CORRESPONDENTS GIVE THEIR VIEWS
ON JAPAN-U.S. NEWS COVERAGE

Survey of Foreign Correspondents
Based in Tokyo and Washington, D.C.

A Gateway in Hawaii Between Asia and America
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Based in Tokyo and Washington, D.C.

For discussion at

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Coverage of Frictions Between Two Nations

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I. INTRODUCTION

Many foreign correspondents based in Tokyo and Washington, D.C. believe uneasy Japanese-American relations will become more strained in the coming months with the growth of emotional "bashing" in the mass media in both countries.

A majority of those journalists questioned in a survey expect increased bitterness stemming from such problems as lop-sided trade, highly visible investment in U.S. motion picture companies and real estate, and Japan's perceived reluctance to share the burden in the Gulf War.

The survey by the East-West Center also disclosed a substantial number of American and Japanese journalists acknowledge that adversarial-style reporting and commentary heightens emotional antagonisms.

"We could be heading for a crisis in the Japan-American relationship," declared Sam Jameson, Los Angeles Times bureau chief with 28 years of experience reporting from Japan. His response to a survey question asking whether press coverage of Japanese-American disputes contributed to rising tensions:

"Very much so--but mainly the trouble is caused by the writings on Japan of U.S.-based reporters and commentators."

Jameson saw the possibility of protectionist legislation against Japanese products and even a rupture in the Japan-U.S. mutual security pact.

It is noteworthy that both American and Japanese correspondents, in significant numbers, placed main responsibility on editors back home for what one called "the emotional war of words."

One comment from a long-time U.S. journalist in Tokyo: "In general, editors seem eager to overdramatize and overdraw what is really going on." A Japanese correspondent responded: "Most editors want stories on controversy or sensational events. They tend to focus on 'What's wrong with America' and are not interested in 'What works in America.'"
Robert Neff, Business Week correspondent who knows Japan well from early school days there, said "My biggest problem is getting editors to acknowledge that much of the blame lies in the United States, and preventing oversimplification and stereotyping. It's not good enough to say, for example, simply that Japan is a closed market. It's not that black-and-white."

Edith Terry, correspondent for the Globe and Mail (Toronto, Canada), commented: "Too much American reporting is driven by the political priorities set by Washington and editorial boards. The result is a polarization of reporting along political lines (for or against Japan) and too little attention is paid to other political currents such as rising nationalism or regional issues such as the Japan-U.S.-China triangle, for example. You could say of American journalism here that it is both overly tolerant and overly critical of Japanese mores."

Terry's view of Japanese reporting: "Japanese coverage reflects almost no understanding at all of the vast scale of investment directed at the U.S. over a very short time period. They tend to cover it as a strange racist aberration of American sentiment."

"There's a horribly myopic and obsessive quality, in both countries, in the way some reporters focus on U.S.-Japan relationships without looking at the surrounding context."

While acknowledging the media role in heightening tensions between the two countries, there was general agreement that news coverage reflected the bitter disputes, rather than causing them. American correspondents tended to blame both sides. For example, Bernard Krisher, Parade Magazine correspondent with 27 years experience reporting from Japan, noted: "U.S. businessmen feel Japan is unfair, while the Japanese think Americans are lazy." Seiichiro Mishina of Nihon Keizai Shimbun thought root causes of the current misunderstandings were: "Loss of competitiveness of U.S. industry; Japanese ignorance of U.S. society."

Japanese journalists were asked to give their opinions on American coverage of Japan, while Americans were asked to assess Japanese coverage of American news. Responses varied widely, of course, but a frequent Japanese criticism was articulated by Rikuo Sato, Mainichi bureau chief in Washington as follows: "American lack of basic understanding of 1) Japanese history; 2) Japanese culture; 3) Japanese way of life."
American criticism of Japanese reporting came in such comments as: "Coverage relies on stereotypes--portraying the United States as all Hollywood or Harlem....Pack reporting, especially over-reliance on Japanese officialdom.....insistence of Japanese editors on writing sexy stories."

Other notable points highlighted by the research:

* Both American and Japanese journalists generally agreed, however, that reporting on both sides had improved substantially in the last few years. Nobuyuki Sato, veteran Kyodo News Service bureau chief in Washington, commented: "Many Japanese correspondents now have developed their own sources, rather than relying on official handouts. They have become more free in criticizing Japanese official positions. For example note the coverage of the SII (Structural Impediments Initiatives) talks."

* Chicago Tribune correspondent Ronald Yates, with more than nine years experience in Japan dating back to the mid-70s, said American reporters "now have better language ability and a better grasp of economic fundamentals."

* The number of American correspondents in Tokyo who speak the Japanese language reasonably well has increased substantially over the last 10 years. But, in the words of one reporter, "We have a long way to go, especially when you consider that only a handful can read the Japanese characters in newspapers and books."

* Language also is a problem for Japanese reporters based in the U.S. Almost without exception, Japanese correspondents in Washington said their biggest problem was "lack of access" to American government officials. But further inquiry made it clear that for most correspondents their spoken English was usually not good enough to build up personal contacts with news sources.

* Although a majority of both Japanese and American correspondents were pessimistic about the future of the Japan-United States relationship, most emphasized the need for more study and more reporting on the history and cultures that shape misunderstandings.

