conducted on the relation that politics entertain with the media and the possible existence of a mediatic bias. The case of Japan offers a unique political setting among democratic countries, the country has been governed quasi-uninterruptedly by only one party: the Liberal Democratic Party(LDP). The long-standing ruling of LDP, in fact, makes the case of Japan even more intriguing since in this context media structures have developed in a mono-party political system. As a party LDP was defeated only on two occasions: in 1994 when a coalition of opposing parties secured the Diet majority and in 2009 when DPJ won the general elections. LDP dominance and its modus operandi has undoubtedly developed patterns of institutionalization thus creating a particular

environment for the analysis of its relation with a variety of organizations. LDP relation with the “fourth state” namely the medias, has rarely been investigated from a bias perspective. In such a context of political monopoly the possibility of media subserviency is highly conceivable therefore the questions that are being investigated by this research are the following: Are Japanese media, and more specifically newspaper outlets, biased toward Japan’s long-dominant party LDP? and to which extent is LDP monopolizing media resources in Japan? The main hypothesis here is that LDP’s long-time dominance has induced a biased media attitude in favor of the party. In order to test this hypothesis and answer the research questions, the analysis will revolve around the political defeat of LDP against DPJ in 2009. By focusing on the tonality bias, 4,525 articles will be scrutinized through the use of sentiment analysis method.

The sequence of this research will start by describing the origins and evolution of medias and their link with politics. An overview of the existing theories on media systems will be then illustrated along with a definition of media bias and the existing types of bias that can be found. To better understand the Japanese political situation, a depiction of LDP and DPJ historical development will be delineated. Following the Japanese media relation with the government will be described. In the same chapter, the previous literature on media stances on LDP will be individuated. Afterward the methodology used in this research will be illustrated and finally the results and possible interpretations will be discussed.

## **Chapter II. Media and Politics: a general standpoint**

Before proceeding with an inquiry of the Japanese case, it would be fair to first understand how do medias and politics are generally interlinked. In order to do so, this chapter will explore the historical origins and development of medias and politics while attempting to summarize the types of media models that the general literature has produced. A short clarification has to be made in regard to the use of the term media in this research, when employing the term media I refer to the traditional media channel: the newspaper, in consequence the term media and newspaper are used interchangeably in this inquiry. Understanding how media systems are developed will help us better delineate and characterize the Japanese media model. Media and politics are two variables which link has been widely investigated in the last decade. The evolution of medias and their involvement in politics have brought to light important aspects of the mass communication in terms of influence on the political life and fate of many countries in both democratic and non-democratic regimes. Historically the intertwining of the mediatic and public sphere started during the modern era in Europe with the development of the newspaper(Read 2003). As Europe was undergoing important political changes and reformations<sup>1</sup> the need to appeal and rally communities into participating into important political decisions and social

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<sup>1</sup> The political changes and reformations here refer to the series of historical events that shaped the European early modern history. In the context of media development, the religious Reformation has contributed a great deal to the development of written communication.

changes was to be achieved through the use of what was considered mainstream communication channels (newspapers, pamphlet, prints etc.). From a technological aspect the introduction of the movable type<sup>2</sup> in Europe has led to a real spread of papers, press and books to many layers of the society inducing a democratization of the knowledge. Further technological development has paved the way for a real “*media revolution*” during the twentieth century with the introduction of audio-visual media into the public sphere. With the advent of the mass society, literacy rates were higher than ever and so did the consumption of information which became a defining aspect of this new type of society. Various newspapers sold hundred of thousands copies everyday consequently making their owners press tycoons with influential tools. As coined by the statesman Edmund Burke the press became referenced as the “Fourth Estate”(Schultz 1998). In Habermas' terms(Goode 2005) media are believed to be the intermediate between citizens and their policymakers, it is a place where the public sphere is forged through contrasting views, tastes, gender and many more social constructs. Essentially the media system within the mass society acts as a builder of the public sphere. The relationship between media, politics and public sphere is central in understanding the nature of political communication. In his attempt to decrypt this trilateral connection, Craig(2004) has emphasized many important aspects of this relation. Medias are to be seen as the mediator between politics and public

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<sup>2</sup> The introduction of the movable type in Europe is attributed to the german metalworker Johannes Gutenberg. His attempt to replicate the bible through the movable typing method initiated a large scale printing revolution in Europe.

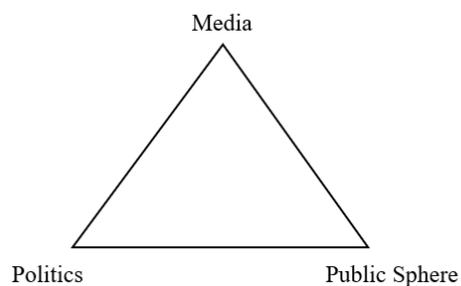
life, in doing so they provide for the construction of the public sphere through their political broadcasting. Media are holders of the communication channels, thus their regulation, ownership and technological aspects are essential in understanding their performance in any given society. The technological evolution of the media has considerably increased the reaching range of communication channels and with the advent of the Internet this range has been expanded to new levels. The introduction of the Internet has revolutionized societies in many ways, in terms of communication it has led to the emergence of “New Media”<sup>3</sup> thus making Internet a new channel of transmission. Politicians have been progressively relying on both traditional media platforms and New Media to deliver their messages and connect with the public, making the management of the available communication tools a cardinal point in their campaign strategy. In this context the prominence of the image advertised by politicians grew into a pillar of political communication, this aspect became even more fundamental to consider in our contemporary society where image plays a decisive role in our daily lives. The image and charisma of a politician are as important as his policies, if not more important in some cases. The way politicians are portrayed by medias is therefore crucial in constructing their public “persona” and maintain a certain level of visibility. Politicians play a critical role in regulating the medias since they are the main policy makers, now

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<sup>3</sup> According to the Cambridge Dictionary definition, the term “New Media” refers to : “products and services that provide information or entertainment using computers or the internet, and not by traditional methods such as television and newspapers.”

the question of whether policies are meant to ensure the freedom of medias or instrumentalize them is important as well however this point will be discussed later on. Always according to Craig(2004) giving a clear definition of what the “public sphere” is a very complicated task. The concept of “public” incorporates not only the aspect of a society as an audience or recipient but also the figures that comes from it(e.g. public figures, personalities or symbols). Considering these aspects it would be safe to consider media, politics and public life as a triangular network where each variable is dependent on the other but at the same time exercise an influence on each other(as in Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Interdependent relation of Media, Politics and Public Sphere**



The way which this triangular relation interacts depend on variety of characteristics that are proper to every country. Each nation is singular and provide a unique context of analysis however it is possible to find similar patterns in how these variables interact. It would be pointless to talk about media and

politics without mentioning the three models<sup>4</sup> developed by Hallin and Mancini(2004). In their analysis the authors investigate how media systems are “*linked structurally and historically to the development of the political system*”. By comparing media structures in Western Europe and North America the authors develop three models: the Polarized Pluralist Model, the Democratic Corporatist Model and the Liberal Model. The first model is mainly found in Mediterranean countries(Italy, France, Spain and Greece) where according to the authors “*the media are relatively strongly politicized*” due to the historical events that highly encouraged the advent of partisan newspapers. An interesting characteristic of this model is that the newspapers are essentially instrumentalized by both wealthy private industrials and the Church in order to direct the newspapers into a particular political orientation; some newspapers are even directly linked to a political party or a politician as it is the case in Greece. In Italy for example one of the major newspaper *La Stampa* is owned by the Agnelli family who also happens be the holder of the Fiat Group, or even more striking the media empire Mediaset owned by the businessman turned politician Silvio Berlusconi, which has very well served its political campaigns. A French equivalent to Berlusconi is that of Robert Hersant who was a representative in both the French parliament and European parliament and also happens to be the

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<sup>4</sup> Hallin and Macini models are mainly based on the analysis of 4 variables: professionalism, structure of media markets, political parallelism and state function in medias. Each of these variables are subsequently analyzed through sub-variables. Political parallelism is of particular importance here, as defined by the authors political parallelism is intended as: “*the degree and nature of the links between the media and political parties or, more broadly, the extent to which the media system reflects the major political divisions in society.*”.

owner of the famous journal *Le Figaro*. Although in the recent years there has been a decline in political partisanship by the western media, their involvement in the political sphere remains significant as they became an essential tool for social condemnation against the rise of corrupt politicians. With the advent of the welfare state, media subsidization became central for the survival of many regional and local newspapers; state-owned press agencies emerged as important actors for the protection of a multi-opinionated system. The polarized pluralist model seems therefore to have encouraged the development of a multi-opinionated media system with strong partisanship by press agencies and often materialized by the interests of a hand of private sector actors. The Democratic Corporatist model presents different historical and geographical origins, since this model mainly developed in Central-Northern Europe (Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Belgium and Nordic countries) its geographic development incorporated countries that share greater historical and social ties than Southern Europe. Characterized by a strong religious reformation, the importance of liberal ideas against the political and religious status quo rapidly found their way in these central and nordic societies. The Reform was a double-edged sword, on one hand it greatly contributed to the development of liberal ideals but on the other hand it fragmented the society creating many religious divisions and social cleavages among the local communities. With a flourishing middle class the involvement in political life was not delimited to a small aristocratic élite but was more spread to the upper-middle class. In this liberal context the

development of an efficient and wide spread newspaper network was relatively easy and more important than that of Southern Europe. The role of the State was decisive in protecting media's freedom of speech and ensuring the transparency of informations, unlike the Polarized Pluralist model journalistic professionalism and firmness reduced the advancement of a strong political partisanship while encouraging a more neutral approach to journalism. In substance, newspapers had their political ideals but were properly organized and regulated among themselves leading to what is defined as the Democratic Corporatist model. Last but not least the Liberal Model is characterized by a distant relation of the media from the political parties, often acting as a third actor and far from any ideological involvement. Britain and North American nations are the principal adepts of this model, traditionally the press agencies in these countries are not binded by any distinct partisanship, on very rare occasion the two has colluded. State intervention is also relatively limited, unlike the first two models in the Liberal Model press agencies are not directly subsidized by the State thus the newspress agencies in this model are mainly "commercial". Although Hallin and Mancini's comparative models analyzed principally the mediatic and political structures in Western countries their research has been fundamental in highlighting the existence of different media models and eventually paved the way for further researches in this topic. In their attempt to explore media models beyond the Western Word, Hallin and Mancini(2012) provided further insight into global media systems through a compilation of case studies. Always in a

democratic context, Peri(2012) analyzed the Israeli media system in light of the three models of Hallin and Mancini. He explained how the media systems in Israel could not fully develop into any of the proposed western models due to the warfare constraint that the country is facing. Despite an independent media system the pressure of a nationalist ideology and warfare threats inhibited the media from developing a proper multiform journalism. The social and political pressure bind the media's position to constantly mirror public nationalist stances. Media systems in Israel seem to be impregnated by a strong ideology in view of the country warfare situation. The Israeli example demonstrates how even in a democratic context, medias can be pressured to align with a certain vision. In this context the three models are hardly applicable. Based on Hallin and Mancini(2004), Roudakova(2008) developed her model in a non-democratic context. Her research explores the extent of mediatic implication in the political context of the post-Soviet Russia from the 1990s to early 2000s. Her findings suggest that media and politics are linked by clientelist relations, the author further explain this media-political clientelism as the: *"production of positive news about a political or economic actor; production of compromising information (kompromat) about the (paying) actor's political enemies; or, even more commonly, the production of absence of negative information about the actor."* In this sense medias are subject to political clientelism in the same manner that voters are, most importantly Roudakova findings are not limited only to the Russian context but are reflected in many other countries with non-

democratic regimes. Unlike the Western democratic context in non-democratic regimes the absence of the rule of law coupled with high levels of corruption and regime adherence strengthen the development of instrumentalism and favouritism in media which is often portrayed as blunt propaganda rather than journalism. Always in regard to non-democratic contexts, Zhao(2012) inquired on the structural model of media in China. Looking at the historical and cultural development of the communist ideology, the mobilization of medias and the consequent instrumentalization of communication channels laid the basis of a state-subservient model. Very close to the Leninist model, the Chinese media system can be fairly described as rigidly regulated in favor of the Chinese Communist Party ideals. It is to note that not all medias are State-Owned-Enterprises(SOEs), most news agencies have been privately commercialized however the political parallelism with the government is still recurrent. The high degree of political parallelism however does not imply that the Chinese model can be characterized as the Polarized Pluralist model, it might present some aspects of it but the strong ideological monopoly and state control do not fit in regard to this model. In the same way Qui, Stromberg and Wu(2018) analyzed media bias in China and concluded that newspaper outlets were predominantly biased toward the government, it remains unsurprising given the highly controlled political environment where several of the major newspaper and media outlets are SOE. However their research also highlights the propensity of minor newspapers to be less politically biased thus creating a competitive space

for rising unbiased newspapers. Albuquerque(2012) attempted to delimit the patterns of the Brazilian model based on the characteristics of Hallin and Mancini models. He argues that the Brazilian media system does not fit any of three models developed by Hallin and Mancini but is described by a fourth model the “*media as political agent*” one. This new model presuppose that medias participate actively in the political life but without representing any specific political party. He defines it as a catch-all model for medias that would be more likely to find its way in presidential regimes. As we have seen through this model comparison, the imbroglio of media systems with politics is the result of a historical, cultural and institutional settings that shape media systems around the world. As the literature has highlighted the instrumentalization of medias is still a common practice in both democratic and non-democratic regimes. Although the degrees of this media instrumentalization highly differ from democratic to non-democratic regimes, it would be proper to assume that a total media neutrality is far from being achieved. The reason why understanding media systems is central for this research, is because some media systems are more propense to develop a patterns of partisanship. Since the goal here is to uncover a biased attitude in media, understanding in which circumstances media are factional is crucial because the very existence of partisanship underpins a bias stance in media coverages. Whether medias are owned by the government or by privates; whether they side with a party, or a politician; support a specific policy or a whole ideology, all these variables contribute to slanting media contents in

a way or another. For this precise reason concluding the existence of bias in any analyzed outlet would lead to identifying a partisan attitude in medias. In the frame of this research detecting media bias in favor of LDP will consequently imply partisanship toward the party. A more in-depth characterization of the Japanese media world and its relation with LDP will be ulteriorly conducted in chapter IV.

## **1. Media Bias**

Before proceeding with an inquiry of the Japanese it is essential to comprehend a fundamental concept in this research: bias. The question to be determined in this subchapter is: what is media bias? and in which forms does it come? Commonly the word bias is defined as the inclination to side with a particular view, idea or person in an unjustified or arbitrary manner, in the context of media and politics it refers to the tendency of media to favouritize the coverage of a certain political figure, political party or policy. By disaggregating media bias, the general literature(Eberl, Boomgarden and Wagner(2015), D'Alessio and Allen(2000)) on this topic has produced three different types of bias: the first one is the coverage bias in which, as the name suggests, there is an unbalanced coverage of an item(politician, party or event) compared to other similar items. For example during an electoral race between two candidates a newspaper can exhibit a coverage bias if it publishes more content related to one of the

candidates in ratio to the other. The second type is the tonality bias in which media can display more positively or negatively a specific party, politician or policy. Finally the agenda bias lays in the content selection published or delivered by the media, selecting which issues or stories will be covered and which will not is the main essence of this bias. Detecting and measuring media bias is not an easy task, many researchers have attempted to uncover the origins of such manifestation. As previously discussed, Hallin and Mancini provided an institutional origin for media bias however more research on this topic is to be conducted to fully grasp the mechanics of mediatic bias. Gentzkow and Saphiro(2006) research also produced interesting results on the origin of media bias by focusing more on a consumerist perspective. In linking media bias with the reputation of news outlets, the authors found that media bias is interlinked with readers prior assumption. The stronger is the preconception of readers the more medias will slant their news in accordance with these preconceptions. The rational here is that medias pursue a “good” reputation in accurately reporting the news, in doing so they somehow have to align their coverage with the consumers view in order not to alienate their prior knowledge. The authors however also pinpoint that in cases where the readers have the possibility to directly check for the information, the bias is more likely to be reduced.

