

PROPAGANDA IN JAPAN'S MEDIA MANUFACTURING CONSENT FOR NATIONAL GOALS AT THE EXPENSE OF NJ RESIDENTS^[1]

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Abstract: Japan has one of the most vibrant and pervasive domestic media environments in the world. This media environment can also be significantly manipulated by the Japanese government, mobilizing Japanese public opinion towards national goals even at the expense of domestic minorities -- particularly non-citizens. The degree of underrepresentation and disenfranchisement of Non-Japanese residents in Japan is clear when one studies the “foreign crime wave of the 2000s”, promoted by the government in the name of “making Japan the world’s safest country again”, justifying public policy against “foreign terrorism, infectious diseases, and crime”. The domestic media’s complicity in publicizing anti-foreign sentiment without analysis has caused quantifiable social dehumanization; government polls indicate a near-majority of citizens surveyed do not agree that non-citizens should have the same human rights as citizens. This paper studies how language and media have been used as a means for disseminating propaganda in Japan, fostering social stratification, alienation, and xenophobia.

Key Words: Japan; foreigners; media; propaganda; human rights, terrorism, crime, xenophobia

INTRODUCTION

An Overview of Japan’s Media Landscape

Japan’s media is a powerhouse for communication and social organization, with the highest penetration and concentration of daily newspapers in the world (Gamble and Watanabe 2004: 33-4), and the tenth largest number of television sets (99% of all households, watching on average 17.9 hours per week) in the world (Economist 2005: 90, 92, 94). Media campaigns, both in terms of popular culture and public policy, are very effective in disseminating information and influencing Japanese public opinion (Gamble and Watanabe 2004); the knock-on effects of the “embedded-journalist” Japanese *kisha kurabu* (Press Club) system (often closed to foreign correspondents) have been discussed thoroughly elsewhere (Freeman 1996, Gamble and Watanabe: Ch. 2, particularly 53-60, 360-1; Hall 1998: Ch. 2). However, one sector of the population, that of Non-Japanese residents (hereinafter NJ), is arguably underrepresented in Japan’s media. There are a few ethnic newspapers/magazines published in Japan in Japanese and foreign languages (including Chinese, Korean, Portuguese, and English, not to mention the Burakumin Liberation League press in Japanese), with few regional “free papers” (e.g., Metropolis, JapanZine, Sapporo Source, etc.), but they generally offer less “hard news”, more “news and events” bulletin-board-style information. As for Japanese media, broadcasting in foreign languages is strictly regulated by the Japanese government (Gamble and Watanabe: 43; Krauss: 196-8), while national-level

newspapers in English (Japan Times, Daily Yomiuri, International Herald-Tribune/Asahi Shimbun, plus online Mainichi Daily News, JapanToday.com, and Kyodo/Jiji wire-based services) are almost entirely controlled by Japanese publishers (i.e., the only newspaper independent of a Japanese media conglomerate being The Japan Times). All of these venues republish domestic wire-service articles or outsource overseas articles; with the exception of the Japan Times and JapanToday.com, their number of in-house foreign-language reporters and staff is miniscule, and consequently “domestic news” generally comes from in-house articles translated from Japanese. The point is that very little national-level professional journalism in Japan, even in foreign languages, is independent of Japanese media editorial control.

The effects of ethnic underrepresentation in Japan

Consequently, the voices of the NJ communities in Japan are often muted if not at times ignored. The author, a monthly columnist for the Japan Times, and spokesperson for several minority causes, has extensive personal experience with domestic media campaigns that were disparaging or unfavorable to NJ (Arudou 2003a, 2007a, 2007b, 2008b, 2009). He has also participated in domestic media debates that have been misrepresented (Arudou 2006a, 2006b) either when translated into Japanese, or transmuted (even when given in Japanese) due to filtering through Japanese media editorial constraint or anticipated readership bias.