Correspondents in both countries generally agreed that Japan's slowness in supporting the U.S. and the United Nations in the Gulf War had further damaged Washington-Tokyo relations. Several American reporters in Tokyo, however, felt much American criticism was excessive, pointing out that Japan had committed thirteen billion dollars to the Gulf effort, compared to five or six billion dollars from Germany.
"We are now in the most critical period of this (Japan-U.S.) relationship in 40 years," according to Takashi Oka, Japan-born Christian Science Monitor correspondent. "The U.S. relationship was the one tie Japan could count on. It can no longer take this relationship for granted, but there is no easy alternative."

Yuzo Osawa, on his third assignment in the U.S. as Washington bureau chief of Tokyo Shimbun, said he expected the differences between the U.S. and Japanese governments to deepen "because the U.S. is getting more frustrated at losing its unequivocal status as the world's super-power. On the other hand, Japan will remain reluctant to take up the burden as a major political power."

Ayako Doi, now editor of the daily Washington newsletter "Japan Digest" after serving as Washington correspondent for the Japan Times and as a Newsweek correspondent in Tokyo, blamed media treatment of disputes for increasing tensions in both countries.

"For example," she added, "Japanese public opinion turned markedly against the U.S. around the time Japanese TV was showing repeatedly the videotape of U.S. lawmakers smashing Toshiba videocassette recorders on the steps of the U.S. Capitol. By the same token, deterioration of friendly feeling toward Japan in the U.S. paralleled the somewhat paranoid press coverage about Japan 'buying up America' by the New York Times, the Atlantic, the New Republic, to name a few."

Ninety per cent of the Japanese correspondents questioned were convinced the disputes between their two countries would become more serious. Two-thirds of the American and other Western journalists questioned in Tokyo were equally pessimistic.

A typical comment from the more cautiously optimistic one-third of those polled, however, was made by Edward Neilan, Washington Times correspondent with more than six years experience in Japan:

"The United States and Japan couldn't get a divorce even if they wanted to. That may be good or bad, but it's a reality. The two biggest, most successful democracies in history, from two differing cultures, inevitably will have frictions. But the outlook is actually quite positive. We're still talking."
Hiroshi Yamada, Washington bureau chief for Yomiuri Shimbun (Japan's largest newspaper with a daily circulation of over 9,000,000), said "Japan could easily become the No. 1 target if frustrations in the American people increase", but added that changes in the world made closer relations more necessary than ever.

The survey of Tokyo and Washington correspondents was conducted in the journalism program of the East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii. The Center was established by the U.S. Congress in 1960 to promote better relations and understanding between the United States and Asian/Pacific nations. Data collected in the research survey included the backgrounds of the working correspondents, their views on problems of covering the news in countries of two differing cultures, and their recommendations for improving coverage.

The importance with which the Japanese regard their relationship with the United States can be seen in the fact that there were 237 Japanese journalists stationed in the United States last year. This compares, for example, with a total of 163 Japanese correspondents stationed in all of Europe, including Moscow, according to the 1990 report of the Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association (Nihon Shinbun Kyokai). U.S. media organizations have about 70 fulltime correspondents stationed in Tokyo (many of them also responsible for covering South Korea and other Asian countries) and an estimated 25 part-time correspondents, or stringers.

One of the recommendations resulting from the survey proposes a program to provide intensive English language training and working experience on regional American newspapers for Japanese journalists being assigned by their organizations to work in the U.S. (See Section VII below for details.) This would provide experienced Japanese journalists, who already have studied English in school but need concentrated practice to achieve fluency, with a better understanding of diverse American lifestyles and cultures they won't encounter when they go on to work in Washington, D.C. or New York City. Somewhat comparable orientation programs should be available for American journalists going to Japan, although there would be differences in emphasis.

Thirty-two correspondents in Tokyo (most of them working for U.S. publications) and nineteen Japanese journalists stationed in the U.S. responded to in-depth questionnaires. Others were interviewed by the research project leader in both capitals. To ensure the utmost candor, respondents were guaranteed anonymity unless their permission was obtained later for attribution on viewpoints where direct quotation would add authority and credibility.
Detailed information resulting from responses to the research questionnaire and interviews will be found in following sections of this report, together with a list of journalists who participated. Prof. Jim Richstad of the University of Oklahoma's School of Journalism and Mass Communication collaborated in drafting the research questionnaire and analysed some of the initial responses while a Fellow at the East-West Center's Institute of Culture and Communication. Paul Addison, a consultant at Nihon Keizai Shimbun, assisted in research in Tokyo. Julian Weiss, founder/director of the Washington Roundtable for the Asia-Pacific Press (WRAP), assisted in the research in Washington, D.C.

II. PRINCIPAL PROBLEMS IN COVERING JAPAN

All of the American and other Western correspondents questioned--except for the half dozen or so who speak Japanese fluently--said that language was the biggest problem in day-to-day reporting in Japan. Even those who devote considerable time to language study find it next to impossible to conduct a serious interview in Japanese--hence the need for good interpreters and translators.

There were sharp differences of opinion, however, on whether gaining access to Japanese officials and business leaders was more difficult than in other industrialized countries.

