

Japan's Media Fiefdom —Mainstream Press is Covertly Disturbing People's Free Access to Information by Monopolizing Daily Interviews with Media-Savvy Prime Minister—

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The Secret of Koizumi's Popularity

It is said that Junichiro Koizumi, former Prime Minister of Japan is very "unique" – Tokyo correspondents from major American media outlets unanimously say that he is the very first Prime Minister they can talk about to New York editors merely by name. Moreover, he is the first Prime Minister after the World War II who is not controlled by a factional mastermind of the Liberal Democratic Party, which has been dominant in Japanese politics for more than fifty years. Koizumi has, instead, been maintaining his leadership based directly on his popularity among the people. His most powerful tool is television; he held a top-notch fashion show at his official residence, he immediately made a televised direct phone call to Shizuka Arakawa, the Gold Medalist of women's figure skating at the Olympic Games in Turin, and he welcomed Richard Gear in his office, "Shall We Dancing" together in front of the cameras, all of which had nothing to do with politics at all. Koizumi has been keeping people's attention by constantly appearing not only on mainstream TV news programs and the politics pages of major newspapers, but also in entertainment shows on television and tabloids.

Koizumi, as a matter of fact, created a very good system to frequently appear on television. Since he took office about five years ago, he and the press club at the Prime Minister's office have been holding twice-a-day interview sessions; first in the morning around eleven o'clock and the other with a pool television camera crew in the evening just before seven o'clock. He responds to various questions ranging from politics and diplomacy to sports and entertainment, and his comments appear on all news programs of that evening until the next morning, beginning with the seven o'clock evening news on NHK (*Nihon Hoso Kyokai*-Japan's public broadcaster), which has the highest viewer ratings of any NHK news program.

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Meanwhile, major media outlets of the press club at the Prime Minister's Office have benefited from the interviews, for media savvy Koizumi has been providing a variety of topics which attract many readers and viewers. Those mainstream media have been monopolizing news on the Prime Minister, thanks to Japan's notorious "press club" system, which have been excluding both foreign media and freelancers. Currently, members of the press club are interrupting the efforts of the Cabinet Office to introduce the Prime Minister's daily interviews word for word, neglecting serious discussions with the Prime Minister's office which is trying to obtain the press club's consent.

I am trying to explain the backgrounds of the media's reluctance to such an attempt which may contribute to people's free access of information by shedding lights on how the media are enjoying privileges to exclusively cover the Prime Minister.

Historic Invention?

Such an interview system is a product of both the media strategy of Koizumi administration and the strong demand of the media for sound bites from a popular Prime Minister. Each media company that is a member of the Prime Minister's Office appoints a reporter only to cover the Prime Minister. They are called "*Ban Kisha*," literally, "watchdog reporters." Before Koizumi, conversations between the Prime Minister and such reporters in charge of covering him had traditionally taken place while the Prime Minister was walking between appointments in the corridors of the Prime Minister's Office or the Diet Building, without television cameras except on very limited occasions, and questions were frequently ignored. These are called "*Burasagari*," literally, "dangling interviews," according to reporters' jargon. Journalists would scribble memos whenever the Prime Minister responded and immediately send them to their senior editors at the press club, who would then include that information in news articles. In the case of television news, anchorpersons would introduce the Prime Minister's words by reading scripts such as, "The Prime Minister said ..." instead of sound bites.

Soon after Koizumi took office, a proposal was made to the press by the Prime Minister's aide for daily interviews since Koizumi wanted to terminate the conversation while walking and wanted to offer fixed interview opportunities twice a day, one with a television camera. This is said to be an idea of Mr. Isao Iijima who has been Koizumi's secretary since the start of his political career and is presently in charge of all media strategies as Secretary to the Prime Minister. Koizumi won popularity during the campaign for presidency of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP: *Jiminto*) by repeatedly emphasizing the same short phrases in public speeches such as, "I will destroy LDP" or "I will pursue structural reform without sanctuaries." This kind of "one-phrase politics" strategy helped Koizumi win popularity over Japanese public opinion. The interview system was therefore a very good vehicle to improve Koizumi's popularity from his excellent ability to instinctively create impressive phrases when facing reporters.