For example, consider how "racial discrimination" has been reported in the Japanese media. In a 5 ½ year survey (*ibid*) of 114 Japanese-language articles^[2] dealing with the Otaru Onsens Case (1999-2005), the word "racial discrimination" (*jinshu sabetsu*) was clearly and specifically attributed to as the cause of the discrimination thereof in *only one article* in Japan's mainstream Japanese-language daily print media^[3]: an editorial by the Hokkaido Shimbun on September 17, 2004, drawing conclusions from the Sapporo High Court decision in favor of plaintiffs accusing a public bathhouse of racial discrimination. In all other articles, the word "racial discrimination" was used only in the context of a claim by the plaintiffs (or the rulings of the Sapporo District and High Courts), and was never attributed objectively as a specific cause of this issue. Instead, milder words were used, such as "discrimination by nationality" (*kokuseki sabetsu*), "discrimination by physical appearance" (*gaiken sabetsu*), "discrimination by ethnicity" (*minzoku sabetsu*), "discrimination against foreigners" (*gaikokujin-* or even *gaijin* [sic] *sabetsu*), or just generic "discrimination" (*sabetsu*), even when it was clear within the article that one of the plaintiffs was not in fact a foreigner, but a naturalized Japanese. This, of course, happened when the articles referred to racism or discrimination at all, not attributing the issue instead to manners, cultural differences and misunderstandings (*manaā, ibunka no chigai, gokai*, etc.), the preternatural shyness of Japanese in general towards foreigners (referred to more than once in print as an "allergy" (*arerugī*) or other causes including the bathhouses protecting their business from foreign crime or from customers' alleged fear of foreigners (*gaikokujin hanzai mizen bōshi, kyaku banare bōshi*, etc.^[4]). In other words, even when adjudged as *jinshu sabetsu* by a Japanese court of law^[5], also by official court testimony of the Defendant Otaru City and official City publications^[6], the use of the word *jinshu sabetsu* in the Japanese media was treated as the opinion of parties involved, not an objective fact of the case; the English-language media, meanwhile, was much less reticent^[7]. This would appear to be part of an official

policy: The United Nations Committee on Racial Discrimination (2010) also noted that even in official state-level human rights reviews with the Japanese government (hereinafter GOJ), “It seems that [racial discrimination] is something that the state in question prefers to avoid as a term.”

Thus, within this media arena, it becomes easier for enfranchised domestic actors to say negative things about the disenfranchised, without the “checks and balances” accorded to a “right of reply”. This can at worst lead to “hate speech¹⁸¹”, and at least lead to propagandistic tendencies. This paper will focus on the latter, in the context of three particular GOJ goals in the 2000s: Prevention of crime, infectious diseases, and terrorism -- all of which became associated with NJ through public policy and media dissemination.

Defining “Propaganda”

Although Webster’s Dictionary’s most applicable definition for the purposes of this paper is, “doctrines, ideas, arguments, facts, or allegations spread by deliberate effort through any medium of communication in order to further one’s cause or to damage an opposing cause”, this author is fond of *The Problem of the Media* author Bob McChesney’s succinct interpretation: “The more people consume your media, the less they’ll know about the subject, and the more they’ll support government policy” (Greenwald 2004, minute 50).

THE NATIONAL GOALS: PREVENTION OF CRIME, INFECTIOUS DISEASES, AND TERRORISM, AND THEIR OFFICIAL LINKAGE TO NJ

The timeline for a gradual tightening of policy targeting NJ

On September 22, 2003, the first day of the second Prime Minister Koizumi Jun’ichiro Cabinet, no fewer than three Cabinet ministers focused on foreign crime as a social issue *du jour*. Justice Minister Nozawa Daizō explicitly stated as one of the policy goals of his office would be to “make Japan the world’s safest country again” (Arudou 2003b; Yomiuri 2003). In the same cabinet announcement, the Yomiuri Shimbun reported National Public Safety Commission Chairman Ono Kiyoko stating that she wanted to devote her total energies (*zenryoku*) to “strengthening policy against foreign and youth crime”. “Foreign crime” was also mentioned by Public Management Minister Aso Tarō in NHK News reports that day.

