

# Populism and News Sources in Election Coverage: Cases of Elections for Lower House in 2012 and Upper House in 2013<sup>1</sup>

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## Overview

Populism is considered a risk to contemporary democratic societies, as it promotes exclusive nationalism and increases societal divides. Due to the current crisis, the word “populism” has been frequently referred to in the news. Populists are politicians who advocate anti-elitism and criticize existing political forces for representing established interests, rather than the people. The spread of populism is changing the relationship between media and politics. Following the spread of populism, there has been criticism that traditional news media channels spread “fake news.” Populists criticize existing media for reporting fake news rather than voices of the ordinary people. To garner support, populists assert the claim that they represent “true people” and attempt to communicate directly to the population through social media. The traditional media indirectly supports maintaining this claim for reporting populist's activities. Populists attract media attention through their bold activities and are often labeled as political outsiders; consequentially, the media interviews them and reports on their activities. Thus, the media and populism are intertwined.

Distrust in news media is related to the spread of populism. Criticisms of news media often appear on social media. It is important to know whether populists' claim is correct or not. Do traditional news media ignore people's voices? How much do they pay attention to the ordinary people? This study examines coverage of election campaigns as cases because news media tends to report various voices as much as possible for people's choice. Conversely, it would be a risk to democracy in Japan if populist's assertions about news media are correct in election coverage.

1 This paper was originally written for the 2019 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in Washington DC and was revised based on the feedback received. The author would like to appreciate all individual participants in the session.

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This study describes the characteristics of Japanese media by analyzing and comparing how Japanese newspapers reported people's voices during the 2012 and 2013 election campaigns. In the 46<sup>th</sup> Lower House election in 2012, the populist's party "*Nihon Ishin-no Kai*," or Japan Restoration Party (hereafter JRP), progressed. In Japan, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Upper House election in 2013 is the first election that enabled candidates to use the Internet for their electoral campaign. As previously mentioned, the voice of people is an essential factor for populism. This study focuses on the role played by citizens and examines news sources during two election campaigns: the 46<sup>th</sup> Lower House election in 2012 and the 23<sup>rd</sup> Upper House election in 2013.

## Theoretical Framework

### *Populism and the "people": Defining populism*

Regarding the question on what populism is, it is difficult to provide a single definition for populism, since its definition is situationally dependent. In the context of Europe, populism refers to anti-immigration attitudes or xenophobia, whereas, in Latin American, populism refers to the politics of clientelism. Although there is difficulty in the development of a standard definition, there are specific populism characteristics that are shared across all contexts. These characteristics are defined as direct communication with people, anti-elitism rhetoric, and anti-pluralism (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2018: 14-17; Canovan, 1999: 7). Also, populism is considered a political and social problem in liberal democratic states. Liberalism refers to the protection of minority rights whereas democracy puts emphasis on majority's voice. Populism emerges from these conflicting faces; as a result, it is considered as the "dark side" of democracy (Canovan 1999: 3).

In this study, populism is defined as a communication strategy with three main characteristics. First, populists appeal to people with the assertion that they are the sole representation of the people. Second, they provide the people with a dichotomy by criticizing and referencing other political forces as enemies. Third, they claim that their purpose can only be realized by defeating their enemies. Additionally, populists have the capability to communicate with the people; they utilize a tabloid-style of language and display mediagenic traits (Mazzoleni 2003: 5).

The concept of people does not merely indicate citizens or constituents (Canovan 1999: 5). Instead, the word "people" is a political symbol that depends on a struggle over meaning. In this sense, the people as "empty signifiers" is constructed (Laclau 2005). In populist discourse, "people" are grouped into three categories (Canovan, 1999: 5). The first category is "united people." The populist suggests that people have been divided by existing political forces, and that "we" as the "people," need to unite and convey "our" thoughts to the government. The

second category is “our people.” In this case, people who do not belong to “us” are considered “them,” examples include immigrants and refugees. The discourse is formed by distinguishing “them” from “us.” The third category is “ordinary people.” The discourse is formed so that only the populist represents the will of the ordinary people, who are distinctive from the highly educated elites with authoritative liberal ideas.

