



The Afterlives of Post-War Japanese Prime Ministers

Hugo Dobson & Caroline Rose

To cite this article: Hugo Dobson & Caroline Rose (2019) The Afterlives of Post-War Japanese Prime Ministers, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 49:1, 127-150, DOI: [10.1080/00472336.2018.1460389](https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2018.1460389)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2018.1460389>



© 2018 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 15 Apr 2018.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)





Article views: 634



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

The Afterlives of Post-War Japanese Prime Ministers

Hugo Dobson ^a and Caroline Rose ^b

^aSchool of East Asian Studies, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK; ^bDepartment of East Asian Studies, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK

ABSTRACT

Despite growing interest over the last 20 years in the position and power of the Japanese prime minister, what he does after resigning from this position has been overlooked in the extant literatures in both English and Japanese. This is unfortunate because, to paraphrase former US President Bill Clinton, as an ex-leader “you lose your power but not your influence.” This article represents the first attempt to explore what post-war Japanese prime ministers have done after stepping down and what influence they have continued to exert. It does so by providing an empirical overview of the afterlives of Japan’s 33 post-war ex-prime ministers before then discussing the benefits and shortcomings of applying the comparative, conceptual literature on the role of former leaders in Western democracies to the specific case of Japan. After providing the necessary justification, it then focuses on three detailed and illuminating case studies of Nakasone Yasuhiro, Murayama Tomiichi and Fukuda Yasuo. It argues that Japanese prime ministers continue to exert influence in several informal ways.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Published online 25 October 2018

KEYWORDS

Japan; prime minister; ex-leaders; power; influence; informal politics

*Daylight has long faded
but until it is time to die
cicadas keep singing*

Former Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro

On December 26, 2012 Abe Shinzo returned to the post of prime minister of Japan, a position that he vacated in September 2007 after what was perceived to be a failed one-year term in office. In doing so, he became the only post-Occupation prime minister to serve a second non-consecutive term and has, since then, proved to be a much more durable and successful prime minister than his first term in office suggested. As a result, scholarly and popular attention has focused upon the differences between Abe 1.0 and Abe 2.0, particularly in terms of the strengthened executive position of the prime minister and Japan’s more proactive role in the world (Hughes 2015; Dobson 2017; George Mulgan 2017). However, there is an aspect of this comeback story that has been overlooked and revolves around the simple question of “where are they now?” Biographies, autobiographies, memoirs and biopics are replete with formative experiences and coverage of leaders’ time in power but are often silent when it comes to the

CONTACT Hugo Dobson  H.Dobson@sheffield.ac.uk  School of East Asian Studies, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK

© 2018 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

period after leaving office. Having been largely written off after resigning in September 2007, the example of Abe demonstrates that political obituaries should never be written too early.

This silence on the subject of what leaders do beyond the point of their departure from office is unfortunate for several reasons and raises important questions. First, one of the inescapable truths of politics is that all leaders eventually become former leaders and ignoring this period of a leader's life misses out not only on academic opportunities to flesh out the complete biography of a leader's experience but also practical opportunities for future administrations to benefit from their expertise. Theakston (2006, 448) has written that "[f]ormer prime ministers are members of a small, exclusive club." However, as Jack (2007) has argued, the topic of former leaders has increased in salience over recent years and this trend is set to continue: "growing numbers of successful politicians are leaving office younger, more energetic, keen to do more in the future, propelled by their recent predecessors, precedents and increased chances to consolidate their legacies and to continue to make a difference." In light of this emerging trend, this article represents the first attempt in the various extant literatures to present the narrative of this inescapable truth, highlight these experiences and identify this expertise in the case of the Japanese prime minister.

Second, the question of what former leaders do after leaving official positions of power leads us to look at the unofficial and informal aspects of politics. Pike (2000, 281) defines informal politics as "interpersonal activities stemming from a tacitly accepted, but unenunciated, matrix of political attitudes existing outside the framework of legal government, constitutions, bureaucratic constructs and similar institutions." In the same book, Dittmer (2000, 292) argues that "informal politics consists of *the use of nonlegitimate means* (albeit not necessarily illegal) *to pursue public ends*." In a similar vein, "marginal diplomacy" has been highlighted as "the performance of quasi-diplomatic functions of intelligence, promotion, and negotiation in the national interest by persons lacking the status of diplomatic representatives, and hence the degree of legal privilege and immunity accorded to officially accredited diplomatic agents" (Johnston 1970–1971, 470). This desire among political scientists to look beyond the "usual suspects" of formal state and even non-state actors, such as non-governmental organisations and international civil society, and instead pay attention to these informal aspects of politics and power and the roles played by a range of informal actors has intensified over recent years. These actors are now described as "hyper-empowered individuals" – a term that can range from celebrity diplomats to academic networks to political spouses (Cooper 2008, 2015; Dobson 2012a; Cross 2013). As will be argued below, Japanese former prime ministers provide a hitherto overlooked but pertinent case study of the influence of unofficial and informal political actors in a country that has traditionally been regarded as placing particular emphasis on the role of informal political channels.

Third, although traditionally portrayed as weak, short-lived, lacking in resources and ultimately occupying a less influential position than in other countries, there has been a concomitant increase over the last 20 years in the attention paid to the Japanese prime minister and the power he exerts (see Neary 1996; Edström 1996). Shinoda's work (2000), in particular, identifies the power resources available to prime ministers and illustrates how they instrumentalise them to achieve their objectives. Takayasu (2001)

takes a similar tack in arguing that although a number of articles in the current constitution are often identified as acting as constraints on prime-ministerial power, they may not be as restraining as has been believed. Rather, taking the 1973 oil crisis as an example, he outlines a range of other power resources and channels of influence, including bilateral meetings with ministers and private secretaries' networks, that Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei was able to use to influence the policymaking process. Others have highlighted the strengthening of the Prime Minister's Office (Shinoda 2007), the presidentialisation of Japanese politics (Krauss and Nyblade 2005), and the increasing importance of the media to enhance public image and approval (Kabashima and Steel 2007). So, once regarded as largely irrelevant, the prime minister is firmly back on the radar of observers of Japanese politics. Yet, his afterlife and post-premiership influence have not received similar attention – a gap this article seeks to fill.

Now is an opportune time to explore the afterlives of former prime ministers in Japan. The disruption of the revolving door of prime ministers, which lasted from 2006 to 2012, produced a new prime minister every year and prompted Brazilian President Lula da Silva to joke at the 2009 G20 Pittsburgh Summit that you say “‘good morning’ to one Japanese prime minister and ‘good afternoon’ to another” (cited in *The Financial Times*, June 2, 2010). That period has come to an end. So, at the time of writing, if we count Abe as an example of a former prime minister and not including caretaker prime ministers, Japan has produced 33 former prime ministers in the post-war period of which 13 are still alive. Table 1 outlines these former leaders and it is the final column that provides the temporal focus in answering the questions of what former prime ministers in Japan do in the time after stepping down and what influence they exert, formally or informally, domestically or internationally.

To these ends, this article marshals evidence from biographies, memoirs, interviews with several living former prime ministers, newspaper reports and a range of secondary sources. It is structured as follows. First, it provides an overview of the afterlives of former prime ministers. Rather than follow a chronological order, which would be unnecessarily rigid and descriptive, this overview is organised intuitively from continued political engagement at various levels, via non-political activities to the pursuit of personal causes and even seemingly trivial celebrity appearances. It then seeks to make sense of this empirical contribution through reference to the conceptual and comparative literature on ex-leaders in Western democracies. In particular, it applies the categorisation of former UK prime ministers developed by Theakston (2006; 2010) and Theakston and De Vries (2012) to the case of Japan, arguing that the framework offers a useful lens through which to view the afterlives of Japanese prime ministers, albeit with some modification and the addition of new categories. The article then justifies the selection of and focuses on three detailed and illuminating case studies of Nakasone Yasuhiro, Murayama Tomiichi and Fukuda Yasuo, which demonstrate the continued importance of former prime ministers and the informal influence they have exerted.

