

The Japanese Media and Hiroshima: Are we members of Obamajority?

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Japanese news media report the Hiroshima memorial event on August 6th in similar ways each year, representing the survivors as victims. However, the news coverage of the event changed in 2009. Japanese media sensationalized Obama's anti-nuclear proliferation speech made in Prague, and focused attention on the Hiroshima Mayor's statement that, "we are members of Obamajority" . This paper will present the findings of a content analysis of the 2007 and 2009 news coverage of Hiroshima. It shows how the mainstream Japanese media use stereotypes to express the importance of peace, and deny a voice to the survivors of the atomic bombing.

Key Words : Hiroshima, the Second World War, survivors, television, news coverage

Introduction

August the 6th, 1945 is the day the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Every year a memorial event is held; attended by survivors, the Japanese Prime Minister and other government representatives, citizens, foreign dignitaries, school children, and the media. Japanese news media report the memorial event in similar ways each year, in particular, representing the survivors as victims. However, the news coverage of the event changed in 2009. Japanese media sensationalized Obama because of an anti-nuclear proliferation speech he made in Prague. The mayor of Hiroshima said in his speech that, "we are members of Obamajority" and used Obama's phrase, "yes, we can" . This paper will present the findings of a content analysis of the 2007 and 2009 news coverage of Hiroshima. In the 2009 coverage, Obama is represented as being at the forefront of nuclear abolition. I argue that survivors of the atomic

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bomb are not members of Obamajority, and as a minority they need to be able to express their experience to a global audience, in their own way, and on their own terms.

This paper will show the way in which Japanese media represent war and peace, and the stereotypes that the media use to express the importance of peace. The research focuses on the news coverage of the anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in 2007 and 2009. It presents the findings of an analysis of television news programs and considers the possibility of peace journalism and media literacy as opportunities for Japanese society to consider the consequences of war and the meaning of peace.

Japan at the end of the Second World War

Japanese citizens knew of their country's defeat in the Second World War from a radio broadcast on August 15th, 1945. One week later, the Asahi Newspaper apologised for its involvement in the Second World War in an editorial. When the Mainichi, Yomiuri and Asahi newspapers followed suit, they blamed management and editorial executives for their involvement in the war (Matsuda 2001: 219-220). This kind of action spread quickly to other domestic newspapers. Thus, after the end of the Second World War, the Japanese media acknowledged its contribution to the war and started the democratization of the media. The theme of "war and media" became significant in the post-war era when discussing the role of media and related issues, and led the Japanese media to question why it could not oppose the war, and what is the best way to avoid wars (Matsuda 2001: 220).

August has become a special time for thinking about peace and war in Japan. August 6th receives the most concentrated media attention because it marks the world's first use of the atomic bomb. In August there are a lot of news programs, documentaries and dramas about war and peace broadcast on Japanese television. Hiroshima and *hibakusha*, the survivors of the atomic bombing, are important to these television broadcasts because they are represented as victims of war.

War and the Japanese Media

Previous studies in Japan on the war and media fall roughly into two categories. The first one is analysis of the mass media system and policies, showing the support for the national mobilization and the war effort (Sato 1998, Maesaka 2005, Nakajima 2008).

The second category is content analyses of the post-war Japanese media, which shows the connection between the memory of war and peace for Japanese people (Beppu 2010, Komori 2008, Sakai 2007). Their analysis shows antiwar messages and the importance of the peace. These antiwar narratives and readings of media in post-war Japan, which emphasise "being the victim" , have also been the subject of criticism. Although Japanese media focus on the victims, they erase the victimizer.

For example, *Tower of Himeyuri*ⁱ is a very famous antiwar novel and has been made into a movie three times (in 1953, 1982 and 1995). This story is about the Star Lily Corps, a nursing care unit made up of the female high school students in Okinawa during the closing days of the war. As the US military made inroads into Okinawa, a lot of Okinawan people as well as Japanese combatantsⁱⁱ committed suicide. Some of them decided to die together as a group, including the Star Lily Corps. This story is a typical antiwar work in Japan; women are represented as victims, and the Star Lily Corps are constructed as a symbol of the tragedy in the war. However, the borderline between victim and victimizer is not clear. Fukuma (2005) indicates that focusing on the innocence of the Star Lily Corps hides the victimizer of Japan. Furthermore, feminising the victim also makes Okinawa invisible as a victim (Fukuma 2005:78-81).