## **2. Media bias in times of election**

As seen the media and political world enjoy an interdependent relation that is often characterized by a complex set of formal and informal practices. While elections are of primary importance for leadership appointment they are also central in expressing people's policy preference and future political expectations. In this context media play a crucial role not only on relying informations about the candidates and their programs but also act as a barometer of the public opinion. Often seen as a central middleman in election times, media perform a wide range of functions. According to the Administration and Cost of Elections(ACE project) during an election period medias operate as real election "watchdogs" from educating voters to providing informations on the proceeding of the election to giving voice to both politicians and the public to discuss their policy preferences. Naturally these functions presume that media act in the most transparent and unbiased manner to the benefit of a democratized process, nevertheless it remains difficult to assess the extent of media neutrality in times of elections. As seen in Hallin and Mancini(2004), partisanship is anchored in media structures of most democratic countries and in times of elections it can prove to be an advantageous tool, therefore the question of media bias in times of elections has been subject to many research as media framework represents the backbone of elections. Naturally the amount and intensity of bias depends on many variables, nonetheless it is generally agreed that in times of elections media

content and bias can affect voters' decision. Dillipane(2014) highlights the effect of partisan media in influencing electors decision, his research suggests that although voters are more likely to follow and read news feed in alignment with their beliefs they are also likely to change their vote in favor of the opposing faction if exposed to an opposition newsfeed. Chiang and Knight(2011) analyzed partisan newspapers endorsement of candidates and found that voters are likely to support the endorsed candidate by a partisan newspaper, however the endorsement has to be creditable in the eyes of the voters for example neutral or right-winged newspapers are more likely to exercise a more effective influence on the support of the Democratic candidate they endorse than a left-winged newspaper endorsement. In this sense voters do recognize the importance of a "logical" partisanship in the newspapers they are exposed to. Moreover the effects of partisan media on voters seem to be more effective at the initial phase of the election when voters are still forging their opinion on candidates(Smith 2016). As highlighted by McCombs and Shaw(1972) mass media can also have a real agenda-setting effect by covering and stressing some specific issues over others media can set the policy agenda of a campaign. By analyzing the issues reported by the media during electoral campaign in contrast to voters preferred issues, the authors' findings suggest: *"a strong relationship between the emphasis placed on different campaign issues by the media and the judgement of voters as to the salience and importance of various campaign topics"*. In attempt to measure media bias in U.S. leading news outlets Groseclose and

Milyo(2005) concluded that most the analyzed outlets were more leaning toward liberal ideas and views except for the *Washington Times* and *Fox News*. These results have been validated by DellaVigna and Kaplan(2007) findings, by analyzing the bias effect of Fox News on voters since its establishment as a cable channel(in 2000). The authors deduced that indeed the channel contributed to an increase in the vote share of the Republican Party from 0.4 to 0.7 points, moreover the cable channel seems to have encouraged a share of non-Republican voters to align with the Republican Party. Literature on medias coverage of U.S. presidential elections seems therefore to insinuate a strong political bias in Fox News coverages. In the European case an interesting research has been conducted by Van Spanje and De Vreese(2014) in relation to the impact of media coverage on eurosceptic voting during the 2009 European Parliamentary Elections. By focusing on eurosceptic votes of 21 European countries, the authors found that the more a voter is exposed to hostile media content the more likely he or she will chose to vote for an eurosceptic party and the opposite is true as well, the more an elector is subject to pro-EU content the more he or she will vote for a non-eurosceptic party. Considering the polarizing aspect of EU appartenance issue, media exposure seems to play a significant role in regard to euroscepticism during the election process. Media attitude in times of election is crucial not only for the sake of democratic process of elections but also for the sake of neutrality. The political decisiveness of elections put at stakes the interest

of many public and private actors including the media industry. Accordingly if media are to be partisan it might be reflected in a greater manner during elections.

### **Chapter III. The Japanese political background**

Before proceeding with the analysis of the relation of media and politics in Japan, an illustration of the Japanese political environment is to be addressed. As Hallin and Mancini have clarified, the development of media systems is deeply ingrained in the political history of any given country. This chapter will therefore attempt to contextualize and illustrate the Japanese political environment and its idiosyncrasies. As the selected period for this research surrounds the political defeat of LDP in 2009, it is primordial to draw a picture of this period and understand the process that led to this defeat. The rise of DPJ as a solid opposition party and its consequent victory challenged electoral rules in many ways and brought to light important institutional aspects of Japanese politics. The importance of DPJ as a second political actor stands also in the fact that a party comparison with LDP is feasible, having a second “equal” party to LDP provide a rare opportunity for the comparison of both party’s portrayal by Japanese media.

## 1. LDP in the path to defeat

The Liberal Democratic Party(LDP) or *Jiminto* was formed in 1955 as a coalition of two middle-right parties to oppose the Japanese Socialist Party and avoid the rise of leftist ideologies in the Diet. Since then the party has been ruling quasi constantly over Japanese politics with the exception of two legislative elections in 1994 and 2009. Up to 1994 Japanese politics were defined by what was coined as “the ‘95 system”. By relying on malapportionment, clientelism and sustained pork barrel politics LDP was able to dominate one sidedly Japanese politics under that system. LDP managed to stay in power also because of the consolidation of its internal organization. LDP as a party presents some unique features in terms of its internal system. The three components of the party are factions, *zoku*<sup>5</sup> and *koenkais*<sup>6</sup>. Since the early stages of LDP factions or *habatsu* have emerged as a way to mobilize the necessary financial support for their respective candidates, provide endorsement and help their respective leaders access to a higher ranking within the party. As described by Park(2001)

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<sup>5</sup> The Zoku Giin and PARC institution represents a cluster of specialization. LDP would encourage its candidates to specialize in certain policy areas such as construction or agriculture to maximize election chances of multiple candidates in one district. Once these Diet members become “specialized” they become Zoku Giin with enough influence over policy implementations. During the SNTV electoral system, the PARC was the main way for LDP to maintain clientelist relations with different industries and corporations. After the electoral reform the disappearance of the Zoku Giin system and PARC was predicted, however they still exist and remain a part of LDP internal organization. It is to be noted that they have indeed seen a change in their functionalities within the party.

<sup>6</sup> *Koenkais* or personal support groups are political associations that channel funds to a particular candidate and through which constituency services are performed. During the SNTV electoral system they have been pivotal in providing the necessary fundings for LDP candidates. With the electoral reform many have argued that they would vanish due to the introduction of strict financial regulations. Despite the introduction of new electoral laws the *koenkais* are still in place however they have considerably weakened their contribution to the party’s candidates funding.

factions can be perceived as “mini-parties” forming the LDP: “*it is no exaggeration to say that the LDP can be best described as a coalition of factions*”. LDP factions and their leaders are known to be in constant competition for electoral appointments and the party leadership assignment. Factions have also been central in developing key relations with the press clubs and reporters. Eventually in 1994 a coalition of opposing parties won the general election and pushed through an electoral reform that was supposed to radically change the landscape of Japanese politics by ending LDP dominance and cultivating power alternation. As a new electoral system was introduced in 1994, that year became a turning point for Japanese political system and marked the end of the ‘55 system. With the introduction of the electoral reform many argued the end of LDP control over Japanese politics however this was not case. For a serie of reasons<sup>7</sup> LDP stayed in power and ruled unceasingly until 2009. Although the party preserved its leadership on Japanese politics, its public support was continuously wavering. Mistrust and dissatisfaction of the party’s practices were increasing from both inside and outside the party. This discontent culminated in the rise of an unconventional LDP politician: Junichiro Koizumi. Armed with a strong reformist mindset Koizumi had well decided a radical change in LDP’s political manoeuvre. With a landslide victory during the 2005 general election,

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<sup>7</sup> Many researchers of Japanese politics have attempted to provide an explanation for LDP continuous preeminence on Japanese politics after the electoral reform. The main arguments involve the party’s ability to centralize government spending and redistribute it based on clientelistic networks(Scheiner 2005); the adaptation of the party to electoral changes(Krauss and Pekkanen 2004); the opposition parties fraction and deficiency; or the electoral coalition with minor party Komeito(Sohn 2018).

Koizumi had put once again LDP at the top of the election results. This victory supplied him with the necessary leverage to instigate a series of reforms that broke with LDP's rural and industrial electoral base in favour of the hard-to-catch urban electoral base. In this changing political setting, DPJ was determined to attract LDP's angered electoral base (Reed, Scheiner, Thies 2012) while presenting fresh policy perspectives. Following Koizumi three LDP prime ministers had succeeded until 2008. In 2008 LDP's secretary was Taro Aso, as depicted by medias, Aso was suffering from a very low support not only within his party but also from the public opinion. During the summer 2009 he called for general elections that saw DPJ as the winner consequently attributing to the party the majority<sup>8</sup> within the Diet. Hatoyama the leader of DPJ, became the prime minister and DPJ wrote a new chapter in Japanese political history by being the first single party to defeat LDP. DPJ remained in power until 2012 when LDP took back the Diet leadership with Shinzo Abe. In light of these political changes some clarifications are to be made in regard to this research. After looking at the political rebounds that occurred around 2009 it was natural to pick this timeframe for the analysis of this research. The main rationale here is that LDP defeat by another single party would provide clear results in regard to media bias, the intent to analyze media bias toward LDP would be confirmed by confronting it with DPJ. Second, always in light of the Japanese political developments, it would be

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<sup>8</sup> The 2009 general election saw the victory of DPJ over LDP. 308 seats were attributed to DPJ, 119 to LDP, 21 to Komeito, 9 to the Communist party, 7 to the Social Democratic party and 5 to the New party.

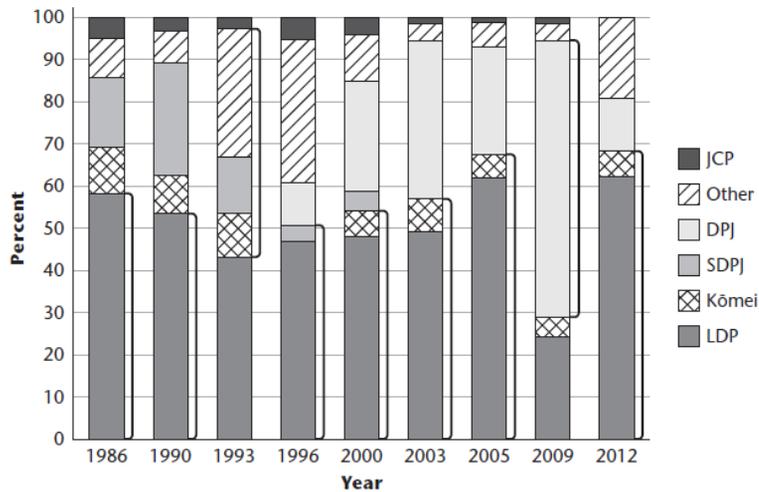
safe to assume that media structures developed in a situation of political monopoly by LDP. With the victory of DPJ many scholars argued the beginning of a multi-party system with probable government alternation between parties, however this argument is still not factually proved. As the *de facto* alternation of power has not yet taken place, it would be reasonable to assume that the media system in Japan matured under a context political monopoly under LDP.

## **2. DPJ in the path to victory**

DPJ as a party has draw the attention of many scholars and political scientists as to its success in detroning LDP from its position of ruling party. The formation of DPJ was the result of a merger between several opposition parties. The Japanese political system is known for its fractured and weak opposition bloc, this weakness and inability to reach a common compromise has been recurrently pointed out as one of the reasons for LDP preeminence on Japanese politics. As previously mentioned LDP was defeated only on two occasion: in 1994 by a coalition of opposing parties and in 2009 by DPJ. In Japanese politics defection from parties and collusion between parties is a common practice that has seen the formation of various parties within the opposition and between LDP factions as well. The foundation of DPJ lays within the opposition parties that first defeated LDP. The opposition coalition was composed of the Japanese Socialist Party(JSP), the Renewal Party(Sinseito), Komeito, Japan New Party, the New

Party Sakigake(New Party Harbinger) and the Japanese Communist Party(JCP). Together these parties collided under the leadership of LDP-defector Ichiro Ozawa and overthrew LDP in the 1993 general election. This victory for the opposition signed the first ever defeat of LDP and provided a long-awaited opportunity to introduce an electoral reform. After the introduction of the electoral reform the coalition of parties eventually came into a disagreement over the policies to pursue consequently ending in a fracture. LDP was eventually back in power in 1996 and few politicians from the opposing parties defected from their previous parties to start new parties. Yukio Hatoyama, an LDP defector, and Naoto Kan, a socialist politician, founded the party in 1996 and slowly started increasing the party's establishment by attracting several turncoats from different opposition parties and sometimes merging with a whole party. Ichiro Ozawa eventually joined DPJ by merging his party with DPJ. Since 2000 DPJ share of the Diet seats started to considerably augment, as the following graph shows, DPJ proportion was not constant however in comparison to other opposition parties DPJ's share is considerably higher.

**Figure 2. Japan's House of Representatives(Lower-House)**



**source:** Kushida and Lipcy(2013, p.9)

If DPJ's share of the House of Representatives before 2009 was not enough to reach a majority its share of the House of Councilors became higher than that of LDP since 2007. The opposition party thus enjoyed the majority in the House of Councilors earlier than in the House of Representatives, it would appear that it was only a matter of time before the party reached the majority in both Houses. Several reasons that led to DPJ victory and LDP defeat have been identified by Maeda(2010). He first argues that Ozawa's electoral strategies proved to be quite successful in the 2009 election, his candidate nomination proved to be efficient against LDP candidates. He selected few prominent womens as candidates for urban areas, resulting in a strong appeal to urban voters and attracting media attention. Second, DPJ was successful in switching the support

of rural voters in its favor. Reed, Scheiner, Thies (2012) also argued that a critical aspect of DPJ's victory was the party's ability to attract rural-based voters that felt abandoned by Koizumi's reformist policies. Third, DPJ benefited from the considerable weakening of LDP's *koenkai* support system. As it appears the electoral reform has markedly impacted the capacity of LDP's politicians to mobilize voters through their *koenkais*. Finally the successful cooperation of opposition parties proved vital in ensuring DPJ's Diet majority. By endorsing each other's candidates DPJ, SPD and PNP made sure that only the most successful candidates will be placed in single member districts and will receive endorsement from the other two parties. All things considered these electoral strategies materialized DPJ's victory into reality and LDP was consequently defeated for the second time in its history. Although DPJ's leadership was rather short( the party lost the following election of 2012) its ascendance to power challenged many electoral and institutional aspects of Japanese politics, besides it ignited the belief that a two-party system was viable and had finally started Japan.

## Chapter IV. Media and Politics in Japan

This chapter will attempt to describe the characteristics of the Japanese media system in relation to Japanese politics. Since the media channel analyzed here is the newspaper, first a description of the historical evolution of the newspaper industry and its idiosyncrasies will be outlined, following the chapter will then proceed with an inquiry of medias relation with LDP. Despite being a developed democratic country Japan has historically proved to have different patterns of development compared to the Western experience. As Strecher(2009) retraces, the first prototype of Japanese newspaper can be found in what was at the time a *Kawabaran*, or “news balad” which were more or less rustic reports on local events as well as important occurrences. In DeLange(1998) narration, the Japanese journalistic experience dates back to Tokugawa era(1603-1868) when dutch traders started circulating the *Nagasaki Shipping List and Avertizer*, a newspaper relating on the shipping and commerce events within the limited foreign community that lived in Japan. Due to the Shogun prohibition of relating any political news newspapers and print distributions were mainly focused on reporting trade news. Later on this prohibition would be lifted giving birth to the first officially published newspaper: the “*Kanpan Batavia Shimbun*”. With advent of the Meiji Restoration(1868) the conditions of the newspaper industry improved, the political and social reformation during the beginning of the Meiji

era led to the emanation of a Newspaper Publishing Ordinance which gave birth to many public and private owned newspapers with a relative freedom. Naturally the press was also to be a propaganda tool for the ideals and policy objectives of the Meiji rulers. In this context appeared the first model of modern newspaper: the daily *Yokohama Mainichi Shimbun* a private newspaper mainly focused on commercial news. Meiji authorities sought to improve the social and academic conditions of the Japanese population however in doing so many subjects started requesting establishment of basic social rights which quickly evolved into a Civil Rights Movement. The newspapers industry found itself at the center of this social movement, newspapers were soon divided based on their stance, they were either on the government side either on the people's rights side. Meiji rules were quick to tighten the press industry by suppressing any form of government criticism which led to a journalistic witch hunt. Freedom of press was limited and the political reporting became closely monitored. Despite this highly supervised journalistic environment, many successful newspapers have emerged during this period. The city of Osaka in particular has seen the echlor a multitude of major newspapers among which the, up to date, *Yomiuri Shimbun* and *Asahi Shimbun*. Launched in 1874, *Yomiuri Shimbun* became gradually a successful newspaper due to its colloquial language and cheap subscription fee. Five years later another hit newspaper was launched: the *Asahi Shimbun*, originally founded in Osaka by Kimura Noboru, Tsuda Tei and Murayaùa Ryohei, as a result of an effective organizational management and government subsidies the

Asahi Shimbun was steady in accumulating readership and subscriptions. A second office was opened in Tokyo in 1888, following in 1908 the two journals merged into a single corporation. The technological and organizational development of the Asahi and Yomiuri Shimbun have been central in modeling the Japanese newspaper industry. During the pre-war period many journals found their readership numbers skyrocket as Japan was undergoing an important phase of economic well-being and political engagement, the introduction of a Constitution and the establishment of the Diet as a culmination of the Civil Rights Movement reflected the engagement and growing interest of the Japanese society on internal and external political and military affairs. As a part of the development of the news industry and the rise of independent political figures the Press Clubs(*kisha* clubs) emerged as a special form of networking clubs for politicians, journalists and editors(around 1870s). With the increasing importance of the information and the boom of the journalistic industry, the relationship of the newspaper agencies with the Japanese government became more and more complicated. On one hand the government was constantly manoeuvring to limit and control the news agencies through censorship or punitive press laws; on the other hand the industry became so important that many independent journals flourished making content controls an arduous task for the government officials. During the First World War, many of the major newspapers eventually moved to Tokyo where they expanded their influence and monopoly on the Japanese newspaper industry, while laying the basis for a

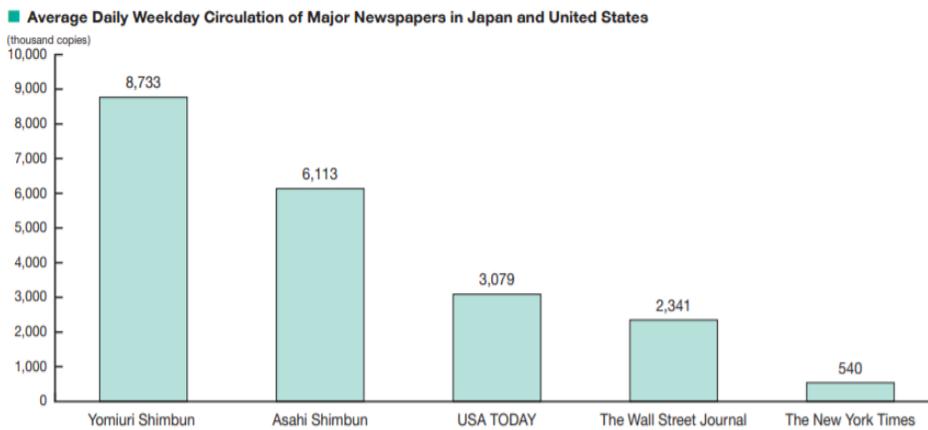
steady organization. The tone of some newspapers became increasingly reproachful and condemning toward government policies and military action plans. During the initial phase of the Meiji era the press enjoyed a relative freedom compared to the following Pacific War period where newspapers were strictly regulated and freedom of press was stiffened not only in Japan but in nearly all the warfare nations. The articles' substance quickly diverted into a uniform government propaganda rather than journalistic content. Even with the end of the Second World War the freedom of press was not fully restored, in fact with the establishment of the Supreme Command of the Allied Powers(SCAP) occupation the press became a tool to vehicle new political and democratic social ideals while containing the spread of communist ideology. Under the newly instored Press Code, any article publicizing a communist view was censored and seen as an obstacle to the democratization of Japan. It is only in 1952 with the end of the allied occupation that all forms of regulations preventing the media freedom of speech were abolished and constitutional protection was given to the mass media. Today Japanese media industry is among the most advanced and developed one in the world, and the press industry remains a leading sector within the media business. The two leading newspapers are none other than Yomiuri Shimbun and Asahi Shimbun, as the Dentsu media<sup>9</sup> report relays : *“The Yomiuri Shimbun, the largest newspaper, has the highest circulation in the*

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<sup>9</sup> Dentsu is Japan's largest advertising and PR multinational; the company releases annual reports on the state of media and information industry. Here the Information Media Trends in Japan 2018 was used to report the numbers and trends relative to the newspaper industry.

world, at 8.73 million copies a day. The Asahi Shimbun, in second place, has a circulation of 6.11 millions.” The Japanese newspaper industry has a very efficient distribution system that allows major journals to remain very competitive in terms of production and distribution.