Former Prime Ministers in Japan

Although continuing to pursue a political career may not be the first choice for every former leader, it is the intuitive choice for many. As mentioned above, Abe is the only “comeback kid” of post-Occupation politics by serving a second non-consecutive term

Table 1. Former prime ministers in post-war Japan.

| Name | Born | Party | Tenure as prime minister | Former prime ministers alive during tenure | Age at leaving office | Died | Length of post-premiership (years) |
|----------------------|------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|--|-----------------------|------|------------------------------------|
| Higashikuni Naruhiko | 1887 | Independent | 1945 | N/A | 57 | 1990 | 45 |
| Shidehara Kijuro | 1872 | Independent | 1945–46 | 1 | 73 | 1951 | 5 |
| Yoshida Shigeru | 1878 | Liberal/Democratic Liberal Party | 1946–47; 1948–54 | 2 (4) | 68 (76) | 1967 | 1 (13) |
| Katayama Tetsu | 1887 | Socialist | 1947–48 | 3 | 60 | 1978 | 30 |
| Ashida Hitoshi | 1887 | Democratic | 1948 | 4 | 60 | 1959 | 11 |
| Hatoyama Ichiro | 1883 | Democratic/LDP | 1954–56 | 4 | 72 | 1959 | 3 |
| Ishibashi Tanzan | 1884 | LDP | 1956–57 | 5 | 72 | 1973 | 16 |
| Kishi Nobusuke | 1896 | LDP | 1957–60 | 6 | 63 | 1987 | 27 |
| Ikeda Hayato | 1899 | LDP | 1960–64 | 5 | 64 | 1965 | 1 |
| Sato Eisaku | 1901 | LDP | 1964–72 | 6 | 71 | 1975 | 3 |
| Tanaka Kakuei | 1918 | LDP | 1972–74 | 5 | 56 | 1993 | 19 |
| Miki Takeo | 1907 | LDP | 1974–76 | 5 | 69 | 1988 | 12 |
| Fukuda Takeo | 1905 | LDP | 1976–78 | 5 | 73 | 1995 | 17 |
| Ohira Masayoshi | 1910 | LDP | 1978–80 | 5 | 70 | 1980 | 0 |
| Suzuki Zenko | 1911 | LDP | 1980–82 | 5 | 71 | 2004 | 22 |
| Nakasone Yasuhiro | 1918 | LDP | 1982–87 | 6 | 69 | – | 30+ |
| Takeshita Noboru | 1924 | LDP | 1987–89 | 6 | 65 | 2000 | 11 |
| Uno Sosuke | 1922 | LDP | 1989 | 6 | 66 | 1998 | 9 |
| Kaifu Toshiki | 1931 | LDP | 1989–91 | 7 | 60 | – | 26+ |
| Miyazawa Kiichi | 1919 | LDP | 1991–93 | 7 | 73 | 2007 | 14 |
| Hosokawa Morihiro | 1938 | JNP | 1993–94 | 8 | 56 | – | 23+ |
| Hata Tsutomu | 1935 | Renewal Socialist | 1994 | 8 | 58 | – | 23+ |
| Murayama Tomiichi | 1924 | Socialist | 1994–96 | 9 | 71 | – | 21+ |
| Hashimoto Ryutaro | 1937 | LDP | 1996–98 | 9 | 61 | 2006 | 8 |
| Obuchi Keizo | 1937 | LDP | 1998–2000 | 9 | 62 | 2000 | 0 |
| Mori Yoshiro | 1937 | LDP | 2000–01 | 9 | 63 | – | 16+ |
| Koizumi Junichiro | 1942 | LDP | 2001–06 | 9 | 64 | – | 11+ |
| Abe Shinzo | 1954 | LDP | 2006–07; 2012–? | 8 (12) | 53 (N/A) | – | 5 (N/A) |
| Fukuda Yasuo | 1936 | LDP | 2007–08 | 8 | 72 | – | 9+ |
| Aso Taro | 1940 | LDP | 2008–09 | 9 | 69 | – | 8+ |
| Hatoyama Yukio | 1947 | DPJ | 2009–10 | 10 | 63 | – | 7+ |
| Kan Naoto | 1946 | DPJ | 2010–11 | 11 | 64 | – | 6+ |
| Noda Yoshihiko | 1957 | DPJ | 2011–12 | 12 | 55 | – | 5+ |

Note: Caretaker prime ministers are not included. Numbers in brackets refer to second term in office. Correct as of October 23, 2017.

as prime minister; however, he is not the first politician to attempt this feat. Hashimoto Ryutaro, who served as prime minister from 1996 to 1998, sought a return to the top job in 2001 but lost the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) leadership race and thereby the position of prime minister to Koizumi Junichiro (*Asahi Shinbun*, April 24, 2001). Several former prime ministers have stayed on in politics in one form or another. For example, Hashimoto, Miyazawa Kiichi and Aso Taro all served in ministerial positions of influence after stepping down (with Miyazawa lending his name as finance minister to one pillar of Japan's response to the Asian Economic Crisis). Alternatively, Kaifu Toshiki continued his political career by defecting from the LDP in 1994 to lead the opposition New Frontier Party briefly before returning to the LDP fold in 2003 (*The*

Japan Times, November 18, 2003). Hatoyama Yukio supported his ally Ozawa Ichiro in an ultimately unsuccessful campaign to unseat his successor as prime minister, Kan Naoto (*Asahi Shinbun*, September 15, 2010). Hosokawa Morihiro sought a different political office when he ran unsuccessfully for Mayor of Tokyo in 2014 largely on an anti-nuclear power, single issue platform (*Yomiuri Shinbun*, February 10, 2014). Many former prime ministers have continued to serve in the House of Representatives or House of Councillors. The most notable examples are Miki Takeo, who served as prime minister for only two years from 1974 to 1976 but for 50 years in total as a member of the House of Representatives and received the rare honour after his death of a bust placed in the Japanese Diet building (*Asahi Shinbun*, June 22, 1990). His protégé Kaifu was prime minister from 1989 to 1991 and served for 49 years in total as a representative of his constituency until the LDP's electoral disaster of 2009. Although admirable for their longevity, elderly parliamentarians are not to everyone's tastes and despite his desire to continue to serve, Nakasone was eventually forced to step down by Koizumi in 2003 as part of his efforts to rejuvenate the LDP by introducing an age limit for electoral candidates (*Yomiuri Shinbun*, October 28, 2003).

A more common way to continue playing a role in politics is within the factional system. Kishi Nobusuke, Tanaka, Miki, Fukuda Takeo, Suzuki Zenko, Nakasone, Takeshita Noboru, Hashimoto and Mori Yoshiro all operated within their respective factions and exerted influence to varying degrees behind the scenes after stepping down as prime minister. The more powerful factional leaders have played the role of king-makers or shadow shoguns. For example, it has been argued that Takeshita's influence was in fact greater after his resignation as prime minister and the selection of each of his successors with the exceptions of Hosokawa and Hata reflect this influence up until his death in 2000 (Anon 1999). Moreover, there has been much discussion of the case of Tanaka and his influence over subsequent administrations can be neatly captured in the term "Tanakasone" that was used to describe Nakasone's administration (Johnson 1986; Babb 2000; *Nihon Keizai Shinbun*, May 26, 1983).

At the other end of the spectrum exist the prime ministers who have done little related to politics in retirement, either through choice or as a result of circumstances. Both Ohira Masayoshi and Obuchi Keizo fell ill while in office and died soon after. A number of prime ministers did not live long after stepping down: Shidehara Kijuro, who made his name as foreign minister in the pre-war period, was brought out of retirement to serve as prime minister during the Occupation period but only lived for a further five years after resigning in 1946 during which time he served as Speaker of the House of Representatives and died in that post. Ikeda Hayato resigned because of cancer and died less than a year later. Hatoyama Ichiro and Sato Eisaku both lived for a further three years. Some former prime ministers have abandoned politics in favour of a completely unrelated career. For example, the shortest serving prime minister but longest living former prime minister, Higashikuni Naruhiko, was a member of the Imperial family and only ever regarded as an interim leader who could sign the instrument of surrender and oversee the transition to the US Occupation. He resigned on October 9, 1945, sought to renounce his imperial status and became a commoner. The Occupation reforms ensured this with the abolition of the aristocracy and thereafter he operated several private businesses, from second-hand goods to dressmaking, with little success before then establishing a religious sect that was

subsequently outlawed by the occupying forces. He would later found the Chiba Institute of Technology and publish his wartime diaries and memoirs before dying in January 1990 aged 102. Uno Sosuke represents a former prime minister who retired into quiet anonymity engaged mostly in personal hobbies of painting, music and poetry after he was forced to resign when an extra-marital affair with a *geisha* came to light.

Some, but not many, former prime ministers have gone on to engage in dignified and non-partisan public service. After resigning in 1954, Yoshida Shigeru retired to his family residence in Oiso, Kanagawa Prefecture and quietly spent the remaining 13 years of life as a modern-day *genro* (an unofficial title given in pre-war Japan to a retired elder statesman), welcoming visitors and foreign dignitaries and dispensing advice when not writing his memoirs and histories of Japan. Two years after retiring and one year before he died, Sato was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1974 for representing the people's will for peace and for signing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1970. Fukuda Takeo was a founding member of the Interaction Council (IAC), which was established in 1983 to bring together former heads of state from across the world with the purpose of raising awareness of global issues, and was followed some years later by his son, Fukuda Yasuo, who took up membership in 2009. Murayama was made an *ad hoc* member of the IAC in 2010 to coincide with that year's plenary session held in Hiroshima that produced the Hiroshima Declaration on the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Several former prime ministers have continued to pursue a personal cause. Although his post-premiership was non-existent, the pet policies and causes of Ohira, especially the Pacific Basin Community Concept, were promoted through the establishment of the Ohira Masayoshi Memorial Foundation five years after his death that continues to operate today. Murayama has been closely associated with the issue of the comfort women and served as president of the Asian Women's Fund until it was wound down in 2007. Hosokawa's unsuccessful campaign in the Tokyo Mayoral elections of 2014 focused on an anti-nuclear ticket, with the public support of Koizumi who broke a relatively long period of silence since retiring. Aso was appointed in 2011 as an anime envoy to China by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), a role that resonated with his own soft power initiatives when in office, such as establishing the International Manga Award (MOFA 2017). In addition, he sought to improve sports facilities ahead of a successful bid to host the 2020 Olympics, in which Mori continues to play a central role as president of the organising committee. As will be discussed in more detail below, Fukuda Yasuo has sought to promote reconciliation in Northeast Asia by taking on various roles at the bilateral and regional levels.