By December 2004, an “Action Plan for Preempting Terrorism” (*tero no mizen bōshi ni kansuru kōdō keikaku*) had been passed by this Cabinet, with explicit provisions made to target foreigners as terrorists (Arudou 2005b). By April 2005, registration regulations for Japanese hotels were legally changed to require the display of passports for people who did not have an address in Japan; however, National Police Agency and Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare directives to hotels explicitly expanded the directive for all hotels to demand (and photocopy) identification from “foreign guests”, regardless of whether they resided in Japan (Arudou 2005a, 2005c). The Embassy of Japan’s Washington D.C. website (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2005) justified it “for the purpose

of effective control of infectious diseases and terrorism” (which should naturally beg the question of whether Japanese citizens, who were not being ID-carded, were incapable of spreading infectious diseases or committing acts of terrorism).

On November 20, 2007, Japan’s Immigration Bureau reinstated fingerprinting (hitherto abolished as a “violation of human rights” in 1999 (Asahi Evening News 1998)) and facial photography at the border for almost all NJ entrants and reentrants – including “Regular Permanent Residents” (the Japanese equivalent of American “Green Card” holders) (Arudou 2007d, 2007f). This policy was once again justified in the name of preventing infectious diseases and terrorism (Arudou 2005b, 2007d). Finally, one week before the fingerprinting was inaugurated, the media reported that the fingerprint machines were now “fighting foreign crime” (Mainichi Shimbun 2007b), making the policy triad complete.

It seemed unimportant to the major Japanese media (where counterarguments did not appear) that NJ were in fact getting a bum rap. There had never been a terrorist attack by NJ on Japanese soil (as opposed to, for example, homegrown terrorism such as the Japanese Red Army, radical leftist groups *Kaikakuha* or *Kakumaruha*, or the Aum Shinrikyō sarin gas attacks of 1995); or in terms of infectious diseases, there had only been one case of SARS influenza from a NJ tourist in 2003 (which did not spread to the general public, but nevertheless panicked many hotels into closing their doors to NJ, including this author, despite his Japanese citizenship) (Arudou 2003c).

However, the third target of the policy push – foreign crime – offers fertile ground for the study of propaganda. In fact, Japanese media, and by extension the Japanese public, has been so influenced by both politicians and bureaucratic agencies (such as the National Police Agency (NPA)) that it exemplifies a textbook case of propaganda. Let us now give a concise timeline of the GOJ’s generation of Japan’s “Foreign Crime Wave of the 2000s”.

The development of the specter of “Foreign Crime” from a propagandistic perspective.

If one could ever catch a policy drive in its larval stage, in this case it would be May 1999, with the creation of the “Committee for Policies Against Internationalization” (*kokusaika taisaku iinkai*) within the NPA’s 2000 White Paper, which would “undertake suitable policies and laws for provincial police agencies, and strengthen their investigative organs” (Arudou 2006a: 206-7). The semantics of this organization are worthy of comment: This was not a committee concerned with “foreign crime” (*gaikokujin hanzai*) in specific, it was “internationalization” (*kokusaika*). The use of the word *taisaku* (as in policies targeting a specific issue, usually a problem), as opposed to the more neutral *seisaku* (policy) or *kenshū* (study), indicates a bias going beyond mere crime and into issues of foreignness and immigration.

Within a year, NPA funding made its way into police notices and pamphlets nationwide (Debito.org 2000-2010) specifically warning the Japanese public to be wary of “bad foreigners” (*furyō gaikokujin*) and “foreign crime” (even though the crimes being mentioned were also being committed by Japanese, and in larger numbers (Debito.org

2003b)). They began appearing at bank ATMs, public transportation stations, and even on people's car windshields and mailboxes. The Shizuoka Prefectural Police issued a manual to local shopkeepers entitled "Characteristics of Crimes Committed by Foreigners Coming to Japan" (*rainichi gaikokujin hanzai no tokuchō*), portraying NJ as indolent, violent, conspiring in groups to shoplift etc.; their advice to shopkeepers who espied a "foreign group" (defined as two or more NJ shoppers) in their store: "Write down their car license place number and report it to police." (Shizuoka Police, 2000: 20-1). Meanwhile, the NPA began its twice-annual (around March and September) press releases specifically advising the public about NJ crime only, with attention perennially drawn to crime rises.

