

ISSA Proceedings 2006 - A Fantasy Theme Analysis Of Prime Minister Koizumi's "Structural Reform Without Sacred Cows"



Introduction

In rhetorical communication, messages are “deliberately chosen to influence an audience whose members have the ability to change their beliefs or behaviors as a consequence of experiencing the message” (Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991, p. 2). In April 2001, Junichiro Koizumi, the leader of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Prime Minister of Japan, conjured up a vivid symbolic image of Japanese people’s interest in politics with his contested slogan, “Structural Reform without Sacred Cows.” The public’s high expectations for Koizumi’s campaign were reflected in the extraordinary high approval ratings he and his Cabinet achieved. According to a poll conducted by the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, his Cabinet recorded an 84.5 percent approval rating on June 30, 2001, an all-time high in Japanese politics.

This public enthusiasm was labeled as “Koizumi fever” by the mass media. David Ignatius (2001) describes: “Media reports about Koizumi have featured the gee-whiz details that journalists love - his long, wavy hair, his taste for heavy-metal music, the public craze to buy his posters, the millions of people who subscribe to his e-mail newsletter, known as “The Lion Heart” because of his leonine looks” (p. 18). Accordingly, the “Koizumi fever” functioned as a driving force for the LDP in the 2001 election of the House of Councilors. The LDP ended up with a victory, as the *Asahi Shimbun* (2001) reported “Koizumi tornado and the LDP’s triumph” (“*Koizumi senpu*” 2001, p. 1: my trans.).

Kenzo Uchida (2001) observes: “For years, LDP-centered politics have been the object of public discontent and criticism, creating a deep sense of alienation among the people” (p. 18). Then, Koizumi emerged as a reformer within the LDP. His public demands for the destruction of the usual pork barrel politics provided a blueprint for reforms that promised to end the out-of-date political structures that had been dominant in Japan as they rehabilitated political processes. Thus, the

Koizumi administration was regarded as inspirational in moving “the collective will of people trying to meet manifold changes in our [Japanese] economic society to break political inertia” (Suzuki 2001, p. 16). Although his political slogan, “Structural Reform without Sacred Cows,” seemed to fulfill the public’s rhetorical need, an analysis of its symbolic function has been uncovered by the past scholars of communication.

This essay examines how Koizumi’s rhetorical constructions of a social reality unfolded during four periods of time: In the first phase, Junichiro Koizumi became the president of the LDP on April 25, 2001, by personifying himself as a “reformer.” During the second phase, Koizumi made efforts to share his rhetorical vision with the audience. In the third phase, the shared vision motivated the public to support the Koizumi-led LDP at the national election. During the final phase, or the “blank period” in August and September of 2001 disappointed the Japanese people about Koizumi’s reform. Then, the progress of Koizumi’s structural reform is stopped, at least temporarily, in the middle of September 2001 because of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. A special Diet committee proposed a bill authorizing the Self Defense Force (SDF) to support the United States military response to international terrorism. The debate about Koizumi’s structural reform was put aside until the approval of the bill on the SDF in October 2001. Therefore, it makes sense to limit the scope of this analysis to the period from April-September of 2001.

I will analyze Koizumi’s message construction by applying Ernest G. Bormann’s Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT) as a paradigm case of political argumentation in Japan. Bormann (1985) defines fantasy as “the creative and imaginative shared interpretation of events that fulfill a group’s psychological or rhetorical need” (p. 131). A content of the fantasy, argues Bormann (2000), consists of “characters, real or fictitious, playing out a dramatic situation in a setting removed in time and space from the here-and-now transactions of the group” (p. 248). Such a dramatized content chains out in the group of people because “a dramatic theme might relate to the repressed psychological problems of some or all of the members and thus pull them into participation” (Bormann 2000, p. 248). Conversely, speakers manipulate a content of a fantasy so that people may get involved in the fantasy. A rhetorical vision is constructed from fantasy themes or drama, which are also constructed by the speakers’ rhetorical appeals. Bormann (2000) explains that fantasy themes may draw upon a “recollection of something that happened to the group in the past or a dream of

what the group might do in the future” (p. 249). A rhetorical vision contains dramas played by characters with typical plot lines. The composite dramas stimulate the people’s reminiscence of emotional chains. Consequently, the dramas catch up the audience in various forms of public communication, such as fact-to-face communication, speaker-audience transactions, as viewers and listeners to television and radio broadcasts, and in all the diverse settings for public and intimate communication in a given society (Bormann 2000, p. 250). Such a phenomenon is regarded as people’s symbolic convergence on symbolic reality.

