

# Neo-liberalism in Japan's Tuna Fisheries?

## A history of government intervention in a food producing sector

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### ABSTRACT

Neo-liberalism refers to a public policy mix that is market oriented, pro trade liberalization and advocates minimal state intervention in the economy. Japanese governance has arguably not been based on neo-liberal principles, and some see this as contributing to Japan's long running recession. In 2001 Prime Minister Koizumi came to power promising neo-liberal reform. This paper presents a history of government involvement in the distant water tuna longline industry and looks for evidence of neo-liberal reforms in fisheries; both in terms of observable changes to governance, and of key stakeholders' receptiveness to neo-liberalism as visible in their representations of issues facing tuna fisheries. We find no evidence of neo-liberal reforms in this sector, and that key stakeholders show little sympathy with neo-liberal policy prescriptions, meaning they are unlikely to champion such reforms. This conclusion may be specific to fisheries since in Japan the political importance of food production and the iconic status of fish cuisine make the sector particularly susceptible to economic and cultural nationalism. In examining relations between industry and government the paper also highlights problems in Japan's co-management of fisheries.

### KEYWORDS

Japan, economic reform, fisheries, economic nationalism, cultural nationalism

## INTRODUCTION

The 1970s combination of economic stagnation with inflation discredited the Keynesian principles that had informed post World War II governance in wealthy capitalist economies. At the same time, economic failures in many of the worlds' developing countries discredited neo-Marxist principles of protectionism and state sponsored industrialization. In countries such as the United States, Britain, Australia and New Zealand, as well as in international donor agencies such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, there was a swing against Keynesian and neo-Marxist faith in state intervention in economies, and a corresponding swing towards faith in markets and free trade, based on neoclassical economic theories. The public policy school of thought that emerged from this swing—pro-privatization, pro-trade liberalization, pro-globalization, pro-markets, pro-small government, anti-protection, anti-trade union, anti-welfare, and anti-state planned economy—has been called neo-liberalism.<sup>1</sup> Neo-liberalism is dominant in policy circles in most countries (although it is opposed by various social movements and some minor political parties) although for political reasons it has rarely been thoroughly implemented. Various forms of trade protection and subsidy remain entrenched even in countries where both the left and right major parties have long espoused neo-liberal tenets (Harvey 2005).

Concurrent with the fall of faith in state intervention and the rise of neo-liberalism, Japan demonstrated miraculous economic recovery after the devastation of World War II. The economic success of Japan and other East Asian economies were interpreted by some as evidence supporting neo-liberalism (Bresser Pereira 1995; Haggard 1986; Sharma 1995). Empirical evidence, however, indicates that Japan's capitalism has been distinguished by extensive government intervention. Before the bubble burst in the early 1990s some posited Japan's interventionism in opposition to the neo-liberal model, claiming Japan was a 'capitalist developmental state' that showed government intervention could be economically successful (Johnson 1982). Since the 1990s recession more research focused on the dysfunctional nature of Japanese government intervention in the economy, arguing that it stymied economic recovery (George Mulgan 2002; George Mulgan 2004; Carpenter 2003). Another take on Japan's high level of government intervention in the economy is that it has been a pragmatic solution to problems posed by modernization (Francks 2006). When the economic center of gravity moves from rural to urban areas, modernizing states face the problem of

maintaining socioeconomic equity across the rural-urban divide, and hence political stability. Japan achieved this through high levels of protection of rural economic sectors, and by redistributing largesse from more competitive sectors through high levels of public spending in rural areas (Chan 2005).

In response to long recession in the 1990s sporadic attempts to reform the economy were made by successive Prime Ministers, but far reaching reform seemed most likely to be implemented with the election of Koizumi Junichirô in 2001. Koizumi's platform included 'a raft of changes designed to drive the economy in a more market-liberal direction', and he stated he would attempt to introduce neo-liberalism to Japan (George Mulgan 2002:2-4). One of the main strands of neo-liberalism in other parts of the world was to tackle inflation even at the expense of employment, but this policy was meaningless for Japan's recession since it was marked by deflation. The strands of neo-liberalism with which Koizumi was most concerned were shrinking the size of government and reducing opportunities for 'pork barrel' politics, for example, through reforms to the postal system.

This paper assesses the extent to which neo-liberal reforms affected Japan's distant water tuna longline industry. Not much has been written about neo-liberalism in fisheries, probably because political economists who write about neo-liberalism tend not to write about fisheries, and people who write about fisheries tend not to write about neo-liberalism. This is not to say neo-liberalism does not affect fisheries but that these effects are not called neo-liberalism by people writing on fisheries; discussion is about changes in regulatory frameworks towards the use of market mechanisms, privatization of or user-pays models for regulatory services, and norms against government support of fisheries businesses such as vessel buyback schemes.