Since former Prime Minister, Mori, was so reluctant to communicate with the reporters

repeating inappropriate remarks such as “I think Japan is a country of the God, under the leadership of the Emperor (Tenno)” or “I hope voters with no party affiliation be lazy at home not to turn out on the general election day,” it easily made himself a perfect target of media’s severe criticism, and this made him too careful and unwilling to comment to reporters. Members of the press club were thus very eager to secure opportunities to obtain the words of the Prime Minister when the popular Prime Minister started his term that they accept the offer without hesitation.¹⁾

Or Ingenious Manipulation?

Such interviews are conducted in the form of pool coverage, with a “representative” interviewer asking some initial questions which are agreed upon with other reporters in advance, followed by a free question-and-answer session. Any reporter who is registered as a member of the press club at the Prime Minister’s Office can attend and ask additional questions even between questions from the representative. For the morning interview, representatives from eight newspapers and two news agencies take turns, and since the evening interview involves TV cameras, the interviewer is chosen among reporters from NHK and five other commercial broadcasting networks.

This system, at first glance, is very attractive to television news indeed. They can easily obtain various kinds of sound bites from the Prime Minister every evening without making complicated and time-consuming efforts to apply for camera opportunity, which was usually rejected anyway in the past. Broadcasting stations, therefore, can utilize Koizumi’s sound bites in news programs which are very compact for use and often attractive to the audience, since he usually comments, for example, not only on ongoing budget debates in the Diet but also on Japan’s national baseball team who won the championship at the World Baseball Classic Games. In short, Koizumi’s prolific use of emotional, entertaining and sometimes meaningless phrases, which news editors find very attractive to include in their programs, has played a big role in increasing and maintaining the Prime Minister’s popularity.

But wait a minute. A big problem remains unsolved on these interviews which nobody has ever pointed out. Namely, the public is not privy to the details of the full conversation held between Koizumi and the press. Instead, only edited “sound bites” are made available to TV viewers, which are eight to fifteen seconds long on news programs, and newspaper readers only see short excerpts of his answers in newspaper articles. Although there are some ten questions and answers exchanged, neither newspapers nor broadcasting stations makes full dialogue public despite the fact that each news outlet makes a very detailed memo of this interview for internal circulation in their newsrooms.²⁾ As far as I have observed, there is only one television network that provides the entire video on its website.³⁾ It is therefore impossible for ordinary people to accurately understand the context or observe which questions the reporters failed to ask. There is no “public record” of the Q & A session even on the website of the Prime Minister’s Office despite the fact that some officials admit Koizumi’s remarks in the interview are considered “official statements.”⁴⁾ Thus, ordinary

people like myself, must spend hours carefully reviewing small articles on the politics pages in newspapers in order to accurately recollect Koizumi's comments for analysis.

Here is an example. During the beginning of August 2005, while debate over the postal reform bills loomed large, Koizumi repeatedly said that he would resort to dissolving the House of Representatives if the Diet did not pass the bills. By staking his entire political career on a single issue, Koizumi drew the attention of major news outlets to the issue of his resoluteness. Consequently, the media in their coverage of the controversy chose to emphasize Koizumi's sensational statements such as "I will regard oppositions to the bills as toppling the Cabinet" or "I am determined to risk my political life on the bills." At the time, there were other important political issues, such as whether Koizumi was going to follow through on his original campaign pledge and the visit to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine on August 15, the anniversary of the end of the Pacific War, even at the risk of further damaging Japan's relations with China and Korea. Moreover, there was no way for the public to know Koizumi's intentions on this matter or if reporters even bothered to ask him these questions in the first place, because all of Koizumi's comments that appeared in media outlets only concerned the postal reform bills, with nothing about diplomacy with Asia at all.

There remains another problem regarding the interviews. By watching only the sound bites from television news, there is no evidence whether reporters have even tried to ask follow-up questions especially when Koizumi tried to dodge giving a definite answer on an important issue. As for the Yasukuni issue, some questions on that issue began to appear in the news outputs as August 15 approached, but Koizumi simply kept on saying, "I will make an appropriate decision" every day. Even through my careful observation of television news, no indication could be found on reporters having enough guts to demand additional comments by asking, "What do you mean by 'appropriate?' Is it a matter of timing?" or "Then what kind of condition do you regard as 'appropriate' to decide?" On one occasion, none of the reporters took action to stop Koizumi who displeasingly interrupted the interview after he responded routinely "I will make an appropriate decision" and tried to walk away.