Some ex-prime ministers have sought to burnish their own reputations or reverse history's judgement on them. Tanaka represents an example of a former prime minister clearly wanting to salvage his reputation from perennial allegations and eventual arrest on charges of corruption after resigning in 1974. Nakasone has engaged in reputation-burnishing activities through the Institute for International Policy Studies, which he founded in 1988 and functions to continue the cause of constitutional revision. Abe has done something similar in relation to his first term in office through his second term in office. Seeking to set the record straight with political memoirs is not common in Japan but Kaifu's 2010 book *Seiji to Kane* (Politics and Money) sought to address the perception of him as a weak prime

minister. Similarly, Kan continued to seek the abandonment of nuclear power as well as exoneration both at home and abroad from his handling of the triple disasters of the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami of March 11, 2011 and resulting Fukushima nuclear meltdown (Kan 2012, 2017).

Other ex-prime ministers have maintained their reputation and status in retirement through their acolytes and protégés. For example, Ikeda and Sato were disciples of Yoshida. Ikeda mentored Miyazawa, Sato was also a follower of Kishi, Kaifu owed allegiance to Miki, Hata Tsutomu was an acolyte of Tanaka, and Obuchi of Takeshita to the extent that he was accorded an unfortunate and scatological nickname (*The Economist*, July 30, 1998).

This kind of reputational burnishing and legacy building can be conducted much closer to home because of the prevalence of dynastic politicians in Japan (Asako et al. 2015). For example, Yoshida, Hatoyama Ichiro, Kishi, Tanaka, Fukuda Takeo, Suzuki, Nakasone, Takeshita, Miyazawa, Hata, Hashimoto, Obuchi and Koizumi all have/had children, grandchildren, siblings or nephews who pursued political careers of varying success but in the process burnished his/her father's, grandfather's, brother's or uncle's reputation and legacy.

Serving as a leader of any country can confer celebrity status and this has been the case in Japan whether it be Hosokawa training as a potter and publicly exhibiting his work, Koizumi lending his vocal talents to the role of Ultraman King in *Mega Monster Battle Ultra Galaxy: The Movie*, or Hatoyama playing the role of the first female president of the US in retirement in a stage musical (Hosokawa 2008; *Nikkan Sports*, September 29, 2014). One other option in Western democracies for former leaders is to seek financial reward resulting from their status through the international lecture circuit like Clinton and the UK's Tony Blair. However, this trend can only be tenuously observed in Japan and may be the result of Japanese prime ministers being of little interest to an international audience or having already secured a level of personal wealth, which is a prerequisite for a successful political career.

Making Sense of Former Leaders

In attempting to make sense of this initial overview of the afterlives of Japan's prime ministers, the comparative literature is of some, limited, assistance. The former US president has traditionally dominated the literature on ex-leaders. This is unsurprising in that "[a]n ex-President. . . occupies a unique position in our national life. As one of a select few he has held the highest position in the gift of the people, an office with which, perhaps, none other in the world is comparable for power and influence" (Sheldon 1925, 3). To this end, several works have provided purely descriptive but nevertheless informative accounts of the post-resignation lives of ex-presidents across time from George Washington to Bill Clinton (Martin 1951; Clark 1985; Cunningham 1989; Updegrave 2006). Other works have explored the post-presidencies of individual ex-presidents including Theodore Roosevelt (O'Toole 2005; Morris 2010) and Jimmy Carter (Brinkley 1998). However, much of this literature lacks an analytical focus and is purely descriptive. Sheldon (1925) represents an early attempt to tease out some categories amongst these post-presidencies along the lines of quiet seclusion, has-been, resuming a previous profession, becoming a national figure, offering wisdom and

advice, or engaging in (or rising above) partisan politics. Others have proposed similar categories with different degrees of emphasis (Hecht 1976; Schenker 1982; Schaller and Williams 2003; Skidmore 2004; Benardo and Weiss 2009). Belenky (1999) provides a more useful categorisation by highlighting six recurrent models of ex-presidents: (i) “still ambitious,” who hope for a return to power; (ii) “exhausted volcanoes,” who do little if anything after stepping down; (iii) “political dabblers,” who continue to play an unofficial role that can be either supportive or unsupportive of their party or the government of the day; (iv) “first citizens,” who are similar to elder statesmen and use their high profiles to engage in honourable activities; (v) “embracers of a cause,” who promote an issue close to their hearts; and (vi) “seekers of vindication,” who want to communicate their own version of events.

The chief weakness in using the literature on ex-presidents to explore former Japanese prime ministers is the disparity between presidential and parliamentary systems. US presidents know that they will serve either one or two four-year terms in office and can thus anticipate the time they will step down. Prime ministers cannot do this and, because they are not directly elected, will often have the option of returning to the backbenches and continuing as a parliamentarian after stepping down.

So, it would appear more logical to look to similar parliamentary systems in the comparative literature, such as the Westminster system. In his article on UK prime ministers’ afterlives, Theakston (2006, 449–455) employs the categories of: (i) “in government office after being prime minister” by serving as a minister in another prime minister’s cabinet; (ii) “honours” including serving in the House of Lords; (iii) “setting the record straight” by writing memoirs; (iv) “money matters,” or securing financial solvency in their retirement; and (v) “outlive the bastards” by recovering from the exigencies of the position, attending to health and aging issues and not succumbing to illness for as long as possible.

Theakston adapts these categories slightly in his book-length treatment (2010) of UK prime ministers from Walpole to Blair, with reference to Belenky’s (1999) categorisation of former US presidents mentioned above. Theakston (2010, 4–13, 226–237) highlights the categories of: “back in government office after being prime minister”; “other political and public office”; “health and age factors”; “money matters,” “honours,” and “putting pen to paper.” Clearly, a number of Belenky’s and Theakston’s categories overlap, such as “back in office after being prime minister”/“still ambitious,” “exhausted volcanoes”/“health and age factors,” and “putting pen to paper”/“seekers of vindication.” Theakston’s category of “other political and public office” includes and conflates aspects of Belenky’s three categories of “political dabblers,” “first citizens” and “embracers of a cause.” So, regardless of political system, these appear to be universal categories. Theakston and de Vries’s edited volume (2012) expands the UK-specific analysis in a more comparative and much-needed direction by applying these categories to other parliamentary and presidential systems, including the US, Canada, Australia, Germany, France, the Republic of Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium and Israel, with the noticeable exception of Japan.

The overview of the activities of former Japanese prime ministers provided above highlights the fact that some of these categories are simply not appropriate to the Japanese case. On the one hand, “honours” cannot be applied as the peerage was abolished during the US Occupation and an elected House of Councillors introduced.

Thus, unlike the UK's House of Lords, to which former UK prime ministers are appointed, Japanese ex-prime ministers are denied an official platform to continue exerting influence, pursue a cause or share their expertise. Lacking an official route, they have tended to seek out alternative pathways to continue exerting some kind of influence, as will be discussed below in more detail. On the other hand, "money matters" is equally not applicable because Japanese prime ministers have already secured the necessary resources to pursue a political career prior to becoming prime minister, as mentioned above.

So, excluding these categories and taking the more nuanced and disaggregated categories outlined by Belenky, [Table 2](#) demonstrates that to an extent the Japanese case maps neatly onto this categorisation. For example, many Japanese ex-prime ministers remain clearly ambitious to serve in some kind of official political office either in opposition or usually in government as a result of LDP dominance. However, at the same time, [Table 2](#) reveals some peculiarities. For example, "exhausted volcanoes" is heavily populated and this is because, until recently, Japanese prime ministers have historically and comparatively tended to be older than their counterparts in other countries. Even more heavily populated is the category of "political dabblers" and of course this is a result of the factional and personal nature of Japanese politics. At the same time, it is also a result of a structural peculiarity of the Japanese case. Unlike most Western democracies where a president or prime minister resigns at the point his/her party loses power, the majority of Japanese prime ministers have resigned but the LDP has remained in power. A Japanese spin on this category is the modern-day *genro*, as seen in Yoshida's casting of himself in this role of offering advice (both solicited and unsolicited), and to a large degree Nakasone has behaved in similar fashion, as discussed below.