Moreover, military prostitution (commonly referred to as “comfort women”) has been a big issue since the 1990s. The Japanese government has been criticized for concealing information about this issue and denying responsibility. This issue was not reported for a long time after the Second World War, and the majority of the victims, Korean women, have been erased in the post-war media. The representation of victims in the media is relevant to the relationship between media and government (Onuma 2007).

Previous studies on media coverage of Hiroshima

Previous studies about media coverage of Hiroshima deal with news coverage and public opinion, analyzing the connection between the two. Hara, Hattori, and Saito (1997) comparatively analyzed public opinion concerning TV programs about war from five countries; Japan, the United States, England, Germany, and Korea, in 1995, which was the 50th anniversary of the end of the war. In addition, they analyzed the contents of TV news programs broadcast in May and August, marking the end of war in Europe and the Pacific respectively. They also examined the relationship between the TV news programs and public opinion about the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the United States. They noted that the amount of news reports increased with the US-Japan trade friction in 1985. The controversy surrounding the atomic bomb exhibition at the Smithsonian Museumⁱⁱⁱ and the tone of newspapers at the time were against Japan. Hattori concluded that public opinion had much to do with the amount of news reporting on certain issues (Hara et al, 1997: 17-18).

Inoue and Rineert (2007) did a comparative study of the international news coverage of the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. They analyzed newspapers published between August 5th and August 8th, 2005 in 12 countries/ regions around the world, and examined the relationship between the coverage and public opinion concerning the morality of the dropping of the atomic bomb (Inoue & Rineert, 2007). Inoue (2006) said that knowledge of the atomic bombing varies from country to country, and was affected by the political situation in each country. On the whole, the misery of the

atomic bombing is widely recognised, however, he concluded that the message of Hiroshima was not shared fully around the world (Inoue 2006:126).

There is not general awareness of the message from Hiroshima in Japan (Inoue 2006:104). This paper will show how the Japanese media construct the message from Hiroshima.

The Annual Hiroshima Memorial Event

On August 6th each year, the peace memorial ceremony is held in Hiroshima city. There is a similar program every year. The ceremony starts at 8 o'clock and the all participants have a silent prayer for one minute with the ringing of a bell at 8:15am – the time the atomic bomb was dropped. The names of atomic bomb survivors who passed away over the last year are added to the memorial list of victims. The Hiroshima mayor gives a declaration of peace and the Prime Minister, two elementary school children, and survivors also give a speech.

Every year, Hiroshima city invites representatives from countries that possess nuclear weapons to attend the ceremony. However, none of the American Presidents has ever been to an event. In addition, a lot of events are held in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. For example, survivors tell their experience of the war, citizen groups have various performances and many school children and citizens offer bundles of one thousand paper cranes. These paper cranes are used to pray for peace. The peace memorial ceremony is one of the few significant events in which to remember victims of the war in Japan.

News coverage of the memorial event has followed a similar pattern every year, as shown in the analysis of the 2007 coverage, below. However, the news coverage showed a noticeable change in 2009. The Japanese media sensationalized a speech made by President Obama in Prague in May 2009, where he outlined an ambitious proposal to prevent the proliferation of war and eliminate current nuclear arsenals. This paper will focus on this shift in television news reporting of the event, and its implications for the media representation of the Hiroshima atomic bomb survivors.

Peace Journalism and Hiroshima

The definition of peace journalism is that it creates “opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict” (Lynch & McGoldrick 2005: 5). As is clear from previous studies on war and media in Japan, one of the critical issues in media reporting on the Hiroshima atomic bombing is the representation of the survivors as victims of war, and the erasure of Japan as the victimizer of war. There is very little or no historical analysis of Japan’s role in the Second World War presented in mainstream media. As one of the tenets of peace journalism is the ability to analyse conflict,

a lack of historical analysis in the reporting of the memorial event provides an extremely limited focus.

If we consider this situation in relation to Galtung's table of peace journalism (Lynch & McGoldrick 2005: 6), then it can be argued that the mainstream Japanese media continue to follow a war journalism approach when reporting the Hiroshima memorial event. For example, the roots of the conflict, such as Japan's colonization and military aggression in Asia, as well as unresolved issues, such as the huge number of civilian casualties in Okinawa and the military prostitution issue, are not dealt with. Instead, the absence of war, or "negative peace" (Lynch & McGoldrick 2005: 48), and the focus of the Japanese victims of the war, are evident in mainstream Japanese journalism.