The first phase: a construction of the rhetorical vision

In the LDP presidential election, only its politicians and 1.2 million members were eligible to vote. But Koizumi used that election campaign as an opportunity to talk to the nation by going out to the street. Koizumi’s aim was “to show the LDP that they couldn’t ignore the will of the people” (Brasor 2001, p. 21). Such a campaign strategy was effective in that the media intensively featured Koizumi’s campaign. When Koizumi beat Ryutaro Hashimoto in primaries, he commented that “I had no idea I’d do this well in so many districts. It’s like pent-up magma that’s erupted” (“Koizumi poised” 2001, p. 1). His “pent-up magma” metaphor indicated the rising public expectations. Thanks to the media coverage, his message spread out. Koizumi’s victory in the LDP presidential election symbolized a significant change of the LDP’s old political style, and, in fact, the presidential election was treated as if it were a general election by the media.

In terms of the life cycle of rhetorical vision, the initial period corresponds to the creation of a social reality. Bormann, Cragan, and Shields (2000) argue: “Speakers dramatize new formulations and others share them until group and community fantasies explain the unfolding experience in novel ways. Because they are dynamic, rhetoricians may embroider and modify the consciousness throughout the life of a rhetorical vision” (p. 261). Thus, a speaker is required to construct a new symbolic ground to catch the minds of his/her audience.

During this period, April 2001, Koizumi establishes himself as a “reformer.” Before the election, he had been described as “odd,” “eccentric,” “strange,” or as a “maverick” by the media (Beals 2001, p. 14). But, as the *Asahi Shimbun* (“*Tensei jingo*” 2001) notes, the attractiveness of Koizumi came from the fact that he did not look like the conventional LDP politicians. Also, the people were curious about Koizumi’s individual qualities, such as listening to a Japanese hard rock band, X-

Japan, watching opera and films, and having an outlandish haircut. These qualities revealed to the people by the media contributed to a construction of Koizumi's popular image as a "hip" reformer, an image that no other LDP member had ever gained before (Beals 2001, p. 15).

A victory in the LDP presidential election provided Koizumi with a ground to generate the symbolic convergence of his persona as a "reformer." There are two important points regarding his victory. First, his victory was interpreted as heroic in the sense that lonely Koizumi won the election against the anti-reform forces within the LDP. Namely, Koizumi's victory was heroic because he became the reformer who made the impossible possible. Before the election, Koizumi seemed not to have even the slightest chance of winning since he was running against Ryutaro Hashimoto, a former prime minister of Japan who served from January 1996 to July 1998, and controlled the party's largest faction. The media had predicted that based on the number of politicians supporting Hashimoto, he would prevail (Brasor 2001, p. 21). But the overwhelming majority of the general members of the LDP voted for Koizumi advocating the destruction of the old style politics. Thus, it was contrary to general expectations, that Koizumi swept the election. When he was elected, Koizumi stated: "Something is happening the party members could never imagine; people are driving the LDP members, and the LDP members are driving the party. This is a total reversal of the past" (Igunatis 2001, p. 18).

In the past, the LDP had been criticized for its "inability to sever cozy relations with particular industries, determination to rely on public undertakings to invigorate the economy, and [its] dependence on the ossified seniority system of the party hierarchy" ("A bold new" 2001, p. 14). Although the LDP knew that those systems were out-of-date, many of those who were within the system believed that no one could change them. As Ryutaro Hosokawa (2001) criticizes, "the LDP no longer responds to the people's wishes and appears to be interested only in satisfying the demands of its members" (p. 19).