First, a general overview of government intervention in the Japanese economy sets the groundwork for discussion. Second, a history of Japanese fisheries governance shows the nature and extent of government intervention in this sector. Following that comes discussion of whether there has been change in the main areas neo-liberalism might affect fisheries governance; the nature of fisheries regulation (whether there is a move to resource management tools based on market mechanisms) and reducing government intervention supporting fisheries businesses. Then the normative framework of fisheries

governance is examined, to gauge the political feasibility of neo-liberal reform attempts. This involves analysis of representations by stakeholder groups, including consumer representatives, industry bodies and fisheries bureaucrats. Findings suggest that the Japanese tuna industry has not yet been significantly (neo-)liberalized and is unlikely to be in the foreseeable future. There are vested interests against neo-liberal reform by stakeholders with the structural capacity to block reform, and prevailing public policy philosophy amongst stakeholders does not constitute pressure to liberalize this sector. Indeed, there is more pressure for protection of tuna fisheries, based on arguments about cultural heritage and food security.

## **GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IN THE FISHERIES INDUSTRY**

### ***Overview of Japanese Government Intervention in the Economy***

The bureaucracy wields a great deal of power in Japan. Bureaucrats have a very significant role in developing policy, and the bureaucracy is relatively autonomous from Prime Minister and Cabinet (George Mulgan 2002). Former Prime Ministers Hashimoto Ryûtarô and Koizumi are said to have strengthened the role of the Prime Minister's Office, especially through Koizumi's use of the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy, however since Koizumi did not dismantle established policy making structures (he simply ignored them) it is possible the bureaucracy will regain the upper hand (Curtis, Makihara and Ôta 2006). Furthermore, the bureaucracy usually directs government intervention in the economy (Carpenter 2003). The main procedure by which the bureaucracy intervenes is 'administrative guidance' (*gyôsei shidô*). This procedure has been well documented; ministry officials are 'entrusted with much discretion in filling in the detail of broad and vaguely worded laws with ministerial regulations and administrative notices' (Amyx 2003:56). Administrative guidance takes place within, and gains much of its efficacy from, a thick layer of affiliated organizations (*gaikaku dantai*) that sit between the ministries and the industries they govern.

The *gaikaku dantai* includes thousands of bodies such as special corporations (*tokushû hôjin*), public corporations (*kôeki hôjin*) and chartered corporations (*ninka hôjin*), that are managed and subsidized by the national government (Carpenter 2003). These corporations service industries under the portfolio of the ministry that sponsors them. For example, many are financial services institutions or public works corporations. There are also a range of associations (*shadan*) and foundations (*zaidan*) similarly

managed and subsidized by ministries for the benefit of sectors under their portfolio. Although industry associations might be assumed to be civil society organizations, in Japan most were established by government and remain structurally closely affiliated to government (George Mulgan 2000).

The two main mechanisms by which influence and money flow between the bureaucracy and business are: 1) ministries' discretion to allocate public money for public works and for a wide range of industry support programs; and 2) practices of *shukkô*—seconding mid-career officials for a few years to management positions in *gaikaku dantai*—and *amakudari*—senior bureaucrats taking up positions in the private sector upon retirement.<sup>2</sup> Together these mechanisms form a system of incentives that facilitate the execution of ministry directives in the private sector and/or in organizations that directly service the private sector.

Vast amounts of public money is spent on the private sector through the *gaikaku dantai*, in the form of public works or various kinds of subsidy, at the discretion of the ministries that manage them. The *gaikaku dantai* therefore extend ministries' power and prestige in the sector in question. The ministries thus have corporate interests in preserving this system. The practice of *amakudari* provides financial and status incentives for individual senior bureaucrats to protect the status quo. The private sector also has vested interests in supporting this system. *Gaikaku dantai* industry associations exert pressure against industry members challenging the *gaikaku dantai* system, since the industry associations are subsidized by government and many of the leadership posts in *gaikaku dantai* are held by ex-ministry officials. Businesses fear retribution from ministries through ministries' regulatory powers (for example, withholding of licenses), and also fear ostracism from the industry association (for example, boycotting by other members of the industrial group) (Carpenter 2003). The private sector is thus inhibited from pushing for reform of the *gaikaku dantai* system.

In sum, Japanese government intervention in the economy is characterized by a very powerful bureaucracy which has an established role directing the private sector through administrative guidance, and which is tied closely to industry by flows of managers and public funds through the *gaikaku dantai*. This institutional system emerged out of political economy developments in Japan over the twentieth century. The following

section of the paper details how these general governance features have been manifest in tuna fisheries.