The media is not among the people who are appealed to by populists. Populists criticize the media by suggesting that the media does not listen to the people but instead represents the elites, so they reinforce the existing order because of their elite-centered sources. Since populists criticize the media for its elitist attitudes, it is crucial to examine how the media reports on the people’s voices. Since, if the media adequately report people’s voices, it can be argued that the media reflects the politics of populism. When the media contends the existing order and social norms, the media tends to regard populists as deviating agents to refrain from reporting on them. As a result, the media unconsciously helps to maintain the status quo (Mazzoleni 2003: 11). Additionally, since populists attempt to reflect the will of people in politics by directly appealing to people without using traditional media, they consider media to be a hindrance to their communication with the people.

Based on previous studies, “populistic” reporting, as referred in this study, has the following three characteristics. First, as noted by populists, traditional media increased the tendency to report voices of outsiders, such as the people who are not categorized among the elite. Namely, “populistic” reporting has fewer elitist attitudes. Second, it applies the dichotomy such as friend or enemy in the reporting. Third, it suggests the importance of defeating enemies.

This study uses Canovan’s third category of the “people”—ordinary people— and analyses how much voices of ordinary people has reflected on the news. Also this study only focuses on the first aspect of “populistic” reporting. The decision to focus on the first characteristic is due to the importance of analyzing the voices that are frequently quoted or referred to in the news. Although it is also important to analyze the news content, this study does not analyze it because it is first necessary to first examine the data on the voices before conducting further research. Therefore, the analysis of the news content will be conducted after first examining the voices.

### ***Literature review: Journalist’s sources and exemplification***

This study analyzes the media coverage on election campaigns with reference to previous studies on journalistic sources. The Literature has significant research that examines journalist sources. For example, journalist employs the role of a gatekeeper in selecting information for news-making (Gans, 1979), and is

sometimes, an “index” of political elites (Bennett, 1990), since the selections of news sources is a routine aspect of journalistic activities (Tuchman, 1978). Previous studies have revealed that the media does not express the voice of citizens. For example, a study on the news sources during the election campaigns in the United Kingdom (2009-2017), indicated that journalists used public opinion to serve their frames and narratives in related reporting. As a result, rather than directly reflecting public opinion, the media represents public opinion in a misleading manner (Cushion, 2018: 654). Although longitudinal research reveals that the use of vox pop – voice of ordinary people – has increased over the years (Kleemans et al. 2017: 475), many studies conclude that journalists tend to depend on institutional, rather than citizen sources.

In journalism, sources are more than just “information.” The practice of exemplification is a legitimate journalistic device used by the media that has a substantial influence on people’s perception. It involves the usage of individual statements to broach an issue, and ordinary people are used as exemplars randomly selected by a journalist to illustrate a news story. According to Zillmann et al. (1996), exemplar opinions expressed as representatives of public opinion in the media is more effective than the content of the media reports themselves. In the study, subjects in three groups were asked to read articles containing actual rates and estimates provided by exemplars. The study found out that the subjects tend to forget the base-rate information and remembered exemplar’s estimates. In the election campaign, the exemplars in the news influenced the perceived climate of opinion more than the opinion poll itself (Daschmann, 2000).

Moreover, other research found out that the exemplars of the ordinary people have significantly more impact than experts and politicians who were quoted in the television news (Lefevere et al., 2012). Due to the strong influence of exemplars (qualitative quotes) on ordinary people, the kind of people who tend to become an exemplar in the news should be investigated. This research found that “they (exemplars) are racially less diverse, older, and more educated. Also, qualitative quotes are used to give meaning to the raw statistical data; they are woven into the narrative structure of news stories and generally support the headline” (Gaskins et al., 2019: 11). These research findings also suggest that audiences do not intensively read news articles; instead, they obtain an impression of who was quoted. Thus, it is necessary to examine whose statements are quoted in the news.

### ***Research on Exemplification and News Source in Japan***

Substantial research supports the claim of a strong influence on people’s perceived climate of opinion by exemplar. In Japan, however, limited research has been conducted on exemplars and news sources. Hashimoto et al., (1997) researched

the effect of exemplars in the news on Japanese population, and the results found that television media should exercise more caution in the introduction of “vox pop” to news programs, however, the study did not examine the influence of the newspaper.