**Figure 3. Average Daily circulation of Major Newspapers in Japan and U.S**



**source:** Information Media Trends in Japan 2018.  
Media Innovation Lab, Dentsu Inc.

As seen in the graph the production of Yomiuri and Asahi are far ahead of any U.S. news outlet, despite a decrease in the circulation volume and a challenging digitalization of newspaper content, the circulation revenues still account for the most important source of earnings for the newspaper industry. If Japanese newspapers score high in terms of progress and competitiveness their score in terms of freedom is comparatively low. With a score averaging 28.64 Japan

comes in 67th position in terms of press freedom<sup>10</sup>. Loopholes in the press legislation along with the persistence of Press clubs seem to be the underlying factors for such a low score. The newspaper industry particularly seems to play an important role in shaping and spreading knowledge about politics in Japan. Feldman and Kawakumi(1991) findings confirm that attention to newspapers more than television enhances political knowledge and participation.

## **1. Press Clubs**

Press Clubs have been pivotal actors in managing the flow of information and most importantly the contents related to the general public. Their existence and persistence represent a unique feature of Japan's media industry. They first appeared during the Meiji era as simple waiting rooms where journalists could interact with politicians after governmental reunions and soon became the principal pipeline of political information. The emergence of this phenomena is very well described by DeLange as he states:

*“Political parties had come to rely more and more on the individual reporter to get their message across to the public. It was in this respect that the newly emerging press clubs would prove to be of inestimable value”.*

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<sup>10</sup> Press Freedom Ranking is a compiled index by Reporters Without Borders. Based on the analysis of multiple variables such as: Pluralism, Media Independence, Environment and self-censorship, Legislative framework, Transparency, Infrastructure and Abuses. The final score is calculated based on the results of the formulas applied to these variables. The score ranges from 0 to 100 with 0 being the best score and 100 the worst; based on the index Japan has a score of 28.64 falling within Orange coloured countries which reflects a “problematic” situation for the freedom of press.

These press clubs transformed quickly the way political news were outsourced, with the development of a strong link with the various authorities and ministries. The press clubs became an essential and influential tool for both journalists and politicians, furthermore the lack of regulation has encouraged the practice of unscrupulous favours that would not be far from bribery or corruption. As Nester(1989) describes:

*“There are also press clubs associated with key political leaders and factions, and these reporters are coopted even more blatantly than the ministry reporters. Each newspaper's political department (seiji-bu) is linked with a specific LDP faction, and each reporter with an LDP politician. In order to gain any significant insights, reporters must establish close ties with the figure they are assigned to follow. What invariably develops is a classic patron-client relationship in which the reporter receives gifts of information, cash, and other benefits while providing the politician with a certain amount of loyalty and information. Reporters either end up writing favorable reports about the politician, or at the very least refraining from any critical comments and retaining damaging information.”*

Press Clubs still prevail as a latch between politicians and journalists and represent a grey area in the information circulation between the political and journalistic world. They remain legally recognized by the *Nihon Shimbun Kyokai*(NSK) and subsidized by the government. The *Nihon Shimbun Kyokai* or Newspaper association is the organism supervising and regulating the press

industry and consequently the Press Clubs. This association has been central in managing and arbitrating the Press Clubs, therefore being part of the Nihon Shimbun Kyokai is a prerequisite for any news outlet wishing to access the Press Clubs. The exclusive nature of the Press Clubs and the existence of a tacit agreement among the reporters and their sources have led these clubs to a nearly independent status. So far they have been depicted as a threat to the freedom of the press and cluster for journalistic clientelism. Many have argued that the persistence of these clubs is a form of political parallelism and a barrier to the freedom of the press in Japan. In line with this view Kuga(2016) has underlined the illiberal aspect of these clubs as routed in the special relation that journalists entertain with their sources. Reporters often follow they sources everywhere even to their houses; the tradition of the *youchi-asagake* gives the right to reporters to visit the home of their source and spend bonding time in order to collect valuable informations. The intimate nature of the relation that reporters develop with their sources makes it hard for the reporters to criticize their political source. Always according to Kuga(2016), the reporters(from different agencies) of a club would reunite at the end of the day to agree on the information that will disclose. One of the most extensive work on the organization of Press Clubs in Japan has been conducted by Freeman(1996). Her field research has emphasized many aspects of these clubs. In explaining how the press clubs operate in Japan, the author depicts these press clubs as highly hermetic and hierarchic. She recounts the episode of the “Asahi leak” as an example. In 1990

the Korean president Roh Tae Woo was supposed to visit Japan as reconciliation effort between the two countries. Through the press clubs many Japanese journalists received a scoop on the provocative comments that a head of LDP held in confront to the Korean president's visit. Although this information was relied by nearly all the major newspapers, Asahi shimbun directly attributed the statement to LDP's general secretary Ozawa. In doing so the journal had infringed an internal regulation of the club that prohibits the direct attribution of any statement to a specific political figure. Freeman further recount the consequences that Asahi had to face, she recalls :

*“Naturally, Asahi's competitors in the club were outraged and called for a general meeting of the club members during which Asahi journalists were made to explain their actions. After the Asahi representatives explained their rationale, they were asked to leave the room and the other club members came up with a list of demands (punishments) that were to be followed by Asahi. These included a written apology to the club written by the appropriate person from the Asahi's political desk, a personal apology to Secretary General Ozawa by a representative from the Asahi, and a ban on any Asahi-affiliated publications referring to "Secretary Ozawa's dogeza hatsugen.”*

The author also highlights the high level of competition between the different clubs. Each club seems to accept only a limited number of reporters, in consequence the news agencies are also competing to place their journalists in all the available clubs. Moreover it appears that each club has a specific area of

coverage(politics, social issues, police reports etc.). The members of clubs cannot easily switch from one club to another, they would either lose the trust of their peers or be denied useful information by their sources. Freeman's narration on the Press Clubs provide great insight on the Press Clubs internal dynamics and political relations with LDP politicians. Her depiction of Japanese medias soaking in a cartelized information system sees the Press Clubs, the Nihon Shimbun Kyokai and the news companies as the center and origin of a tightly regulated and non competitive media system. Penn(2015) has also accentuated the role of Press Clubs in bringing down the Hatoyama administration. According to the author Japanese medias in collaboration with the bureaucracy have colluded to bring LDP back in power and oust DPJ's cabinet. The mishandling of the U.S. Futenma base relocation by the Prime Minister Hatoyama has been heavily criticized by Japanese mainstream medias, as they leaked many "secret" informations on the ongoing procedure medias have depicted the DPJ's cabinet as incapable of managing the Futenma controversy and a stain in U.S-Japan alliance. This episode mirrors the biased approach that medias in Japan can adopt and the unhealthy relation that medias entertain with bureaucrats. In relation to this research understanding the nature and functioning of Press Clubs is a first step in acknowledging the non-neutral aspect of media coverage in Japan. The persistence of these clubs is representative of a form of biased information gathering process coupled with a high levels of collusion between the reporters and their sources(and sometimes between reporters

themselves). In this media environment the existence of a mediatic bias is highly probable and considering that LDP politicians have been in the game for so long it is only natural to infer a biased attitude of medias toward the party.

## **2. LDP and the media**

The media industry in Japan appears to be not only very developed but also very powerful, as reported by Ikuo and Broadbent(1986) media as a power group ranked first in a survey conducted on 2264 elites(comprising of LDP politicians, bureaucrats, labour unions, business organizations etc.); medias in Japan seem therefore to exert a significant influence on politics and society as a whole. Given these considerations, the questions of how media are interlinked with politics and to which degree remain central, in a context where press and politicians are binded by Press Clubs, where high-ranking bureaucrats advance to top positions within the media industry(Roya 1990) and where freedom of the press is not guaranteed, the Japanese model seems to diverge from the three Western models of Hallin and Mancini. In terms of politicization, media content have seen a gradual and constant increase in political coverage, by analyzing airtime ranking of all wide shows<sup>11</sup> Taniguchi(2007) found that politics-related topics have

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<sup>11</sup> Wide shows refer to Japanese talk shows that are usually aired early in the morning. Hosts invite experts and public figures to comment and discuss on public events, these shows often exhibit a highly opinionated tone. This type of show was first introduced around the 1960s by NHK through “The Today Show” and usually targets an audience mainly composed of housewives and elderly persons.

reached the first place in the ranking starting 2002; comparatively back in 1992 they ranked 6th. Politics thus started to occupy the largest share of airtime on wide shows, consequently politicians started to correspondingly augment their TV appearances. Always according to Taniguchi's research, the more an LDP representative was mentioned by newspaper outlets the more he or she would receive appraisal from his constituency. The extent of newspaper coverage seems also to affect the elections of Prime Minister within LDP, accordingly since the 1990's Prime Ministers who have been mentioned in newspapers or enjoyed ample popularity in the mass media have been elected as head of the party. LDP's general secretary's therefore is to be popular before acceding to the party's top positions. It would be pointless to talk about medias and LDP without mentioning the case of Junichiro Koizumi. Being one of the most mediatized candidates of LDP but also one of the most controversial, Koizumi is believed to have successfully grasped the use of of media to win the elections and positively publicize his policies. As Yamamura and Sabatini(2014) point out: "*Mass media played a fundamental role in inducing undecided or unaffiliated urban voters to support Koizumi's principal policy*". The case of Koizumi is emblematic in the sense that he was not affiliated to any faction thus was hardly supported inside his party but the use of media to increase his popularity and reach to voters has proved to be a winning tactic and tuned out to illustrate the importance and power of media in mobilizing voters. Koizumi has enjoyed wide mediatization but he was also perceived as a highly charismatic and appealing

candidate to both men and women which proved to be an important factor in attaining urban voters. His anti status-quo stances also played a role in increasing his popularity, the results of this mix of anti-institutional policies and highly mediatized politics led to a crashing landslide victory that ensured his election as Prime Minister and head of the Liberal Democratic Party. According to Krauss and Nyblade(2005) the increasing mediatization of politics and especially that of prime ministers has led to a “presidentialization” of this role, they argue that: *“Now the Japanese focus on the position to a degree not seen before, and evaluate the prime minister critically as the leader of his party and of Japan. While the Japanese prime minister may not necessarily be the strong leader seen in many other countries, most notably Britain, the public image of the prime minister has become a more potent force in Japanese politics”*. The growing mediatization of candidates has therefore an impact not only on their electoral chances but also on their position within LDP, in light of these findings it is therefore possible to deduce that LDP candidates mediatization led to structural changes within the party power dynamics. It is established by the general literature that media do play an important role in the Japanese political sphere, this consequently leads to the central question here: are Japanese media biased toward LDP? On this matter previous literature seems to have reached diverging opinions and results. On one side Japanese newspapers are considered as non-partisan and mostly leaning toward neutral positions but on the other side the existence and persistence of press clubs have brought many to suggest the

opposite. The advocates of the idea of biased news often see the Press Clubs as the origin of the bias as they are often presented as the pipeline of information between the politicians and journalists and usually in favor of maintaining the status quo. Krauss suggests that these clubs influence the news related in a sense that creates a uniformity and homogeneity in the content provided by journalists as they gather their informations from the same sources. These Press Clubs are in a way spokespersons of ministries and public officials. In his following analysis of the national broadcasting television NHK, Krauss highlights the biased and subordinated character of NHK reporters to the Japanese government and to some LDP politicians. In the case of newspapers, it is widely accepted that they do not practice any type of sponsoring in regard to political parties, nevertheless Yomiuri Shimbun and Asahi Shimbun positions have been labeled quite differently in terms of policy. On one hand Yomiuri Shimbun has been recognized as center-right oriented newspaper with conservative views and a pro-establishment stance. On the other hand Asahi Shimbun has been recognized as center-left and more liberal oriented, often critical toward LDP policies, Asahi news agency has been often accused by LDP representatives of slashing their popularity through the agency's television channel to the extent that it has been accused of being a major contributor to LDP defeat in 1993(Altman 1996). It is important to mention that these orientations are based on the newspapers' policy positions not based on their link to the government or to LDP politicians. Others have seen Japanese media as more neutral and facts oriented due to their often

time critical positions toward the government, uncovering scandals involving politicians and bureaucrats and reporting on general public dissatisfaction with government policies. Farley(1996) has identified the cause of this neutrality as a commercial strategy to attract the broader audience possible, in line with this argument supporting a specific candidate or party would be detrimental for the revenues of the news agencies. A third perspective on medias in Japan has been argued by Phar's(1996), her assertion is that media in Japan act as a “trickster”. She describes the figure of the trickster who “*plays out its roles in society by virtue of its location “betwixt and between” the established order*”, therefore positioning Japanese media somewhere between watchdogs and pro-establishment. This dual position of media accordingly would induce critical and satirical attitude toward political institutions while at the same time serving the purpose of these same institutions.

While the general literature is very divided on this subject, the main argument of this inquiry is that LDP long-dominance might have produced a subservient effect on media, but the approach used here is different. The previous literature has mostly looked into Press Clubs to determine the existence of partisanship. It is undeniable that Press Clubs are a central feature of the Japanese media system however they represent an indirect approach to demonstrate partisanship. The approach that will be used here is a more direct one: a straight analysis of the released news articles will be performed through sentiment analysis.

### 3. Methodology

Since LDP first defeat by a single political party was during the 2009 elections, media bias is more likely to be detected in times of political defeat. The basic idea is that LDP dominance over Japanese politics has led to a monopolization of resources including media access and coverage by limiting this access to the political opposition which in this case would be the Democratic Party of Japan(DPJ). The importance of DPJ as a single actor stands in the fact that the existence of two competing parties would generally lead to a polarization of views, in this context if there is to be favouritism it might manifest under these conditions. Since the central idea of this research is to determine the existence of newspaper bias toward LDP, coverage analysis of the two major Japanese newspapers Asahi Shimbun and Yomiuri Shimbun will be performed for the following time frame:

1. Before the election: 2008
2. During the election year: 2009
3. After the election: 2010

In total 4,525 articles have been gathered from the Asahi and Yomiuri respective databases<sup>12</sup> covering both LDP and DPJ in accordance with the above mentioned time-frame. As previously mentioned media bias regroups different

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<sup>12</sup> The articles subject to this analysis have been sourced from Asahi Shimbun database: Kikuzo Visual II and from Yomiuri database: Yomidas. The introduced keywords were “LDP” for LDP related articles and “DPJ”/”Minshuto” for DPJ related articles. All the rights relative to the articles’ content belong to their respective publishers.

forms(coverage bias, tonality bias and gatekeeping bias). Previous researches on media bias either focus on one bias, or two or in rare cases the three of them. This research will focus primarily on the analysis of tonality bias since it is the main indicator of political partisanship, however few explanations will be given in regard to the limitations of the other two biases estimation. Considering that the agenda bias is more focused on policy and events coverage the analysis of this bias might be out of scope of this research, moreover this bias might prove difficult to correctly assess in the case of Japanese media because of the presence of the Press Clubs. If on one hand the very existence of these clubs might suggests a high degree of agenda bias<sup>13</sup> they in fact make it very difficult to examine the existence of different issues that could have been related in the news since they act as a news strainer by dampening the chances of accurately calculating the number of discarded issues versus the number of covered issues. On the other hand the agenda bias is problematic also in a sense that it has a bilateral effect, as literature suggests media can use the agenda bias to affect the policy direction of a campaign or a party as the same could be done by a political party to stop or promote the spread of a particular issue or event. In consideration of these aspects the investigation of the agenda bias in Japanese newspapers will not be performed in this analysis. The coverage bias is also difficult to correctly assess due to data limitations; in order to correctly determine the coverage bias

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<sup>13</sup> The agenda bias presuppose that media would select to cover some issues over others, in this case due to the presence of Press Clubs the content portrayed by Japanese press is apparently highly uniform due to the similar process of information sourcing by the reporters.