It is therefore important for Japanese media audiences to be media literate, and, as advocated by Lynch and McGoldrick, to be able to recognise the war journalism approach (2005: 243). The research presented below incorporates a media literacy approach to analyse the representation of the Hiroshima survivors.

Methodology

The methodological basis of this paper is based on a media literacy approach (Suzuki 2003), that is, critically analysing and evaluating media representation in a socio-cultural context (Suzuki 2003:13). The issue of representation is very important because it is "an encoded and constructed version of reality" and media stereotypes have an effect on the way audiences see human rights, gender, race and ethnicity (Suzuki 2003: 18).

Hiroshima News Report Analysis

Five evening news programs of the one public, and four commercial broadcasters were recorded on August 6th in 2007 and 2009. Three of the evening news programs with reports on the ceremony in Hiroshima were chosen for analysis. The objects of analysis for 2007 are NHK (Nippon Hoso Kyokai/ Japan Broadcasting Corporation), the public broadcaster, TBS (Tokyo Broadcasting System) and NTV (Nippon Television Network Corporation), two commercial broadcasters (see Table 1).

Table 1. News reports in three news programs on the 6th August, 2007

Name of news program	Broadcaster	Time Hiroshima/ Program
NEWS 7 19:00 – 19:30	NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation)	0:04:03/ 0:30:00
Evening News 17:50 – 18:16	TBS (Tokyo Broadcasting System Television)	0:03:46/ 0:26:00
Real Time 17:50 – 18:16	NTV (Nippon Television Network Corporation)	0:05:21/ 0:26:00

The objects of analysis for 2009 are NHK, TBS and Fuji TV (see Table 2), following a similar pattern to the 2007 analysis of the public broadcaster and two commercial broadcasters.

Table 2. News reports in three news programs on the 6th August, 2009

Name of news program	Broadcaster	Time Hiroshima/ Program
NEWS 7 19:00 – 19:30	NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation)	0:04:11/ 0:30:00
NEWS JAPAN 23:30 – 23:55	FUJI (Fuji Television Network)	0:04:25/ 0:25:00
Soryoku Hodo, The NEWS! 17:50 – 19:50	TBS (Tokyo Broadcasting System Television)	0:05:56/ 2:00:00

Hiroshima was the top news story on August 6th on all three TV news programs in 2007. The tables above show the amount of time each broadcaster gave to coverage of the event. Each report is longer than the average length of stories reported on that day; the average time amount of most topics on the news programs was under one minute.

People who appeared in Hiroshima news reports in 2007

The people who appeared in the news reports were coded by gender and age. They were Hiroshima survivors, politicians, citizens, international visitors, and school children who attended the event appeared in the reports. Table 3, below, shows the number of the people who appeared in close-ups in the 2007 coverage.

Table 3. Camera close-ups of people in the reports (2007)

	Female							Male						
	-10s	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	70s-	-10s	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	70s-
NHK				1	1		4	3						
TBS	3			1		1	3	1				3	1	2
NTV	3			2		1	1	2				3	1	5
Total	6	0	0	4	1	2	8	6	0	0	0	6	2	7
	21							21						

The numbers of female and male are same, as is the number of under 10s and teenagers. However, there are slightly more females over 70s shown than males. This age group is shown praying at the ceremony or in front of the stone memorials. Children are also shown praying, following their parents and seniors. No males in their 40s are shown, but there are a significant number of females. They are mothers who take their children to the ceremony and are also shown praying without speaking. Table 4, below, shows the number of people who are interviewed or give statements.

Table 4. People who are interviewed or give statements (2007)

	Female							Male						
	-10s	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	70s-	-10s	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	70s-
NHK	2						1	1				1	2	2
TBS				1		1	1					2	2	
NTV	2						2	2		1	1	1	2	2
Total	4	0	0	1	0	1	4	3	0	1	1	4	6	4
	10							19						

A far greater number of males than females speak in the reports. This is because male politicians in their 50s and 60s are given important roles in the Hiroshima Peace Ceremony. The prime minister and the mayor of Hiroshima appeared many times. The number of under 10s stands out because both girls and boys gave statements at the ceremony. They promise to keep peace in the future. Older people, in their 70s, who speak in the programs, tell of the experience of the war.