However, these categories do not fully capture all aspects of the afterlives of Japanese prime ministers. The Japanese case suggests the addition of three further categories that are captured in [Table 3](#): (i) "acolytes and protégés," who continue to burnish an ex-prime minister's reputation; (ii) "family affair" with a similar emphasis on maintaining reputation through generational politics; and (iii) "celebrity," which can be used as political capital but is sometimes simply for the sake of it. Belenky's and Theakston's approaches do not allow us to make sense of these activities and it is only an understanding of the specific or amplified aspects of the Japanese political system that can help us. These will be highlighted below.

It is the categories of "political dabblers," "first citizens" and "embracers of a cause" that attract several ex-prime ministers regardless of their position on the political

Table 2. Categorisation of former Japanese prime ministers.

| Still ambitious | Exhausted volcanoes | Political dabblers | First citizens | Embracers of a cause | Seekers of vindication |
|-----------------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Abe | Higashikuni | Fukuda T. | Fukuda T. | Aso | Kaifu |
| Aso | Hatoyama I. | Hashimoto | Fukuda Y. | Fukuda Y. | Kan |
| Hashimoto | Ikeda | Kishi | Murayama | Hosokawa | Nakasone |
| Hatoyama Y. | Obuchi | Miki | Nakasone | Mori | Tanaka |
| Hosokawa | Ohira | Mori | Sato | Murayama | |
| Kaifu | Sato | Nakasone | Yoshida | Nakasone | |
| Miyazawa | Shidehara | Suzuki | | Ohira | |
| | Uno | Takeshita | | | |
| | | Tanaka | | | |

Source: Authors' application of categories from Belenky (1999) and Theakston (2010).

Table 3. New categories of former Japanese prime ministers.

| Acolytes and protégés | Family affair | Celebrity |
|-------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Yoshida (Ikeda, Sato) | Yoshida | Hosokawa |
| Kishi (Sato) | Hatoyama I. | Murayama |
| Ikeda (Miyazawa) | Kishi | Hatoyama Y. |
| Miki (Kaifu) | Tanaka | Koizumi |
| Tanaka (Hata, Nakasone) | Fukuda T. | |
| Takeshita (Obuchi) | Suzuki | |
| | Nakasone | |
| | Takeshita | |
| | Miyazawa | |
| | Hata | |
| | Hashimoto | |
| | Obuchi | |
| | Koizumi | |

spectrum and relate most closely to the discussion of unofficial and informal politics mentioned in the introductory section. The case studies that follow explore the post-premierships of three prime ministers who appear in two or more of these categories, Nakasone, Fukuda and Murayama. They identify all three as embracers of causes (albeit different ones) and first citizens (albeit aspiring ones) but Nakasone as a political dabbler for the most part. The case studies outline their activities, degree of success in playing these unofficial and informal roles and the influence exerted.

Political Dabblers, First Citizens and Embracers of a Cause as Informal Political Actors

The post-premiership activities of Nakasone, Fukuda and Murayama are worth exploring in more detail for several other reasons. First, their selection covers significant periods of time with Nakasone serving as prime minister in the 1980s, Murayama in the 1990s, and Fukuda in the 2000s. Second, they represent the full range of the mainstream political spectrum with Nakasone as the traditional, nationalist conservative on the right, Fukuda more right of centre and Murayama on the left. Finally, these are three ex-prime ministers that have been active and written about since stepping down, unlike Uno or Hata for example, and as a result provide a paper trail for the researcher, but one that is neither overwhelming nor over-researched as is the case with Tanaka. Thus, taken together, they capture a significant and wide range of post-premiership activities and, as mentioned above, all fit into some or all of the categories discussed above, namely political dabblers, embracers of a cause and first citizens. Nakasone is noteworthy not just because of his longevity but because of his active involvement in the business of politics and foreign policy since stepping down as prime minister 30 years ago, making him part political dabbler, part embracer of a cause as well as, briefly, aspiring first citizen. Fukuda and Murayama also merit further attention as they were largely regarded as short-lived, even failed, prime ministers. Their active post-premierships, however, suggest a path towards redemption through their embrace of various causes and (aspiring) first citizen roles. The following sections describe the activities of each of these three former prime ministers in turn, before making sense of their activities in light of the literature on informal political actors.

Nakasone Yasuhiro

Nakasone was born on May 27, 1918 in Gunma Prefecture and graduated from Tokyo Imperial University in 1941. He was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1947 for the Democratic Party. He served under Kishi as Director-General of the Science and Technology Agency, as Transport Minister and Director-General of the Defence Agency under Sato, Minister of Trade under Tanaka, LDP Secretary General under Miki and Director-General of the Administrative Management Agency under Suzuki. At the time of writing, he is Japan's oldest living former prime minister and his post-premiership activities have been rich and varied as demonstrated by his inclusion in all three categories of political dabbler, first citizen and embracer of a cause.

Nakasone is probably best remembered for being one of the more charismatic and dynamic premiers, and his major achievements include bolstering the relationship with the US through his friendship with Ronald Reagan (the “Ron-Yasu” relationship). Domestically, he attempted to enact a series of bold reforms, some more successful than others. While he managed to privatise the railways during his time in office, his education and administrative reforms took longer. He is also associated with trying to settle post-war accounts in East Asia, but he contributed to the emergence of the history problem in Japan–China, and Japan–Korea relations with his controversial visit to the Yasukuni Shrine in 1985. He resigned on November 6, 1987 having reached the end of the maximum term that he could serve.

During a short period out of the LDP between 1989 and 1991, Nakasone appeared to be carving out a first citizen role through various high-profile overseas missions. For example, in similar fashion to a number of former leaders, including the UK's Edward Heath and Germany's Willy Brandt, he met with Saddam Hussein in November 1990 in order to secure the release of 72 Japanese hostages taken after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait earlier that year and to urge Saddam to continue dialogue with the US to avoid war (Nakasone 1996, 591–597). He also joined a delegation to the Soviet Union in January 1989, alongside former French President Giscard d'Estaing and former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, to meet President Gorbachev (Hattori 2015, 288). On returning to the LDP fold in 1991 as senior adviser (partly on the back of his successful visit to Iraq), Nakasone visited China to establish the Japan–China Youth Exchange Centre and later visited Moscow to discuss the possibility of a peace treaty with President Yeltsin (Hattori 2015, 288).

He did not, however, develop this first citizen role, focussing his attention instead on party matters and assuming a “kingmaker” role reminiscent of Tanaka. He states in his memoirs, for example, that he had some influence over the choice of Takeshita as his successor, and on Takeshita's policies on consumption tax. Similarly, he claims to have had influence over the choice of Uno in discussion with Takeshita (Nakasone 1996, 591). During the break-up of the LDP at the end of the Miyazawa administration, Nakasone is quoted by Hayasaka (1994, 161–162) as saying:

From now on, I will control the LDP behind the curtain. I will put together the Watanabe, Miyazawa and Mitsuzuka factions and lend a helping hand to Takeshita who is in a great quandary. And then I will establish an encircling net against Ozawa who is a dangerous revolutionary element that will jeopardize the present LDP structure. He must be destroyed.

The extent to which Nakasone was able to control the LDP in the way he described is debatable. While his influence within the party was greater in the years immediately after

he stepped down as prime minister, this later diminished. Nakasone had passed leadership of his own faction over to Watanabe Michio in 1989, but on Watanabe's death in 1995 the faction split as divisions opened up between the old guard (Nakasone, Sakurachi Yoshio and Murakami Masakuni) and the new (Yamasaki Taku). The faction split in 1998 and Nakasone's group merged with Kamei Shizuka's group. This weakening of Nakasone's factional power meant that, except for the ill-fated Uno, the Nakasone faction produced no further prime ministers after the Recruit scandal (Hattori 2015, 294). This did not stop Nakasone, however, from attempting to steer party matters, though not always with successful outcomes. When Hashimoto became prime minister in 1996, Nakasone had high expectations for his ambitious reform programme. In 1997, however, Nakasone's pressure on Hashimoto to appoint Sato Koko, a member of the Nakasone group, as head of the Management and Co-ordination Agency in a cabinet re-shuffle led to a weakening of the Hashimoto government when the public protested against Sato's previous involvement (and criminal conviction) in the Lockheed scandal (see Shinoda 1999). The Hashimoto cabinet's support rate plummeted as a result, and after heavy losses in the July 1998 Upper House elections, he stood down.

By 1997, Nakasone had become the fourth Diet member in Japanese history to serve for 50 years and only the third Diet member (along with former prime ministers Saionji Kinmochi and Sato Eisaku) to receive the prestigious Supreme Order of the Chrysanthemum. Showing no signs of heading towards retirement, Nakasone said in 2000 that it was "his duty to serve the nation until he dies, as he pledged as a Japanese military officer in World War II" (*The Japan Times*, May 12, 2000). He even penned his own *haiku*, quoted at the beginning of this article, that describes his wish not to retire (Hattori 2015, 283). In 2003, however, he clashed with then Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro who, in seeking to bring about party reform, put an upper age limit of 73 on candidates for proportional representation districts that included former prime ministers who had previously been exempt (*The Japan Times*, August 26, 2016). The change to the rules also hit 84-year-old Miyazawa Kiichi, who immediately stood down, but Nakasone felt deeply insulted and insisted on a televised face-off with Koizumi during which he accused him of being disrespectful (Hattori 2015, 296; *The New York Times*, October 24, 2003).