the total number of coverage by party should be subtracted to the total amount of articles dedicated to the political coverage by the selected news outlets(Fortuny and colleagues 2012). The unavailability of such numbers makes it therefore difficult to determine this bias. The tonality bias will be analyzed by performing content analysis for newspaper text, known as text mining, through the use of computational linguistics<sup>14</sup> for speech analysis and more precisely in this case for sentiment analysis. Content analysis refers to the series of methods used to analyze and transform textual or image data into quantifiable results. With the technological development and the increasing availability of informations and databases, content analysis became increasingly automated while remaining a central methodology in tackling and analyzing trends in different sectors. The tonality bias is in nature more complicated to analyze because of the interpretation of positive and negative stances, nevertheless it remains the critical part of this analysis since it allows to detect a possible partisanship attitude from the examined newspapers. In order to quantify how positive LDP is portrayed in comparison to DPJ, the tonality bias will be assessed through the use of computerized sentiment analysis. Sentiment analysis is a methodology that aims at uncovering the amount of positive and negative words used in a text and provide a final sentiment score. The final sentiment score can be either positive or negative based on the wording choice used in the analyzed

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<sup>14</sup> Computational linguistics is interlinked to the branch of Natural Language Processing(NLP) and refers to the method of language processing using computational techniques. Language processing includes understanding, producing or analyzing spoken or written language.

text. Naturally if the score is positive it would suggest a positive portrayal while if it is negative it would imply a negative portrayal. Sentiment analysis can be either performed directly by the researcher or by using a computerized approach. If it is conducted directly by the researcher, this one has to manually code for every sentence or word that is considered positive or negative according to his view. The automated way relies on a dictionary-based approach, basically the researcher is using pre-formed dictionaries inclusive of a bag of positive and negative words that will be matched with the analyzed text in order to obtain a sentiment score. It would be fair to recognize that computerized sentiment analysis is a relatively recent methodology as it is still under exploration and development. Ample literature has however used this method in order to analyze a variety of topics, from politics to marketing to finance. More importantly this method allows to analyze considerable amount of data as it is the case in this research. Fortuny et al.(2012) have also highlighted the importance of automated analysis in increasing the objectivity of the analyzed texts, they state : “*Using an automated technique strengthens the objectivity of the analysis: personal bias and opinion in scoring is reduced substantially due to the absence of manual human intervention.*”. In their research Fortuny et al.(2012) have used sentiment analysis to inquire on how Belgian political parties have been portrayed by the medias in the Belgian government formation of 2011. With the use of sentiment analysis they estimated the mediatic bias toward each party, consequently showing that sentiment analysis not only proved to be a great tool to examine

mediatic bias but also the reliability of such method in the face of the enormous sample size that they analyzed(68,000 articles). Since the topic of their research is closely related to this research, their research has greatly inspired the use sentiment analysis in investigating mediatic bias for the Japanese case. Moreover the examination of news content using sentiment analysis has been conducted by several researchers in a wide range of topics. Taj, Shaikh and Meghji(2019) used lexicon-based sentiment analysis to detect sentiment polarity in BBC news articles. Sentiment analysis has been considerably employed in analyzing voters behaviour in social media(especially Twitter). Due to the increasing penetration of politics in the New Media, many have seen in the social platforms an opportunity to analyze voters opinions and political affiliation through sentiment analysis methods. In fact Salunkhe and Deshmukh(2017) have successfully grasped the outcome of the 2016 US presidential election through the use of sentiment analysis on twitter API<sup>15</sup>. While Saphiro, Sudhof and Wilson(2018) developed in their research a new lexicon tailored for sentiment analysis in financial and economic news articles. Due to the high influence of sentiment on markets, many researchers have in fact conducted researches on financial news sentiment polarity. Khedr, Salama and Yaseen(2017) used sentiment analysis of financials news to predict the movement of stock prices thus taking a step further into sentiment analysis techniques. It has to be precised that there are several

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<sup>15</sup> Twitter API or Programming Application Interfaces, is an interface provided by Twitter allowing users, companies, researchers to access Twitter database and gather the data that users have shared so far on the social platform.

lexicon and dictionaries available for sentiment analysis, the selection of the most appropriate tool is at the researcher discretion and usually dependent on the type of content analyzed.

### 3.1. SentimentR

In this inquiry the sentiment analysis<sup>16</sup> will be performed through the SentimentR package developed by Tyler Rinker(2015). The choice of this sentiment package is principally due to linguistic reasons, unlike others, the incorporation of valence shifters<sup>17</sup> in its dictionaries is a game-changer for the accuracy of the sentiment analysis. The *SentimentR* package is based on a total of 11,709 words and 140 valence shifters(Naldi 2019) and it has been used in a diversity of research contexts. After performing a text cleaning<sup>18</sup> and tokenization<sup>19</sup> of the articles, the sentiment analysis is supposed to produce a count of positive words and negative words per article. The final sentiment score

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<sup>16</sup> The sentiment analysis can be performed through different analysis software, in the present case it will be performed using dictionary-based SentimentR which is a package developed for the data-analysis software R(x64).

<sup>17</sup> Valence shifters are of considerable importance for textual sentiment analysis. Among valence shifter we can individuate amplifiers for example tend to intensify the emotions e.g. “really”, “strongly”, “barely” etc... Negative-positive words or sentences are also influential in the sentimental analysis e.g. “not able”, “better not” etc... taking in consideration these kind of speech peculiarities increases considerably the reliability of the results thus the choice of using the SentimentR package for this sentiment analysis.

<sup>18</sup> Text cleaning refers to the pre-processing part of the analysis. In order to obtain a fairly “clean” text, some modifications have to be conducted on the corpus of the text. These modifications include removal of numbers, punctuation, stopwords, white spaces and single letters. Following these steps the text is sizely uniformized through the *tolower* function.

<sup>19</sup> Tokenization refers to the process of singling out every words in a text in order to consider it as a unique value. This procedure is automatically performed by SentimentR, however in normal circumstances it has to be conducted by the user.

is obtained through an algorithm equation that attributes a sentiment score based on the incorporated dictionaries as well as the valence shifters. To better grasp how this package works, first I will start by disaggregating a random article into its positive and negative sentences by highlighting and scoring each sentence through the highlight function. Second I will provide a table score based on random article titles to discern how the scoring is finalized. Finally I will extract the most polarizing words of each title to give a further insight into how the dictionary-based scoring works. The article in figure 4 has been published by Yomiuri on 2009.05.22 under the title: “*LDP set for party ban on 'inheriting' seats*”, the article relates to LDP internal nepotism among the elected Diet representatives of the party. By using the highlighting function of *SentimentR*, it is possible to fathom how the package scores any given article at sentence level. Positive sentences are highlighted in green while negative sentences are highlighted in pink.

Figure 4. Sentence level sentiment scores based on SentimentR

1: <b>-0.177</b>	LDP set for party ban on 'inheriting' seats
2: <b>.000</b>	
3: <b>-0.204</b>	A Liberal Democratic Party task force met Thursday morning to consider intraparty restrictions on relatives of party lawmakers seeking to take over a Diet seat when it is vacated.
4: <b>-0.050</b>	The task force, headed by Tsutomu Takebe, is planning to prevent LDP members standing for a seat straight after it is vacated by a relative.
5: <b>+0.260</b>	If the policy is approved, the second son of former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, Shinjiro, and the eldest son of former Justice Minister Hideo Usui, Shoichi, nominated as candidates for the Kanagawa Constituency No. 11 and Chiba Constituency No. 1, respectively, would be barred from gaining an official party endorsement.
6: <b>-0.142</b>	Despite some dissent in the party, the task force plans to include this policy in a report to be submitted to Prime Minister Taro Aso later this month.
7: <b>+0.029</b>	"We have concluded it's necessary to impose restrictions on hereditary candidates," Takebe said.
8: <b>+0.491</b>	Yoshihide Suga, deputy chairman of the LDP's Election Strategy Council and who is close to Aso, argued strongly that it is necessary to bar "hereditary" candidates to improve the party's constitution. Though some have cautioned against the policy, the concept has been approved by most of the party's young and mid-ranking lawmakers.
9: <b>-0.025</b>	The Democratic Party of Japan has already decided to impose an internal ban on all relatives within three degrees of a lawmaker, including children and spouses, standing as a candidate for the seat being vacated.
10: <b>.000</b>	

The scores resulting from the `highlight()` function reflects the operating of the package, as shown in the image it first appears that this article contains more negative sentences(pink) than positive ones(green). It would be important to recognize that although the article chronicles how LDP is fighting this practice within its party, which could be seen as a positive attitude, the fact that the article enjoys a positive score (0.39969504) is related to the wording choice of the article's author and not the initiative itself. At first glance it would seem that there are more pink highlights than green ones however the scores at sentence level are higher for the positive sentences than the negative ones. This is to say that despite a higher number of "negative" sentences the final sentiment score is rather positive due to the wording choice of the author, thus it can be concluded that this is article positively portrays LDP's initiative to fight nepotism within the party. As seen the highlight function clearly underlines how the package discerns positive and negative sentences and followingly attributes its score-per-sentence. A further step in explaining *SentimentR* will consist in understanding how the polarity score is attributed to a given article, by looking precisely at the polarizing words used by the authors of the articles. In order to provide an idea of how this polarity score is obtained five random article titles, from Yomiuri newspaper, were singularly analyzed at sentence level using the `sentiment()` function of *SentimentR* and presented in figure 5.

**Figure 5. Sentiment scores of selected article titles based on SentimentR**

Title	Score
LDP plans major revision of Sports Promotion Law	0.34016803
Parties fear crash could sink Cabinet approval rate	-0.28347335
Aso Cabinet disapproval jumps to 72% /Rate worst for a cabinet in 8 years	-0.35355339
New DPJ leadership, polls a worry for LDP	0.02041241
Shady money-politics ties not going unnoticed by voters	-0.15118579

As shown in the table, the writer's choice of adjective in the title plays an important role in attributing a polarity score<sup>20</sup>. In this research the word categorization is mainly conducted under the *positive/negative* division. Further inquiry could be conducted on the negative category such as anger, sadness or fear; however here the main focus is on the simple division of positive and negative scores in accordance with the definition of the tonality bias. Through the extraction function(`extract_sentiment_by()`)<sup>21</sup> it is possible to classify the polarizing words based on their positive or negative categorization. In figure 6

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<sup>20</sup> The resulting score from the final *SentimentR* analysis can be referred to as either polarity score or sentiment score. For this reason I use this two terms in an interchangeable way.

<sup>21</sup> The *sentimentR* package is comprehensive of different analysis tools, here we principally focus on highlight, sentiment analysis and sentiment extraction. Other functions allow to grade profanity, emotions, emojis and grading in any given text.

it is possible to understand how *SentimentR* discerns the positive from the negative words.

**Figure 6. Polarizing words of selected article titles based on SentimentR**

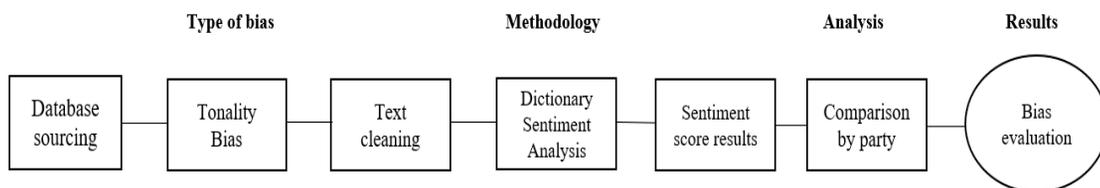
Title	Negative	Positive
LDP plans major revision of Sports Promotion Law		<i>major,promotion</i>
Parties fear crash could sink Cabinet approval rate	<i>fear,crash,sink</i>	<i>approval</i>
Aso Cabinet disapproval jumps to 72% /Rate worst for a cabinet in 8 years	<i>disapproval,worst</i>	
New DPJ leadership, polls a worry for LDP	<i>worry</i>	<i>new</i>
Shady money-politics ties not going unnoticed by voters	<i>shady,unnoticed</i>	<i>money</i>

The extraction results of Figure 6, show how wording balance is performed by the package. The table exhibits the most polarizing words by sentence, adjective valence differs along the positive-negative range but overall the score range is between -1 and 1. In the first title the sentiment score averages 0.34 which is a fairly positive score. Through the sentiment extraction we can see that the word *major* and *promotion* are the positive polarizing words, the first title seems to contain only positive polarizing words. Looking at the second title we can perceive a negative score of -0.28 which is justified by the use of negatively polarizing words such as *fear,crash and sink* and one positive word *approval*. The third title presents a quite negative score of -0.35 based on the polarizing

words *disapproval* and *worst*; in comparison with the second title it can be observed that the presence of a positive word in the sentence weights up the final sentiment score. It should be mentioned that in terms of the sentiment score ascription the dictionaries used to detect the polarizing words attribute different scores to each word, that is to say that two negative words have two different negative scores. For example if a title or sentence uses the adjective *bad* while another one employs the adjective *worst*(as it is the case for the third title), chances are that the second sentence might exhibit a more negative score than the first one due to a difference in negative polarization. The fourth title has a sentiment score of 0.020 which is a fairly low positive score, notice that in this title SentimentR recognize only two opposing polarizing words *worry* and *new*. The positive word seems to have a higher valence than the negative one however since the difference in polarization is not so strong the resulting sentiment score is not so high either. Finally in the fifth title we have a negative sentiment score of -0.15 comprehensive of two negative words *shady*, *unnoticed* and one positive word *money*. It is interesting to note that the package considers the word *money* as positive word rather an neutral one. This title analysis provided a deeper insight in how the package recognizes the polarizing words in a text and attributes them a sentiment score. Lachanski and Pav(2017) used this package to evaluate how financial tweets affect stock markets. Dekalchuk, Khokhlova and Skougarevski(2016) relied on *SentimentR* to investigate sentiment polarization among members of the European parliament in regard to their

stances on EU-Russia relations. Always in relation to politics, Sanders(2018) used the package to assess polarity sentiment toward the different campaigns(in favor or against) of the Brexit. Although automated sentiment analysis is a prominent methodology with rich-based applications it also presents some limitations. The principal limitation is clearly in relation with the “automated” part. As a general assumption the words “automation” and “sentiment” have always been considered as antithetical. The current technological progress does try to reconcile these two terms nevertheless the field of natural language processing is still in development. The singularity of human expressions and language peculiarities represent a real challenges for the improvement of sentiment analysis. The dictionary-based analysis does not account for metaphorical expressions or satirical ones which are particularities of human language therefore they can hardly be detected or considered by an automated analysis. In the context of political news content, the amount of satirical or metaphoric content is not as abundant as to nullify or considerably distort the automated analysis results, especially in the case of Japan. In light of these limitations, the choice of *SentimentR* was further supported by its consideration of some language idiosyncrasies. The gradual methodological process of this research is described by the following figure.

**Figure 7. Methodological process of the research**



## **Chapter V. Analysis**

As mentioned in the methodological part, for the analysis of the tonality bias 4,525 newspaper articles were gathered and analyzed through *SentimentR* to determine the degree of polarity in LDP and DPJ portrayal by the selected newspaper outlets. The analysis will proceed by party and by year, first an in depth inquiry into LDP's portrayal will be conducted for each year. Since the selected time-frame is composed of three consecutive years, the evolution of LDP's portrayal will be monitored by further decomposing each year into three quarters. The mean score of each quarter will be contrasted in accordance to the analyzed year. The examination of the mean scores will be accompanied by an inquiry of the socio-political events that might have led to the resulting sentiment scores. The analysis of LDP polarity scores will be followed by that of DPJ, using a similar approach DPJ mean scores will be interpreted in light of the events that might have led to its respective results.

A focused analysis of the election period will be conducted in attempt to better understand media stances on each party around that crucial period. The results of the selected period are central in determining a possible polarization of the medias in portraying the competing parties. Finally a cross-sectional table of the overall results of both parties will be compiled with a subsequent interpretation of the results. The final part aims at drawing a bigger picture of the sentiment scores of the parties therefore the final table will composed of the overall mean sentiment score of each party in by year. To summarize, in this analysis part the articles' score will be analyzed from a specific perspective to a general one. Before proceeding with the analysis an inspection of the articles distribution would be necessary to provide a better understanding of how the 4,525 articles are dispersed among the parties.

**Table 1. Number of articles per party for each year**

<b>Party/Year</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
<b>LDP</b>	<b>662</b>	<b>752</b>	<b>444</b>
<b>DPJ</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>924</b>	<b>1027</b>

**Source:** Each number is the aggregated total of articles published in Yomiuri and Asahi covering each party according to each year. The keywords “LDP” and “Minshuto/DPJ” have been used as research tools.