People who appeared in Hiroshima as news topics in 2009

Table 5, below, shows the number of the people who appeared in close-ups in the 2007 news programs. The number of females is 23, and the largest age group is women in their 70s. Senior women were shown praying and crying with no words. Of these, two women in their 80s women using wheelchairs were shown praying at the nursing home. The number of girls shown under 10s is 6 and the number of women in their 40s is 5. They were also shown praying silently at the Hiroshima Memorial Park or on the road in Hiroshima city. On the other hand, the number of males is 37, more than half as

large again as the female group. Men in their 70s were survivors and members of the plaintiff’s group in courtcases related to the atomic bombing. Senior male survivors were also shown praying or listening to the statements of the prime minister and the mayor of Hiroshima at the ceremony. The number men shown in their 50s is 4, and they are foreign journalists who were interviewing participants in the ceremony. This scene means the Hiroshima is worthy of note globally.

Table 5. Camera close-ups of people in the reports (2007)

	Female							Male						
	-10s	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	70s-	-10s	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	70s-
NHK	3			3		1	4					4	3	3
Fuji	3			1	1	1	4	2			1		7	5
TBS				1			1	1		1	1		3	6
Total	6	0	0	5	1	2	9	3	0	1	2	4	13	14
	23							37						

Table 6, below, shows the number of people who were interviewed or gave statements in each of the news programs in 2009. The news reports show images from the memorial event as well as interviews with participants. The people who usually appear in the reports are survivors of the atomic bomb, the Japanese Prime Minister, government representatives, foreign dignitaries, citizens, school children and the domestic and international media.

Table 6. The number of the people interviewed or who give statements (2009)

	Female							Male						
	-10s	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	70s-	-10s	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	70s-
NHK							2					1	3	
Fuji											1		3	1
TBS						1	2				1		4	2
Total	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	2	1	10	3
	5							16						

Table 6 is the number of the people interviewed or who give statements in 2009 coverage. The total number of males is sixteen, as is more than three times the number of female. The biggest number of females is four who were in their 70s. Senior women talked about the damage of the atomic bomb as survivors. The number of men shown in their 60s is ten, the Japanese prime minister and the mayor of Hiroshima, the president of the U. N. General assembly, the representatives of the plaintiff’s group in courtcases related to the atomic bombing appeared in each news program several times. The former mayor of Hiroshima, who is in his 70s, made critical comments against “Obamajority” . The total number of women interviewed is five and all of them appeared as survivors. They talked about the misery of the war, and made comments like “Hiroshima on August 6th was a hellish sight” , and “we

hope for a peaceful and safe world” . The male politicians who were interviewed were shown promising to continue to make an effort to ensure a peaceful and safe world through policy solutions. Their response to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the hope for a more peaceful world is purely political.

One of the male politicians who dominated in the Fuji and TBS news reports in 2009 was President Barack Obama. He was shown several times in news programs on this day. Parts of his speech in Prague in May 2009 about preventing the proliferation of war and eliminating current nuclear arsenals were shown extensively. The other male politician who dominated news reports was the Mayor of Hiroshima, Akiba Tadatoshi, who was shown using some phrases from Obama’s speech. In particular, he emphasised in English, though his speech was mainly in Japanese, that “we are members of Obamajority”^{iv} and used Obama’s well known campaign phrase, “yes, we can” .

Findings of the 2007 reporting on Hiroshima

The result of analysis of the Hiroshima news coverage in 2007 shows some stereotypes. Although children and youth are constructed as the hope for future peace, seniors are represented as a symbol of the misery of war. Media emphasize that seniors have the role to tell the experiences of the war to the younger generation. Media tend to construct a simple story using some stereotypes. As a result, Hiroshima news coverage in 2007 shows that it is the most important not to forget the misery of the war in order to have peace. This should be handed down from generation to generation. On the other hand, people in their 20s, 30s and 40s rarely appeared in these texts. Children and youth are represented as a symbol of the future and seniors are the past. People in their 20s, 30s, and 40s have the possibility of representing the present. But they don’t appear.