Contrary to exemplification research, research on the sources of news has been conducted in Japan. For example, Kabashima (1990) investigated the accessibility of organizations and institutions to journalists of national newspapers. The research revealed that social movements and pressure groups had access to newspaper journalists. Conversely, Krauss (2000), demonstrated that the Japanese television news programs that aired during the 1990s, mostly reported bureaucratic voices since the programs were dependent on the press club or “Kisha” club<sup>i</sup> for their sources. Additionally, even though there were massive social movements against forced lawmaking, the news programs mainly reported politicians’ voices, and “indexed” Congressional debates (Mitani, 2015). Moreover, a comparative study on 11 countries on political news sources revealed that on the subject of public issues, television news emphasized the government and ruling party, and only reflected vox pop 12% of the time (Curran et al., 2017: 826). These studies highlight that Japanese news media tends to report the voices of political sources more so than those of social movements/pressure groups and citizens, despite knowing and having access to the latter’s voices. Even though a survey was conducted on vox pops (Curran et al., 2017), the studies did not examine the construction of people in populist politics.

## Method and Measurements

This study compares news coverage of elections won and lost by the populist party to examine the difference in the election coverages. The 46th Lower House election was an election where a third political party other than the major political parties, Liberal Democratic Party and the Democratic Party of Japan, extended the seat in parliament. The populist party JRP first appeared in national elections and acquired seats to become the third party of parliament. Toru Hashimoto, founder and co-head of the JRP, is a typical example of a populist in Japan (Yoshida, 2019). He asserted that he was fighting against the established forces, whom were labeled as resistance forces, and he gained the people’s support through an appeal for reformation. His communication skills also contributed to his party victory in the Lower House election 2012. However, despite half a year after the Lower House election, the number of seats acquired by JRP in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Upper House election was small, as a result, Toru Hashimoto stated that he would retire from politics. Namely,

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<sup>i</sup> The Kisha club provides exclusive access to information by central or local governments and business associates with its membership organizations.

this study plans to compare the news coverage of the populist party winning and losing elections and how the media differs in the media coverage from the perspective of “ordinary people.”

This study analyzes the newspaper coverage of these elections. The 23rd Upper House election is the first election that allowed the use of the Internet for campaigns. Consequentially, remarks made on Twitter by Hashimoto drew public attention. Previous research suggests that voters supported the JRP because images of Hashimoto depicted “strong leadership,” and “orientation to conservatism” (Zenkyo and Sakamoto, 2013: 85). However, those images were constructed by traditional media, and not through the Internet. In 2013, the candidates for Upper House tended to only use the Internet for announcing the date and location of their public speech (Uenohara, 2014). Additionally, in a study on voter’s behavior on the elections mentioned above, Arata Yamazaki found that voters were more exposed to television news programs and newspaper articles than to the Internet (Yamazaki, 2015: 105). Thus television news and newspaper were the most utilized by the voters.

Traditional news media paid more attention to the Internet in the Upper House election because its usage was allowed for election campaigns. The news media tried to communicate the voices on the Internet as one aspect of public opinion by reporting responses on the Internet. Thus they are expected to report people’s voices more in the Upper House election than previous elections.

The following analysis has two hypotheses. The first hypothesis is that newspapers conducted more “populistic” coverage for the Lower House election than for the Upper House election. This is because the JRP achieved a big victory over the 46<sup>th</sup> Lower House election. As discussed above, this study refers to populistic coverage as the number of political outsider voices that are most reported, such as the voices of ordinary people. The second hypothesis is that there is expected to be more reported voices of ordinary people in the Upper House election than the Lower House election. This is because the Internet use for campaign became allowed in the Upper House election in 2013.

News stories were selected from *Yomiuri Shimbun* (hereafter, *Yomiuri*) and *Asahi Shimbun* (hereafter, *Asahi*). Both are national newspapers with a countrywide readership of more than 5 million subscribers each, and they provide coverage of national, international, and local news events. This paper only analyzed the news published by the Tokyo branch of both newspapers and does not review news published by other regional offices. The reasoning is that other regional offices publish regional news while other news is shared with the Tokyo branch. Also, the

analysis focused on the JRP, which is popular in the Osaka area. Hence, to examine the nationwide trend, this paper only analyzed stories published by the Tokyo branch.