There are many more cases of reporters' negligence or inabilities. One day in the summer of 2005 when Koizumi responded to criticisms from Diet members for not sufficiently explaining the benefits of the postal reform bill said, "I tried to answer very slowly at the debate in the special committee so that all the members present could clearly understand the details. I am trying to speak slowly as I realize that I have a tendency to speak fast." It was obviously a dodge; a key issue was the content of the bill itself. But it was disappointing to see that the reporter holding the microphones was merely nodding, which many TV viewers would consider as a sign of consent, and that no journalists present protested the Prime Minister's attempt to change the subject.

Merely Training for Rookie Reporters?

Why are reporters tasked with so important a mission as to covering the Prime Minister although incapable of deriving meaningful comments? To understand this, we must take a

look at how Japanese media companies train their reporters. Customarily, the politics bureaus of major Japanese newspapers and television stations assign young, relatively inexperienced reporters to cover the Prime Minister since his words are all considered “on-record”, freeing them from the difficult responsibility of judging which comments can and cannot be attributed to their source. In major newspapers, news agencies and NHK, freshmen reporters are first assigned to small branch offices in rural areas and they learn basic journalism disciplines, first by covering a small local government. Five to seven years later, after understanding the mechanisms of the power structure of a society that moves reporters to larger branches in several years cycles, some of them are finally promoted to Tokyo or Osaka and are nominated to cover nationwide and international issues. By that time, they would have reached their early thirties and have already learned various customs and styles, as well as establishing personal relationships with politicians and government officials. On the other hand, political reporters of major commercial television networks are far more inexperienced than those of newspapers. Most of them are only in their early twenties and in the most extreme case they are freshmen who just started his/her career a few months ago. In the evening sessions, the Prime Minister is interviewed mainly by such unskilled reporters who are often too timid to ask any ad-lib questions.

One former senior political editor from a broadcasting station explained to me that he believed major media outlets have used the Prime Ministers' interviews as opportunities to train junior reporters from being intimidated to talk to renowned politicians.⁵⁾ He also said that the members of the press club do not seem to take this problem very seriously because in any case, they will still be obtaining Koizumi's “attractive” sound bites. He admitted that the quality of the questions asked were sometimes so poor to the point of being embarrassed. Therefore, he thinks that commercial stations try not to disclose the full content of the interviews lest they lose public trust.

Another senior reporter from a news agency currently working at the press club cited an example of the ridiculous types of questions asked. One reporter asked on Christmas Eve, “People are fidgety about Christmas, what do you think, Mr. Prime Minister?” He wondered if she was trying to get Koizumi to deliver a Christmas message to the public.⁶⁾ The senior reporter tried to explain why his company does not provide the whole record of the interviews for their readers. He said his employer does not feel that they are withholding information. Rather, the company believes that the job of journalists is to select news topics to report and comment on, from the many available to them.

Government's Inactiveness

In the United States, the website of the White House usually provides the full contents of speeches delivered by political leaders for the press or for the public, either in the form of videos or transcripts. Naturally, any government agency or political party is expected to provide such records of official statements on its website. Although such records can be covertly altered from originals for political reasons, they are the least contributing materials

for people to discuss in a democratic society. But it seems that we cannot count on the Japanese government to be even as open as this website.

The website of the Prime Minister's Office is administrated by the Public Relations Division of the Cabinet Office. They have also been promoting Koizumi's e-mail magazine named "Lion's Heart"⁷⁾, but they appear reluctant when it comes to information disclosure – the website currently only displays limited records of speeches by the Prime Minister and the Cabinet Secretary. Besides written documents and formal speeches made at the Diet's plenary sessions, the only sources made available are archives of "formal" press conferences, which are usually held only after an "important political juncture."⁸⁾ Furthermore, no scripts or videos can be found anywhere on the website. Even though the present Cabinet Secretary, Shinzo Abe (as of August, 2006), holds press conferences twice a day on weekdays before television cameras, including the one from the Prime Minister's Office, videos and scripts are limited only to the opening comments, while question-and-answer sessions are excluded from the website. The Public Relations Division of the Cabinet Office gives two reasons as an explanation. The first is that the resources they can spare for maintaining the website, budget and manpower, are very limited.⁹⁾ There are only two officials who are responsible for editing the content of the website and they say it is impossible to cover all the speeches and events relevant to the Cabinet and the Prime Minister. It seems that no discussion has ever taken place in the Japanese government regarding expanding the Public Relations section in order to provide the public with more information through its website.