In Table 1 it is possible to visualize how the articles are dispatched among the parties. Several points can be raised in regard to the table numbers. At first glance one can notice how in terms of coverage DPJ has outnumbered LDP in all the three years. Surprisingly in 2008 when LDP was in power its coverage was lower than that of DPJ with 662 articles against 716. It has to be specified that these numbers are cumulative articles from both Asahi and Yomiuri shimbun, therefore further explanation should be provided in regard to the coverage proportion of each newspaper outlet. According to the sources database in 2008 Asahi dedicated 213 articles to LDP while Yomiuri dedicated 449 articles to the party, thus it appears that Yomiuri devoted a larger coverage to LDP than Asahi. In regard to DPJ, always in 2008 the party as made the headlines 332 times in Asahi and 384 times in Yomiuri thus enjoying a nearly equal coverage by both outlets. In 2009 DPJ again outnumbered LDP in terms of coverage with a total of 924 articles against 752 articles. The analysis of 2009 will be central in this research since it is not only the election year but also the year of defeat and dethronement of LDP from power. Always according to the sources database, on one hand LDP has seen its name mentioned 318 times by Asahi shimbun and 434 times by Yomiuri, once again Yomiuri attributed a larger coverage to LDP than Asahi. DPJ on the other hand has been covered 246 times by Asahi while Yomiuri dedicated 678 articles to the party. It seems that the coverage gap between Asahi and Yomiuri during the election year is quite important for both parties. Those numbers could be explained by the fact that Yomiuri extensively narrated the election and power transition than the Asahi

shimbun. Although it seems that LDP coverage was higher than that of DPJ in Asahi, overall the number of articles for both parties is lower than those of Yomiuri. Finally in 2010 with DPJ in power, the party has enjoyed a further substantial media coverage than the opposing party LDP with a total of 1027 articles against 444 for LDP. It seems that LDP has made the headlines only 187 times in Asahi articles and 257 times in Yomiuri, while DPJ was portrayed 410 times by Asahi shimbun and 617 times by Yomiuri. It seems that the coverage gap between the parties became even wider with DPJ in power. By considering the overall political developments of these years it is actually no wonder that DPJ enjoyed a bigger coverage proportion, DPJ is considered as the first single party to defeat LDP, moreover the party enjoyed a wide popularity among Japanese voters seeking for a concrete political change. In media language DPJ seems to have created a political “buzz” that has been consequently translated in the wider coverage that the party enjoyed. Overall Yomiuri shimbun seems to have allotted a considerable amount of media coverage to the political developments that occurred since the rise of DPJ. It has to be precised that DPJ rise in terms of popularity is clearly reflected by the overall mediatic coverage that the party retained, although the number of analyzed outlets here is limited to two newspapers it would be safe to assume that other minor news companies might have followed a similar pattern of coverage. By looking at a more extended timeframe it has to be pointed out that DPJ coverage has started to be substantial only starting 2007, at the time LDP enjoyed a higher coverage but the gap was not as important as in previous year. In regard to this coverage surge, it

would be safe to assume that both parties have been captivating all the public attention, as a matter of fact in terms of monopoly LDP and DPJ indeed have dominated all the newspapers coverage<sup>22</sup> leaving small to no coverage to minor parties. The coverage proportion of other parties is in fact so minimal in comparison to LDP and DPJ which in a way reflects how Japanese media focused heavily on the ruling party and its rising competitor. As a ruling party LDP did in fact enjoy a political and media monopoly over the opposition parties. Considering that the party has been ruling for so long, uncovering the existence of a media bias will be crucial in concluding whether the medias in Japan are simply extensively covering the party heading the government or they in fact are biased toward LDP. When looking at how DPJ outnumbered LDP in terms of popularity and article coverage one can infer that media coverage might indicate a non-biased stance however this is hardly indicative of any bias since it does not reflect whether this coverage is positive or negative. The rationale behind this bias analysis is that the amount of coverage of an item might not reflect the tonality of such coverage. For example if item A enjoys a hundred more coverage than item B it does not indicate if the former is portrayed more positively or negatively compared to the latter. This kind of situation often arise when medias are treating or comparing two policies, politicians or parties. A policy for example can enjoy a wide media broadcasting in a negative slanted manner, the same can be inferred in regard to a political party or a politician. Through the analysis

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<sup>22</sup> I would like to specify that coverage monopoly here does not refer to the coverage bias which is represented and calculated in a different way. Coverage monopoly simply refers to the amount of articles posted by the two selected newspapers on the different parties.

of the tonality bias medias slant toward LDP will be more easily spotted. One last point has to be clarified in relation to numbers of article and the mean scores, since the number of articles per year or per quarter is considerable, the mean scores resulting from the articles analysis might not be very high, considering that there are on average more than 1,000 articles per year, the overall mean score is not expected to reach a considerable heights(e.g. 0,80 to 1). Naturally this point does not deduce that mean polarity scores are affected by the number of articles, it only suggests that the scores are unlikely to be extremely high or low(close to -1 or +1).

### **1. LDP polarity scores**

As explained in the initial part of this chapter, the analysis will be first decomposed into a party per year frame, starting with LDP at the forefront of the Japanese government in 2008. After categorizing and organizing the newspaper articles by quarter, the resulting scores will be interpreted according to the socio-political developments that might have led to such outcomes. Providing an explanation of the results is capital for ensuring the legitimacy and appropriateness of SenitmentR scores. The results of the sentiment analysis for the opening year 2008 are displayed on the following table.

**Table 2. LDP quarterly mean of sentiment scores for 2008**

<b>Party</b>	<b>1Q</b>	<b>2Q</b>	<b>3Q</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>LDP</b>	0,2172	0,3288	0,3530	0,3056

Each score represents the result of the mean of all the scores of the newspaper articles released during each quarter of 2008 for the party LDP. The total here refers to the mean score of all the articles of 2008 not the mean score of the quarterly means.

In Table 2 the outcoming scores for LDP portrayal are mostly positive. With a total average of 0,3056 LDP seems to have benefited from a positive coverage through the year with a score increase after each end of quarter. During the first quarter of 2008, the party scored the lowest with a result of 0,2172. Politically 2008 started with LDP and Komeito as the ruling majority in the Diet's Lower House however DPJ was holding the majority in the Upper House. At the time LDP was led by prime minister Yasuo Fukuda. Around the start of the year many political issues and divide over tax policies have involved both LDP and opposing party DPJ in a heated political debate. LDP proposal of a serie of tax increases has not only declined the party's support but has also led to a stalemate in the decision-making process within the Diet. LDP domestic policy was oriented toward an increase in consumption tax, gasoline tax and a drop of health-care fee cut. The main gridlock was in regard to the gas tax, although prime minister Fukuda explained that the tax rise was to support the government social spending and provide more funds for

infrastructure constructions, the strong opposition of DPJ in passing this bill has led to a bitter public debates on the necessity of such tax increase. The faltering of LDP's voter base was first signaled when the party lost in the local election race in Yamaguchi prefecture. LDP's victory in this prefecture would have given the party a greater advantage in advancing its policy program however the defeat to the opposing party DPJ has proven how LDP's public support was wavering. According to the sentiment score evolution, during the second quarter of the year the ruling party has seen a steady increase in its positive score. With a serie of successful bill passing LDP and DPJ have both found a way to overcome their policy divide by cooperating in both Diet houses, the passing bills however has translated a slender increase in public support for LDP. By reshuffling his Cabinet, Fukuda has showed his commitment to regain public approval rate. The party has made public statements on how the importance of further stimulating the already stagnating Japanese economy was central in its future policy decisions. The surge in positive portrayal might be caused by the initiative of an LDP group to internally reform LDP by ending the prevailing nepotism among the party's elected diet candidates. Inheriting offices within the party has been a long inside tradition, however this new reformistic perception has shown how the Liberal Democratic Party was in a track for internal transformations. The second quarter ended in a bad note for prime minister Fukuda who decided to resign in order to give the new appointed cabinet better chances to implement the policy goals of the party. Fukuda's resignation has given the start to an LDP internal race for the

appointment of the new party leader and consequent prime minister of Japan. After a fierce race for leadership, Taro Aso has won the party election, marking the beginning of the last quarter with a new prime minister. Aso started his new term by presenting a new economic plan to address Japan's fiscal crisis inclusive of a considerable tax-cut. A dissolution of the Diet's Lower House has been in talk while Yasuo Fukuda was still prime minister, with the election of Aso the dissolution and consequent election has been postponed to the following year. This decision came not only from the urgency of dealing with the financial crisis that was sweeping the global markets but also from the Japanese voters as they did not see any imminent reason to dissolve the Lower House. The year 2008 ended with a divided Diet between LDP and DPJ, as each party was holding the majority in a different House of the Diet the legislative process was constantly disrupted by the two parties disagreement. In killing each other's bills LDP and DPJ both contributed to a continuous stalemate in the legislative process. In light of the sentiment score evolution it would be safe to assume that LDP's reforms and leadership substitution have been positively welcomed by Japanese medias. Although the country was undergoing a heavy economic pressure from the global financial crisis, maintaining LDP leadership has been portrayed as a temporary necessity to manage the country's faltering economy. With a total average of 0.35 LDP score in 2008 seems moderate if we consider that the score range for each word is between -1 and +1, the accumulated average is mostly positive. Looking at 2009 as a pivotal year in Japanese politics, the aggregated polarity scores will

be analyzed in light of two major events, the Diet Lower House general election and the transfer of power to the hands of DPJ. The main focus of this initial analysis gravitates around LDP thus the score results here will be important in highlighting media's portrayal of LDP before and after the election in other words before and after LDP's detronment from the government. Table 3 highlights the resulting averages from SentimentR polarity scores.

**Table 3. LDP quarterly mean of sentiment scores for 2009**

<b>Party</b>	<b>1Q</b>	<b>2Q</b>	<b>3Q</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>LDP</b>	0,1241	0,3226	0,3293	0,2778

Each score is the result of the mean of all the scores for newspaper articles released during each quarter of 2009 for the party LDP. The total here refers to the mean score of all the articles of 2009 not the mean score of the quarterly means.

As can be inferred from the table results, 2009 provides interesting results in terms of polarity scores. In the first quarter LDP scores poorly with an average of only 0,1241, although the polarity outcomes are positive, so far this has been the lowest score for LDP's portrayal. The reason for such low outcome can be understood by looking at the events surrounding this first quarter of 2009. As previously mentioned, the end of 2008 was marked by a change in leadership within the party with Taro Aso as the new head of LDP and the Japanese government. Moreover the economic situation of Japan was becoming tumultuous due to the financial

crisis that the country was undergoing, this has been reflected in the many fiscal policies that the party has been advancing to rebalance the economy. In 2009, LDP started with a spiral of unpopularity for its cabinet members, according to a series of polls conducted by Yomiuri newspaper, the popularity of prime minister Aso was continuously decreasing. Many events have led to the unpopularity of LDP's leader, as Japan was undergoing a time of economic crisis the tightening fiscal regime has created a strong sense of discontent among Japanese voters. Hoping to redress his lowering popularity, the incumbent prime minister pursued a policy of cash-handout to encourage private spending and money's injection in the domestic market. The huge amount allocated to the cause was not sufficient to impress neither consumers nor voters, as the results of this policy were not tangible for Japan's economic situation. Aso has seen his ratings fall as some of his cabinet members handed their resignation; putting the cabinet in a difficult position to correctly pursue and implement its policies. The situation became even worse when some LDP members turned out to be involved in financial scandals surrounding suspicious donations made to these members. In the midst of these events, Aso's support started to falter within his own party, as it appears many LDP members were against the fiscal budget presented by the prime minister. Pressure on Aso's resignation started to form inside the party, as party members began to be unhappy about how the cabinet was handling the national recession. LDP seems to have started off on a wrong note during the first quarter of 2009, media's seems to have portrayed in a very critical way Aso and his cabinet

decisions. In the second quarter however the party is portrayed in a more positive light than in the first quarter, the gap is substantial when we consider that the sentiment score went from 0,12 to 0,32. The second quarter started with more cabinet resignation, this time with the deputy chief of cabinet Yoshitada Konoike. Although another resignation was to be filled in Aso cabinet, his popularity did not further decline rather it stagnated around 27-29% (according to the polls). Around this quarter it became clear that the Lower House elections will be held around the end of August, thus political debate over economic policies became the main focus of many politicians. Meanwhile a group of LDP politicians brought another attempt to fight inheritance of Diet seats to reduce the number of LDP candidates running in the constitution in which a family member used to run. The news during this quarter mostly broadcasted LDP's candidates planning to run for the Lower House election. Even though most news relayed how the public opinion was favourable toward a victory of DPJ, LDP's struggle was also mentioned as many of its candidates were having a hard time attracting the full support of their constituencies. Continuously pushing for Aso's resignation as head of the party a group of politicians attempted a coup to remove Aso from his office however the attempt failed. LDP internal quarrels were reflecting a divided image of the party, media however did not seem to portray these divisions as negative per se. Aso popularity was faltering and in a way LDP's internal strife was justified. The most discussed policies were surrounding the tax consumption, measures to address the economic downturn as well as education. LDP remained opaque regarding its

future budget allocations and implementations however the party pledged a real support to free early education and to child-raising families. Except the parties electoral strategies and promises, most news were relating how DPJ was likely to win the Lower House election as its support was doubling that of LDP. The ruling party was loosing in both SMDs and in PRs. According to the gathered articles, for LDP the path to defeat was nearly certain. The party was de facto defeated the 30th August 2009 in the general elections. The last quarter of 2009 has seen the transfer of power to DPJ therefore from this quarter on LDP will be mostly portrayed as an opposition party by the media. LDP's polarity score remained surprisingly stable from the second to the third quarter with a similar score of 0,32. The last quarter of 2009 is important in a determining how LDP was portrayed after its defeat to DPJ; for now the focus is on the polarity scores of LDP however to have a more comprehensive understanding of this critical time the scores of both LDP and DPJ should be compared. For this purpose a comparative analysis of the two parties scores will be conducted later on. It seems that LDP was portrayed in a similar way from the second to the third quarter, despite going from ruling to opposition party, LDP has a similar score for both quarters. Right after LDP's defeat, the party members could not rest as they had to elect the new party leader that would replace Aso. Sadakazu Tanigaki former Minister of Finance, became the newly elected leader of LDP with the mission to renew the party's image and bring more freshness in reinventing its manifesto. LDP portrayal starts with the party as the fronting opposition party and ready to fully exercise its function of political

opposition within the Diet. Most news related to the changing approaches that DPJ was recurring to compared to LDP. After being elected, Tanigaki became the main spokesperson of the opposition. His parliamentary debates focused on questioning the new government decisions, however his interrogatory has not succeeded in destabilizing DPJ's government. Overall the sentiment scores for LDP in 2009 have seen a clear evolution from the first to the last quarter, in the beginning the party has been badly portrayed compared to the last two quarters. The most interesting outcome is in relation to the mean score that the party has for the two last quarters of 2009. In view of this similarity, it would be safe to assume that according to SentimentR polarity scores, Japanese media outlets have not penalized LDP image as an opposition party. In fact if the party is portrayed in a quasi-similar manner during the election and after its defeat, it could be concluded that medias held a similar vision of the party before and after its defeat. To assess the real extent to which medias have positively portrayed LDP during the election, it would be necessary to compare it with DPJ therefore for the moment no comments will be made on how positive is LDP portrayal by Japanese medias. Finally by looking at the final score of the year 2009, it is noticeable how the party has seen a modest decrease in its sentiment score in comparison to the previous year. Despite the fact that the party has seen its polarity score decrease from 0,30 to 0,27; it is hardly arguable that there has been a unfavorable portrayal by the media. Interestingly a closer look at the quarterly results from both years reveals that LDP overall remains on a score averaging 0,30 during its ruling period and

during its defeat period. The last year to be analyzed under the time-frame is 2010, during this year LDP is the main opposition party and most of its portrayal surrounds the party's ability to correctly fulfill its role of opposition party.

**Table 4. LDP quarterly mean of sentiment scores for 2010**

<b>Party</b>	<b>1Q</b>	<b>2Q</b>	<b>3Q</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>LDP</b>	0,2360	0,3075	0,1690	0,2463

Each score is the result of the mean of all the scores of the newspaper articles released during each quarter of 2010 for the party LDP. The total here refers to the mean score of all the articles of 2010 not the mean score of the quarterly means.