Koizumi's advocacy dissolved such frustration, and promised to show the LDP supporters a clear path to reform. His election slogan was "Support for Koizumi, the man that will change the LDP." As Minoru Toda (2001) notes, Koizumi is the only candidate that called for eliminating the LDP's pork barrel and faction-driven politics. Identifying the old-LDP politics as the cause of society's woes, Koizumi put the feelings of the LDP supporters into words. As a result, they finally heard words that they had been hoping to hear for a long time. Bormann (2000, p. 230)

explains that much persuasive' communication simply repeats what the audience already knows to be true. Koizumi's contribution was that he had the courage and the foresight to give voice to opinions and beliefs that many listeners already accepted as true. Thus, Koizumi's victory in the LDP'S presidential election triggered the "Koizumi fever."

The second important point about his victory is that the drama of Koizumi as a reformer set the stage to view his critics as anti-reformers, or as representatives of a tainted, un-modern, and arguably corrupt regime. Koizumi was depicted as a man of good character while the anti-reformers were cast as persons of bad character.

In the Symbolic Convergence Theory, a confrontation is one of the essential components of audience psychological process. Dramatized messages typically include good and bad characters (Bormann 1985, p. 132). In other words, speakers can make their message more attractive through constructing the narrative about their antagonists. Bormann (1985) further argues that the plot of "good" versus "evil" encourages the arousal of audience's sympathy and empathy for the good leading character. The emotional investment in a "good" leading character results in involvement in the fantasy.

The second phase: a maintenance of the rhetorical vision

The second phase of Koizumi's drama of "Structural Reform" was the period after the LDP presidential election, from April 2001 until July 12, 2001. This was the period when Koizumi tried to sustain the fantasy theme of "Structural Reform" among the public. Due to the huge media coverage, the public had paid much attention to the selection of members for Koizumi's Cabinet, including Foreign Minister Makiko Tanaka. During this period, "the press went into the crowds and found out firsthand that the people wanted Koizumi and Tanaka" (Brasor 2001, p. 21). The people were so interested in the Koizumi Cabinet that the TV viewer ratings of deliberative broadcasts of their meetings recorded unusually high figures ("Diet surprises" 2001). For instance, the viewer rating of Koizumi's policy speech on May 7, 2001, was 6.4 percent, while then Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori's speech in September 2000 was only 1.8 percent. In addition, the TV viewer rating for the House of Representative Budget Committee on May 14, 2001, was 6.5 percent, while the viewer rating of the debate in the Lower House Budget Committee in September 2000 was around 1 percent.

Within the life cycle of a rhetorical vision, speakers need to keep their audience shared and committed to their same rhetorical visions. At the sustaining or in

some cases during the maturation phase of a rhetorical vision, as Bormann (1985) explained, the rhetorical vision is condensed into a keyword, slogan, or label as “a total coherent view of an aspect of their [rhetorical community members’] social reality” (p. 133).

In this phase, Koizumi cited the anecdote, “One Hundred Sacks of Rice,” which pumped a new life into Koizumi’s rhetorical vision. The anecdote refers to the well known story of Torasaburo Kobayashi, a samurai at the end of the nineteenth century. At that time, the Edo shogunate, which was established in 1603, was collapsing due to the Boshin Civil War. Every fief, a basic unit of provincial government in the Edo era, suffered from poverty and distress. When the Nagaoka fief tried to rebuild the town, a related fief sent them a hundred sacks of rice. The members of the donor fief believed that the rice would be distributed to the citizens. However, instead of providing people with rice, Kobayashi sold it for building schools and educating young people. He argued that a small amount of rice was easy to consume, and that it would be more efficient to use it form a long-term vision for the Nagaoka fief (City Nagaoka 2006). Thus, Koizumi illustrated the importance of patience for the sake of a long-term gain, by promoting a laudable spirit of the anecdote.