The second reason, which is closely related to the first, is more technical, but crucial. The Cabinet Office has its own standards for deciding which kind of information has higher priority for display in the website. They say that the website can only include information which "the government regards as 'necessary' to announce publicly." Regarding the reason for not including the Prime Minister's daily interviews on the list, they do not consider those interviews to have the same status as the "official" press conferences, which are held approximately five to seven times a year, contradicting the fact that they admit the Prime Minister's comments from those interviews as "official." In Japan, decisions on hosting press conferences are not decided by government offices or political parties, but by press clubs, a practice that appears to be highly unusual to foreigners. The Public Relations Division of the Cabinet Office considers Koizumi's nightly interview as a private conversation with the press club, not to the public, therefore it is the responsibility of the journalists in the press club, not the cabinet, to decide which contents should be disclosed to the public. For the same reason, only the opening remarks of the Cabinet Secretary's daily press conferences are considered as part of the public record by the Cabinet Office, while entrusting the press with the authority to decide which parts of the question-and-answer sessions should be made public. In its defense, the Cabinet Office claims that these rules are merely temporary, but they have shown no indication of seriously considering revisions. In this way, the Japanese government compromises the people's rights to free access of information.

Media's Negligence

The Japanese government is, nevertheless, making some efforts to increase the amount of content available on the website. The website of the Prime Minister's Office is trying to introduce "Government Internet TV,"¹⁰⁾ which contains interview videos with Cabinet ministers, educational videos on new legislation, and the like. As a part of this improvement, the Public Relations section of the Cabinet Office, in late May of 2005, asked the press club if they would make available the full video of the Prime Minister's daily interviews and the Cabinet Secretary's daily press conferences, both filmed by government's own camera crews, on their website. Immediately after the proposal, the press club held a meeting with the chief reporters from each of the member media outlets. Surprisingly, aside from proposing a condition that the video contents must be displayed in the original, unedited format, the participants expressed reluctance and suspicion toward the idea. One of them expressed his discomfort openly, saying "Our news gathering activities are completely different from the government's PR activities and therefore it is completely unreasonable to disclose the interview on the website." (But if the government promises to make the video available in full with no edits, can the fairness of interview contents and independence of the press members be protected as long as the interview is conducted by the members of the press club? There is no other website except for the government's own to carry the full version of the interview and if any member of the press club is apprehensive about the government's deceit over the public by falsifying the record, that newspaper or television should undertake a mission to watchdog instead.) Others were concerned about disclosing reporters' identities and affiliations for security reasons if they air the whole video."¹¹⁾ (Are they working in a country where there are terrorists' attacks as daily occurrences as in Iraq? It is surprising that such top-ranked Japanese "journalists" thus fear their identities to be exposed. Are they really eligible to cover politics as "journalists"?)

The press club decided to consult their senior editors on the matter and it was eventually discussed at the Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editor's Association (Nihon Shinbun Kyokai), which has a membership of one hundred and eight newspapers, four news agencies, and thirty-one radio or television broadcasting stations.¹²⁾ The organization managed to reach a tentative agreement in early September of 2005 and drafted an internal document for circulation among its members. The document reiterated their basic understanding that press conferences held at major press clubs in government agencies are hosted and operated by press clubs, not by the government. While the agreement confirmed the people's right to free access of information as an important point, it concluded that "Therefore, if press conferences, which are essentially held for news reports, are exploited by the government to draw publicity, 'it would not be appropriate for the intended purpose.'"

One of the fifty-seven news section executives from major media outlets party expressed his disappointment to the agreement, saying that the discussion was merely an expression of their reluctance toward full disclosure of news-reporting activities. He points out that the media are afraid to broach this subject, as newspapers are seriously worried that the internet

would rob “vested rights” from them as guardians of information while television networks are reluctant to take any initiative since the government has not yet decided its policy on the “fusion between television and internet.” All along, the Koizumi Administration has been trying to use the daily interviews and its website as powerful “propaganda” tools.¹³⁾ The executive further criticized scholars in media and journalism for putting too much emphasis on free access of information, as they are unwittingly supporting the establishment of a system where the website of the Prime Minister’s Office includes video contents of the daily interviews without regard to the unsecured structure of websites—that they can be easily and secretly altered for political reasons. There also remains unresolved the fundamental question on the traditional practices of press clubs in Japan, such as whether press conferences are hosted by the clubs rather than by the person or organization being covered and if press clubs are consistent with the principle of the people’s rights to free access of information.