Looking at the developments of 2010, LDP had ups and downs as the new main opposition party and it clearly has been reflected in its sentiment scores. In the first quarter of 2010 LDP has a mean polarity score of 0,23; the party started the year with a confrontational position against DPJ who was suffering from a series of political scandals. Some of LDP heavyweights pointed out the necessity for prime minister Hatoyama to step down, many of the party elected representatives have, in fact, been waiting for the right occasion to slam DPJ. For Tanigaki and many of LDP politicians, the defeat of the party was only temporary thus their role as the main opposition was to lay the foundation of a new support for the party. In this sense the continuous interrogations of DPJ cabinet were to highlight LDP position toward a more transparent and efficient government. The witch

hunt against DPJ's heads only intensified as LDP politicians kept requesting a cross-examination of prime minister Hatoyama and leader Ozawa, whom were involved in scandals over funds and donations. In the midst of LDP's political chase, the party was hit again by threats of internal defection from former ministers. The internal strife was mainly due to the discontent of a group of politicians over the inability of Tanigaki to take advantage of DPJ's scandals to better enhance the party's popularity. In fact despite the fact that DPJ popularity at the time was going downward LDP's popularity did not see any substantial improvement in its public image. The perception of the party seemed to be stuck with its old-school approach toward politics. Some members of LDP did indeed defect from the party to form a new party: Your Party. This new party assembled many politicians who defected from LDP due to the party's inability to reinvent itself and present a tangible internal reform. To make things even more complicated some donors ceased their support to LDP, Keidanren<sup>23</sup> halted its political donations counseling as a new policy of the lobby group moreover another agricultural lobby announced its intention to stop all political donations to LDP. It appears that in face of the money scandals involving the government many lobby groups decided to retract their direct political involvement with some political parties. This news was seen as an opportunity for LDP to break

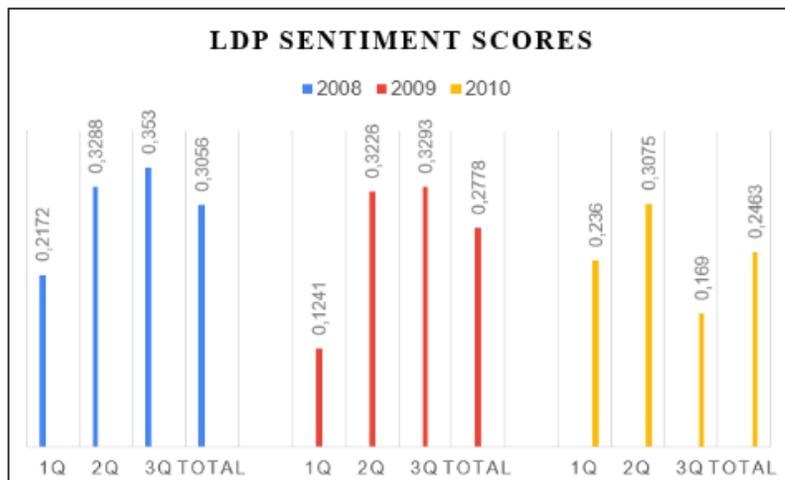
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<sup>23</sup> Keidanren refers to the Japanese Business Federation, it is a powerful organization regrouping the leading business companies in Japan. This federation political support and donations have been fundamental for LDP politicians. In terms of policy Keidanren has been always considered as the spokesperson of the big business policy suggestions to the Japanese government.

with its old political practices. To meet the public expectations LDP presented a new policy draft aiming at creating new jobs in fast-growing industries, ending thus the first quarter of 2010 on a positive note. Compared to the first quarter LDP enjoyed a more positive portrayal during the second quarter of 2010; reflected in the increase of its polarity score to 0,30. In a quest to improve its image, LDP has submitted a new constitutional draft to lower the voting age to eighteen years old instead of twenty, this move was aiming at encouraging younger voters' participation in the political life of Japan. This proposal was aiming to involve younger generations to vote in the upcoming electoral race for the House of Councilors. The election's main talking issues revolved around the consumption tax rate as well security regarding Japan's military policies. In regard to these issues LDP main emphasis was a slight increase in the consumption and an improvement in U.S.-Japan security alliance. The party's manifesto was positively portrayed by the medias, LDP's proposed policies were also inclusive of an enhancement of the agricultural sector, by reforming it Japanese farmers would acquire more competitiveness to. The elections resulted in the victory of LDP reaching the majority in the Upper House and obtain a quasi-informal veto over DPJ proposed bills. This comeback victory however seems to be caused by DPJ's faltering support among Japanese voters. For this second quarter LDP's victory seems to have received a better portrayal by the media. Finally in the last quarter of 2010 the party seems to have received an average depiction by the media. With a lowering score of 0,16; LDP has heavily

criticized prime minister Kan's diplomacy toward China over a ship accident between the two countries. This last scarce score is due to the considerable amount of news that cover both LDP and DPJ in single articles, criticizing the scandals of the ruling party and the legacy of the former ruling one. In fact, in this last quarter LDP opposition role has been seen a dubious considering that many of the systemic challenges encountered by DPJ are the result of LDP's political legacy. After obtaining the majority in the House of Councilors, LDP became even more hostile toward DPJ's policy, however the struggles of the ruling party have been portrayed as a result of LDP's institutionalized political system. The media however welcomed the efforts of the party to reform its politics especially in light of DPJ failure to address its internal animosities. According to the sentiment analysis of LDP's portrayal in Japanese medias, in 2010 the party has scored a total of 0,24; in comparison to the previous years it would be fair to conclude that LDP's polarity score has been steadily decreasing over the years. From 0,30 to 0,27 to 0,24 the party has indeed enjoyed a better portrayal while in power than as an opposition party. The evolution of LDP's sentiment scores by year is laid out in Figure 8.

**Figure 8. LDP sentiment scores evolution**



This figure displays all the means of the polarity scores obtained through the sentiment analysis. Quarterly scores as well as total scores are displayed for each analyzed year.

As can be deduced from the evolution of the sentiment scores, LDP portrayal by Japanese media has evolved in a downward manner. In 2008 the party has been portrayed quite positively with a total average score of 0,30 which remains the highest score during the whole analyzed period. Despite a leadership crisis the party has maintained an average of 0,33 for the last two quarters of 2008 which reflects a positive media portrayal when the party was in power. The following year has been more challenging for the party due to the Lower House election and defeat of the party, from a sentiment analysis perspective the party has seen a positive evolution in its portrayal by the medias. Even if the total average for the year 2009 was lower than 2008 it is noticeable how the party was positively

portrayed during the electoral period. The party enjoyed the most positive sentiment score (for the year 2009) during the last quarter of 2009 which was precisely when the party became the main opposition. As a final result the party scored a total average of 0,27 which represents a lower score compared to the previous year, it is to be highlighted that the party went from ruling party to main opposition party. Finally in the year 2010 the party has once again seen its sentiment score sink to 0,24 which is the lowest total polarity result for the party during the analyzed time-frame. It is to note that the party also scored poorly in its quarterly mean scores compared to the previous years, this suggests that overall the media slammed the party while being the main opposition. As previously explained the party was undergoing internal power shifts and a much needed reflection on its political manoeuvrings however the media portrayal was not as pleasant as when the party was in power. Highlighting the evolution of LDP sentiment scores is however not sufficient to understand the extent of media bias toward the party, therefore with these results in mind the next step of this analysis will be to evaluate the scores of DPJ in a similar approach used for LPD.

## **2. DPJ polarity scores**

To correctly assess media bias the results of DPJ polarity scores will not only provide a comparative benchmark but also provide an insight on how positively

LPD is portrayed compared to its main competitor DPJ. The polarity scores of this opposition-turned-ruling party will be central in assessing if DPJ political “buzz” was truly seen by the medias as an opportunity for political shift or was it just a response to the public growing support toward the party. In accordance with this research hypothesis, the expectations for the overall sentiment results are to be more negative for DPJ than for LDP especially in times of political defeat. More precisely if there is to be a tonality bias in media portrayal then DPJ would be portrayed more negatively than LDP in both 2009 and 2010. In the following sub-chapter I will refrain from comparing the results with LDP, a task that will be completed later after compiling a comparative table. As for LDP, a similar quarterly table will be compiled for DPJ as well. Starting from 2008, the quarterly polarity scores for DPJ are the shown in the table 5.

**Table 5. DPJ quarterly mean of sentiment scores for 2008**

<b>Party</b>	<b>1Q</b>	<b>2Q</b>	<b>3Q</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>DPJ</b>	0,07919	0,2287	0,1984	0,1546

Each score is the result of the mean of all the scores of the newspaper articles released during each quarter of 2008 for the party DPJ. The total here refers to the mean score of all the articles of 2008 not the mean score of the quarterly means.

As can be adjudged from the table sentiment results, DPJ has been skeptically depicted during the first quarter of 2008. DPJ was, at the time, the main opposition in the Diet, as previously mentioned the party was enjoying the majority in the Upper House while LDP was the ruling majority in the Lower House. DPJ's party leader at the time was Ichiro Ozawa<sup>24</sup>, he was also the election strategist for the party. As previously narrated, in this early phase of 2008 the Diet was undergoing a political gridlock between LDP and DPJ as the parties were sabotaging each others legislative proposals. Ozawa position against Fukuda has been portrayed as the cause of the political division and stalemate within the Diet. The inability of the opposition to compromise on LDP's bills has been heavily pointed out by the newspapers, moreover DPJ's boycott of the legislative procedure was not fully justified as the party failed to provide solutions or counter-proposals to LDP's fiscal proposals. DPJ's was aiming to cut or reduce taxes(gas tax and road tax) without presenting a clear on plan on how to fill the fiscal void that the tax cuts would create. Ozawa has seen his internal support falter in view of the unclear stance that he took in regard to the tax bills creating thus opposing sides within the party. Another reason for DPJ internal strife was in regard to the party's proposed draft on allowing foreign holders of Japanese permanent residency the right to vote. If the draft was to

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<sup>24</sup> Ichiro Ozawa is a well-known Japanese political figure. Initially he was part of LDP and a member of the Takeshita faction. After defecting from the Liberal Democratic Party, with other party colleagues, he formed the Japan Renewal Party and led the opposition coalition that led to LDP's first defeat in 1994. Since then Ozawa has always been seen as a symbol and a central figure of the Japanese opposition front. In 2003 he joined the Democratic Party of Japan(DPJ) and led once again to LDP defeat in the Upper House. He then became a heavyweight in DPJ and leader of the party in 2006.

successfully pass, the new proposed law would gravitate foreigner's vote toward the party, however many members of the opposition party remained skeptical in advancing the proposal. After successfully passing a few tax bills in the Lower House, the bills were supposed to be voted in the Upper House to obtain a final ratification however DPJ confrontational stance toward LDP's proposed bills had once again produced a blockade in the legislative process. DPJ, and more precisely Ozawa, was unable to come to an agreement with LDP over the nomination of the new head of the Bank of Japan thus the party leader decided to bar the approval of the government bills. The hawkish attitude of DPJ has been heavily criticized by the medias in the first quarter of 2008. The resulting sentiment score is in fact close to zero as the party scored 0,07; this suggests that among the analyzed articles an important proportion included negatively polarizing word resulting thus in a close to negative portrayal for the party. In the second quarter however the party managed to obtain a more positive score of 0,22. With its victory in the Yamaguchi constituency over LDP, the party has shown that it has been successfully gathering support from the voters. Following, DPJ has been able to cooperate with the ruling coalition of LDP and Komeito in passing a new space law and another one on a civil service reform. By passing another array of bills DPJ showed its willingness to cooperate with the ruling party LDP. According to the relevant articles this move was meant to persuade voters that an opposition party like DPJ can come to compromise when needed and that the party is therefore able to lead the Japanese government. The most

important event in this second quarter remained the censure motion submitted by DPJ against LDP's prime minister Yasuo Fukuda. In moving a censure motion DPJ was hoping to force Fukuda to dissolve its cabinet and in a second time the Lower House, which would lead to a general election. Fukuda however maintained a strong position and showed no intention to dissolve neither the lower house nor his cabinet, at the time his cabinet was scoring very low in public support polls. DPJ's move was in fact timed around the cabinet's low popularity as a justifiable censure motion. Another central event for the party was the leadership election during July 2008, it was forecasted that Ozawa would probably be appointed as the leader for another term. The leadership election has seen Ozawa and Noda(another DPJ heavyweight) as the main competing candidates, however Noda withdrew at the last minute which cleared the path to victory for Ozawa. The second quarter ended therefore with Ozawa appointment as the new leader of DPJ. In the third quarter DPJ scored 0,19 in terms of sentiment polarity, the score is lower than the second quarter but remains a considerably higher score than the first quarter. During this last quarter of 2008, Ozawa started by laying the ideal policies of DPJ in the Diet as a way to reassure voters and its party members that, as an opposition party, DPJ does have a clear policy that will answer the challenges posed by LDP and provide a solution to the fiscal and budgetary issues. In the results of a nationwide poll DPJ turned out to be backed up by 50% of the respondents which suggests that the party was on the right path to receive additional political support from the voters. In fact, the

party presented a package of economic stimulus regrouping all the economic policies that the party intended to implement if it was to be elected. In presenting this package, DPJ's leader Ozawa also mentioned another possible censure motion against prime minister Aso. The importance of presenting this economic package was also aimed at relieving Japanese voters from the psychological distress caused by the worldwide financial crisis. If LDP's solution to the financial crisis was "cash handouts" and more aggressive fiscalization, DPJ's solution was leaning toward the provision of additional government loans to small and medium enterprises as well as other tax cuts for health and education programs. Looking at the total sentiment score for 2008, it is deductible that the party has been portrayed in an average way by medias, in fact although the party's final score is overall better than the first quarter, it seems that the final result remains lower than the last two quarters.

Advancing to 2009, the centrality of this year has been pointed out during the analysis of LDP sentiment scores, now the analysis will be conducted from DPJ's perspective. 2009 has been pivotal for DPJ, the lower house election gave the party the occasion to finally materialize its longtime desire to run the government. As a party DPJ has proved that its ascension was legitimate in the eyes of the voters wishing to see a change in the political leadership. Although the voters have voiced their strong support toward the newly elected party, the same assertion cannot be made in regard to the media(as the results of 2008 show). The sentiment analysis will therefore provide us with media's "sentiment"

toward DPJ's victory. The polarity scores of DPJ for the year 2009 are displayed in the following table.

**Table 6. DPJ quarterly mean of sentiment scores for 2009**

<b>Party</b>	<b>1Q</b>	<b>2Q</b>	<b>3Q</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>DPJ</b>	0,1733	0,4012	0,3492	0,3432

Each score is the result of the mean of all the scores of the newspaper articles released during each quarter of 2009 for the party DPJ. The total here refers to the mean score of all the articles of 2009 not the mean score of the quarterly means.

Surprisingly the results from the sentiment analysis are quite positive, a positive evolution can be observed by looking at the quarterly mean results. With a sentiment score of only 0,17 for the first quarter of 2009, DPJ was off to a bad start. This year started with a congested Diet, the resistance of DPJ to LDP budgetary requests was stronger than ever. However the party's initial hostility quickly transformed into acquiescence, in fact DPJ changed tactic by planning to agree to all LDP's budgetary requests. The rationale behind this move was that the faster the budget would be approved the faster the lower house would be dissolved and general elections would be called. DPJ was also hoping that by accepting LDP's budget proposal it would provoke a strife between LDP members. The party successively released the list of the candidates for the cabinet posts if it was to win the election. DPJ also released a final version of its manifesto for the election; the

main proposed policies were: an increase in child support, more job creation in the agricultural and fisheries sector as well as a salary increase for the care workers. In the midst of the electoral push, DPJ's president Ozawa has been involved in a financial scandal over shady donations made to the leader. Although the party leader denied any wrongdoing the members of the party were skeptical in face of the alarming news. The fear that a possible scandal could tarnish the party's image right before the election was of main concern for DPJ's members. As it appeared Ozawa's aid was accused of money embezzlement for the profit of the party leader. The first signs of mistrust came from a poll that revealed that 53% of voters believed that Ozawa should resign from his position. Even after his aid was indicted Ozawa strongly declared that he had no intention of stepping down as DPJ's leader, his arguments quickly started a division within the party, as it appears many believed that he should resign in order not to hurt the party's public support. The first quarter ended with the party's victory in Nagoya election for a new major. By retracing the events that characterized this first quarter of 2009, it can be concluded that DPJ's low sentiment score is mainly due to Ozawa's funding scandal, overall the support for DPJ leader was increasingly faltering after the indictment of his aid. Moving to the second quarter it is apparent that so far the party obtained the highest sentiment score during this second quarter of 2009. In fact this polarity score is so far the highest not only for DPJ but also the highest among all the quarterly scores. A closer look at the event surrounding this quarter might reveal the reasons for such high score. In this second quarter of 2009 DPJ's

elected representatives decided to “clean” the party’s image by returning all the donations received from the scandal donor (related to Ozawa’s aid indictment). Few days later Ozawa announced his resignation in face of the growing disapproval rate by both voters and party members. Following Ozawa’s resignation the party had to elect a new president, this time the presidential race was disputed between the party’s vice president Katsuya Okada and the general secretary Yukio Hatoyama. The fiery election ended with the victory of Hatoyama as the new leader of DPJ. Although there was an apprehension over the ability of Hatoyama to bring the party together while giving Ozawa a strategic post within the party, the voters’ response to the newly appointed leader was rather positive. In fact, Hatoyama support was overwhelming not only as party leader but also as prospect prime minister. Polls revealed that voters favored Hatoyama over Aso as a future prime minister. The polls of Tokyo in particular were in favor of DPJ, mirroring a support for the party by urban voters. Voters seemed to be positively viewing DPJ’s manifesto who added free high school education among its future policies. Following Hatoyama’s appointment another Diet disagreement between DPJ and LDP started over the appointment of Japan’s Post chairman. The disagreement went further as DPJ members stated their opposition to the Cabinet defense deployment strategy in the Indian Ocean. As previously mentioned, around the middle of the second quarter Aso announced his dissolution of the Lower House and fixed the elections around the 30th August. DPJ blow to LDP’s supporters base was the announcement that the opposition will provide a reformed subsidy

program for the farmers in need. In light of these policy promises, media along with LDP remained doubtful of the ability of DPJ to deliver the promised programs especially since the Japanese economy was undergoing a period of recession. According to some newspaper articles, realistically many of the promised programs by DPJ were difficult to achieve; as it appears many economists were dubious over the possible realization of DPJ's policy manifesto. In an attempt to reassure voters on the party's pledge not to further raise taxes, DPJ had released a joint statement with its coalition partners the Social Democratic Party and the People's New Party stating that in case these parties win the election, they will not raise the consumption tax. If on one hand LDP's policy plan was described as lacking in terms of originality and mostly stuck in its old-fashioned fashion. On the other hand DPJ's policy overall has been characterized as implausible and misleading, the media remained very suspicious on the possible economic implementation of DPJ's promises. According to the score of this second quarter, this skepticism however did not negatively affect DPJ's image as a plausible replacement for LDP. The score of this second quarter of 2009 is important in highlighting how the parties were portrayed before and during the electoral race and how their manifesto were perceived. During the electoral race DPJ came out as the idealist party that will bring a concrete change to Japanese politics, the party's pledges have in fact been not only economic but also political, DPJ made it clear that it will not cede to bureaucratic plays and was consistent in reshaping the role of Japanese bureaucracy.