Admitting the necessary evil of his structural reform, Koizumi constructed the public consensus that the “pain” was inevitable to revive the economy. He repeated such slogans as “No Gain without Pain.” What Koizumi indicated with the word, “pain,” means a necessary evil, or the dark side of his structural reform. If Koizumi’s reform plans were implemented, the unemployment rate was expected to increase. For instance, a clearance of non-performing bank loans, one of his salient policies, would create a lot of bankruptcy and unemployment. Historically, Koizumi’s predecessors had placed more importance on economic recovery, or on providing short-term economic stimulus programs for seducing the public (Toda 2001, p. 16). They had hesitated to talk about the negative effects of structural reforms. What is worse, they had failed to revitalize Japanese economy with such a policy. Based on his predecessors’ failures, Koizumi stated that he had did not intend to take the same route.

However, Koizumi avoided a detailed discussion of the content of “pain.” In his first policy speech as Prime Minister on May 7, 2001, Koizumi stated: “More than anything else what is needed for us today is the spirit of persevering through the present difficulties to build a better tomorrow. With this spirit, we can move

forward with reforms. Whether we can create a hopeful Japan in the new century depend on the determination and will of each and every one of us, the Japanese people, to carry out the reforms that are needed" ("Prime Minister's" 2001, p. 4). Thus, he did not clarify what type of "pain" would occur or how long people had to endure such a pain. He rather explained that the form of "pain" would be different from one person to another, since "whether one feels something as pain depends on one's attitude" (Maeda 2001, p. 4).

At this point, the anecdote of "One hundred Sacks of Rice" worked very effectively to persuade the Japanese people to accept Koizumi's rhetorical vision. According to the SCT, the people "share fantasies that give some old familiar dramas as a new production" (Bormann, Cragan, & Shields 2000, p. 262). If speakers imitate a certain story to present a new story, the audience is encouraged to share the new story. That is, "portraying an ideal past with the old familiar heroes, values, and scenarios" (Bormann, Cragan, & Shields 2000, p. 262) is effective to produce "a symbolic cue," a kind of trigger to raise an emotional involvement of the members of the rhetorical vision.

As a result, no one was sure about what exactly Koizumi meant by the "pain." For instance, the *Asahi Shimbun* (2001) heralded journalist Takao Saito's and novelist Ryu Murakami's criticism ("*Kaikaku no naijitsu*," p. 13). Saito argued that the people could not imagine what negative effects would happen to them. Murakami similarly questions about the lack of explanation about the "pain," and he argues that the weak people would sufferer from the "pain" severely. Therefore, Murakami contends, what Koizumi should have done was to tell who would have to endure the "pain."

The third phase: a crisis management of the rhetorical vision

This stage is the period when Koizumi engaged in the generic election campaign from July 13 to July 31, 2001. Most importantly, during this phase, Koizumi's rhetorical vision clashed with the counter rhetorical visions of the "pain" constructed by opposition parties. The opposition parties constructed the counter rhetorical visions designed to beat the LDP at the coming general election by focusing on the "pain" accrued from the change of Koizumi's structural reform. Against such counter rhetorical visions, Koizumi began by stressing the need to destroy the LDP's old-style politics. He had to do so. An internal discord within the LDP made the voters hesitant to vote for the Koizumi-led LDP although his drama of the reformer-versus-anti-reformers had worked well for the general

public. Even the anti-reform forces within the LDP, at least for the time being, decided to disguise themselves as supporters of popular Koizumi, because they also needed the public support to win the election. The *Japan Times* (2001) reports that to win the election, the LDP candidates tried to ride on Koizumi's popularity ("LDP candidates," p. 1). For Koizumi, too, to win the general election was essential to establish a political authority so that he could mandate the reform plan. According to CNN (2001), Koizumi said that the election would be a test of whether the LDP could support his Cabinet and carry out a bold reform. He also declared that, if the LDP old-guard gained the initiative again after the election, he would destroy the LDP ("Voters head").