For both elections, this study coded stories beginning from public noticing day to voting day: December 4 to December 16, 2012, and July 4 to July 21, 2013. From the *Yomiuri* and *Asahi*, a total of 886 news stories about the 46<sup>th</sup> Lower House election were coded, of which 476 stories were from *Yomiuri* and 410 from *Asahi*. As for the July 2013 23<sup>rd</sup> Upper House election, a total of 810 news stories were coded, of which 446 stories were from *Yomiuri* and 364 from *Asahi*. Both newspapers have news archives on the Internet. Stories that include the words “Lower House election” or “Upper House election” were extracted and coded (Table 1 and 2). The analysis used quoted statements and information from the coded stories during the same period. When the same person appears several times in one article, it was coded as a single case ( $N=1120$ ) for Lower House election, and ( $N=1131$ ) for the Upper House election.

For the 46<sup>th</sup> Lower House election in 2012 (Table 1), the category *Political elite sources* ( $N=561$ ; 50.1% of the total number of sources) included representatives of national government who belonged to the ruling parties (the Democratic Party of Japan and the People’s New Party) and opposition parties (the Liberal Democratic Party, the *Komeito*, the Japan Communist Party, Social Democratic Party, and Your Party, New Party *Daichi*, New Party *Nippon*, New Renaissance Party, Tomorrow Party of Japan). It also includes representatives of local governments such as governors or mayors. Additionally, national government bureaucrats and members of a committee that was set up by the government; other political elites are also categorized in this category.

Furthermore, the category *other elite sources* ( $N=227$ ; 20.3% of the total number of sources) included sources from economic elites, experts, media, journalists, and pressure groups.

The category *civil society sources* ( $N=332$ ; 29.6% of the total number of sources) includes sources from citizens who participated in gatherings of social movement groups and are not full members of such organizations or groups. It also included sources from ordinary people who did not commit themselves to any activities.

For the 23<sup>rd</sup> Upper House election in 2013 (Table 2), the category *political elite sources* ( $N=673$ ; 59.5% of the total number of sources) includes representatives of national government who belong to the ruling parties (the Liberal Democratic Party

Table 1. Types and brief descriptions of sources for the 46<sup>th</sup> Lower House Election (N=1120)

Source types/roles (N ; % of the total number of sources)	Summary of source description
Political elite sources (N=561; 50.1%)	
Politicians of ruling parties (N=165; 14.7%)	Representatives of government agencies who belong to the ruling parties the of the Democratic Party of Japan and the People's New Party
Politicians of opposition parties (N=371; 33.1%)	Representatives and politicians of the opposition parties: the Liberal Democratic Party, the <i>Komeito</i> , <i>Nihon-Ishinno Kai</i> , the Japan Communist Party, Social Democratic Party, and Your Party, New Party <i>Daichi</i> , New Party <i>Nippon</i> , New Renaissance Party, and the Tomorrow Party of Japan
Politicians or bureaucrats of local governments (N=14; 1.3%)	Representatives or bureaucrats of local governments
Bureaucrats or commissioners (N=10; 0.9%)	Bureaucrats or a member of a committee that is established by the national government
Others (N=1; 0.1%)	Other political elites such as minister of another country or family member of prime minister
Other elite sources (N=227; 20.3%)	
Economic elites (N=12; 1.1%)	Sources from economic elites such as presidents or CEO of corporations in TSE first section
Experts (N=137; 12.2%)	Sources from academicians or intellectuals who remain outside the government
Media/journalists (N=53; 4.7%)	Explicit reference to information obtained from media or journalists who are not involved in the construction of the news story
Pressure groups (N=25; 2.2%)	Members of pressure groups that could affect the national government. It includes industry associations
Civil Society Sources (N=332; 29.6%)	
Social movements (N=15; 1.3%)	National or local social movement organizations such as NPO. This includes citizens who participate in gatherings of social movement/pressure groups without being full-time members of such organizations
Ordinary people (N=317; 28.3%)	Ordinary people who are not committed, or do not participate in activities; also known as the "man-in-the-street" or vox pop

Table 2. Types and brief descriptions of sources for the 23<sup>rd</sup> Upper House Election (N=1131)