"Language is obviously the biggest obstacle," commented David Sanger, a business writer for the New York Times who was assigned to Japan in 1988. "Access to news sources, both official and business, is better than I expected. Usually, Japanese seem to want to explain themselves to readers of the Times. But companies with little international business tend to be more secretive and non-cooperative, as are the government agencies that deal almost exclusively with domestic problems."

Another experienced correspondent, however, stated flatly that "access is the major problem," adding:

"Access is not only a question of getting to see someone within an organization. That involves an excessive amount of rigmarole--presenting question lists, for example, for interviews with minor officials. Within organizations, it is rare to get beyond the level of basic (often rudimentary) information. It is almost impossible to break down apparently universal reluctance to offer insight or interpretation."
One correspondent who has worked in Japan for nearly a quarter of a century responded to the question about difficulties in reporting as follows: "The absolutely top 'difficulty' is Japanese hesitancy to be frank and truthful with strangers, foreigners in particular. Their friends might judge them as show-offs. Truth is relative, often dangerous to express. The language itself is vague. Corporate officials or group representatives can't speak for themselves. Government bureaucracy is secretive. Religious leaders, too, fear making waves."

A contrary view came from Ian C.F. Rodger, who has reported from Japan for the British newspaper Financial Times. His response: "Virtually no difficulties. Information is available. Officials are no more or less forthcoming on delicate subjects than in the United States or the United Kingdom."

A similar opinion came from Charles Smith, a long time resident of Japan who reports for Hong Kong's Far Eastern Economic Review: "Apart from the language barrier, access is not a serious problem in Japan. But most issues are complex. This makes it hard to satisfy editors who want clear-cut, black-and-white stories."

"The biggest difficulty is that news (in Japan) doesn't happen, but instead just sort of oozes out," declared Bradley Martin, Newsweek correspondent with more than 10 years experience in Japan. "American editors are accustomed to more clearly defined news events, and it is hard to know when to do a particular story."

Several American and other Western reporters complained about barriers to news coverage erected by Japanese journalists who form monopolistic "kisha clubs" which control the flow of news from most government ministries and offices. But such complaints were fewer than was the case 10 or 15 years ago when foreign correspondents in Tokyo were fighting hard to open up the press conferences and other news events to non-Japanese reporters. A few correspondents said some key ministries (foreign affairs and international trade, for example) now provide greater access for foreign correspondents. American and other Western correspondents still maintain the "kisha club" system is a pernicious influence in Japanese journalism.
James P. Colligan, Catholic News Service correspondent with 23 years experience in Japan, gave this outlook for the future: "I'm optimistic, assuming more effort in the United States on all levels to understand Asian ways, and assuming ample opportunity for Japan to participate more knowledgably and actively in international relations--including a greater openness at home to foreigners and even allowing the inevitable disappearance of some features of the native culture and social mores."

Veteran reporters in Tokyo were asked about the sort of advice they would give to foreign correspondents newly assigned to cover Japan. Here are some of the responses:

Michael Berger, San Francisco Chronicle: "Study the history. There is a complex history to every major trade and economic issue--usually revealing defects on both sides (Japan and U.S.). This background is rarely evident in most reporting. Learn how to avoid making value judgments based entirely on American points of views."

Takashi Oka, Christian Science Monitor: "Don't rush to conclusions. Be tactful. If you are new to Japan, you will be overwhelmingly aware of the differences with the U.S. But these differences are less important once you go below the surface. Some differences are essential; others are not. It will take some time to sort them out."


Edward Neilan, Washington Times: "In general, employ the usual reportorial skills and approach. There is no 'magic' way to get along in Japan."

John Roderick, who retired recently after more than 25 years in Japan reporting for the Associated Press: "Cultivate sources in the bureaucracy at the lower levels. If you protect them, they can supply information and reactions that senior officials would hesitate to give."
Japanese journalists based in Washington, D.C. were asked what they considered their biggest difficulty in covering news in the United States. More than half of those responding said that "lack of access" to government officials and use of the English language were the two biggest problems.

Further inquiry indicated that complaints of "lack of access" and trouble with the English language were closely linked. Most of the Japanese correspondents who were fluent in English had no complaints about access. Ayako Doi, former Japan Times correspondent who studied at a U.S. university, commented, for example: "I don't find any difficulty. The United States is the most open country for the press."

One Japanese correspondent conceded that those with an uncertain command of English had difficulty in establishing an easy relationship with American officials or legislators. Another American with extensive experience in Tokyo said Japanese journalists who got their early experience as members of "kisha" clubs were accustomed to easy access to the high-ranking Japanese officials they covered, and were dismayed when they could not get the same reception from top American officials. Carol E. Ludwig, a former press attache at the U.S. embassy in Tokyo and now director of the United States Information Agency's Foreign Press Centers, was asked to comment on the Japanese complaints of "lack of access." Her response:

"Although there are sharp contrasts between the Kisha Club newsgathering system in effect in Japan and the relatively open 'catch-as-catch-can' system which prevails in Washington, all foreign correspondents complain about lack of access to high level U.S. government officials. Daily White House and State Department briefings and twice-weekly Defense Department briefings are open to all accredited foreign correspondents. Many choose to attend these briefings. Only aggressive foreign reporters with good English language skills can hope to be recognized during the question-and-answer portions of those briefings.