Under such circumstances, Koizumi's slogan was re-constructed for the election. In the initial period of the LDP's presidential election, Koizumi demanded "People's Support for Koizumi's Challenge" ("*Bunseki Koizumiryu*" 2001, p. 4). The slogan implied the simple plot of the reformer Koizumi as a protagonist and the anti-reform forces within the LDP as antagonists. Koizumi's other strategy toward the voters was to evade detailed explanations about his structural reform. During the campaign, he did not discuss any detailed issue of his reform plans, but he merely repeated the same phrase, "Let's Change." Insofar as Koizumi strategically employed ambiguity about his plans, opposition parties could not any attack substantial aspects of the reform. As a result, the election represented an overwhelming victory for the Koizumi-led LDP. With that triumph, Koizumi achieved his aim to gain a political authority to implement his proposed structural reforms. In a sense, Koizumi was a savior of the LDP, which had been on a trend toward decline since the 1990's. In April 2001, therefore, the LDP members were afraid of a fatal loss in the general election ("A bold new" 2001, p. 14). The advent of Prime Minister Koizumi cleared up the party's worry.

To motivate the audience to take action is one of the aims of such a rhetorical message. Bormann argues: "The rhetorical vision of a group of people contains their drives to action. People who generate, legitimize and participate in a public fantasy are, in Bale's words, "powerfully impelled to action" by that process. Motives do not exist to be expressed in communication but rather arise in the expression itself and come to be embedded in the drama of the fantasy themes that generated and serve to sustain them" (2000, p. 257). Thus, in case of Koizumi, he employed rhetorical visions to promote the people's expectation for the structural reform. As a consequence, the people sharing Koizumi's rhetorical visions came to be committed to his structural reform and voted for the Koizumi-

led LDP. As Bormann concurs, “when group members respond emotionally to the dramatic situation, they publicly proclaim some commitment to an attitude” (2000, p. 249).

But the counter rhetorical visions constructed by opposition parties were far less effective in swaying the voters’ opinion than Koizumi’s for two reasons. First, the opposition parties failed to provide concrete objections to Koizumi’s reforms. Koizumi stated that “the opposition parties are wrong to criticize me for failing to be specific about my reforms, ... I map out courses of reforms, but specific policies should be determined through discussions” (“LDP rides into town” 2001). Thus, the opposition parties could not find the points to attack. At the same time, the simplicity of Koizumi’s plot of rhetorical visions contributed to the LDP’s triumph. He simply described himself as reformer and classified the opposition parties as anti-reform forces. As Bormann, Cragan, and Shields (2000) explain, “when events become confusing and disturbing, people are likely to share fantasies that provide them with a plausible and satisfying account that makes sense out of experiences” (p. 262). By the period of the election campaign, the mood was already constructed by the media in the mind of the public that Koizumi’s structural reforms were absolutely right (“A bandwagon election” 2001, p. 18).

In addition, the opposition parties tried to provide an alternative to the Koizumi version of structural reform, rather than a straightforward denial of Koizumi’s reforms. For instance, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) described itself as the “real reformer.” Yukio Hatoyama, the leader of the DPJ, claimed that the Koizumi-led LDP could not realize the structural reform because of an existence of the potential anti-Koizumi forces within the LDP. The DPJ portrayed their policies as “warm-hearted structural reform,” while they called Koizumi’s structural reform “cold-hearted structural reform” (Nabeshima 2001, p. 18). The DPJ emphasized that they would prepare “safety nets” for unemployed people who were hit by the structural reform, and accused Koizumi of not having such a safety net. However, the DPJ’s discussion failed to make clear crucial differences between the two. Similarly, other opposition parties were faced with a dilemma: When there was a social consensus about a necessity for the structural reform, how could they hammer out an alternative to Koizumi’s policy proposal?

What happened during the general election campaign was not an ideal situation for democracy. Each party’s policy is literally described, as “Structural Reform” for it is obvious that the current political system needed a drastic change. But clear differences did not exist in abstract policy proposals from each party. As the

Daily Yomiuri On-line (2001) notes, an ideal situation for democracy is when competing parties clearly demonstrate contrasting policy view to the voters (“Poll: Ruling coalition shoot-in”). Through comparison between those different views of the parties, each voter should make a decision. In this election, however, all parties proclaimed the need for “Structural Reform” as agenda, but the differences among each party’s view were not clear.