Despite being forced out of the party, Nakasone continued to keep a watchful eye on the LDP, and political developments in general, regularly commenting on the problems he perceived. He had a penchant for identifying the shortcomings of his LDP successors including Koizumi, Aso and Fukuda (see Nakasone 2008; *Mainichi Shinbun*, September 3, 2008). Moreover, he did not restrict his criticisms to LDP prime ministers, speaking out about DPJ Prime Minister Hatoyama and on the problems facing Japan in the wake of Prime Minister Kan's handling of the Fukushima disaster (Nakasone and Umehara 2010; *Sankei Shinbun*, May 13, 2011).

Beyond party matters, Nakasone has also promoted multiple causes through his numerous publications that include memoirs, interviews and reflections on Japan's political history, current domestic and international affairs, and the nature of leadership (Nakasone 1992, 1996). Through the think tank he established in 1988 with the cooperation of then Prime Minister Takeshita – the Institute for International Policy Studies (*Sekai Heiwa Kenkyujo*) – he has been able to pursue his ongoing interests in issues such as constitutional revision, educational reform and administrative reform

(see Maslow 2013; Abb and Koellner 2015). He has also been personally involved in LDP government moves to consider constitutional revision. For example, he was asked to head up one of the subcommittees considering a revised draft of the constitution in 2005 (*The Japan Times*, January 25, 2005), and continues to be a vocal critic of the current constitution for its lack of “values and principles based on Japan’s own traditions” (*The Japan Times*, May 3, 2015).

Murayama Tomiichi

Born on March 3, 1924 in Oita Prefecture, Murayama graduated from Meiji University in 1946 before he joined the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) and was elected to Oita City and Prefectural Councils. He was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1972 and would be elected eight times. He took over the leadership of the JSP in 1993 and became only the second socialist prime minister (after Katayama) in June 1994 via a marriage of convenience between the LDP, JSP and New Party Sakigake (which had broken away from the LDP the previous year). He announced his resignation suddenly on January 5, 1996 at the age of 71 after exhausting himself (Yakushiji 2012). In contrast to Nakasone and Fukuda, he represents a rare example of a prime minister not being succeeded by a member of his own political party and thus the opportunities for him to assume the role of political dabbler by, for example, influencing the choice of his successor, Hashimoto, were limited.

Murayama was heavily tested during his time in office, having made a surprising and damaging U-turn on the JSP’s longstanding position on the Self-Defence Forces and the US-Japan Security Treaty, and having to deal with crises such as the long-running *jusen* (housing loan companies) issue of non-performing loans, the Kobe earthquake of January 1995, and the sarin gas attack of March 1995 – his handling of which was severely criticised. A more positive legacy was the Murayama Statement (*Murayama danwa*) issued on August 15, 1995 to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of the war. The statement, though highly controversial within the ruling coalition, not least within LDP ranks, nonetheless provided a benchmark against which successive prime ministers would be measured when issuing apologies (Sakata and Murayama 2009).

After resigning as prime minister, Murayama was reappointed as leader of the JSP (later renamed the Social Democratic Party of Japan), but stepped down in September 1996 to be succeeded by Doi Takako. He published a collection of interviews with fellow politician Tsujimoto Kiyomi in 1998 entitled *So ja no (Well, Let’s See)* that reflected upon his time as prime minister. However, he was generally regarded as something of an exhausted volcano and eventually retired from politics on June 2, 2000.

However, he was able to aspire to the status of first citizen by assuming a highly visible role in attempts to re-open normalisation talks with North Korea from 1999 to 2000. The decision to assume this role could possibly be read as a form of vindication and a means of completing unfinished business from his time as prime minister when there had been an attempt to open talks in October 1994 and March 1995. In any case, taking the opportunity presented by the thaw in US–North Korean relations and agreement surrounding US inspections of North Korean nuclear facilities, Murayama sought to organise and lead a non-partisan delegation to North Korea. The visit was delayed several times during 1999 due to spikes in bilateral tensions but was eventually

realised in December. The visit saw Murayama lay a wreath at the statue of Kim Il-Sung and resulted in Japan lifting sanctions introduced in 1998 in protest at the North Korean ballistic missile launch over Japan, as well as an agreement that normalisation talks would re-commence by the end of the year. To support this negotiation process, the non-governmental National Organisation for the Promotion of Normalisation between Japan and North Korea was established in July 2000 headed by Murayama who led a delegation to Pyongyang in November–December 2000. However, three rounds of negotiations during 2000 failed to bring about the hoped-for normalisation, getting bogged down in apology and compensation issues on the one hand (the North Koreans rejected a statement along the lines of the 1995 Murayama Statement as inadequate), and the *rachi jiken* issue (abduction of Japanese citizens by North Korean agents) on the other hand (*The Japan Times*, December 10, 2000; *NHK News*, November 30, 2000).

Murayama's other main post-premiership role was as president of the Asian Women's Fund (AWF) from September 2000 until it was disbanded on March 31, 2007. The AWF was established in 1995 during his time as prime minister and distributed 1.7 billion yen in total (1.2 billion from government and half a billion from private sources), compensating approximately 360 women from Indonesia, the Netherlands, the Philippines, South Korea and Taiwan "who underwent immeasurable and painful experiences and suffered incurable physical and psychological wounds as comfort women" (quoted in Kumagai 2014, 147). In addition, it distributed letters of apology from the prime minister and private donors, and promoted regional educational and cultural activities as a means of atonement. A further legacy of the AWF was the creation of a digital museum to document in both English and Japanese the fund's activities and the testimonies of many of the comfort women (*The Japan Times*, September 28, 2007). However, from its inception, the AWF was the target of criticism from many who rejected its private nature and restitution in place of explicit state compensation alone. Lack of consistent leadership, poor administration, confusion as to the relationship between the government's and the people's admission of responsibility, and mismanagement of former comfort women's expectations of the AWF's efforts towards atonement have also been cited as factors contributing to its limited success (Kumagai 2014, 121–128).

As the AWF approached disbandment, Murayama urged the government to continue to do more and acknowledged the criticisms levelled at the fund's work:

I don't think our projects – providing atonement money, and medical and welfare support as well as sending letters of apology from the prime minister – will not [*sic*] cure the damage that those women received. I will ask the government to provide them with further care (*The Japan Times*, May 7, 2007).

Our relief measures and the letter of apology from prime ministers are not enough to cure the sufferings of the victims, and maybe few people accepted them willingly (*The Japan Times*, May 9, 2007).

Alongside these two salient if not entirely successful roles, Murayama's other post-premiership activities have further underscored his role as a first citizen attempting to address the history problem and promote the cause of Northeast Asian reconciliation. In 2005 he joined other former prime ministers in urging then Prime Minister

Koizumi to “use extreme caution” when deciding whether or not to visit the Yasukuni shrine” (*The Japan Times*, June 8, 2005). He has visited China and South Korea on several occasions to attend friendship association events or meet with comfort women. His visit to South Korea in February 2014 was regarded as an attempt to reignite high-level diplomacy (*The Diplomat*, February 15, 2014). He still serves today as chair of the Japan-Vietnam Peace and Friendship Promotion Council and an honorary advisor to the Japan-China Friendship Association. This latter role has seen him collaborate with the China-Japan Friendship Association “to create an ‘atmosphere’ that will allow the two governments to engage in talks” (*The Japan Times*, April 1, 2013).

Finally, Murayama has been particularly vocal in recent years on the ongoing struggles over the comfort women issue and Abe Shinzo’s much-anticipated statement made on the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, acting as a persistent advocate for Japan to address its past. For example, he criticised Abe’s anniversary statement for lacking clarity (*The Japan Times*, August 16, 2015), but welcomed the Japan–Korea agreement on the comfort women in December 2015 (*The Japan Times*, December 30, 2015). He has upheld the eponymous Murayama Statement, stating that “there is no need to change anything” (*The Japan Times*, April 1, 2013).

Fukuda Yasuo

Born on July 16, 1936 in Tokyo and graduating from Waseda University, Fukuda Yasuo was, like his predecessor Abe Shinzo, a leader with a political heritage. Fukuda Takeo, his father, served as prime minister from 1976 to 1978. In fact, the son served as an aide to his father during this period having quit his position at Maruzen Petroleum but returned to the business world thereafter. He was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1990 and served as Chief Cabinet Secretary in the Mori and Koizumi administrations before resigning from the government over unpaid pension contributions in May 2004.