The media picked up on this. Newspapers and television shows for next several years featured specials about the new foreign crime wave, reporting on bag snatching, Chinese lock-picking gangs, visa overstaying, and a general debasement of Japan's public morals (*fūki*) through the underground labor markets; Sankei Shimbun (May 1, 2000) front-paged "a six-fold rise in foreign crime over ten years", and reported that Chinese gangs were targeting Japanese. Businesses were also capitalizing: Miwa Locks began advertising new and improved "foreigner-proof locks" (Arudou 2006a 195-209). Most famously, on April 9, 2000, Tokyo Governor Ishihara Shintarō made his notorious "*Sangokujin* Speech", where he depicted "bad foreigners", visa overstayers, and *sangokujin* [a derogatory term for Japan's Japan-born generational "foreigners" of Chinese and Korean ethnicity] as repeatedly committing heinous crimes (*gokuaku hanzai*). Then he charged his audience of Nerima Self-Defense Forces (i.e., the Japanese military) with rounding up NJ in natural disasters "in case they riot" (*ibid*: 196-7). Although activists demanded a retraction and an apology (which Ishihara never gave), the media focused instead on whether *sangokujin* was an offensive word, not whether the claims made by Ishihara and the media about foreign crime were accurate and unexaggerated.

They were not accurate. In no NPA media report, or domestic media article, was foreign crime compared to Japanese crime. If it had been, several discrepancies would have come to light: 1) Foreign crime over the interim had in fact plateaued; the Sankei's "six-fold rise" claim was in only one sector of crime, with comparatively small numbers of cases compared to Japanese cases. 2) Difficulties in counting "perpetrators" (*jin'in*), "cases" (*kyokensū*, i.e. one perpetrator can commit more than one case of crime, and sometimes within gangs of Japanese), and "cleared cases" (*tekihatsusha*, meaning NJ actually caught for a specific crime, whereas the NPA also counts suspected yet uncaught NJ as "cases") meant that data was grey and complex enough for manipulation to accentuate rises and downplay falls. 3) The claims of a rise of "visa overstayers" (*fuhō taizaisha*, rendered in NPA publications more colorfully as "bad" or "illegal foreigners" (*furyō/fuhō gaikokujin*) was a complete falsehood – they had fallen without pause since 1993 (Ministry of Justice 2003). 4) The NPA would be counting "visa overstays" (*fuhō taizai*, subsumed under a more ominous-sounding category of *tokubetsu hōhan kensū*, or "special penal offenses") as part of total NJ crimes -- even though a) visa violations are "victimless crimes", unlike rape or murder), and b) visa violations are crimes that Japanese citizens, by definition, cannot commit, as citizens have no visa to overstay. However, lumping in these incomparable crimes increased foreign crime gross statistics by as much as a third, and were reported as such without differentiation or

caveat. If one removed visa violations, this would generally lower the foreign crime rate far below the proportion of NJ population (ranging at the time between 1.4% to 1.6% of the total population), meaning the foreign crime rate was actually substantially below the (also rising) Japanese crime rate. 5) The NPA reports percentages more than raw numbers, meaning an increase in already small numbers (e.g., if one case last year becomes two cases this year, this is a rise of a small number, but a 100% increase) is markedly more reportable than much higher crime numbers (but smaller proportional rises) in Japanese crime. That is, if NJ and Japanese crimes were ever compared. They were not (Arudou 2002b, 2003b; Debito.org 2003a).