The final phase: a termination of the structural reform

The fourth and final phase is the period when Koizumi’s rhetorical visions declined between August 1 and September 1, 2001. Bormann argues that rhetorical visions are placed on a flexible to inflexible continuum, and that “[o]n the end [of the continuum] are flexible rhetorical visions that are sensitive to ... the changing experience of the participants in the vision” (Bormann, Cragan, and Shields 2000, p. 272). When a rhetorical vision loses its sense-making power, it declines. Hence, Bormann, Cragan, and Shields (2000) argue that “Rhetoricians can sustain the integrity of the inflexible vision by using a number of different types” (p. 278). Speakers are required to restore new fantasies continuously into rhetorical visions.

The presentation of his reform plans in this period was important, since Koizumi’s leadership as prime minister was tested, and that the implementation of the reform was his final goal. However, on the privatization of government-funded corporations for instance, Koizumi still did not present any clear roadmap. As a result, Koizumi was losing his audience’s faith in the structural reform, since he held responsible for providing specific explanation about his policies to the public. But Koizumi repeated that “even if [the people] don’t get the concrete details of reform, I’m sure they get my spirit toward reform” (Maeda 2001, p.3). Although Koizumi gained a political authority through the triumph in the last general election, the process of the reform stopped for almost two months, which was perceived as the blank period by the public. The media urged Koizumi to do something concrete and meaningful as soon as possible. For instance, the *Asahi Shimbun* (2001) argues that if Koizumi did not do his best for implementation of his plan at this point, the people would never believe his words (“*Kaikaku no seihi*”). The *Japan Times* (2001) cites the comment from the *Financial Times*: “No more compromises. Now is the time for Junichiro Koizumi, Prime Minister of Japan, to make a concrete plan to reverse the decade-long side of the world second-largest economy and to implement it” (“Two steps” p. 18).

At the same time, the “pain” gradually started to take shape before the people. For instance, the unemployment rate of July 2001, climbed to 5 percent, the highest rate since 1953 (“Unemployment” 2001, p. 20). People thus began to experience the hardships caused by Koizumi’s reforms, and their suffering seemed to have no clear ending. The tone of the media coverage then became increasingly pessimistic about Koizumi’s structural reforms. Their focus shifted to the negative aspects of Koizumi’s structural policies. They featured unemployment, which was perceived as “the most severe form of pain” (“Easing the pain” 2001, p. 18). For example, *The Japan Times* (2001) argued that the full impacts of the kinds of pain Koizumi’s reform plans would bring were not clear yet. It also warned that the people would not feel inclined to accept the “pain” incurred by Koizumi’s reforms without improvements to Japan’s existing unemployment-insurance system (“Easing the pain” p. 18).

The speed of Koizumi’s reforms was too slow to make the people convinced that the plan was succeeding. As *The Japan Times* (2001) reported, “A government proposal to drastically overhaul government-backed corporations” faced “resistance from the ministers and agencies” (“Reform of state-linked” p. 1). The victory of the election did not mean an extinction of the anti-reform forces. The anti-reform forces re-appeared in the drama. Thanks to Koizumi’s popularity, the LDP conservatives and anti-Koizumi candidates were able to win a seat in the House. This is paradoxical from the voters’ perspective in the sense that voting for the Koizumi-led LDP helped his antagonists to survive. In addition, the Japanese stock market did not react positively to Koizumi’s triumph in the general election. *The Japan Times* (2001) also cited the *Financial Times* assertion that there was a skeptical view in the world’s financial markets of Koizumi’s economic policies (“Two steps” p. 18). Despite the situation, Koizumi continued to place the priority on the structural reform plan, and did not propose any new measures to stimulate economic recovery. The *Financial Times* (2001) criticized that “[Koizumi’s] slogan ‘no pain, no gain’ may strike a masochistic chord with some. But the slogan makes no economic sense. Japan’s economy will not fire again until demand is stocked up with an ample supply of credit” (“Crazy for Koizumi” p. 18). Furthermore, the *Mainichi Shimbun* (2001) argues that the limitation of Koizumi’s philosophy of “patience” was coming because of its slow progress (“*Gaman no tetsugaku*” p. 3).