After Abe’s resignation, Fukuda won the LDP presidential election on September 23, 2007 having proved to be a “consensus candidate.” Although regarded by some as a caretaker prime minister, his domestic policies while in power included attempts to tackle pension problems, health care reform and an economic stimulus package. On the international level, he hosted a rare double of summits as chair of the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD-IV) and the G8 Hokkaido-Toyako Summit in May and July 2008. At the former, Fukuda pledged to double Japan’s official development assistance contributions to Africa by 2012; while at the latter, he promoted Japan’s Cool Earth initiative (Dobson 2012b). He also continued his father’s policies of engaging the Asian region and pursuing an “omni-directional” foreign policy. In particular, he presided over the signing of the May 2008 Joint Statement on the China–Japan “Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests,” although the groundwork for this development had been put in place by Abe and his foreign policy and national security advisor Yachi Shotaro. However, Fukuda was constrained during his time in power as a result of opposition control of the House of Councillors that resulted in deadlock in the Diet and the blocking of many of the LDP’s legislative efforts.

Fukuda resigned unexpectedly on September 1, 2008 declaring that “[t]his is the perfect timing to not cause people too much trouble” (cited in *The New York Times*, September 1, 2008). However, the media’s reaction was critical, reflecting a general feeling across society that Fukuda had been irresponsible in resigning (*The Japan Times*, September 2, 2008). Fukuda retorted with uncharacteristic frankness when accused at a press conference after resigning of running away from dealing with Japan’s problems, saying “You said I sound detached, but I am able to look at myself objectively. I’m different from you” (Kantei 2008). The last sentence of this statement in Japanese (*anata to wa chigau n desu*) became a “phrase of the year” as voted for by readers of *Shukan Bunshun*, a popular weekly magazine.

Fukuda retained his Diet seat in the 2009 election amid fears that he might lose out to the new DPJ candidate Miyake Yukiko. He continued in politics until the end of 2012, indicating in September his intention not to stand in the next election. During his final years as a Diet member, Fukuda followed in his father’s footsteps by taking on a range of foreign affairs-related roles, clearly something he relished (Interview with Fukuda Yasuo, June 27, 2012). He acted as a special envoy during Aso’s premiership, visiting the United Arab Emirates and Oman, and accompanying the emperor on his visit to the US and Canada. He also attended the TICAD-IV interim meeting in Botswana in March 2009 and in the same year visited Kenya. Both visits linked back to Fukuda’s chairing of TICAD-IV and the G8 in 2008.

Fukuda’s appointments to the directorship or boards of various international and regional non-governmental organisations attest not only to his desire to continue with his long-held interests, but to explore new leadership opportunities and take on the position of first citizen. For example, he has taken on a number of formal and informal roles that have enabled him to express his ideas on nuclear non-proliferation through the InterAction Council from 2009, economic integration and development through his directorship of the Boao Forum from 2010, sustainable development and human security issues through the Asian Population and Development Association from 2012, and East Asian reconciliation in general through the Northeast Asia Trilateral Forum (NATF) and the Genron-NPO Tokyo-Beijing Forum.¹ His activities have attracted a certain amount of positive attention, not least his Boao Forum directorship and his attendance at the NATF meetings. But of particular note is his informal role in facilitating a thaw in the tension between China and Japan that had been mounting over the Senkaku/Diaoyu island issue since 2012.

Fukuda is generally considered to be one of China’s “old friends” (*lao pengyou*), making regular visits to China or meeting the leadership at regional fora. In April 2010, for example, he met then Vice-President Xi Jinping at the Boao Forum and in August 2010 attended the opening ceremony of the Japan Pavilion at the Shanghai World Expo. He also made a keynote speech at the Tokyo-Beijing Forum and has attended each year since 2012, becoming a regular speaker and “top advisor” at this annual event that seeks to promote co-operative relations. When the Senkaku/Diaoyu island issue began to resurface in 2012, a meeting between Fukuda and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao at the InterAction Council in May provided an opportunity for the Chinese side, in reference to Ishihara Shintaro’s plans to purchase some of the islands, to ask that Japan take steps “to prudently deal with troublesome issues” (*China Daily*, May 10, 2012). It is unclear whether the Chinese expected Fukuda to pass the message back directly to the Noda

administration, but for the Chinese side this was at least a useful and high-profile meeting to send a signal to the Japanese government (a message that was of course reiterated during other meetings between Chinese leaders and Japanese visitors over the next few months).² Fukuda continued his normal round of attendance at various forums during the rest of 2012 and 2013 and made speeches urging caution on the part of both the Chinese and Japanese governments as bilateral tensions failed to ease.

In 2014 his role in Sino-Japanese rapprochement was stepped up. In April, Fukuda met Hu Deping (son of Hu Yaobang) during his visit to Tokyo, while in July, he made a secret visit to Beijing to discuss the possibility of a thaw in relations. Fukuda claimed that the visit was arranged independently, but Yachi's attendance at the meeting suggests this was not the case (*Asahi Shinbun*, October 12, 2014). In his capacity as Boao Forum chair, Fukuda made a further visit to Beijing on October 29 and met Xi Jinping again, paving the way for the November meeting between Abe and Xi. Fukuda's dual roles as "China friend" (informal) and chair of the Boao Forum (formal) enabled the Abe government to check the signals coming from the Chinese leadership and test the water for a possible rapprochement from a relatively safe distance. Similarly, for the Chinese government, Fukuda was a useful conduit for communication with the Abe administration in the form of someone who was trusted and of high symbolic value. While Fukuda was not the key broker in repairing the relationship in 2014, his role cannot be completely ignored and speaks to Fukuda's own ambitions as the embracer of a long-held cause (stabilisation of East Asian international relations) as well as a first citizen.

How Ex is an Ex-Prime Minister?

The literature on informal political actors or hyper-empowered individuals, such as former leaders, highlights several unofficial resources and channels that can be leveraged in their efforts to continue exerting influence despite not holding official positions of power. In the context of international politics but with reference to national, institutional structures, Cooper (2015, 99–123, 124–155) stresses the "iconic status" and name recognition accorded to some ex-leaders by having served as high-profile leaders of their respective countries – with Nelson Mandela and Mikhail Gorbachev being obvious examples. In addition, he highlights their contacts and resources both within and outside the official structures of government that result from their time as leader and points to some examples of personal platforms established by leaders such as Clinton and Blair in the form of eponymous foundations. He also refers to the "network power" by which ex-leaders are embedded in global networks of mutually recognising elder statesmen such as the IAC, Club of Madrid or The Elders. In the process of playing the role of political dabbler, first citizen and/or embracer of a cause, and seeking to exert influence, Nakasone, Murayama and Fukuda have instrumentalised these resources and channels (as well as others) to varying degrees and with different outcomes.

Nakasone's political dabbling, for example in his choice of successor(s) and influence on policy, was in large part possible due to the nature of factional politics in the LDP, as well as the authority and political capital he had accrued during his time in office. His selection of Takeshita as his successor over the other two leadership candidates, Abe Shintaro and Miyazawa Kiichi, was calculated "to maximize his influence over the new prime minister and gain the most advantages for his faction" (Nester 1990, 175). In

choosing Takeshita, Nakasone demonstrated his gratitude to the Tanaka/Takeshita faction for their previous support since 1982, but at the same time reaped the benefit of five cabinet posts for his own faction in Takeshita's government (Nester 1990, 175). Nakasone's policy concerns also steered his decision, since he saw Takeshita as the best choice of candidate to implement his favoured consumption tax reform (Hattori 2015, 280).

The activities that Nakasone, Murayama and Fukuda have all undertaken with regard to international or regional issues have highlighted their importance as symbolic and well-connected figureheads involved in "marginal diplomacy." Thus, Nakasone engaged in shuttle diplomacy attempting to find a diplomatic solution to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and Murayama led a delegation to North Korea in April 1999 prior to Koizumi's historic visit, demonstrating shades of Carter not only in relation to North Korea but also in terms of salvaging a reputation as a perceived failed leader. Finally, Fukuda has played an unofficial role in trying to keep Sino-Japanese relations on track since 2012. These continued (informal) political activities have often taken place behind the scenes, in some cases aspiring to the role of a first citizen and could be regarded as such if they were more public.

Murayama and Fukuda are notable examples but there are surprisingly few former prime ministers who have become first citizens, certainly at the international level. One reason for this is the general absence of network power. Even if globalisation is opening opportunities for a range of hyper-empowered individuals to assume this role, Japanese former prime ministers do not appear to be able or willing to take such roles. This might be a matter of confidence, language ability, or the predominantly Western international system working against a latecomer like Japan, as it has done in the United Nations Security Council (Drifte 2000). Fukuda seems to come the closest to having achieved this, though his roles tend to be restricted to regional institutions rather than international ones, with the exception of the IAC, and his low-key style might obscure his impact.