Although activists have repeatedly pointed out (in Japanese) all of these mitigators and deflators to domestic media, no domestic daily media body has as of yet offered analysis to this degree of the inherent biases in the data. Nobody has reported other potential mitigators that are standard practice in other societies analyzing crime: 1) NJ migrant workers tend to be younger, male, in less-lucrative, less-stable, and lower-status jobs, and thus statistically are disproportionately more likely to commit crime. 2) Racial profiling by Japanese police (Arudou 2001, 2002a, 2007e, 2008b) could comparatively inflate NJ numbers of suspects and apprehensions, thus biasing the sample. 3) The NJ population has more than doubled since 1990 (from one million to two), while the Japanese population has stabilized, even fallen since 2006; more NJ means more potential criminals, yet the Japanese crime rate has risen despite the population fall.

Reporters, in their defense (according to interviews the author has done with several; usually “cub reporters” are first assigned the police beat), indicate they have little time for analysis. The NPA gives out the information shortly before deadline, and claim they can do little more than type in the statistics as given. That said, there have been cases of Japanese media egregiously parroting the NPA’s bias. The most spectacular examples are the Mainichi Shimbun’s articles of February 8 and 9, where the Japanese original headlined a 35-fold increase in regional NJ crimes, while the next day’s English translation headlined the overall NJ crime decrease (Mainichi Shimbun 2007a). An interview with a Mainichi editor shortly afterward revealed the reason: The headline was adjusted as per the “preferences of their readership”, as the “impact (*inpakuto*) would be different”. This was in fact part of a historical pattern. In a survey of news articles in the Asahi Shimbun between January and July 1998, Nara University associate professor of Sociology Mabuchi Ryogo noted that foreign crime was 4.87 more likely to be covered than crimes by Japanese (IHT/Asahi 2002). This was, however, before the NPA’s *Kokusai Taisaku Iinkai*, which made the media feedline for foreign crime more systematic, had instilled fear in and whetted the public’s appetite for more information, and through economic demand elicited media compliance.

Thus, as per the fundamental nature of propaganda, the more people read the media about foreign crime in Japan, the less they knew about the subject.

Impacts of propagandizing: Public policy creep

With the consistent and periodic slow-drip of “foreign crime” reports to the Japanese public, it has become progressively easier for the NPA to embark upon periodic “foreign

crime” campaigns, and create momentum for further NJ-targeting policy making, even budgetary outlay for tangential projects.

For example, tighter policing of NJ became a means to political capital (Debito.org 2003b). In addition to the Governor Ishihara example above, other politicians made public statements about "a million foreign murderers and thieves in Japan" (Dietmember Etō Takami, July 12, 2003)^[9], called Tokyo's Kabukichō party district (with Japan's highest concentration of NJ-owned and operated businesses) "a lawless zone" (*fuhō chitai*) (*ibid*), and asserted during 2003 election speeches that "all foreigners are sneaky thieves" (*koso doro*) (Kanagawa Governor Matsuzawa Shigefumi, November 2, 2003)^[10]. Political slogans eventually became policy. In February 2002, Kabukichō became Japan's first entire neighborhood with 24-hour police surveillance cameras (the second would be Roppongi a year later, another place in Tokyo with a high concentration of NJ patrons) to keep watch on foreign crime. Stressing that he would be "booting out" illegal Chinese during a 2003 tour of Tokyo Ikebukuro, Tokyo Governor Ishihara announced his appointment of Takehana Yutaka, a former NPA chief, as vice governor (Mainichi Shimbun 2003).

Another example is Japan's hosting of the World Cup in 2002. The fear whipped up by police and media campaigns to advise the Japanese public about "foreign soccer hooligans" generated significant media debate, localized panic, and budgetary outlay for security during the event (Christian Science Monitor 2002, Asahi Evening News 2002). In an extreme but instructive example, on June 27, 2000, Miyagi Prefectural Assemblyman Konnō Takayoshi pondered aloud in an official government session about what should be done for illegitimate children born from NJ hooligan rapes.^[11] Ultimately, mayhem did not ensue. In Sapporo, the place most anticipating hooliganism (as the site of the England-Argentina match, whose fans have a historic mutual animosity; 3000 police and two ferries for miscreants had been transported north at great expense), there were a total of only three arrests of five perpetrators – and of them only one NJ (for ticket scalping). When contacted by the author for an acknowledgment of police overreaction, and an apology for hurting the public image of NJ residents, the Hokkaido Police Department refused, saying, "If we hadn't taken these measures, the hooligans would have come." They stressed to the media, "There's no such thing as being too careful" (Debito.org 2002).