Source types/roles	Summary of source description (N ; % of the total number of sources)
Political elite sources (N=673; 59.5%)	
Politicians of ruling parties (N=253; 22.4%)	Representatives of government agencies who belong to the ruling parties: the Liberal Democratic Party and the <i>Komeito</i>
Politicians of opposition parties (N=406; 35.9%)	Representatives and politicians of opposition parties: the Democratic Party of Japan, <i>Nihon Ishin-no Kai</i> , the Japan Communist Party, Social Democratic Party, and Your Party, New Party <i>Daichi</i> , the Green Wind, and the People's Life Party.
Politicians or bureaucrats of local governments (N=11; 1.0%)	Representatives of local governments
Bureaucrats or commissioners (N=1; 0.1%)	Bureaucrats or a member of a committee that is established by the national government
Others (N=2; 0.2%)	Other political elites such as minister of another country or family member of the prime minister
Other elite sources (N=143; 12.6%)	
Economic elites (N=19; 1.7%)	Sources from economic elites such as presidents or CEO of companies in TSE first section
Experts (N=66; 5.8%)	Sources from academicians or intellectuals who remain outside the government
Media/journalists (N=48; 4.2%)	Explicit reference to information obtained from media or journalists who were not involved in the construction of the news story
Pressure groups (N=10; 0.9%)	Members of pressure groups that will affect the national government. It includes industry associations
Civil Society Sources (N=315; 27.9%)	
Social movements (N=22; 1.9%)	National or local social movement organizations such as NPO. This includes citizens who participated in gatherings of social movement/pressure groups without being full-time members of such organizations
Ordinary people (N=293; 25.9%)	Ordinary people who are not committed to or do not participate in any activities; also known as the "man-in-the-street" or vox pop

and the *Komeito*), and opposition parties (the Democratic Party of Japan, the Japan Communist Party, Social Democratic Party, and Your Party, New Party *Daichi*, *Nihon Ishin-no Kai*, the Green Wind and People's Life Party). It also includes representatives of local governments such as governor or mayor. It also included bureaucrats of national governments and members of a committee that is set up by the government.

The category *other elite sources* ( $N=143$ ; 12.6% of the total number of sources) included sources from economic elites, experts, media, journalists, and pressure groups.

The category *civil society sources* ( $N=315$ ; 27.9% of the total number of sources) includes sources from citizens who are full member of a social movement organization such as an NGO or NPO, or who participated in gatherings of social movement groups without being full members of such organizations or groups. It also includes sources from the ordinary people who do not committed themselves to any activities.

The following section discusses the results. First, it reviews whether news coverage depicts Hashimoto as a populist politician. Secondly, it examines the various voices of people reported in the media coverage.

## Discussion

### ***Quality of Sources: Is Hashimoto reported as a populist in news coverage?***

In this study, populism is defined as a communication strategy with three characteristics: 1) populist depicts themselves as represents the people, 2) they providing a dichotomy that villainizes the opposition, and 3) they mention the defeat of enemies. During the analytical period, the second and third characteristics were found in Hashimoto's quoted remarks. Specifically, Hashimoto regarded the "vested interest," including mass media, as enemies and verbally attacked them in his speech and on the Internet, through tweets.

Party leaders made most remarks in the *political elite* source. Specifically, the populist party JRP's remarks were from party leader Shintaro Ishihara and co-leader Hashimoto. For the Lower House election, some of their quoted remarks in the news articles came from Hashimoto's Twitter account, but the majority were directly quoted from public speeches. Their quoted remarks were composed of not only policies, but included tabloid-style languages such as, "Japan would sink if things don't change" (*Yomiuri*, December 12, 2014) and "stupid rule" (*Yomiuri*, December 6, 2012). Moreover, they represented themselves as heroes for Japan. For example,

they called themselves “double-headed eagle,” and Ishihara referred to Hashimoto as “Ushiwakamaru,” and himself as “Benkei.” Ushiwakamaru and Benkei are famous historical heroic Japanese figures. Ishihara emphasized Hashimoto’s youth and promoted his fresh images. Their message was “to destroy vested interest and promote Japan’s growth.” Criticism of vested interests is typical populist language.

In the Upper House election in 2013, Hashimoto was required to explain his comments on the issue of women’s comfort, which is historical disputes between Japan and South Korea on the forced sexual services during the World War 2. In May 2013, he justified the system of comfort, which resulted in massive criticism. Due to the criticism, he stated that mass media misreported his remarks. Hashimoto also argued on the necessity for reform in politics. There were no words or expressions found in any articles that referenced Hashimoto as a hero. *Yomiuri* and *Asahi* reported Hashimoto with concerning the issue of comfort women.

***Quantity of Sources: How many voices of ordinary people were reflected in the news?***

Based on the news articles, it is evident that Hashimoto was represented as a populist during both election campaigns. This leads to the question of how many voices were reflected in the news during both election campaigns that featured populists. This study examines two hypotheses. The first hypothesis is the newspapers conducted “populistic” coverage more so in the Lower House election than in the Upper House election.