"Many Japanese correspondents in Washington are unsure of their English language ability in large public situations. More are not accustomed to the free-wheeling nature of the U.S. press conference format. Both factors limit Japanese correspondents' active participation in such fora.
"For journalists who do not wish to ask questions, but want to cover these briefings, the Foreign Press Center pipes in audio of the daily White House briefings and audio/visual of the State and Defense Department briefings. This allows most Japanese journalists to cover these briefings without leaving the building in which their bureaus are located. In many cases, written transcripts of these briefings are available free of charge later in the day. Copies of audio and video tapes are also available to journalists.

"To assist Japanese journalists further, the Foreign Press Center has regularly scheduled a series of one-country briefings for them. These briefings have featured State and Commerce Department, U.S. Trade Representative and National Security officials. These periodic briefings insure Japanese journalists easier access to officials than any other segment of the foreign correspondent community in Washington. Nonetheless, the access in no way compares to the constant attention Japanese journalists in Tokyo receive from senior government officials. Such is the nature of the cultural differences in newsgathering in the two countries."

Two veteran Japanese correspondents said they believed access to news sources was more difficult than in the past.

"Barriers are becoming even higher in the U.S. (Bush) administration," according to Hiroshi Yamada, Yomiuri Shimbun bureau chief. Rikuo Sato, Mainichi-Shimbun bureau chief, responded: "I feel the news coverage in Washington, D.C., is more or less controlled by the people who are in official positions...News is more or less being manipulated."

A veteran Japanese correspondent with previous experience in Paris and Bangkok, felt "access to news sources is quite open," adding: "The problem lies mainly with our poor English, and the short assignment periods of Japanese correspondents before rotation. But a longer stay doesn't necessarily mean it is good for correspondents to understand the United States because they easily lose their viewpoint--that is, that they are Japanese."

Veteran Japanese correspondents in Washington were asked what advice they would give to correspondents newly assigned to cover the United States. Some of the responses:

Ayako Doi, Japan Digest editor: "Don't depend only on the Japanese for news and interpretation of news... Talk to as many American sources as possible."
Yoichiro Miwa, Nishi-Nippon Shimbun: "Brush up on English. Learn American history and culture. Have an open mind. Associate with all races."

Rikio Sato, Mainichi Shimbun: "Washington is political and power oriented. If you really want to know the (American) situation, you have to cover more outside the Washington Beltway. The more you go into the country, the deeper your understanding will become."

IV. IMPROVEMENTS IN COVERAGE OF JAPAN AND UNITED STATES

American correspondents based in Tokyo and Japanese correspondents in Washington, D.C. agreed that news coverage of the two countries had improved substantially in recent years. Asked to recommend measures for further improvements, the Americans listed serious study of Japanese language and culture, while the Japanese correspondents in Washington gave priority to improving their English language facility and study of American history and culture.

Here are some of the responses of American and other Western correspondents to the question: "What do you see as the greatest improvements in the past several years in American correspondents' coverage of U.S.-Japan political and economic relations?"

A business magazine correspondent: "Reporters are talking more often, in greater depth and more directly, with local politicians and other decision makers. The expansion of most bureaus allows for broader, deeper coverage. The Tokyo Stock Exchange, for example, is much better reported by the U.S. media than even five years ago."

A periodicals writer: "Well-educated young correspondents, often with some earlier Japan experience as children or college students, are being assigned. I notice an increased appreciation for the complexity of Japanese society among correspondents."

A British correspondent: "The Japanese increasingly are being depicted on their own terms, not as funny little people with an inevitable attachment to terylene fabrics."

From a Canadian correspondent: "In five years Tokyo has gone from being a second-rate Asian posting, where business was the only story, to the most important assignment in Asia, where issues in business, the economy and politics get scrupulous attention. Social issues still get short shrift. But the breadth of coverage has still improved astoundingly."
A wire service bureau chief: The assignment of more correspondents to Tokyo is good, but most focus exclusively on business news and that does not aid in general understanding by a wide audience."

A business reporter: "Greater numbers covering Japan brings much more diverse coverage. The Wall Street Journal, for example, went from three reporters to eight."

A newcomer's view: "There is more coverage now, but it accentuates the negative aspects more than anything and it fails, generally, to dig beneath the surface of what's announced, etc."

Japanese Responses

Here is how some Japanese correspondents in Washington, D.C. responded to the question about improvements in Japanese coverage of the United States:

A broadcasting bureau chief with previous experience in New York City, Paris and South East Asia: "Like it or not, Japan is becoming more important to the United States in the last several years. In other words, it is becoming easier for Japanese correspondents to have a 'give and take' relationship with American news sources. This relationship has changed a lot in the last several years."

An economic reporter: "Direct interviews with VIPs are getting much more frequent in reporting first-hand news. We are getting more competitive with the U.S. media on American news sources."

Another reporter: "There has been an increase in coverage in the fields of science, health, daily life and women's lives."

On the other hand, the bureau chief for one of Tokyo's largest newspapers commented: "No progress."

Another bureau chief's response: "There are more and more direct contacts with American news sources. But I think too many Japanese reporters still rely too much on reports on American TV and in American newspapers."