Other examples include the 2008 G8 Summit at Toyako, Hokkaido, where the search for "terrorists" again meant searching for "foreigners" -- with spot checks of expressly non-Asian persons (including the author) at Hokkaido's Chitose Airport (Arudou 2008a, 2008b). Separately, in February and March 2009, with the release of an NPA report on organized crime zeroing in on NJ criminals (National Police Agency 2009), the NPA announced that it would be "implementing crime prevention measures to ensure safety where many foreigners reside"; in other words, they would be further increasing their police presence wherever NJ were concentrated (Kyodo News 2009). The logic that terrorism, infectious diseases, and crime (particularly crime syndicates, given the strength of Japan's "yakuza") are not a function of nationality continues to evade most of Japan's policymakers, pundits, media, and consequently the general public.

The clearest example of Japan's "closed loop" propaganda, of public dissemination of information to justify a public policy goal, could be seen, again, in the November 2007 reinstatement of border fingerprinting. As the author wrote (adapted from Arudou 2007f):

The media was already insulating the public was against a small but public backlash, e.g., street demonstrations that were taking place against NJ border fingerprinting. The Yomiuri Shimbun ran an editorial on November 19, 2007, the day before fingerprinting was reinstated, entitled: "Use fingerprints, photos to boost security", containing the text:

"The main objective of the revised law is to block terrorists and foreign criminals from entering the country. If it is proven to be effective, Japan's reputation as a safe country will be bolstered...

"Japan will host the Group of Eight summit meeting at the Lake Toya hot spring resort in Toyakochi, Hokkaido, next year. Together with strengthening immigration checks, we hope the government will take all possible means to ensure coastal security and prevent terrorism in this country

Establishing a linkage between the new measure, international terrorism, and an upcoming high-profile world summit was apparently not enough. Nothing was left to chance. NHK 7PM's 3-minute segment only parroted the government's line of protecting "citizens" (*kokumin*) from the outside world, with no airtime given to the protests outside the Justice Ministry.

NHK 9PM's 6-minute segment gave positive feedback from a couple of tourists, but no word from any NJ residents whatsoever. NHK's BS News at 10:50PM didn't even bother to carry the story.

Other networks and newspapers carried news about concerns for human rights, the malfunctioning fingerprint machines, and angry tourists. But not one network had the presence of mind to interview a NJ resident or immigrant.

Then, right on cue, came the vindication. Hours past midnight, the Nikkei, Sankei, and Yomiuri dailies were all fed information in time for articles in their Nov 21 morning editions: "Five foreigners snagged!" Huzzah for our new system!

Not so, actually. The Sankei Shimbun admitted they were snagged for odd passports, not fingerprints, which happens every day anyway even before the system was reintroduced.

Thus this was not news. It was propaganda.

Too much success: The propaganda machine becomes illogical and unstoppable
In recent years, GOJ policies have targeted NJ with little sense of responsibility to remain grounded in reality. In October 2007, one month before the abovementioned NJ border fingerprinting was reinstated, the GOJ required that all employers register their NJ workers with the "Hello Work" unemployment agency -- in the name of "cracking down on overstayers". Even though foreign crime began a clear and double-digit decline after 2006 (as did visa overstaying after 1993), police sources were still claiming on public flyers and announcements that foreign crime and overstaying were rising (Debito.org 2007). Yet repeated notifications to the domestic media of this discrepancy by activists produced no mainstream domestic articles.