Another reason for the slow speed of Koizumi’s reform actions was very structure of the Japanese political decision-making system. Historically, important policies,

such as policies on taxation and road constructions, are deliberated by the LDP. The LDP examines bills prior to the congressional discussion, which was established as a system during the LDP's long-time dominant era. Under that system, the Cabinet cannot make a decision without the approval of the LDP's committees (Ando 2002, p. 2). That system allowed the anti-Koizumi forces with the LDP to obstruct Koizumi's reform plans. The *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* reports that Koizumi was trying to take the initiative of the reform by the top-down style ("*Shushou shudou*" 2001, p. 2). Nobuo Asami (2001) argues that "strengthening the Cabinet functions" (p. 20) is one possible way of implementing Koizumi's reform. For assuring Prime Minister's leadership, Koizumi needed to strive for changing the dual decision-making system.

Unfortunately, the progress of Koizumi's structural reforms stopped in the middle of September 2001 because of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. A special Diet committee proposed a bill authorizing the Self Defense Force (SDF) to support the United States military response to international terrorism. The debate about Koizumi's structural reform was put aside until the approval of the bill on the SDF in October 2001.

Implications

There are a number of implications to be outlined. First, Koizumi's catchy, simple, assertive words, such as "Structural Reform without Sacred Cows," "without structural reform there can be no rebirth of Japan," "One Hundred Sacks of Rice," and "No fear, no hesitation, and no constraint," caught up the people's attention. Those slogans contributed to constructing the symbolic reality. At the same time, according to the survey conducted by the *Asahi Shimbun* by December 26, 2001, fully 63 percent of the respondents polled did not think that Koizumi's structural reforms had obtained excellent results. On the other hand, the 72 percent of the people surveyed still expressed their approval for the Koizumi administration. The *Asahi Shimbun* (2001) read such seemingly incompatible results as the proof that while the public's expectation of Koizumi's reforms had been sustained, they had not satisfied with what he had done ("*Susundeninai*").

Such incompatible results illustrate the gap between Koizumi's words and deeds. Koizumi tried to achieve political objectives through his advocacy to make the people "feel" what he was going to do (Maeda 2001, p. 3). However, his deeds did not match up with his words. Since his inauguration in April 2001, he had been criticized for a lack of clarity of his words ("*Ryukougo*" 2001, p. 4). At this point,

the *Asahi Shimbun* (2002) argues that Koizumi had not shown the clear perspective of the future to the people (“*Kadan*”). Asaumi (2001) argues: “Although the public entertains high expectations that a charismatic leader will bring them happiness, the leader’s ability to bring about the happiness sought by the public inevitably is limited. The relationship between the masses and a charismatic leader can be described as a fantasy shared by many members of society” (p. 20: my trans.).

Second, Koizumi’s political style is problematic in the sense that he used the power of rhetoric to focus people’s attention, but not to obtaining public support to implement his reform program and to overcome the objections of the anti-reform forces. Indeed, Takashi Mikuriya (2001) admits that his sensational word choice created a highlight in Japanese political discourse (p. 4). Viewing Koizumi’s drama of “Structural Reform,” the people praised him as a reformer for a while. Such evidence of symbolic convergence demonstrates the public’s agreement with his reform spirit. Therefore, Koizumi should have shifted his strategy to use more clear and concrete language to express his views.

Finally, despite the problems posed by Koizumi’s use of symbolic language, future Japanese politicians should not hesitate to use powerful symbols to win public support for the implementation of their new programs. The use of effective rhetoric is essential to help people reach good decisions. Prime Minister Koizumi should be considered one of the pioneers of Japanese politics. He used rhetoric effectively to obtain the public’s attention. But, at the same time, he should have also use rhetoric to open up the process of the congressional decision-making so that the public was more fully included in policy deliberations.

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