Finally, the causes that all three former prime ministers have embraced since leaving office have linked back in some cases to "unfinished business" during their time in office, and their desire to bring about some sort of resolution or completion. Nakasone's enthusiastic support for constitutional revision continues through his think tank activities, regular press commentaries, and his inclusion in LDP discussions on the topic, while both Murayama and Fukuda have continued their respective work on reconciliation in East Asia. It should also be noted that an unsuccessful term in office does not necessarily translate into obscurity. Murayama has probably been more successful (or at least more proactive and less encumbered) as a former prime minister than a prime minister, and he has been both persistent and consistent in pursuing some of the causes he took up during his time in office. The same can be said of Fukuda. In the case of both, they have been able to leverage their reputation – Murayama as originator of the 1995 apology, and Fukuda as a trusted China friend – to address ongoing and divisive history-related problems in the region. The relatively fluid and informal nature of Japanese politics has afforded former prime ministers perceived to be failures a second act.

Political dabblers, first citizens and embracers of a cause are all categories associated with exerting informal influence that are taken from the extant literature, having been proposed by Belenky and adapted by Theakston, and applied to Japan

above. At the same time, this article has also shown that the Japanese case does not completely map to some of the existing categories and in fact suggests new ones by which former leaders continue to exert some influence, namely acolytes and protégés, family affair and celebrity (see Table 3). The high number of prime ministerial acolytes and protégés can be attributed to the importance placed on personalism in Japanese politics whereby personal connections and networks play a key role in one's career development. As Ward (1965, 71) pointed out some years ago, a new politician will "join *someone* rather than *something*, [and] select a protector and a leader rather than a cause." This practice continues to this day, even though the power of factions where these patron–client relationships played out has diminished in recent years. For example, Abe's protégé Inada Tomomi was widely tipped to be Abe's potential successor until she resigned as defence minister in July 2017 over Self-Defence Forces cover-ups.

The "family affair" category is also well represented in Japan, and speaks to the relatively high percentage of second-, third-, fourth-, and even fifth-generation politicians (Aso Taro, for example) from whose ranks prime ministers have emerged. Hereditary politicians or political dynasties are not unique to Japan, featuring in both Western and Asian democracies (see Thompson 2012). Yet Japan is noteworthy because of the marked increase in the number of such politicians from the 1980s (Krauss and Pekkanen 2011, 43–44). In the 2009 general election just over 40% of LDP Diet members were hereditary politicians, as were 13% of the DPJ. In subsequent elections, Smith (2016, 118) shows that the LDP attempted to stem this tide by introducing open recruitment contests, but still over 50% of Abe's second cabinet was made up of hereditary politicians (*Nihon Keizai Shinbun*, December 26, 2012). The phenomenon has been partly explained by political culture, in particular the need for a candidate to have the "three *ban*" – a constituency (*jiban*), finance (*kaban*), and publicity/name recognition (*kanban*). However, structural factors relating to the nature of the election system and the strength of a candidate's *koenkai* (support group) are also contributing factors (see Ishibashi and Reed 1992; Fukuda 2009). The fact is that ten of Japan's 25 LDP prime ministers between 1955 and 1993, and eight of the 13 (LDP and non-LDP) prime ministers since 1993 have hailed from political dynasties (four with fathers or grandfathers who were previous prime ministers). This suggests that family heritage provides considerable political advantage (Hrebendar and Nakamura 2014, 15). In addition, it provides an opportunity for former leaders' reputations to be burnished and legacies to be sustained by their children, grandchildren, nephews or brothers.

Finally, on "celebrity politics" the literature proposes two categories: (i) CP1, politicians who instrumentalise aspects of celebrity; and (ii) CP2, celebrities who enter the world of politics (Street 2004, 437–439). In line with the former category, ex-leaders, by virtue of having been leaders, are often automatically imbued with a degree of fame and celebrity that can be translated into political capital after stepping down (Cooper 2008, 1–14). Murayama sought to leverage this status and capital to focus public attention on a chosen cause when he made his film acting debut at the age of 79 appearing in Takahashi Iwao's *8-gatsu no Kariyushi* (Happiness in August) in 2003.³ Despite refusing various approaches to appear in films, Murayama eventually agreed to appear in this film set in Okinawa citing its anti-war message but also because the 1995 Okinawa Rape Incident took place during his time as prime minister (*Okinawa Taimsu*, May 24, 2003).

Murayama had to learn the Okinawan dialect to play an elderly wheelchair-bound man who lost both legs in the Battle of Okinawa and is tasked with explaining some of the young protagonist's supernatural experiences. This stands in stark contrast to the celebrity activities of Koizumi and Hatoyama mentioned above that appear to be celebrity for celebrity's sake and serve no discernible cause or end.

Concluding Remarks

There is clearly no established role for any leader of any country to play after retirement, but this is especially so for the Japanese prime minister when compared with the US president, who retains the title for life. However, this does not mean that Japanese former prime ministers have ceased to exist and being an ex-prime minister does not necessarily mean "you are very ex" (*Daily Telegraph*, June 24, 2007). The general overview given above of what Japan's post-war former prime ministers have done in retirement and the three more detailed case studies represent the first attempt to highlight the post-premiership narrative of former prime ministers in Japan and identify a range of activities. They also suggest a degree of suitability and transferability in the extant categorisation, in particular those of still ambitious and exhausted volcanoes. As regards continuing to exert influence, the categories of political dabblers, first citizens and embracers of a cause are useful in the Japanese case but require some adaptation to take into account various norms and practices within the Japanese political system. In particular, the presence of informal institutions, such as factions, and the importance of personal connections help to explain the ways in which former prime ministers have been able to continue to wield some power beyond their period in office. This exploration of former Japanese prime ministers also suggests new categories that can in turn be applied to the empirical data on ex-leaders elsewhere in the world. For example, the acolytes and protégés category applies in the case of French President Emmanuel Macron, elected in May 2017, who is regarded as an acolyte of his immediate predecessor François Hollande. The two Presidents Bush fit the family affair category, and Blair's many film and television appearances put him in the celebrity category.

A number of possible directions for future research can be identified. For example, what are the conditions that shape a leader's post-premiership? Does a successful or unsuccessful term in office translate into success or failure post-premiership or is the manner of resignation the determining factor? It also would be edifying to expand the range of interviews beyond the 13 living former Japanese prime ministers to include the bureaucrats, particularly from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who have had to work with these individuals as they seek to take on the role of a first citizen on a regional basis or embrace a cause such as Asian reconciliation. Similarly, establishing and exploring the perspectives of acolytes, protégés and family members who engage in reputation burnishing provides another potential avenue of future research.

Is there an argument for institutionalising the role of former prime minister to harness and benefit from their experience and expertise? As the average age of leaders drops and the number of former leaders increases, this is a valid question to ask. At this point in time, they retain no formal position that recognises their status and there are no plans afoot to introduce such a position. However, to an extent this is happening

already in that the official residences of some prime ministers (the Hatoyamas and Yoshida in particular) memorialise their legacy as prime minister and, by default, their position as former prime minister. However, this is occurring very much informally and off-radar – rather like the ways in which Japanese prime ministers have continued to play a role after stepping down.

Notes

1. Established in 2005, the forum is organised by Genron NPO, which also carries out joint annual opinion polls with *China Daily* to gauge the shifts in perceptions between China and Japan.
2. It is worth noting that Fukuda has not been the only former prime minister who has played a proactive role in Sino-Japanese relations in recent years. Both Hatoyama Yukio and Murayama Tomiichi have been outspoken critics of the revisionist tendencies of the Abe government *vis-à-vis* the lingering history problems between China and Japan, and their speeches and visits to China have drawn the positive attention of the Chinese media.
3. A trailer for the film is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K033kukWFaI>.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This work was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council [AH/L006758/1].

ORCID

Hugo Dobson  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3124-8546>

Caroline Rose  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8147-8097>

References

- Abb, P., and P. Koellner. 2015. "Foreign Policy Think Tanks in China and Japan: Characteristics, Current Profile, and the Case of Collective Self-Defence." *International Journal* 70 (4): 593–612.
- Anon. 1999. "Motosori' ni Natte Kara Eikyoryoku o Mashita 'Takeshita Shinwa' ga Shuen o Mukaeru Hi" [Approaching the Day that the Myth of Takeshita's Increased Influence as a Former Prime Minister Dies]. *Decide* December: 50–52.
- Asako, Y., T. Iida, T. Matsubayashi, and M. Ueda. 2015. "Dynastic Politicians: Theory and Evidence from Japan." *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 16 (1): 5–32.
- Babb, J. 2000. *Tanaka: The Making of Modern Japan*. Harlow: Longman.
- Belenky, I. 1999. "The Making of the Ex-Presidents, 1797–1993: Six Recurrent Models." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29 (1): 150–165.
- Benardo, L., and J. Weiss. 2009. *Citizen-in-Chief: The Second Lives of the American Presidents*. New York: William Morrow.
- Brinkley, D. 1998. *The Unfinished Presidency: Jimmy Carter's Journey Beyond the White House*. New York: Viking.
- Clark, J. 1985. *Faded Glory: Presidents Out of Power*. New York: Praeger.
- Cooper, A. 2008. *Celebrity Diplomacy*. Boulder: Paradigm.