Underdevelopment of Japanese Press Democracy

In the press club of the Prime Minister’s Office, “managers” are rotated every two months among club members. To improve the website, the Public Relations Division of the Cabinet Office has asked to negotiate on including the video materials in question whenever the managers change, since this is the only official opportunity for them to directly contact the members of the press club.¹⁴⁾ But such discussions have never taken place since last September. One reason for this has been a particularly active news cycle during the last six months, with prominent stories including the falsifying of earthquake-resistance data used for constructing condominiums and hotels, BSE and Japan’s beef imports from the United States, the arrest of Takafumi Horie, a flamboyant internet entrepreneur who ran as a candidate in last year’s general election with Prime Minister Koizumi’s personal backing, for violation of the Securities Exchange Law and bid rigging scandals at the Defense Facilities Administration. This cycle had left the media too busy to discuss details about the website. But it also reflects the media’s indifference to creating a better system for their readers or viewers to access information. The Public Relations Division explained that they receive minimal support from the public through e-mails for implementing reforms to its website. People might be interested only in which tie Koizumi is wearing today, but not what he says about policies.

The status of the agreement between Koizumi and the press club to hold interview sessions twice a day is only temporary and the next Prime Minister Shinzo Abe decided to hold interview session only once a day in the evenings (as of October, 2006). I think media should push for progress toward a system where the website includes the full record of Koizumi’s interviews. Also, I think it is necessary for at least news agencies and major newspapers to make their own records of those interviews available to the public, similar to the script service which some foreign news agencies, such as Reuters, provide. It is very important to provide an alternative record to monitor any attempts to covertly modify written records used to manipulate public perceptions. In the worst-case scenario, the next Prime

Minister could hold interviews exclusively with the camera crew of the Public Relations section and place the video on the website after editing in accordance with political intentions that the public cannot detect. Since the media may not be so lucky in future, they need to push this matter before Koizumi's term as a Prime Minister is over.

Notes

- 1) The press club did not give up asking questions while walking, insisting that it was the right of the press to cover the Prime Minister unconditionally at any time or occasion, but Koizumi has ceased to respond since the agreement.
- 2) Author was working at TV Asahi, one of six major networks, for sixteen years until March, 2005 and confirmed that the reporters who cover the interviews always make detailed, word-for-word memos and send them to internal network so that other reporters and producers in the news section could read. Author also found out that almost all major news outlets of the press club in the Prime Minister's Office follow the same practices.
- 3) As of April, 2006, the only website which provides the entire video of the interview is by NTV (Nihon Television). On "Dai-Ni Nippon TV (Second NTV)", a venture project that NTV has begun as a paid, on-demand style website in October, 2005, viewers can watch the video as free contents. Those interviews, unfortunately, are not permanently stored; they are deleted every month as an index calendar on the website changes.
- 4) Author's telephone interview with officials of the Press Relations Office at the Prime Minister's office (February 2, 2006) and another telephone interview with officials from the Public Relations Division of the Cabinet Office (March 14, 2006), all interviewees agreed to introduce their words on the condition of anonymity.
- 5) Author's interview with a former political editor from one of the five commercial broadcasting stations on January 31, 2006.
- 6) Author's interview on January 17, 2006 with a senior reporter from one of the news agencies who is currently working at the press club of the Prime Minister's Office. He also agreed to answer on off-the-record basis.
- 7) The mail magazine was founded in May, 2001 and it is said that it was named after Koizumi's nickname, as his long and wavy hair style resembles the mane of a male lion.
<http://www.kantei.go.jp/>
- 8) The Prime Minister's official press conferences are customary held at 1) the beginning of the year, 2) the end of both regular and extraordinary sessions of the Diet, 3) the approvals of the budget and other important bills such as Special Measures Law for Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance in Iraq, 4) the end of official visits to foreign countries including bilateral meetings with leaders and presence at conferences held by international organizations, such as the United Nations, G8, APEC.
- 9) Author's telephone interview with an official from the Public Relations Division of the Cabinet Office on March 14, 2006.
- 10) <http://nettv.gov-online.go.jp>
- 11) Author's interview on February 20, 2006 with one of the senior reporters from a

membercompany of the press club at the Prime Minister's Office. The interviewee agreed to disclose information on the condition of anonymity.

- 12) <http://www.pressnet.or.jp/>
- 13) Author received an e-mail and had a telephone interview with one of the fifty-seven newsroom executives of the Tokyo-based media outlets on March 14, 2006.
- 14) It is the Press Relations Office of the Prime Minister's Office to customary deal with the press and the press club.