### ***History of Japan's Distant Water Longline Tuna Fisheries***

Japan's modern industrial fishing industries started during the Meiji era (1868-1912). The Meiji government was remarkably successful in its aim of matching European powers of the time by modernizing, building military strength, and building a colonial empire. Overseas fishing activities were part of the empire building exercise (Peattie 1984; Koh 1998; Chen 2006). Overseas fisheries were also part of the improvement and expansion of food production and distribution necessary for an urbanizing industrializing economy, especially since parts of Japan were susceptible to famine (Fujinami 1987). Because offshore fishing was playing these important roles it was supported financially, politically and militarily by the national government and also by regional governments (prefectural and municipal). The Fisheries Promotion Act of 1897 was the framework for this support, which included initiatives such as the Fisheries Training Institute (opened 1889, now the Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology), as well as financial support for technological developments in ship-building, such as installing engines (1903), refrigeration equipment (1907) and radios (1918) (Fujinami 1987).

The *gaikaku dantai* played a key role in facilitating governance and guiding modernization from the outset. In 1882 the Meiji government established the *Dai Nippon Suisankai* (in English the Japan Fisheries Association) (1998). The Dai Nippon Suisankai was established by bureaucrat Shinagawa Yajirō, who also set up several similar associations for other sectors under the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce. The first president of the Dai Nippon Suisankai was not a fisherman, but a representative of the Imperial state, Prince Komatsunomiya Akihito.

Local fisheries associations were another part of the fisheries *gaikaku dantai*. In 1901 the Fisheries Law transferred fishing rights from the corporate property of fishing villages to local fisheries associations set up all over the country (*Gyogyō Kumiai*, which later became the *Gyogyō Kyodō Kumiai*, usually called *Gyokyō* or Fisheries Cooperative Associations), These fisheries associations took on the regulation of fishing licenses (Dai Nippon Suisankai 1998; Kalland 1981). Agricultural and industrial

societies established in the first half of the twentieth century were legally empowered to engage in a range of activities including marketing and distribution (George Mulgan 2000). Some fishing associations diversified into the marketing of seafood products and by the 1920s had largely taken over the role merchants had played in the Tokugawa and Meiji eras (Kalland 1981:139). In addition, industry associations became involved in policy making processes, not just through lobbying, but also more direct involvement in governance, such as setting prices and executing policies in the relevant sector (George Mulgan 2000:42). The distribution and regulatory functions of the industry associations were strengthened with the military build-up and during World War II. Early public corporations that supported fisheries endeavors include the Ishigaki Industry Promotion Foundation (now called the Agriculture Forestry Fisheries Promotion Foundation – *Nôrinsuisan Shôrei Kai*) established in 1926 (Dai Nippon Suisankai 1998).

Japan's fisheries were decimated at the end of World War II (Bergin and Harward 1996:13) (see Table 1). In the immediate postwar years there was famine, so in order to boost food production the Allied occupying forces and the Japanese government again supported tuna fishers to rebuild fleets and port infrastructure. The colonial empire had provided a large proportion of Japan's food supply, so in the immediate postwar years Japan had not only to recover domestic food production but also to replace colonial production. Offshore fisheries played a major role in this (Bestor 2004:177). The government promoted Japanese fishers moving out into the world again after restrictions on their travels by the Allied occupying force were lifted in 1952, in a policy with the slogan 'from coastal to offshore, from offshore to distant waters' (Bergin and Harward 1996; Dai Nippon Suisankai 1998; Fujinami 1987). Postwar distant water fishing was no longer part of a military expansion, but it retained a sense of being a Japanese political presence overseas. The postwar political role of distant water fisheries has been mainly through economic ties and aid diplomacy (Tarte 1998).

The Japanese economic recovery was consolidated in the 1960s. Fisheries production as a whole increased dramatically during the 1960s, and tuna production was no exception (see Table 1). Up until 1950 tuna (other than skipjack) production had remained under 10,000 tonnes, then by 1960 was over 50,000 tonnes and from then on mostly stayed over 40,000 tonnes into the 1990s (Bergin and Harward 1996). Quantity ceased to be a pressing national food security issue and consumers started to demand high quality high

value products. At the same time developments in ultra-low freezing technology enabled Japanese distant water longline fishers to supply sashimi tuna in commercially significant amounts.

**Table 1. Kagoshima Prefecture Fisheries Production 1936-1965**

By the early 1980s the longline tuna catch had reached 15 per cent of the total value of Japanese fisheries and it remained at this level for most of the 1990s. In 1980 the value of the longline tuna catch was around ¥280 billion (US\$1.3 billion) and in 1990 around ¥270 billion (US\$1.9 billion) (Bergin and Harward 1996:15). Although Japan was no longer in danger of famine, government support for distant water tuna fishing continued to assist the industry recover from a range of setbacks. These included increasing fuel costs, restricted access to overseas fishing grounds through the declaration of marine territories (exclusive economic zones) as part of the development of the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea, and increasing competition, especially from Korean and Taiwanese fishers. Support provided by government to the longline tuna industry included price support schemes, low interest loans, fleet reconstruction schemes (to update technology), and structural adjustment (Fujinami 1987; Bergin and Harward 1996; Campbell and Nicholl 1994).