- Cooper, A. 2015. *Diplomatic Afterlives*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Cross, M. 2013. "Rethinking Epistemic Communities Twenty Years Later." *Review of International Studies* 39 (1): 137–160.
- Cunningham, H. 1989. *The Presidents' Last Years: George Washington to Lyndon B. Johnson*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company.
- Dittmer, L. 2000. "Conclusion: East Asian Informal Politics in Comparative Perspective." In *Informal Politics in East Asia*, edited by L. Dittmer, H. Fukui, and P. Lee, 290–308. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dobson, H. 2012a. "Where are the Women in Global Governance? Leaders, Wives and Hegemonic Masculinity in the G8 and G20 Summits." *Global Society* 26 (4): 429–449.
- Dobson, H. 2012b. "Japan's Diplomatic Double Whammy: Hosting TICAD-IV and the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit." *Japanese Studies* 32 (2): 237–253.
- Dobson, H. 2017. "Is Japan Really Back? The 'Abe Doctrine' and Global Governance." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 47 (2): 199–224.
- Drifte, R. 2000. *Japan's Quest for a Permanent Security Council Seat: A Matter of Pride or Justice?* Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Edström, B. 1996. "Prime Ministerial Leadership in Japanese Foreign Policy." In *Leaders and Leadership in Japan*, edited by I. Neary, 243–264. Richmond: Japan Library.
- Fukuda, H. 2009. "Why Are There So Many Hereditary Politicians in Japan?" *Asia-Pacific Review* 16 (2): 1–14.
- George Mulgan, A. 2017. *The Abe Administration and the Rise of the Prime Ministerial Executive*. London: Routledge.
- Hattori, R. 2015. *Nakasone Yasuhiro: "Daitoryoteki Shusho" no Kiseki* [Nakasone Yasuhiro: The Origins of a "Presidential Prime Minister"]. Tokyo: Chuo Koron Shinsha.
- Hayasaka, S. 1994. *The Making of a Japanese Prime Minister: How to Become No. 1 in Japan*. Tokyo: Sekai no Ugoikisha.
- Hecht, M. 1976. *Beyond the Presidency: The Residues of Power*. New York: Macmillan.
- Hosokawa, M. 2008. *Futoan Nichijo* [Day to Day in Futoan]. Tokyo: Shogakukan.
- Hrebenar, R., and A. Nakamura, eds. 2014. *Party Politics in Japan: Political Chaos and Stalemate in the 21st Century*. London: Routledge.
- Hughes, C. 2015. *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy Under the "Abe Doctrine": New Dynamism or New Dead End?* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ishibashi, M., and S. Reed. 1992. "Second-Generation Diet Members and Democracy in Japan: Hereditary Seats." *Asian Survey* 32 (4): 366–379.
- Jack, A. 2007. "Into the Sunset: How Ex-Leaders Adjust to Life with Less Power." *The Financial Times*, December 26. Accessed March 7, 2017. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/dcle1682-b3e4-11dc-a6df-0000779fd2ac.html#axzz1ruWWAB2L>.
- Johnson, C. 1986. "Tanaka Kakuei, Structural Corruption, and the Advent of Machine Politics in Japan." *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 12 (1): 1–28.
- Johnston, D. 1970–1971. "Marginal Diplomacy in East Asia." *International Journal* 26 (3): 469–506.
- Kabashima, I., and G. Steel. 2007. "How Junichiro Koizumi Seized the Leadership of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party." *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 8 (1): 95–114.
- Kaifu, T. 2010. *Seiji to Kane: Kaifu Toshiki Kaikoroku* [Politics and Money: The Memoirs of Kaifu Toshiki]. Tokyo: Shinchosha.
- Kan, N. 2012. *Toden Fukushima Genpatsu Jiko Soridaijin Toshita Kangaeta Koto* [My Thoughts on the Fukushima Incident]. Tokyo: Gentosha.
- Kan, N. 2017. *My Nuclear Nightmare: Leading Japan Through the Fukushima Disaster to a Nuclear-Free Future*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Kantei. 2008. "Fukuda Naikaku Soridaijin Kisha Kaiken" [Prime Minister Fukuda's Press Conference]. September 1. Accessed March 7, 2017. <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/hukudaspeech/2008/09/01kaiken.html>.
- Krauss, E., and B. Nyblade. 2005. "'Presidentialization' in Japan? The Prime Minister, Media and Elections in Japan." *British Journal of Political Science* 35 (2): 357–368.

- Krauss, E., and R. Pekkanen. 2011. *The Rise and Fall of Japan's LDP: Political Party Organizations as Historical Organizations*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Kumagai, N. 2014. "Asia Women's Fund Revisited." *Asia-Pacific Review* 21 (2): 117–148.
- Martin, A. 1951. *After the White House*. State College: Penns Valley Publishers.
- Maslow, S. 2013. "Thinking Security: Foreign Policy Think Tanks in Japan." *Asian Politics & Policy* 5 (2): 300–305.
- MOFA. 2017. "Japan International Manga Award." March 16. Accessed June 26, 2017. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/culture/exchange/pop/manga>
- Morris, E. 2010. *Colonel Roosevelt*. New York: Random House.
- Nakasone, Y. 1992. *Seiji to Jinsei: Nakasone Yasuhiro Kaikoroku* [Politics and Life: Nakasone Yasuhiro's Memoirs]. Tokyo: Kodansha.
- Nakasone, Y. 1996. *Tenchi Yujo: 50-nen no Sengo Seiji o Kataru* [The Nature of Heaven and Earth: On Fifty Years of Postwar Politics]. Tokyo: Bungeishunju.
- Nakasone, Y. 2008. "Fukuda Shusho ni 'Kokueki' no Shugoshataru Jikaku ha aru ka" [Is Prime Minister Fukuda Aware of His Role as Defender of the National Interest?]. *Seiron* August: 50–55.
- Nakasone, Y., and T. Umehara. 2010. "Hatoyama-kun ni Oshietai 'Ridashippu no Joken'" [What I Would Like to Teach Hatoyama about Leadership]. *Voice* July: 94–100.
- Neary, I. 1996. "Leaders and Leadership in Japan." In *Leaders and Leadership in Japan*, edited by I. Neary, 1–13. Richmond: Japan Library.
- Nester, W. 1990. *The Foundations of Japanese Power: Continuities, Changes, Challenges*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- O'Toole, P. 2005. *When Trumpets Call: Theodore Roosevelt after the White House*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Pike, D. 2000. "Informal Politics in Vietnam." In *Informal Politics in East Asia*, edited by L. Dittmer, H. Fukui, and P. Lee, 269–289. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sakata, M., and T. Murayama. 2009. "Murayama Danwa" to ha nani ka [What is the "Murayama Statement"?]. Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten.
- Schaller, T., and T. Williams. 2003. "The Contemporary Presidency: Postpresidential Influence in the Postmodern Era." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 33 (1): 188–200.
- Schenker, A. 1982. "Former Presidents: Suggestions for the Study of an Often Neglected Resource." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 12 (4): 545–551.
- Sheldon, W. 1925. *The Ex-Presidents of the United States: How Each Played a Role*. Philadelphia. Accessed May 10, 2012. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015059428725>.
- Shinoda, T. 1999. "The Japanese Prime Minister and Public Support." *IUJ Research Institute Working Paper*, 12. Accessed March 6, 2017. <http://iuj.ac.jp/research/archive/wpap012.html>.
- Shinoda, T. 2000. *Leading Japan: The Role of the Prime Minister*. Westport: Praeger.
- Shinoda, T. 2007. *Koizumi Diplomacy: Japan's Kantei Approach to Foreign and Defense Affairs*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Skidmore, M. 2004. *After the White House: Former Presidents as Private Citizens*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Smith, D. 2016. "Candidates in the 2014 Election: Better Coordination and Higher Candidate Quality." In *Japan Decides 2014: The Japanese General Election*, edited by R. Pekkanen, S. Reed, and E. Scheiner, 118–134. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Street, J. 2004. "Celebrity Politicians: Popular Culture and Political Representation." *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 6 (4): 435–452.
- Takayasu, K. 2001. "Prime-Ministerial Power in Japan: A Re-examination." *Japan Forum* 17 (2): 163–184.
- Theakston, K. 2006. "After Number Ten: What Do Former Prime Ministers Do?" *The Political Quarterly* 77 (4): 448–456.
- Theakston, K. 2010. *After Number 10: Former Prime Ministers in British Politics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Theakston, K., and J. de Vries, eds. 2012. *Former Leaders in Modern Democracies: Political Sunsets*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Thompson, M. 2012. "Asia's Hybrid Dynasties." *Asian Affairs* 43 (2): 204–220.

Updegrove, M. 2006. *Second Acts: Presidential Lives and Legacies After the White House*. Guilford: The Lyons Press.

Ward, R. 1965. "Japan: The Continuity of Modernization." In *Political Culture and Political Development*, edited by S. Verba and L. Pye, 27–82. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Yakushiji, K., ed. 2012. *Murayama Tomiichi Kaikoroku* [Murayama Tomiichi's Memoirs]. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.