Hiroshima news coverage in 2007 avoided dealing with present problems. Japan still has uneasy relations with Korea, China, North Korea and other Asian countries. The Japanese government has not officially compensated for Chinese and Korean victims. This problem is connected to the Japanese emperor and war responsibility. This is a taboo topic in the Japanese media. In addition, in 2007 North Korea wanted to realise their nuclear power military ambitions. The Japanese government was trying to prevent it. However, as Japan also uses nuclear power for its electricity supply, the Japanese media don’t try to explain this complicated situation. Only Japanese politicians are given a voice to speak about the present situation, especially political problems, in these reports. Additionally, education about the atomic bombing in the U. S. is reported but not in Japan. Therefore it is difficult for Japanese audiences to think about these issues deeply and ask what we should do for the future.

Findings of the 2009 Reporting on Hiroshima

The 2009 news reporting of the Hiroshima ceremony indicates a major shift in the style of reporting compared to reports in 2007. Instead of following the similar patterns of reporting across networks, as in previous years, the analysis presented here shows that it diverged considerably. The news reports consisted of the following three distinct patterns.

Firstly, the news report of NHK was quite similar to previous years' news reporting on Hiroshima. Survivors are mostly shown as a symbol of the misery of the war. They appear as passive participants in the ceremony, talking about the war with tears and praying for a peaceful world. The people who are interviewed are mostly politicians. Children are shown as symbols of the future.

Secondly, the news report of Fuji TV focuses on President Obama and the relationship between North Korea and Japan. The Japanese prime minister highlighted the threat of North Korea and nuclear weapons. Fuji TV's report said Japan had a dilemma in that they had to appeal for a nuclear free world under the American nuclear umbrella.

Thirdly, the news report of TBS focused on the "Obamajority" . President Obama appeared in the report speaking and was also quoted by the Hiroshima Mayor. Obama was shown surrounded by large crowds in Prague. These images of Obama show him as a hero, and the hope of the movement for nuclear disarmament. The only alternative opinions and comments shown in the news programs were those of two men – the former mayor of Hiroshima, and a peace researcher. They were both critical of the Hiroshima mayor's speech which relied heavily on Obama's Prague speech.

The 2009 TV news reporting on the Hiroshima ceremony indicates a deeply ironic situation. America dropped the world's first atomic bomb on Hiroshima 65 years ago, and no American President has ever attended the Hiroshima memorial ceremony. Until 2009, no Mayor of Hiroshima had positively used the words of an American President in his memorial address, or included the Japanese people in American politics, such as the use of "Obamajority" . This had an effect on the three news reports; NHK mentions Obama's speech without images and Obama's inclusion in the mayor's speech, whilst Fuji TV made part of their report in connection with Japan-US relations, and TBS made it the main feature of their coverage.

Conclusion

The media coverage of the Hiroshima ceremony in 2007 shows stereotypes for expressing the importance of peace. Images of people praying without speaking are the symbol of peace in these media reports. The images of seniors and survivors are symbols of the misery of the war. On the other hand, children and the youth are symbols of the future. Only politicians are represented as having the power to

talk about the future and what needs to be done.

The media coverage of the Hiroshima ceremony in 2009 indicates that stereotypes continue to be used in reporting on Hiroshima – survivors and citizens are constructed as passive, whilst politicians are constructed as active. Media reports emphasise that the responsibility of peace is with politicians not citizens. The media focus on “Obamajority” emphasises “majority” and implies that Japan should be part of a global majority through Obama. However, the atomic bomb survivors are a minority within in Japan, and the world. It’s difficult for their message to be disseminated on a global scale, as a message of peace, not a political solution to nuclear disarmament through the “Obamajority” .

This paper has presented the findings of a content analysis of the 2007 and 2009 news coverage of Hiroshima. It has shown how the mainstream Japanese media use stereotypes to express the importance of peace, and deny a voice to the survivors of the atomic bombing. The complexities surrounding unresolved issues with Japan’s Asian neighbours, the issue of war responsibility and the appeal for nuclear proliferation under the American nuclear umbrella are not included in reporting on the Hiroshima anniversary. Given this situation, peace journalism and media literacy are indeed opportunities for Japanese society and media to consider the consequences of war and the meaning of peace.

- ⁱ Himeyuri no tou [Tower of Himeyuri] was written by Keichiro Ishino in 1950.
- ⁱⁱ Okinawa was the only battlefield in Japan during the Second World War.
- ⁱⁱⁱ An atomic bomb display at the Smithsonian Museum was closed down through pressure from former servicemen in the United States.
- ^{iv} “We” means the Japanese people.

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