In the lower house election, the majority of the quoted remarks on political elites were about them and their party’s policies. There was not small amount of voices relating to the Fukushima Prefecture. One of their main policies was recovery from the disasters of the Great East Japan Earthquake and the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster. Additionally, four party leaders began a campaign in the Fukushima Prefecture. These contributed to reporting voices about Fukushima.

Concerning the number of quotes reported, the voices of politicians of ruling and opposition parties were the most reported. As shown in Tables 1 and 2, in both elections, the voices of political elites were the most reported. Among the political elites, the voice of politicians and opposition parties were the most reported. In the Lower House election, there were two ruling parties and ten opposition parties. In the Upper House election, there were two ruling parties and eight opposition parties. The media, to some extent, attempted to report the policies and candidates of each party equally, which is why the number of voices for the opposition parties’ politicians was reported more than politicians of the ruling parties. It is the data from *Civil society sources* that contrasts existing research. In existing research, ‘vox pop’

is only referred to as 12% of social and political problems (Curran et al., 2018), but in this study, around 30% were seen in both elections for the Lower House and the Upper House. Thus, during the election, the Japanese newspaper reported on voices of relatively ordinary people.

An overall trend is that during the election campaign, the voice of political elites was the most reported, and the voice of ordinary people is more reported than reports on other problems. In both of the newspapers, the number of politicians of ruling/opposition parties had increased. Figure 1 and 2 show the difference by the newspaper. Among *Other elite sources*, the experts' voices were the most reported. There were many forms such as interviewing experts on evaluations of policies of each party. However, the number of experts has decreased in the Upper House election in the *Asahi* and *Yomiuri*. The decreased number is added to the politicians of ruling and opposition parties.

However, the number of quotes of the JRP politicians are not small (see Figure 3 and 4). Hashimoto's argument that their voices are not reflected in the news is incorrect. Also, in the Lower House election campaign, both newspapers reported the people's voices more than the Upper House election campaign. The ratio of the civil society sources are similar; 29.6% for the Lower House election, 27.9% for the Upper House election. From these numbers, it can be concluded that the newspaper did not do the "populistic" coverage. Instead, in the Lower House election, they reported multiple voices of JRP politicians and the voices of ordinary people

Hence, the first hypothesis, although partly correct, failed; the newspapers reported more voice of political outsiders in the Lower House election than in the Upper House election. However, both newspapers reported voices of ordinary people more than other issues, and they adequately reported the voices of populist party JRP candidates when compared to other opposition parties. As an overall trend, the newspaper's attitude was elitist. We cannot regard the newspaper coverage during the Lower House election as populist.

The second hypothesis, which asserts that in the Upper House election, more voices of ordinary people would be reported than in the Lower House election, also failed. There was no indication that existing media positively picked up the voices on the Internet or reported people's voices more than before even though the usage of the Internet for elections was allowed. Concerning the allowance of the Internet for use in the election campaign, the Internet use did not have a big influence on the *Yomiuri*. Figures 1 and 2 show that the *Yomiuri* decreased its number of ordinary people in the Upper House election while the *Asahi* increased it a few.