In 2008, during its annual spring foreign crime update, the NPA had discovered that foreign crime had fallen even further, and by double digits. Kyodo parroted the NPA's need to keep calling a crime drop a rise, putting a "high plateauing" in the Japanese

headline yet a fall in the English translation headline. Citing the article is instructive of NPA tactics:

No. of crimes committed by visiting foreigners down

TOKYO, Feb. 28, 2008 (AP) - (Kyodo):

“The number of crimes committed by foreigners visiting Japan dropped for the second straight year to 35,800 last year, down 10.8 percent from the previous year, after hitting a peak in 2005, the National Police Agency said Thursday.

“However, the number of crimes detected by police during the five-year period from 2003 to 2007 increased some 70 percent from the period of with (*sic*) an NPA official stressing the need for further crackdown on them...”

This sloppy translation of the second paragraph is better understood by looking at the Japanese original (literally translated by the author):

“On the other hand, when looking at the number of cases committed within five year periods, comparing the number of crimes committed between 2003-2007 and 1993-1997, there has been a 70% rise. The NPA says, “Although there have been some rises and falls, in recent years it’s ‘been stopped at a high point’. From now on it’ll be necessary to for us to strengthen our crackdown even more.”

Consider the NPA’s method of convoluting data into a foreign crime rise this time. They have arbitrarily chosen a five-year time frame from the past (even though the NJ population was less), noted that the crime rate was lower than the current five-year time frame, and called the current time frame a comparative rise. This is bad science. Yet it once again was reported as is by Kyodo News with no analysis (even without a professionally-proofed translation). Furthermore, by logical extension, one can never reach any other conclusion but the justification of a further crackdown against NJ. For even if foreign crime fell to *zero*, the police would argue that the fall is due to their strict policies; therefore the crackdown must be maintained. After all, “there’s no such thing as being too careful”. NJ can’t win.

The message: All NJ must be policed. There is, however, insufficient concern about protecting their civil, political, or human rights.

The long-term social damage caused by sustained propagandizing: Dehumanization

NPA and GOJ propaganda has not only affected public trust of NJ, but also dehumanized them. According to an April 2003 GOJ Cabinet Survey of the Japanese Public: “Overall, 54% said that foreigners should have the same protection of human rights as Japanese (*nihon kokuseki o motanai hito demo, nihonjin to onaji yō ni jinken wa mamorubeki da*). This is a steady decline from 68.3% 10 years ago, and 65.5% 5 years ago” (Debito.org 2003b). The reason for this trend? According to the Justice Ministry’s Bureau of Human Rights, this drop was due to “a sudden rise in foreign crime” (Arudou 2007c)

Thus this is quantifiable social damage. When a near-minority (and growing) of a surveyed Japanese public indicate that NJ do not deserve the same human rights as their fellow Japanese humans, this is by definition dehumanization.

Of course, there was no critique in the press on the poor social science within the Cabinet Survey itself, particularly regarding the oddity of making human rights “optional” for NJ in a government document (my critique *ibid*); for no other discriminated minority mentioned in the survey was human rights optional. Even in GOJ-sponsored statistical surveys, NJ were in their own, special, disenfranchised, and dehumanized category in Japanese society.

CONCLUSION

This systematic denial of civil and political rights for peoples in Japan has not escaped notice of the United Nations. Dr. Doudou Diene, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and intolerance, commented in 2005 and 2006 that “Discrimination in Japan is deep and profound”. “As a world power in an era of globalization, Japan has to expand to the outside world. But its society is still closed, spiritually and intellectually centered” (Debito.org 2006). The committee reviewing Japan under the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, which Japan ratified in 1979) has criticized Japan: “The Committee stresses that protection of human rights and human rights standards are not determined by popularity polls. It is concerned by the repeated use of popularity statistics to justify attitudes of the State party that may violate its obligations under the Covenant” (CCPR/C/79/Add.102 1998).