The opposition party has been innovative also in terms of nominations, DPJ strategic nominations were highlighted by Yomiuri newspaper in their “BATTLE FOR POWER” section. As the reported articles recount, DPJ has placed inexperienced but young and appealing candidates in the constituencies of Kanazawa, Fukuoka and Kyoto. Interestingly in both Kanazawa and Kyoto DPJ had ran women candidates with charismatic appeals against LDP’s heavyweight candidates, a strategy that seems to have paid off. The two competing parties have been battling in 122 single member districts, among these districts the urban areas have been central for both parties as they encompass a considerable number of floating voters. In proportional districts the candidates placements has been left to Ozawa referring to his roster as the “Ozawa list”, many of the selected candidates were women which reflected a progressivist characteristic of DPJ’s candidates. Prior to the final election results, many newspaper articles highlighted the high probability of DPJ’s victory due to the pre-polls results. Moving to the last quarter of 2009, DPJ obtained a sentiment score of 0,34 which is lower than the previous quarter however it remains a relatively “high” sentiment score. In this last quarter of 2009 the predicted government change has been concretized with the landslide victory of DPJ in the general elections, reaching thus the long-awaited majority in the Lower House of the Diet. In consequence of this victory Hatoyama became the Prime minister of Japan with the objective to meet the high expectations of voters from an economic, social and security perspective. DPJ’s first days as the governing party have been challenging for the party’s elected members in finding

concrete measure to implement their policy promises. The first difficulty for the new Prime minister was the selection of his cabinet members, in fact the selection has created some tensions within the party. Hatoyama intention was to create a mixed cabinet with both experienced DPJ politicians and members of the coalition partners, however the decision has received some opposition over the appointments of specific ministries to the partner parties. Once the cabinet members announced, the newly elected cabinet had to prove its intention to pursue an enhanced diplomacy in the security relations between the U.S. and Japan. After several assessments, the budget required to implement its manifesto policies turned out to be excessive in comparison to the government ability to source the necessary funds, which required DPJ to review most of its manifesto. The opposition party found itself in contrast with bureaucratic handling, moreover the party had also to deal with a series of appointments and reform over the government agencies. The changes that DPJ tried to bring into the overall management were met with few opposition in regard to the party procedures. DPJ therefore ended 2009 with a crushing victory and concrete steps to change the Japanese political environment. By retracing the resulting sentiment scores for the year 2009, it can be accentuated how the opposition-turned-ruling party has seen a steady increase in its positive portrayal across the different quarters. With an overall sentiment score of 0,34 for 2009 the party has clearly benefited from a better portrayal compared to the previous year. The quarterly results also emphasize how the party received a clear positive portrayal during the electoral race as well as after becoming the ruling

party. As DPJ fully became the ruling party in office for 2010, the sentiment score of this year will help shed a light on how the party's performance has been rated by the media. The polarity scores of 2010 for DPJ have been compiled in the following table.

**Table 7. DPJ quarterly mean of sentiment scores for 2010**

<b>Party</b>	<b>1Q</b>	<b>2Q</b>	<b>3Q</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>DPJ</b>	0,1464	0,2879	0,1763	0,2074

Each score is the result of the mean of all the scores of the newspaper articles released during each quarter of 2010 for the party DPJ. The total here refers to the mean score of all the articles of 2010 not the mean score of the quarterly means.

As a ruling party for the year 2010, DPJ started the year with comparative low score of 0,14 compared to the previous year. With a deeper recession hitting the Japanese economy, DPJ had to quickly resort to concrete financial plans to redress the country's economy and limit the damages of the global economic crisis. Right at the beginning of the quarter DPJ's prime minister Hatoyama has been involved in a money scandal over one of his political fund management, the fund scandal has also been associated with another land purchase made by Ozawa. LDP did not miss the chance to highlight the necessity to launch an investigation on the Prime minister which led to a decrease in his approval rate. Moreover the new cabinet

also failed to provide a clear cut budget strategy to finance the welfare programs promised during the electoral race, which again brought a very confrontational Diet debate between DPJ and the new face of the opposition LDP. Right before the proposal of the new budget, the finance minister has presented his resignation and has been replaced by Naoto Kan which was the deputy prime minister. Kan's role as the new finance minister has been depicted as a crucial post for deciding the economic future of the nation. His plan has received some criticism since it involved the release of a considerable amount of government bonds to receive the necessary funding to DPJ's welfare program, however this decision has been described by the media as a probable mistake, as it could trigger an even worst recession. In fact as the Japanese government was already undergoing a considerable fiscal deficit the release of further bonds would only worsen the deficit according to the news articles. A further drag on the money scandal was the confession of another aid of Ozawa on the opaque transfer of an enormous amount of funds not reported on the party's transactions reflecting thus the possibility of an illegitimate political donation. Ozawa previous land purchase has resurfaced again as a shady deal. Considering that Ozawa was the secretary general of DPJ, many members of the party as well as voters started requesting his resignation from the post. This money scandal was clearly reflecting bad on both the party and the cabinet's image, moreover DPJ relation with the bureaucrats was going sour in regard to the workings of the new budget proposal. According to a general survey it appears that seventy percent of the voters were requesting the resignation of

Ozawa as secretary of the new ruling party. To worsen the situation another money scandal had burst over the donations made to a Hokkaido lawmaker. As the money scandals kept surfacing, the voters disenchantment with the newly elected party kept growing as well, as the media surveys relayed the approval rate for the Cabinet and DPJ as whole were continuously decreasing. In light of the surveys results many party members started voicing their concern over the remaining of Ozawa as secretary general. With prime minister Hatoyama still supporting the position of Ozawa in the party, the stance of the prime minister has been depicted as controversial for the party's image. In light of the declining support for the cabinet as well as the surfacing of multiple money scandal, it is no wonder that the party scored an average score of 0,14 for this first quarter of 2010. DPJ has therefore started its mandate on a bad note reflected in its sentiment score, by the end of this first quarter Hatoyama's public support was faltering more than ever and Ozawa was still the secretary general of DPJ despite a clear preference for him to resign from his post as veteran of the party. Moving to the second quarter of 2010, DPJ has seen a positive boost in its mean sentiment result. Benefitting from a better portrayal, DPJ has scored 0,28 for this second quarter. Another issues raised during this second quarter: the relocation of the Futenma<sup>25</sup> base outside Okinawa, the controversy began as a confusion over Hatoyama claims during the elections.

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<sup>25</sup> The Marine Corps Air Station Futenma(MCAS) is an American military base located in Okinawa. The base has been subject to a lot of controversy since the islanders have been complaining about the military personnel behaviour as well as the ecological harm that the base represents for the ecosystem of the island. There have been talks about the relocation of the base outside the island however no concrete measures have been taken so far.

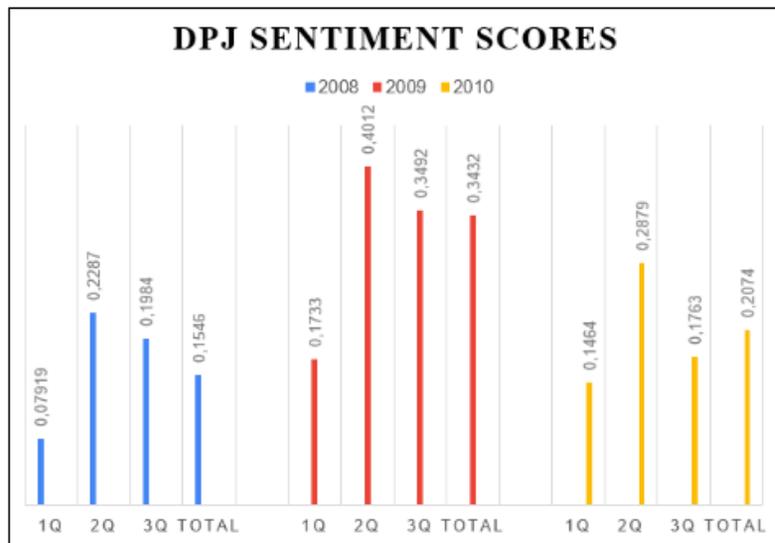
As it appears the prime minister had previously claimed that the base would be relocated outside of Okinawa once he gets elected, however the failure to keep its promise created tensions and frustration among the islanders. Media continued their critical stance on the economic policies while pointing out how the government should change track in regard to the economic path taken by DPJ's cabinet. The party showed the first signs of manifesto abandonment when it was forced to discard child allowance as a government subsidy. This manifesto change toward a more realistic budget implementation further plummeted the approval rates for DPJ's cabinet, the worrisome decrease in public support pushed the members of the party to request the dismissal of the Prime minister to allow a leadership renewal for the party. The pressure stemming from the Futenma base relocation as well as the earlier money scandal pushed Hatoyama to resign from his function of Prime minister, his resignation was later followed by Ozawa's resignation. During the summer of 2010 DPJ has therefore seen the resignation of both its Prime minister as well as its general secretary. Following was the election for a new head of the party, among the party's favorite was the finance minister Naoto Kan, whom has been elected as the new Prime minister. The new Prime minister had the urgent task to redress the Japanese economy and tranquilize the U.S.-Japan relations in regard to the relocation of the Futenma military base. The election of Kan as new head of DPJ had a positive effect on the public opinion, the approval rates slightly increased compared to the previous cabinet. In the same period, the new Prime minister had to announce the upcoming elections for the

Upper House of the Diet. This time the party was more careful in announcing its manifesto program for the House of Councilors election. Among the pledged amendments there was a reform of the postal services as well as the pension system; an increase in the employment and an improvement in the diplomatic policy. In attempt to stand on a more pragmatic economic policy, Kan has voiced his intention to raise the consumption tax as a much needed fiscal policy to provide more income for the state welfare programs. Despite an engaged campaign battle, DPJ lost its majority in the Upper House election to the opposing party LDP. The most pressing issues, according to Yomiuri articles, were designated as the “three K” or the *kichi*(base), the *keiki*(economy) and the *kenkin*(political donations). In fact as the political developments have shown these three Ks have been quite problematic for the party, if on one hand the economic recession was of primary importance, on the other hand the mishandlings of the previous cabinet gave rise to two other controversies: the shady political donations and the diplomatic question surrounding the relocation of the Futenma base. In the final period of second quarter DPJ presidential election race took place, to the surprise of many Ozawa presented himself for the presidency election against the Prime minister Kan, in spite of the ongoing controversy over his fund malpractice. In retrospective this second quarter of 2010 has seen a better portrayal compared to the first quarter thanks to the resignation of both Ozawa and Hatoyama, with the election of Kan the party has been able to review its manifesto and implement a more realistic fiscal policy. Nevertheless the sentiment score of this second quarter remains

averagely positive due to the loss of DPJ in the Upper House which reflected a lower public support for the party. Moving to the third quarter DPJ's polarity score has once again decreased to 0,17. At the end of the second quarter the party was undergoing a presidential election battle between Ozawa and Kan, the election round had created a division within the party as members were adopting strong polarizing sides. The presidential election has seen the victory of Naoto Kan as remaining the head of the party and the government. After reshuffling his cabinet, Kan new cabinet focused on stabilizing the diplomatic relations with both China and the U.S. A controversial issue over the dispute surrounding the collision between a Japanese and Chinese boat nearby the Senkaku Islands had brought down the public support for Kan and his new cabinet. The cabinet stance in regard to the collision has, in fact, been described as "submissive". The diplomatic handling of this delicate issue has been deplored by the opposition party LDP. The new face of the opposition did not miss the chance to adopt a censure motion against the transport minister and the chief secretary of Kan's cabinet. Nevertheless the real blow to the party was the mandatory indictment faced by Ozawa around that time, in fact as previously narrated Ozawa was facing an investigation over his dubious land purchase and money mismanagement by his personal fund. Since the news broke that the previous secretary general was soon to be indicted the party members were skeptical on how to deal with his ongoing membership within the party and as an elected representative in the Diet. DPJ ended the year with a plummeting public support as a consequence of how the

government handled domestic issues and diplomatic relations with its U.S. and neighboring China. The last quarter of 2010 has clearly seen a more critical stance of the media in the way they portrayed the ruling party. As a final sentiment result for this last year, DPJ recorded an overall polarity score of 0,20. Looking back at the evolution of DPJ's polarity score, it is apparent that the party recorded extreme sentiment scores during the analyzed time frame.

**Figure 9. DPJ sentiment scores evolution**



This figure displays all the means of the polarity scores obtained through the sentiment analysis. Quarterly scores as well as total scores are displayed for each analyzed year.

The above figure exhibits the evolution of DPJ's sentiment scores over the inquired time frame. The party was initially portrayed quite poorly, especially in the first quarter of 2008, the resulting sentiment score was the lowest among all the

resulting polarity scores. Since DPJ was an opposition party at the time it can be argued that the party was not seen in a positive light by media while being the opposition party. The overall sentiment scores for the first year were the lowest within the analyzed time frame. Nevertheless during the second year the party has seen an exponential increase in its positive portrayal, with an ever-high score of 0,40 the second quarter registered the best polarity score for the party so far. The total score for this second year was the highest recorded for DPJ. Since 2009 was a pivotal year for the Japanese politics the positive portrayal of DPJ is quite reflective of the general public sentiment toward the party at the time. As previously underlined, DPJ has been increasingly cumulating the public support over the years, although this support was not initially reflected by media during the pre-electoral season, the final victory of the party has clearly been portrayed in a beneficial way during the course of the election. Finally when the party finally grabbed the power its portrayal fell down again, not to the levels of 2008 but low enough to qualify it as a below average portrayal. The reasons for such mean scores were identified in the repetitive fund scandals that hit the party around the beginning of 2010. The consequent resignation of prime minister Hatoyama and party secretary Ozawa had clearly negatively impacted the party's image. Although a new cabinet was elected the public support toward the party was in constant decrease, media did not spare the party any criticism in relation to its economic policy plan to redress the country's economic recession. With a final score of 0,20 DPJ has seen a sharp decrease in its positive portrayal compared to

the previous year(2009) polarity score of 0,34 . By looking at the graph of figure 6, it is apparent how DPJ recorded an moderate score when the party was both a full opposition party and a ruling party. The only considerable positive portrayal was in election times when the party was bolstering an optimistic manifesto and promising a concrete change in the Japanese political scene.

### **3. Comparing the polarity scores**

Thus far the completion of a separate analysis for LDP and DPJ in terms of their resulting sentiment scores has provided an insight into how both parties have been portrayed by the media. The evolvement of their individual polarity scores has been inspected in light of the socio-political events that led to their respective sentiment scores. As highlighted, both parties have seen a rollercoaster of their sentiment scores through the quarterly periods of each year. Since the aim of this research is to inquire on the existence of a media tonality bias toward LDP it is only logical to compare the sentiment scores of both parties in order to make sense of the polarity results. The sentiment scores of DPJ will in fact provide a benchmark for how positive or negative is the media portrayal of LDP. In this last part of this analysis, first I will attempt to make sense of the sentiment results by compiling a summary comparative table and then on a second time I will try to answer the research question by examining the veracity of the hypothesis.

**Table 8. Summary of sentiment scores of LDP and DPJ for the analyzed interval**

Party	2008				2009				2010			
	1Q	2Q	3Q	Total	1Q	2Q	3Q	Total	1Q	2Q	3Q	Total
<b>LDP</b>	0,21	0,32	0,35	<b>0,30</b>	0,12	0,32	0,32	<b>0,27</b>	0,23	0,30	0,16	<b>0,24</b>
<b>DPJ</b>	0,079	0,22	0,19	<b>0,15</b>	0,17	0,40	0,34	<b>0,34</b>	0,14	0,28	0,17	<b>0,20</b>

This table summarizes all the mean sentiment scores for both LDP and DPJ for the three years time period. The quarterly means as well as the total yearly score have been included in the table. In bold are the final sentiment scores for each year.

The above summary table reflects all the sentiment scores for both parties in the time frame chosen for this research. On first sight it is discernible how the polarity scores are all positive and vary from 0,079, being the lowest score, to 0,40 being the highest score. By looking at the table it is possible to classify the results into three categories, the first category is the highly positive one with results ranging from 0,30 to 0,45. The second category is the moderately positive one with results

varying from 0,15 to 0,30 and finally the last category is the minimally positive one with results varying from 0 to 0,15. Considering the results DPJ has registered both the lowest and highest mean polarity scores, in relation to the results it is also possible to confirm the previously discussed argument regarding the non-consequential relation between the number of articles and the polarity scores. In the methodological part I underlined that the number of articles is not related to the final sentiment score that might result from SentimentR analysis; this argument is in fact confirmed by both LDP and DPJ mean results. In the case of DPJ, the party has a quasi-similar number of coverages in both 2009 and 2010 and yet the final polarity scores display a considerable gap between the results. For the year 2009 DPJ has a coverage number of 924 and 1027 for the year 2010, the party therefore has a difference of only hundred articles between the two years and yet its total polarity score for 2009 was 0,34 while for 2010 it was 0,20 which represents a difference of 0,14 between the two years. In LDP's case the party has seen a sharp decrease in its coverage moving from 2009 to 2010 and yet its total polarity scores do not present a wide gap; with coverage of 924 for the election year and a coverage of only 444 articles for the year 2010, the party has scored a total sentiment score of 0,27 for 2009 and a total score of 0,24 for the year 2010. Despite a considerable difference between the yearly coverage the total sentiment scores do not seem to present any significant disparity. Going back to the comparative analysis, in the first year we have LDP as the ruling party and DPJ as the main opposition party. Medias portrayal around this first period is clearly in

favor of the ruling party, in fact, as formerly mentioned during that time LDP was enjoying a better portrayal than its opposition counterpart mainly because the legislative gridlock that was blocking the approval of important policies was seen as a cause of the opposition stance on the proposed bills. With a score of 0,30 against 0,15 it is noticeable how media were on the side of the ruling party despite its constant decrease in public support. In fact it has to be mentioned that around 2008, although DPJ was not in the ruling coalition the party was able to obtain increasing support from the voters. Its victory in many constituencies that previously supported LDP candidates was among the first signs of this shift in support. Later on some lobby groups and industry associations started shifting their support as well toward the opposition party, however it seems that media did not positively portray DPJ when others had already started to support the party. LDP final score for the year 2008 is the exact double of that of DPJ, it has to be specified that in terms of coverage DPJ enjoyed a higher coverage<sup>26</sup> than LDP however in terms of portrayal LDP does outscore DPJ. It is fair to state that LDP as a ruling party enjoyed a higher positive broadcasting than the main opposition party DPJ. Moving to 2009, the pivotal year, it is eye-catching how DPJ has seen a sharp increase in its portrayal compared to LDP. It is important to note that 2009 remains a transition year( for both LDP and DPJ) in the way that these parties are portrayed by the media, around that year neither LDP or DPJ are fully ruling or

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<sup>26</sup> DPJ coverage here refers to the numbers of articles reported on table 3 in the initial part of the chapter. The coverage gap is not substantial, nevertheless according to the keyword research more articles have been dedicated to DPJ than LDP.