Figure 1. The number of quotes of each categories in Asahi

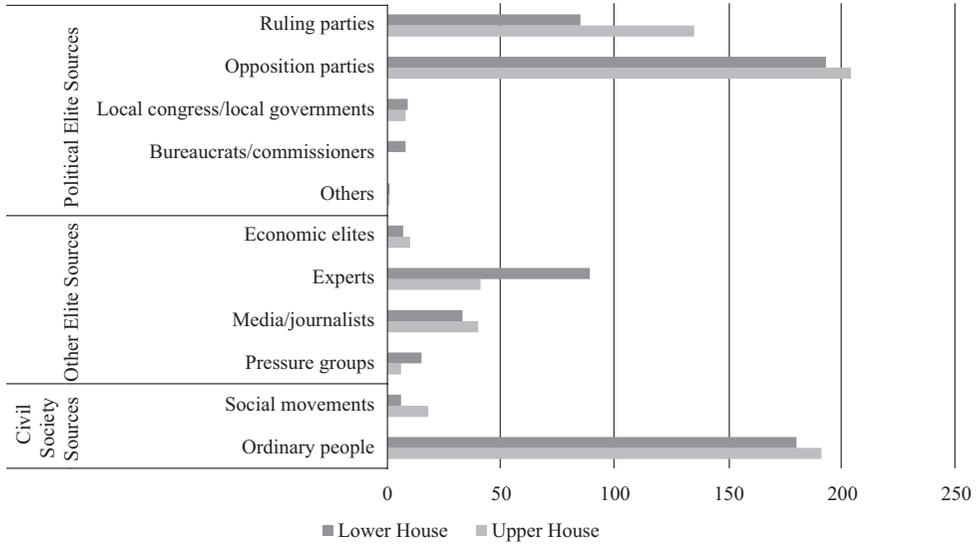


Figure 2. The number of quotes of each categories in Yomiuri

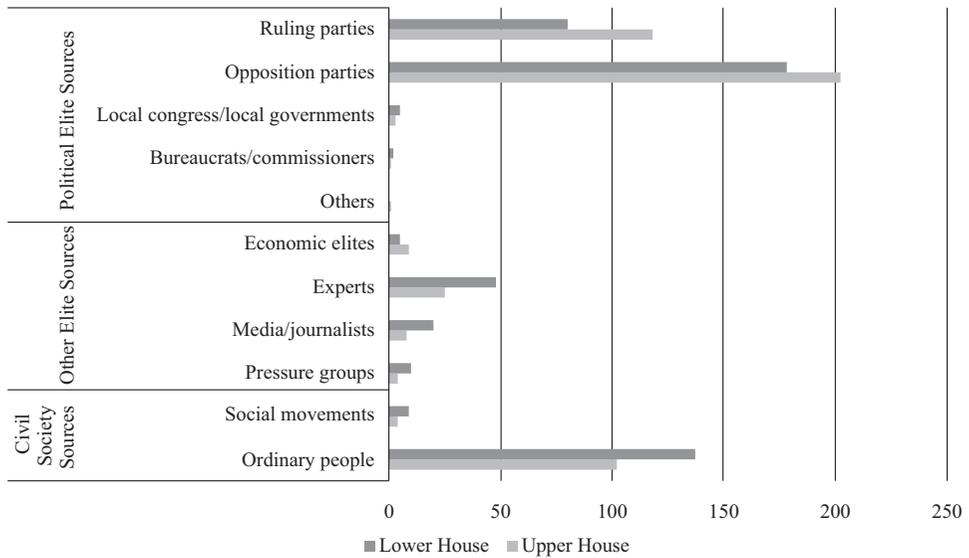


Figure 3. The number of quotes of politicians in the Lower Housje election coverage