Peek (1991) has noted, “[Article 20 of the ICCPR] calls for the prohibition of propaganda for war and the advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred. The [GOJ] contends that the enactment of such legislation would result in limitations on the freedom of speech.” The problem with the GOJ claiming freedom of speech as a defense against limitations in speech assumes that freedom of speech applies equally to all participants of a debate arena. However, as we have seen above, the unusual degree of influence the Japanese authorities have over the domestic media, and the media’s abdication of its watchdog role to present and defend minority views, have severely disadvantaged the ability of NJ residents to influence their own image and expression in Japan. Simply put, the promotion of disinformation for the sake of GOJ policy pushes has created a media that promotes anti-NJ propaganda in Japan. Given that Japan’s media gets an estimated 90% of its “news” from official sources (Gamble and Watanabe: 62), the GOJ’s wish to deny all members of a society the right to prohibit propaganda, for the sake of maintaining its current regime of propaganda, is, put mildly, disingenuous.

Japan’s media must, as must media in any country, resist the temptation to become cosy with authorities and policymakers. They must not allow the government to propagandize, using public modes of information dispersal as a public mobilizing tool against other peoples, of minorities.

As I teach future reporters in my Nagoya University intensive course on “Media Professionalism”:

<p><i>“With as little bias as possible, Based on as many confirmed facts as possible, Find the essential truth of the situation And report it to others.”</i></p>

Reporters must analyze when they report, or risk becoming part of a propaganda machine.

NOTES

[1] Download the powerpoint presentation associated with this paper, given at Linguapax Asia 2008 Fifth International Symposium, Tokyo University, Sunday, October 26, 2008 at www.debito.org/arudoudebito_linguapaxasia2008.ppt

[2] An exhaustive vault of all collectable non-tabloid (and some tabloid) media regarding the Otaru Onsens Case from its inception on September 19, 1999 to its end on April 8, 2005, are available for reading in chronological order at <http://www.debito.org/nihongotimeline.html#keii>

[3] "Mainstream daily print media" refers to the newspapers Asahi, Mainichi, Yomiuri, Sankei, and Nikkei, regional paper Hokkaido Shimbun, and other regional daily newspapers using wire services from Kyodo, Jiji, or other sources. These are the influential, non-tabloid media that are seen as more trustworthy. The same trends were observed by the author in broadcast radio and television media, but these are harder to substantiate since records were difficult to collect and reproduce in print or online, since the time period is pre-YouTube.

[4] The English-language media in Japan was less reserved. For example, see political cartoon by Roger Dahl, Japan Times, February 14, 2001, where one of the figures caricatured represents "racist bathhouse owners" (emphasis mine). Similarly "Bathhouse racism controversy lingers on" (emphasis mine). The Japan Times, February 21, 2001. The author can find no similarly-worded articles in the Japanese media ever referring to exclusionary enterprisers as *jinshu sabetsu shugisha* in mainstream Japanese media.

[5] *Karthaus et al. vs Earthcure KK and City of Otaru* (i.e. the Otaru Onsens Case) Sapporo District Court decision November 11, 2002, Arudou (2003) page XX

[6] See Otaru City International Communications Chief Takeuchi Kazuho, Sapporo District Court testimony March 15, 2002, page 20, and Otaru City *Kōhō* (the official city monthly newsletter) page, both cited in Arudou (2006a)

[7] Examples at <http://www.debito.org/lawsuitbackground.html>

[8] "Hate Speech" shall be defined under the standard dictionary definitions (Random House, American Heritage) as "speech that attacks a person or group on the basis of race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation."

[9] This would, of course, mean that more than half the contemporary population of registered NJ in Japan were thieves and murderers, so the media once again complicitly revised the quote of "a million" (*100 man nin*) to "many" (*kazu ōku*) for him in its reports. Etō never retracted, amended, or apologized for his clerical error.

[10] Matsuzawa later apologized for the statement, and was re-elected.

[11] "Given the exceptional atmosphere of the event, we must face the possibility of unwanted babies fathered by foreigners who rape our women." Miyagi Prefecture *teireikai* 283, June 27, 2000. See "Person of the Week", Time Magazine May 6, 2002. After the World Cup had concluded and no hooligan rapes had occurred, Konnō refused to retract or amend his statement during a phone interview with the author on July 5, 2002. More analysis at Debito.org (2002).

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