Another bureau chief with an earlier assignment in New York City, as well as experience in Europe and the Middle East: "Japanese reporters have come to have their own sources in covering major issues. They have become more free to criticize official Japanese positions (in disputes with the U.S.)."
From a correspondent with previous experience in New York: "The Japanese papers have started giving more attention to the cultural features of U.S. life." Other correspondents disputed this.

**Comparative Ratings**

Americans and Japanese gave the following ratings to questions about suggested methods of improving news coverage (Rating Choices—Very Important, Important, Little Important, Not Important):

**More journalism training?:** Only eight Americans rated this as very important or important, while 21 said it was of little or no importance. Fifteen Japanese felt it was important, while three felt it was of little importance. This high percentage of Japanese favoring more journalism training was particularly interesting because, as one pointed out, Japanese newspapers follow the pattern of most big enterprises in Japan by hiring new employees just after university graduation, then training them in journalism with the prospect of employment until retirement.

**More language training (in Japanese or English)?** All correspondents felt this was important or very important.

**More study of the other country's culture and history?** All the Japanese respondents thought it was important or very important to learn more of U.S. culture and history. Twenty Western reporters rated study of Japanese culture as important or very important, but nine rated it of little or no importance. The American ratings on study of Japanese history had twenty-five listing it as important, while five felt it was of little importance.

**More study of Japan-U.S. relations?** Twenty-two Americans rated this as important or very important, but nine said it was of little or no importance. One Japanese felt this was of little importance but all the rest felt it was important or very important.

**More economic/trade study?** Twenty-four Americans said it was important or very important, while six felt such study was of little importance. Two Japanese felt this was of little importance while fifteen thought it important or very important.
Assignment of more experienced correspondents? Fifteen Japanese rated this as important or very important, while two said it was of little importance. Eighteen Western correspondents said this was important or very important, but twelve rated it of little or no importance. One American respondent said "some of the best foreign correspondents in Tokyo are on their first foreign assignments"—and cited as examples David Sanger of the New York Times and Fred Hiatt and Margaret Shapiro of the Washington Post (the latter couple has since been transferred to Moscow.)

Longer assignments at a single post for correspondents? Twenty-two Americans thought longer assignments (most are about three years) would improve coverage, while eight felt it was of little or no importance. Fifteen Japanese felt longer assignments were important or very important, while three rated it as of little importance.

Greater access to news sources? Thirteen Japanese rated this as "very important", five rated it as "important" and only one felt it was of little importance. Twenty-eight Westerners felt it was important (13) or very important (15), while only two rated as of little or no importance.

On the question of opening the Japanese "kisha clubs" to foreign correspondents, twenty-four Westerners felt this was important or very important, while five said it was of little or no importance.

American Suggestions for Improvement

Here are some of the responses from American and other Western correspondents in Tokyo to the question, "Broadly speaking, what can practically be done to improve news coverage on Japan-U.S. political and economic relations?":

From one who has been both a foreign news editor and a foreign correspondent: "Work on editors, who are gradually—behind the curve of reality—learning how important Japan (and its yen) is to the United States and the rest of the world in practical and symbolic terms. News coverage has improved on both sides since I was here in 1960-62. Also I think you may find coverage by West Coast papers in the U.S. have a better balance on Japan life than papers on the East Coast, where trade seems to be the main preoccupation."
A correspondent who also has long experience in other countries of Asia: "Perhaps more exposure on both sides to the concerns of individuals, average people whose lives are affected by the decisions made by bureaucrats and trade officials...I would like to see more interchange between Japanese journalists and foreign correspondents."

Other comments included:

"...have an understanding spouse to overlook late nights and hours spent playing golf with news sources."

"...more visits to Japan by editors so they will be educated about the importance of Japan in global relationships."

"...Facility with the Japanese language is desirable, as is ability to handle Chinese or Korean--but the first requirements is to be a good reporter/writer."

Japanese Suggestions for Improvement

Several Japanese correspondents in Washington, responding to the same question about improving news coverage, advocated exchange programs under which Japanese reporters would gain experience working on American papers, and American journalists would work on Japanese newspapers. It is noteworthy that the big Japanese newspapers, with smaller English language editions, are hiring more foreign editors and writers.

Some typical suggestions and comments:

"...Promote interchange among young journalists."

"...The U.S. side (trade negotiators) should be more receptive to the Japanese press and the Japanese government side should be less selective and more balanced in providing information."

"...On the Japanese side there is a national consensus that we must have friendly political and economic relations. I wonder if there is such a consensus on the American side."

"...Opportunities to develop friendships with Americans."

"...More frequent exchanges of reporters and editors, not necessarily between Washington and Tokyo but more regionally, locally-oriented."
"...Visit more places in the United States, meet more people, mix with the Americans."

"...Encourage more in-depth investigative reporting."

"...Meet more Americans. Most of the Japanese journalists stationed in Washington mix mainly with other Japanese except when they are working."

V. ROOTS OF TENSION AND CONFLICT

Responses to the questionnaire and follow-up interviews with correspondents in Washington, D.C. and Tokyo demonstrate clearly that, among the Japanese at least, the tensions in the Japan-United States relationship have a more complex and psychological basis than simple trade competition and protection of markets.

Almost all of the American correspondents, along with the few other Western reporters who responded, cited the troublesome trade/investment imbalance in answering the question "What would you say is the major irritant or conflict in Japan-U.S. relations?"