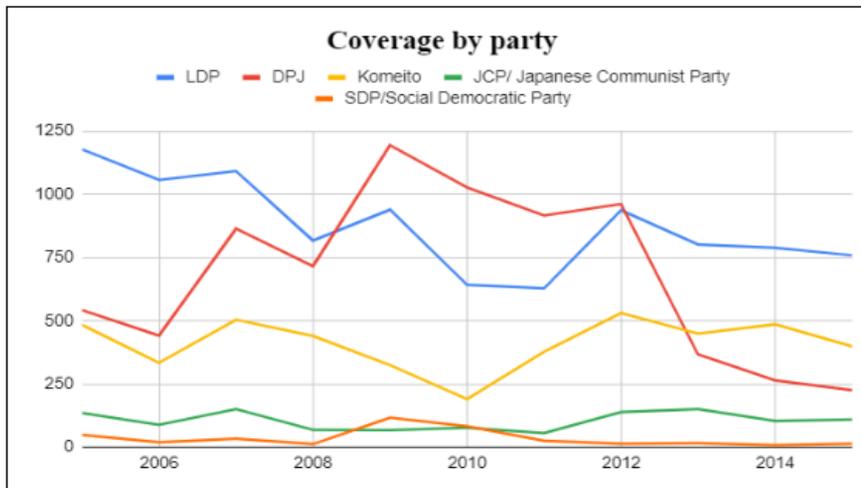
opposition party. For this reason the quarterly mean scores have been central in highlighting the change in power structures through the media's eyes. Starting from the first quarter the depiction of DPJ seems more positive than that of LDP, although the gap in polarity scores is not considerable, media have portrayed more positively the opposition party vis-à-vis the ruling party. The second quarter which represents the electoral period has seen a more advantageous portrayal for DPJ compared to LDP, media during this term seem to have been on the side of the public. As much as this year is central for the power shift, it has to be notified that this year is the only one in which DPJ outscores LDP in terms of portrayal (in all the quarterly terms). In conclusion the year 2009 has seen an advantageous portrayal for DPJ which final sentiment score falls within the highly positive category, while LDP's polarity score falls within the moderately positive category. Moving to the year 2010, during this period LDP was this time depicted from the perspective of an opposition party while DPJ was the ruling party. Judging from the polarity scores it is evident how the new opposition party was better portrayed than the ruling party. Although the gap in final sentiment scores is not considerable compared to the previous years, it can be fairly stated that LDP benefited from a slightly better portrayal than DPJ. As previously explained DPJ had a difficult time providing an effective solution to the recession that Japan was undergoing not to mention the real leadership crisis that the party faced right after being elected. The series of scandal that consecutively hit DPJ's leadership were not giving the new governing party any chance for a better portrayal. While, at the same time, LDP

was not doing great in providing a renewed image that would once again attract the voter's favor. In regard to the sentiment analysis results for this last year, it can be stated that both parties received a moderately positive portrayal by medias, however it has to be noticed that while DPJ was averagely portrayed by media while being an opposition party the same cannot be inferred for LDP. In fact, the paradigm here is that while in 2008 LDP was the dominating party and DPJ was the main opposition party; in 2010 the situation reversed in favor of DPJ but the sentiment scores did not. The main point here is that LDP was better portrayed than DPJ while serving as both a governing party and an opposition party. Moreover if we visualize the scores from a linear perspective, it can be recognized that LDP has seen a decrease in its sentiment scores during the analyzed interval, more precisely the party has lost 0,3 points each year starting with a score of 0,30 and ending with a score of 0,24. LDP's portrayal could be therefore described as a steady but balanced decreasing portrayal. The same cannot be stated for DPJ, as a matter of fact the pattern of polarity results for the party are quite extreme compared to LDP's results. The opposition-turned-ruling party has, in fact, seen a sharp increase in its polarity scores from the first to the second year and then again a sharp decrease of its results. The patterns of the scores can be described as quite different for the two parties, on one hand LDP depiction has been steadily decreasing since the first year and on the other hand DPJ has seen abrupt changes in its sentiment scores. All things considered, the central question of this whole analysis remains the following: is there a tonality bias in favor of Japan's long-

dominant party LDP? As a first step the sentiment scores have been inquired in relation to the socio-political events that have led to such results, then as a second step a comparative interpretation of the results has been attempted in order to comprehend the patterns of the results for each party. The final step of this analysis would be, therefore, to answer the research question in light of the findings. The hypothesis advanced in the descriptive part of this research is that Japanese media have developed a biased attitude toward LDP, however as the numbers show media's attitude is not as clear-cut as expected. The original expectation toward the sentiment analysis result was that LDP results would surpass DPJ's outcome for all the three years and especially in times of political defeat however the results are not in definitive favor of LDP. When looking back at the literature on Japanese media relation with LDP, three main positions have been distinguished: the first one was in favor of the biased media industry toward LDP; the second one argued the independence and non-partisan position of media toward the party and finally the third one described Japanese media as tricksters with contradictory position toward the ruling party. In light of the results it seems that the final outcome is in accordance with the biased media argument, even with DPJ's higher score in 2009. I argue that medias are in a way slanted toward LDP in spite of the fact that the party has received a lower sentiment score compared to DPJ in 2009. The election year seems like an exceptional circumstance rather than a usual condition. In the

first part of this chapter I mentioned the possibility of a political “buzz” effect<sup>27</sup> for DPJ that would explain the number of coverages dedicated to the party. Under the same logic it is arguable that DPJ positive portrayal was the result of this “buzz” effect in which media extend their coverage of the party in light of its growing public support. In fact, DPJ has gained in support even before its election. The case of this surge in coverage for an opposition party is a very rare in Japanese media.

**Figure 10. Coverage of selected Japanese political parties(2005-2015)**



**Source:** this figure has been compiled based on the number of articles dedicated for the selected political parties according to Asahi and Yomiuri newspapers coverages. The articles number is based on keyword input by party. Aside from LDP and DPJ, minor parties have been included for the sake of coverage comparison. Due to the high level of disaggregation and formation of new parties within the Japanese political arena only perduring parties have been included.

<sup>27</sup> Although the word “buzz” refers to the marketing technique of increasing the word-of-mouth capacity of a particular product, in the context of this research it can be interpreted through the political lense. By political buzz I intend the considerable media exposure that a party(in this case DPJ) benefits from in order to increase its visibility to voters.

The mobilization of medias attention or broadcasting has in fact been very low for opposition parties in general. More striking is the case of Komeito, which is LDP coalition partner in the ruling bloc and yet the party's coverage is considerably low. In figure 10, a coverage time span of ten years has been examined for both ruling and opposition parties. As reported in the figure, since 2007 DPJ has seen a sharp increase in its coverage compared to other opposition parties. Although the chart is based only on Yomiuri and Asahi shimbun coverages, I believe it is representative of the parties overall coverage since these two companies represent the largest news outlets in the country. The analyzed year span(from 2005 to 2015) has been considerably enlarged to highlight better the coverage difference and evolution among the parties. Two points can be inferred from the graph: first there is a considerable coverage gap between the ruling party and the other parties(both coalition partners and opposition parties). As a matter of fact when we consider the period in which LDP was the ruling party and the period in which DPJ was the ruling party, it is apparent how in both cases the ruling party outnumbers the other parties in terms of coverage. Second LDP's coverage has been consistent over the years, even when the party was an opposition party, its coverage never considerably declined to the level of other opposition parties or minor parties. More importantly the coverage numbers are not reflected in the tone used to address the parties. The political buzz that DPJ has benefitted from is mostly due to the party's depiction as a real political substitution for the ruling party LDP. It seems that the political and media buzz conceived around DPJ has been therefore

translated not only in terms of coverage numbers but also in terms of media tone. My argument is that DPJ's surge in positive portrayal is only the result of momentary vague of enthusiasm toward the party and thus, as the analysis results confirm, is only ephemeral rather than constant. This transitory phase is reflected in both the sentiment score results and the coverage tendencies. Some of the sentiment scores of DPJ for the year 2009 are abnormally high, especially the sentiment score for the second quarter of 2009 is a clear outlier compared to the rest of the polarity scores. Moreover if we look at the coverage span of DPJ in figure 8, the party has seen a surge and then a considerable decrease of its coverage compared to LDP whose coverage remained more stable in spite of the change in power dynamics. DPJ's increasing public popularity coupled with the belief that the party was going to represent the political shift that the country was looking for, have played in favor of the party's overly positive portrayal during the electoral period. It also has to be highlighted that this election represented the first defeat of LDP against a single party in the Japanese democratic history, therefore such a political buzz is also justified by the singularity of this political twist. In regard to the growing popularity of DPJ, it should be stipulated that the party has been extremely efficient in manufacturing its public image. By presenting itself as the "party of the people" DPJ has declared itself against the political order constructed by LDP and therefore as the only solution to a decaying political system. In line with its image of people's party, DPJ has promoted a manifesto of overly optimistic policies in a context of depressed public sentiment. This unrealistic

policy campaign has initially worked in favor of the party's electoral victory and positive image however the reality has soon proved the impractical character of DPJ's idealistic manifesto. The inability to implement the promised policies along with the party's ever-decreasing public support clearly underline the ephemeral aspect of DPJ's positive support. Many of LDP's cabinet have suffered from low public support however the party managed not only to remain in power but also to maintain a stable sentiment score. DPJ's failure to institutionalize itself within Japanese politics is subject to further research, however from a media perspective the tone used to depict this party has not been constantly more positive than LDP which in a way suggests the existence of a slant media attitude toward the long-dominant party. In conclusion, the sentiment analysis has proved that the portrayal of LDP in times of political defeat is more positive than its political competitors thus confirming the existence of a media tonality bias toward the party.

## Chapter VI. Conclusion

In retrospective, through this research on media bias in Japan, it has been brought light how the media industry in Japan shows signs of tonality bias toward the long-dominant party LDP. By first retracing the intertwined relation between media and politics, it has been highlighted how media partisanship is a perduring aspect in the mediatic systems of both democratic and non-democratic regimes. By closely inspecting the singular case of Japan it has been attempted to confirm the existence of a tonality bias in media's depiction of the predominant party LDP. The case of Japan presents unique political features among the democratic countries, it has been under the political monopoly of a single party: the Liberal Democratic Party(LDP). LDP has been successful in institutionalizing itself within the Japanese political system. In 65 years of democracy the party has lost only twice: once in 1994 against a coalition of opposition parties and once in 2009 against the Democratic Party of Japan(DPJ), therefore it is ostensible that the Japanese media industry has developed in very peculiar political conditions. In light of these considerations I questioned the possibility of the existence of a media bias, and more precisely a tonality bias, toward the long-dominant LDP. To answer this research question I selected the period surrounding LDP political defeat in 2009, this period selection is justified by the fact that media bias is more likely to be detected under this particular political downturn. In fact the defeat of LDP in 2009 provide a very rare context in which the party became an opposition party,

moreover the defeat against another single party(DPJ) has been crucial in providing a benchmark for comparison. In a polarized political setting, media are more likely to adopt partisan positions. Overall 4,525 newspaper articles from Japan's two major newspaper companies have been gathered and analyzed through a sentiment analysis package(SentimentR). The gathered newspaper articles cover both LDP and DPJ for a temporal arc that ranges from 2008 to 2010. This temporal arc has been selected to provide a better evolution of the sentiment scores through the different governing contexts of LDP. In 2008 LDP was the ruling party and DPJ the main opposition party. In 2009 the election took place consequently leading to a shift of power for the two parties. Finally in the year 2010 LDP was the main opposition party while DPJ was the ruling party. The use of SentimentR to quantify the positive portrayal of the newspaper articles has brought interesting results. The comparison of the sentiment scores between LDP and the opposition party DPJ has resulted in confirming the slant attitude of media toward the institutional party LDP. The sentiment scores have highlighted how LDP has been better portrayed than DPJ in both 2008 and 2010 but not in 2009. In this context 2009 has been presented as a rather exceptional year since DPJ has benefitted from a high sentiment score during the whole year and more specifically the party has scored an above-average sentiment result during the election quarter. Three reasons behind this exceptionally high positive coverage have been identified. First the party's image manufacturing as the party of the people against LDP status quo. By branding itself as a party that stands for the people and not for big businesses,

DPJ stroke a chord with Japanese voters. In a period of heavy economic recession Japanese voters have been very receptive to DPJ's political message. Second the unrealistically optimistic manifesto presented during the electoral race has further attracted the public support toward the party.

Finally the singularity of LDP defeat against a single party which has never occurred before in Japan's democratic history. These three variable have played a central role in considerably rising DPJ's public support which consequently translated in a more positive sentiment score than LDP. However as the sentiment scores of the following year illustrate the political buzz of DPJ was only ephemeral. In fact LDP has obtained a better score than DPJ while being both a ruling party and an opposition party. The final results suggests that, independently from LDP political position, the party benefited from a better portrayal than its political competitor.

### **1. Limitations of the research**

Although this research has been designed to examine the existence of a general biased attitude of medias in Japan, it has to be mentioned that bias determination is a very complicated task due to the plurality of bias types. As a result of data limitations this research was principally focused on the analysis of the tonality bias however as explained in Chapter II, media bias comes in many shapes and forms. Determining the existence of only one type of bias can hardly generalize the results

of the existence of a broad bias. As I had to forgo the exploration of the coverage and agenda bias, the extent of Japanese media bias cannot be fully grasped. The results have shown that in terms of tonality bias, media seem to adopt a slanted attitude toward LDP however little can be inferred on the coverage and agenda bias. By looking at the gathered information it is possible to assume the existence of an agenda bias in Japanese medias, as previously stated the existence of Press Clubs in itself highly suggests the existence of such bias, many scholars have in fact argued the effect of Press Clubs on the agenda setting function of Japanese media however empirically it is difficult to quantify this phenomena. Regarding the coverage bias the data unavailability made it very difficult to precisely calculate. In the analysis part I compiled a graph that retraces the coverage of Asahi and Yomiuri shimbun of the selected political parties, however to accurately calculate the coverage bias the number of articles dedicated to the political section of these newspapers has to be taken into account. The lack of such metric makes it difficult to empirically assess the coverage bias. It can be concluded that a first limitation of this study is in relation of the generalization of the bias results. A second possible limitation is in regard to the language of the articles. Although the selected newspapers are Japanese, the gathered articles are in English. The principal reason for this characteristic of the articles is related to the methodology. The sentiment analysis performed here is based on the English compiled dictionaries included in the SentimentR package, as the package does not take into account the Japanese language the sentiment analysis cannot be performed under

such language. Another reason for the selection of English articles is in relation to the pre-processing part of the methodology. As highlighted by Figure 7, the third step of the methodological process involves text cleaning which is a central task in “polishing” the articles for the sentiment analysis. Due to the particular aspect of the Japanese language this part might prove to be challenging, and a simple textual analysis based on a random Japanese dictionary might prove inaccurate to quantify the tonality bias. Despite the fact that the articles are in English, I believe the results are very reflective of the position of the analyzed newspapers. In many cases the articles are the translated version of the Japanese ones, since they have been published by the respective news agencies they still reflect the position of medias in regard to the different reported issues. For future research, if the data allows it could be interesting to address the existence of the other two types of bias to obtain a more global perspective of the media bias within the Japanese industry.

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## 국문초록

민주주의 국가들 중에서 일본은 특정한 정치적 맥락에 놓여있다. 일본은 현재까지 외견상으로 중단됨 없이 자유민주당 하나의 정당에 의해 통치되어 왔다. 이러한 독특한 정치적 배경을 고려하면 현대의 일본 미디어 산업이 단일 정당 독점 중심의 환경에서 발전해왔다고 할 수 있다. 장기간 우세한 정당과 미디어의 사이의 관계에 대한 기존의 연구는 미디어 산업이 편향되어있는지 혹은 중립적인지에 대해 대답되는 견해를 보여준다.

자유민주당과 미디어 산업의 편향된 관계를 증명하기 위해 본 논문은 자유민주당이 일본민주당에 패배했던 2009년 선거 동안 일본 국내 신문에서 발견되는 자유민주당에 대한 편향된 논조에 초점을 맞추었다. 신문의 편향된 논조를 판단하기 위해 두 정당에 대해 기술한 4,525 개의 신문 기사가 감정 분석 방법론에 따라 분석되었다.

자유민주당과 일본민주당의 언론 편향 비교에 의해 본 논문은 일본의 장기간 우세한 자유민주당의 정치적 상황(여당 혹은 야당)에 관계없이, 한 정당은 상대 정치적 경쟁 정당에 비해 긍정적인 논조에 의해 이득을 봄을 밝혔다. 투표기간 동안은 일본민주당에 더욱 긍정적인 논조가 보였으나 근본적인 이유들에 의해 이러한 결과는 은이례적이며 한시적인 패턴임을 보였다. 비록 언론 편향은 여러 형태로 나타나고 본질적으로 밝혀내기 복잡하지만 본 논문은 일본 국내 신문 논조의 관점에서 장기간 우세한 자유민주당에 편파적임을 확인했다.

키워드: 자유민주당, 미디어 정치, 언론 편향, 감정 분석, 일본 정치