「日本メディアの隠された閉鎖性」 —首相のぶらさがりインタビューの情報は大手メディアにより 「知る権利」がふみにじられている

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自民党の派閥力学に拠らず、国民の人気に直接支えられてきた小泉（前）首相のメディア対策は特に優れていた。有名なスポーツ選手や芸能人とカメラに取まってスポーツ紙や週刊誌などにも頻繁に登場して親近感を演出した。そして彼が一番利用したツールはテレビであった。歴代首相の伝統を破り、1日2回の「ぶら下がり」インタビューの機会を設け、国民に直接語りかけるという戦略をとったのである。小泉首相は政治のみならず、プロ野球やオリンピックなどにも明るくコメントに応じるので、特に夕方に行われるインタビューは、いち早くNHKの午後7時のニュースや民放の夜のニュースで取り上げられ、国民の注目を集め、小泉首相もメディア（特にテレビ）の側双方ともその恩恵に与ってきた。

しかし、官邸が「首相の公式発言である」と認めるこのインタビューの「全体」は、驚くべきことにどこにも記録が残っていない。我々が眼にするのは、わずか数秒から十数秒のテレビニュースの「サウンドバイト」と首相の発言の一部を引用した政治記事だけである。「全体で何問のやりとりがあったのか」「それに首相はどのように応えたのか、自信に満ちていたのか、不快そうだったのか」「なされるべきどんな質問が記者団から出なかったのか」を検証することができない（最近の一部の民放のウェブサイトでは数日間の映像を参照することは可能になった）。

首相のインタビューでは通常、「番記者」と呼ばれる首相担当の記者が代わる代わる代表を務める。「首相番」は各報道機関とも一番経験の浅い記者が担当するケースが多く、特に地方勤務を経ないで政府や中央省庁の取材現場に派遣される民放の記者は、最悪の場合、入社数カ月の20歳台の若者になる。そのような記者が繰り返す質問は果たして首相のコメントを引き出すのに有効なのだろうか。ある民放のベテラン記者は質問の仕方や内容が公開に耐えないことがあると認め、少なくとも民放はインタビュー全体の公開に積極的になれないのではないかと証言した。しかしメディアは、何はともあれ魅力的な小泉首相のサウンドバイトが取れるということで、この問題を放置してきた。

官邸のウェブサイトでも首相インタビューのすべてのやりとりは参照できない。正式な記者会見や公式なスピーチ、官房長官の記者会見も質疑応答の部分は載っていない。サイト運営の責任をもつ内閣府広報室は、「政府が『公式に』アナウンスしたほうがいいと判断したものしかウェブサイトには掲載しない」と回答し、「公式発言」としているぶらさがりインタビューについては「メディアの責任で公開すべき」としている。内閣府広報室はこの状態が永久的ではないとしたものの、改善の兆しは見られない。

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実はウェブサイトには首相インタビューの記録が掲載されないのには隠れた重大な理由がある。内閣府広報室は密かに官邸の記者クラブに対し、インタビューに広報室のテレビカメラを入れ、その映像をウェブサイトアップしたいと再三打診してきたが、各報道機関は「質問する記者の所属が明らかになる」「内閣府広報室がビデオを編集する恐れはないのか」などの理由をつけて難色を示し、報道機関の幹部が日本新聞協会で協議した結果、「インタビューはそもそも記者クラブの主催で行われている」ことを強調して、「その内容が『政府の宣伝』に使われるのは望ましくない」との内部文書をまとめ、内閣広報室は記者クラブと再度交渉を行わなければならなくなった。

しかし、その文書がまとめられた2005年9月以来、記者クラブ側と広報室との交渉が進展した形跡はない。当時の各社の協議に加わったある報道機関の幹部は「メディアの既得権益に固執しているだけだった」と述懐する。

後任の安倍首相はインタビューの回数を1日1回に減らしてしまった(2006年10月現在)。米国のホワイトハウスのように全ての大統領発言をウェブサイトに掲載しているといっても、それらは勝手に書き換えられる恐れもあり、完全な「お手本」とは言い難い。やはり各報道機関が首相とのやりとりという「真剣勝負」を責任を持って公開し、国民全体で検証ができる環境を整えなければならない。

キーワード：メディア、ジャーナリズム、報道、ニュース、インタビュー、首相官邸、小泉純一郎、自民党、知る権利、記者クラブ、ぶら下がり、政治記者、インターネット、ウェブサイト、ホワイトハウス、会見録、記事