Half of the Japanese respondents listed the trade dispute as an important factor, but also attributed the tension to racial discrimination, cultural ignorance on both sides, and poor competitiveness of U.S. products. One bureau chief of a major Tokyo newspaper replied:

"Mistrust. The United States will never forget nor forgive the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor; and the Japanese will never forgive the atomic bombs."

Here are some other comments from Japanese reporters on causes of tension:

"...Japan's aggressive investments in the United States."

"...Mutual misunderstandings about culture and history."

"...Racially-oriented approach. The Americans never understand the Japanese mentality."

"...U.S. legislators' ignorance of Japanese issues."
Some responses from American and other Western correspondents in Tokyo:

"...The major irritant is that Japan is becoming a big power, and the U.S. is having difficulty in accepting it."

"...Trade is clearly the major irritant but technological conflict, and the concerns it raises in America, is next."

"...U.S. pride, Japanese arrogance."

"...Genuinely unfair practices by Japan, coupled with the U.S. penchant for finding someone else to blame for its problems make for much bad feeling."

Opinions among both Americans and Japanese were divided on the question "How much of that conflict would you say was due to the type of news coverage given in Japanese and American newspapers?" Only five Americans and three Japanese reporters said flatly that news coverage did not affect the tensions. Six Americans and three Japanese maintained that much of the conflict was traceable to news coverage. The rest were more in line with the following comments:

From a Japanese reporter: "The Japanese press often portrays the American position as unreasonable, while not shedding light on the initial problems deriving from the Japanese side."

From an American reporter: "The press is a major influence. For example, using such war-like language in stories and headlines as invade...battleground...trade war, etc."

VI. COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENTS OF NEWS COVERAGE

In the questionnaire, American correspondents in Tokyo and Japanese correspondents in Washington, D.C. were asked to give their assessments of the quality of news coverage as shown in the tables below. In their evaluations, the American correspondents were considerably more critical of the quality of the Japanese coverage of United-States Japan issues than were the Japanese correspondents' judgments of the American reporting on Japan-United States issues.

The evaluations were made on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being the best quality (for example, fair) and 7 being the worst (unfair). A rating of 4 would be considered as neutral, or neither very good or very bad.
Here are the ratings given by the American (and a few other Western reporters) in answer to the following question:

"How would you assess the coverage in the major Japanese newspapers over the past few years on issues affecting the United States?"

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</tbody>
</table>

The Americans assessed Japanese news coverage as tilting toward being unbalanced (5.29), incomplete (5.26), and insensitive (5.23). No category was judged even neutral.

Thus, the Americans assessed Japanese news coverage as tilting toward being unbalanced (5.29), incomplete (5.26), and insensitive (5.23). No category was judged even neutral.

* * * * *

The table below gives the assessments of the Japanese correspondents of the coverage of issues affecting Japan in "major U.S. newspapers over the last few years."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fair/Unfair</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accurate/Inaccurate</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete/Incomplete</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear/Confused</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astute/Shallow</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective/Not Objective</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced/Unbalanced</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerant/Critical</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed/Uninformed</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive/Insensitive</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ratings show that Japanese correspondents give coverage in U.S. newspapers a somewhat better assessment than Americans gave coverage in Japanese newspapers. But the ratings on U.S. coverage tilted slightly toward insensitive and critical (4.5), and toward unbalanced (4.4). The best rating was for fairness, yet that was only a 3.5.

* * * * *
Japanese correspondents in Washington, D.C. gave themselves more credit for their own reporting in response to the following question: "How well would you say you and/or your fellow Japanese correspondents are giving a full, complete and fair picture of the United States, the American people, and particularly the American positions on political and economic issues?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fair/Unfair</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accurate/Inaccurate</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete/Incomplete</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear/Confused</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astute/Shallow</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective/Not Objective</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced/Unbalanced</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerant/Critical</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed/Uninformed</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive/Insensitive</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, Japanese correspondents gave their own coverage of Japan-U.S. issues the best rating for accuracy (2.9), with good assessments for fairness (3.1) and objectivity (3.5)

American (and the few other Western) correspondents in the poll kept the assessments of their own work just slightly on the favorable side in giving the judgments below to the following question: "How well would you say you and/or your fellow correspondents in Japan are giving a full, complete, and fair picture of Japan, the Japanese people, and particularly the Japanese positions on political and economic issues?" The average of American responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fair/Unfair</td>
<td>3.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accurate/Inaccurate</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete/Incomplete</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear/Confused</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astute/Shallow</td>
<td>3.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective/Not Objective</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced/Unbalanced</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerant/Critical</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed/Uninformed</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive/Insensitive</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The worst rating was a 4.13 tilting, toward incomplete, reflecting the feeling of most U.S. correspondents that their newspapers didn't devote enough space to complex stories.

* * * * *
Japanese Views on American Reporting

Here are some of the responses of Japanese correspondents in Washington, D.C. to the question: "What would you say were two or three of the main problems or faults, if any, of U.S. newspaper reporting of U.S.-Japan relations?

"...American lack of basic understanding of 1) Japanese history; 2) Japanese culture; 3) Japanese way of life."

"...Lack of knowledge of Japan. Too much concentration on trade issues."