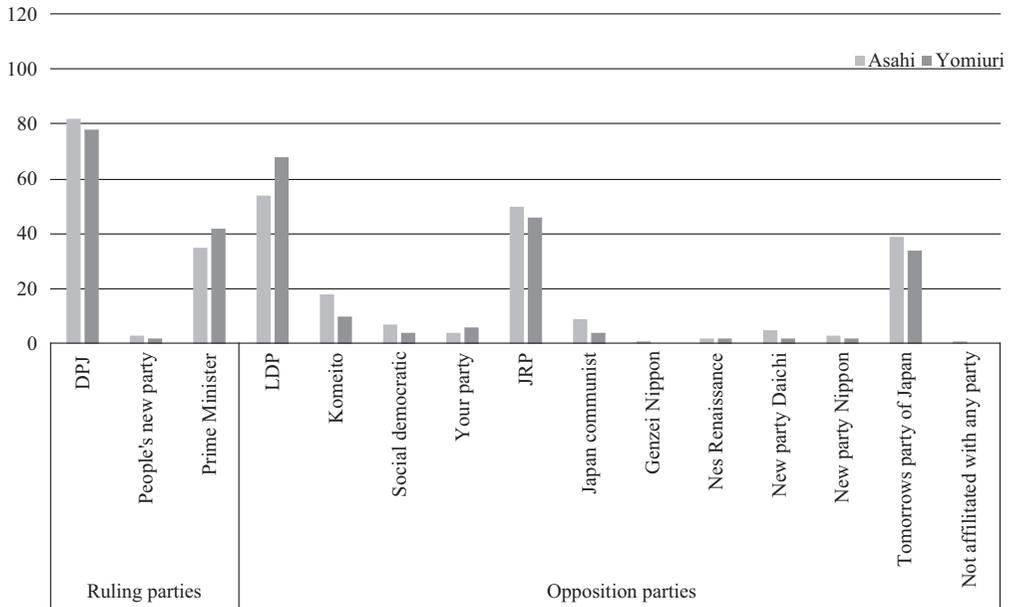
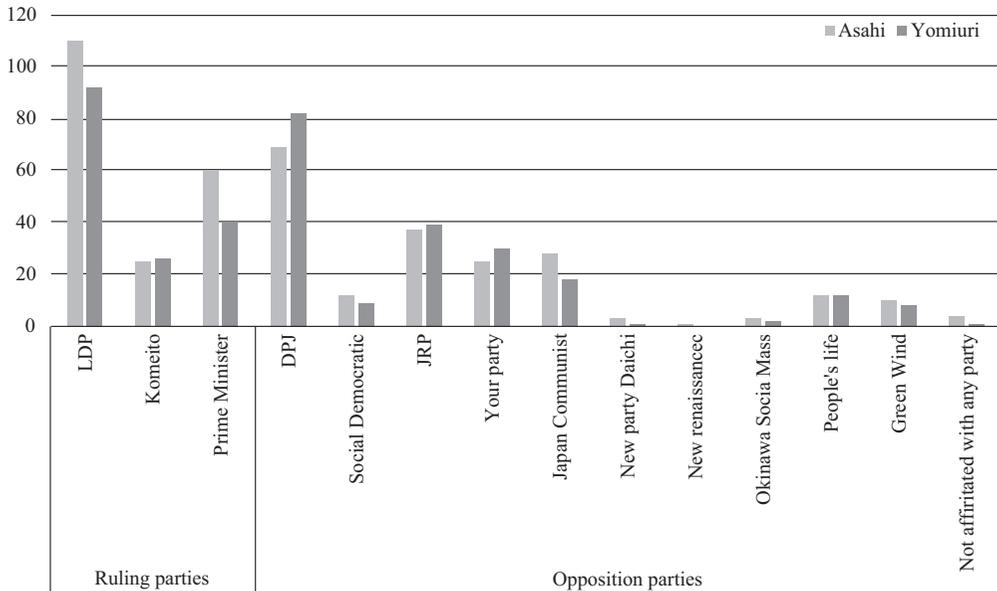


Figure 4. The number of quotes of politicians in the Upper House election coverage



The reason for the failure of both hypotheses is that it needed to consider the difference of interest between the Lower House election and the Upper House election. The election for Lower House generally garners the public's attention more than the one for the Upper House. Also, the Lower House election in 2012 led to a change of government. During the Upper House election, the *Yomiuri* seemingly reduce the number of ordinary people's voices, possibly because it reported on the Lower House election more than usual. Second, the newspaper, as well as the candidates, did not know how they could use the Internet during the election campaign because they may not have fully understood what was allowed under the Public Offices Election Act; which could explain why the candidates just used the Internet for scheduled announcement of public speeches.

The voices of ordinary people tended to be actively reported during both elections. However, after the election, it is certain that the number will decline significantly. The voices of social movements were rarely reported in the media. Non-elites are not actively expressing their opinions in politics, and are positioned as passive beings.

## Conclusion

The populist party advanced politically in the Lower House election of 2012. The Upper House election of 2013 allowed the use of the Internet for election campaigns. These changes are thought to have had a major impact on political communication, especially on traditional media coverage. However, the findings of this study indicate that it had no significant impact on the political communication in the 2012 and 2013 elections.

There are three limitations to this study. First, these results should have been compared to previous or recent election campaign data. When compared with recent examples, it is necessary to study whether changes in political communication have occurred, when they occurred, and why. Even though, the voices of the ordinary people were reported more than other issues, it is important to compare them with previous elections. Second, this study lacks in an inclusive analysis of populist reporting. It only focuses on one aspect of "populistic" reporting. Other aspects also need to be examined. Third, this study did not analyze different forms of media, such as television and the Internet. It only reviewed newspaper articles, because there is a public television archive in Japan. These questions and limitations will be the subject of future research. Despite these findings, it is still necessary to examine whether populism is affecting traditional media coverage, since this study only reviewed the elections of 2012 and 2013, and the populist political environment in Japan is thought to have become more "populistic" since then.

[Acknowledgements] This research was funded by JSPS Grant Number JP19K20931.

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