"...Missionary sense, cynicism, lack of knowledge."

"...They (American correspondents) seem too patriotic. They seem so sure their way of life should be the model for all the peoples of the world."

"...Exaggerations...lack of understanding of Japanese society and the system."

"...Language lack. Very narrow view of Japanese politics...reporting is too Tokyo-centered."

Japanese Views on Japanese Reporting

Along with their assessments of the reporting in U.S. newspapers, Japanese correspondents were asked: "What are the most important weaknesses and strengths in general Japanese reporting on the United States? Most of the responses touched on what were regarded as weaknesses:

"...The single most important weakness of Japanese reporting on the U.S. is lack of clarity because often in Japanese reporting background information is minimal."

"...Lack of knowledge of the American political system. For example, every Japanese newspaper gives too much emphasis on the U.S. President's budget plans, without also reporting that it's only a plan and is subject to change by Congress."

"...Covering competitive deadlines around the clock, with most papers featuring the same news...Not much uniqueness."
"...A weakness is that we cannot understand 100 per cent what the American people say and think. It comes from language and culture problems. A strength is that Japanese reporters know America and Americans much better than American reporters know Japan and the Japanese."

"...Strength in Japanese reporting is vigilance. Weakness is superficiality."

"...If an American article on Japan were to be translated into Japanese it would be several times the length of a similar story written by a Japanese reporter about the U.S. As far as economic and foreign policy issues are concerned, Japanese reporters tend to report on details but too often fail to give an overall picture."

American Views on Japanese Reporting

Here some of the responses of American and a few other Western correspondents based in Tokyo to the question: "What would you say were two or three of the main problems of faults, if any, of Japanese reporting of U.S.-Japan relations?"

A Canadian reporter: "Japanese journalists rarely step out of the 'us versus them' mode... They tend to portray the relationship adversarily."

Another American with long experience in Asia: "Pack reporting, which means errors are compounded... Over-reliance on officialdom, especially Japanese officialdom, for news... There is a tendency for the Japanese reporters to see a conspiracy or plot in cases where the American side is just muddling through as usual."

An American business reporter: "Many Japanese newspapers do not examine the economies of other nations very carefully. They are swung easily by political rhetoric or imagery.

American Views on American Reporting

American and other Western reporters based in Tokyo also were asked to give their views on "the most important weaknesses and strengths in general of American reporting on Japan." Like the Japanese, the Americans tended to concentrate on perceived weaknesses and a surprising number (more than half) blamed editors of their home papers. Some of the responses:
From a 25-year veteran in Japan: "The current group of correspondents for the key media are bright, hard-working and competent...a problem is that editors tend to dictate what they expect from their correspondents."

A British correspondent: "Reporting is often biased or superficial because of editors' demands. By and large, the correspondents do well but they also know what their editors want to hear."

Another comment from an "old hand" in Tokyo: "The main weakness is lack of depth of knowledge, which is partly due to the language problem, partly due to the longer time it takes to achieve rapport with Japanese than with many other peoples, partly due to the short assignments of correspondents, partly due to insufficient effort to get deep into the Japanese lifestyle and psyche--the ghettoization of American correspondents."

VII. U.S. ORIENTATION PROGRAM FOR JAPANESE JOURNALISTS

Views and recommendations expressed by correspondents in the research survey indicate the need for further study to determine the feasibility of conducting individualized programs in English language familiarization and cultural orientation for Japanese correspondents being assigned to work in the United States. The specialized programs, probably lasting for two to three months, would include working assignments on regional American newspapers. This would give the correspondent "hands on" experience in reporting on the varied American scene before proceeding to regular assignments in New York City or Washington, D.C.

The United States Information Agency, which operates foreign press information centers on the East and West Coasts, reported that in 1990 there were 84 Japanese correspondents stationed in Washington, 113 stationed in New York City (predominantly TV and financial news correspondents) and 3 stationed in San Francisco and Los Angeles. Four Japanese journalists were stationed in Chicago, with additional one-person bureaus in Houston, Seattle and Honolulu.

With only one exception, Japanese correspondents surveyed in Washington, D.C., put "more English language training for correspondents" at the top of their list of ways to improve Japanese news coverage of the United States.
Rated almost as high was the need for "more study" of American culture and history. Most of the Washington-based correspondents said they would like to travel more outside the Capitol city to report on the variety of lifestyles throughout the U.S., but they cited two principal obstacles: 1) lack of interest on the part of many of their editors; 2) the time and expense involved in such reporting.

Asked to list their greatest difficulty in reporting in Washington, seventy-five per cent of the respondents named "lack of access" to U.S. government officials. Further inquiry, however, leads to the conclusion that many complaining of "lack of access" were those whose command of conversational English was too poor to develop easy rapport with American news sources -- a problem encountered in Tokyo by American correspondents who lacked fluency in the Japanese language.

One U.S. official with long experience in Tokyo and extensive journalism contacts in Washington estimated that less than 10 of the 84 Japanese correspondents in the capital had an easy command of English.

"Washington is one of the most open capitals in the world for journalists--foreign and domestic," said one Japanese correspondent who had been educated in the U.S. and spoke English fluently.

Another veteran Japanese bureau chief said that the English language problem was partly responsible for what one called the "ghetto complex," adding: "Most of the Japanese journalists stationed in Washington mix mainly with other Japanese except when they are working. Most have their own special areas of reporting -- like economics, politics or diplomacy -- and rarely try to extend their coverage."

(It should be noted that the survey found a somewhat similar concern about "ghetto living" in Tokyo among some American and other Western correspondents who socialized largely among themselves, with relatively little recreational contact with the Japanese.)

Since more than 200 journalists are stationed in the United States, with most of them on assignments of two to three years, Japanese newspapers and TV/radio organizations have a small, but fairly steady, stream of correspondents moving to the U.S. each year -- and most of them encounter language and cultural lifestyle problems.
Individual English language/culture orientation programs could begin with one month of intensive English language study and cross-cultural orientation in an appropriate institution in the United States. Because most Japanese have studied English in school and university, the emphasis in language training would be on improving conversational skills. In addition to four hours of intensive formal language instruction daily, the correspondent could further improve language skills and self-confidence by participating in numerous seminars, and joining in community activities.

Four weeks of intensive language training should be adequate to prepare the correspondent for the next phase — assignment to one or more newspapers or tv/radio stations on the U.S. mainland.

Almost every Japanese correspondent interviewed in the survey said he/she could do a better job of reporting if they had actual experience in the United States outside the highly-urbanized atmosphere of New York City or the politicized life in Washington, D.C. Depending upon the specific interests of the correspondent, arrangements can be made for the journalist to become associated with the staffs of various regional newspapers or broadcast stations. We recommend "assignments" of two to three weeks each on at least two or three cooperating newspapers or broadcasting stations outside the Washington-New York City metropolitan areas.

Through cooperative arrangements to be established, the correspondent could accompany reporters on breaking stories, sit in on editorial page discussion meetings, and report on varied events in the local community. Most of the "host" organizations would also expect the correspondent to contribute articles or talks on impressions of a visiting Japanese journalist.

The home newspaper or broadcast organization would be expected to pay the correspondent's salary, provide transportation and living costs at the educational institution and the "host" newspapers/broadcast stations, and cover any instructional expenses such as language classes or tutors.
VIII. ORIENTATION PROGRAMS FOR AMERICAN CORRESPONDENTS

Devising feasible language training/cultural orientation programs for American or other Western journalists interested in covering Japan is more complicated and more expensive than arranging comparable programs for Japanese journalists being prepared for work in the United States.

Western correspondents in Tokyo questioned in the East-West Center survey about ways to improve coverage were virtually unanimous in placing priority on learning the Japanese language, with more study on Japanese culture, history and economics listed not far behind.

Virtually all Japanese students get at least six years study of the English language in junior and senior high schools, with some getting additional training in college. Thus Japanese journalists being assigned to the United States, or other English-speaking countries, can profit by a few weeks of intensive English language training and usually achieve some degree of fluency.

American journalists on the other hand, are rarely exposed to Japanese language study in their basic education. Most authorities agree that well over a year of intensive Japanese language study is required to achieve minimal speaking facility, and even more for reading and writing. A few newspapers—notably the New York Times, Washington Post, and Wall Street Journal--give time for some of their newly-assigned reporters to study Japanese, but often this is only for six months or so.

Another factor militating against organized language programs for American and Western correspondents is the fact that few mid-career journalists want to devote a couple of years of their career to learning a language they cannot use in other parts of the world.

Given these difficulties, however, there is general agreement that an orientation program in intensive study of Japanese history, culture and present-day political trends one to three months would be worthwhile--coupled with introductory Japanese language learning.
A substantial number of Japanese-speaking American journalists now working in Tokyo learned the language while taking graduate study in Japanese colleges and universities, or while teaching English in Japanese schools under a program in which the Japanese ministry of education has brought several thousand young American college graduates to Japan to assist Japanese teachers of English.

A number of foreign correspondents in Japan got their first exposure to the country as Fulbright scholars or received language training while serving in the military forces.

Four correspondents currently working in Japan studied for an academic year at the University of Hawaii on Gannett Foundation Fellowships in Asian Studies. Others were enrolled in special studies at Columbia, Stanford and the University of Michigan.

The East-West Center offers two-year scholarships leading to a master's degree in Asian Studies or other fields at the University of Hawaii.

* * *

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Seiichiro Mishina, Nihon Keizai Shimbun
Yoichiro Miwa, Nishi Nippon Shimbun
Yoriyoshi Naito, Asahi Shimbun
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Bernard Krisher, Parade Magazine/Shinchosha
Bradley Martin, Newsweek
Russ McCulloch, Metal Bulletin Magazine
Robert C. Neff, Business Week
Edward Neilan, Washington Times
Colin Nickerson, Boston Globe
Takashi Oka, Christian Science Monitor
Carla Rapopart, Fortune
Robert Ivor Ries, Australian Financial Review
John Roderick, Associated Press
Ian Rodger, Financial Times (U.K.)
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Elizabeth Zingg, Agence France Press
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Some 2,000 research fellows, graduate students and professionals in business and government each year work with the Center's international staff on major Asia-Pacific issues relating to population, economic and trade policies, resources and development, the environment, culture and communication, and international relations. Since 1960, more than 25,000 men and women from the region have participated in the Center's cooperative programs.

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