Government support included fleet reductions. In 1976 longline vessel owners were paid up to ¥163 million each (US\$567,000) in a government program to retire their vessels (Campbell and Nicholl 1994:48). In 1980 the government and industry decided to reduce the longline fleet by 20 per cent, with government support (Fujinami 1987:62; Bergin and Harward 1996:14). Then in 1987 ¥60 billion (US\$417 million) from the Japan Fisheries Agency (part of MAFF) budget was provided for low interest loans for tuna fishing vessel retirement (Campbell and Nicholl 1994:48).

At the same time, large amounts of public money was also provided for upgrading the tuna fleet, even when the economic problems of the industry listed above, combined with declining stocks in many of the large tuna species, meant there were low or negative returns on capital (Bergin and Harward 1996:14). Government subsidies for fleet upgrades concurrent with fleet reductions may explain why the buybacks were less than decisive in reducing the size of the fleet size operating in the Pacific Ocean over



this period (see Table 2). According to the Kagoshima Prefectural Tuna Fisheries Cooperative Association, the fleet reductions in the 1970s and 1980s should actually be seen as restructures, enabling the fleet to invest in more fuel-efficient boats and target higher value species (Kagoshima Prefecture Skipjack and Tuna Fisheries Association 2000:429-33).

**Table 2. Number of Japanese Longline Vessels Operating in the Pacific Ocean 1955-1991**

Economists Campbell and Owen found that in 1987 the total subsidies to the tuna industry from the Japan Fisheries Agency (¥269 billion, US\$1.8 billion) exceeded the losses incurred by the tuna fleet that year (Campbell and Nicholl 1994:48). They also found that during the 1980s as a whole the Japanese distant water tuna fleet was operating at a loss to the extent that 'it is difficult to believe the industry could have continued without such [government] assistance' (Campbell and Nicholl 1994:49).

Direct subsidies from the Fisheries Agency of Japan to industry, however, are only part of the total government support for distant water tuna fisheries. Rural areas are politically important in Japan, both because of the historical concern with food security mentioned earlier, and because rural electorates are weighted more heavily than urban electorates and these rural electorates have been the heartland of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which has been in power almost continuously since 1955. Although rural areas have been in decline for some decades and are less politically important than they were, they still receive a range of government benefits from preferential tax treatment, to lower electricity charges, to public works for infrastructure development (George Mulgan 2000). The policy of 'investing in things' in rural areas as a way of redistributing some of the wealth being accumulated in urban areas was used to great effect by former Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei in the 1970s and has continued as an LDP strategy, although politicians such as Koizumi saw it as a corrupt and wasteful form of 'pork barrel' politics (DeWit and Yamazaki 2004). Many distant water tuna companies are based in rural areas, such as Kushikino in Kagoshima Prefecture and Kesenuma in Miyagi Prefecture (see Fig. 1), so have thus been beneficiaries of this aspect of the Japanese political economy.

### Fig. 1. Map of Japan

Fisheries-specific government support comes through the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF). MAFF connections to industry have been as problematic as any of the Ministries, with officials involved in scandals over 'excessive' wining and dining (*settai*) by industry and corruption during the 1990s, sparking public demands for reform of the Ministry and its governance (Amyx and Drysdale 2003:4; George Mulgan 2003:171). In May 2007 the Minister for MAFF Matsuoka Toshikatsu committed suicide under suspicion of misuse of public funds.

The MAFF sponsors a range of *gaikaku dantai* that support fisheries as well as other primary industries under the MAFF portfolio. MAFF has more chartered corporations (eight) than any other ministry (Carpenter 2003:27). Special corporations under MAFF supporting fisheries include the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Groups Staff Members' Mutual Aid Association (*Nôringyogô Dantai Shokuin Kyôsai Kumiai*, effectively a pension fund) that since the 1950s has been subsidized one third by the government. Insurance is also provided via the *gaikaku dantai*. Since the 1930s Japanese fishers have been insured against loss or damage of vessels, and since 1967 against poor harvest, in a system administered by insurance associations at the prefectural level, and reinsured at the national level, and subsidized by the national government (JIFRS 2004:31-32). According to Fujinami, in the late 1980s just over half of Japan's fishing vessels were insured through 'special government insurance programs' (Fujinami 1987:66-67).<sup>3</sup> *Gaikaku dantai* also provide financial services including venture finance. There is the Fisheries Resources Development Corporation (*Suishigen Kaihatsu Kôdan*) (George Mulgan 2000:115) and MAFF also supports the *Nôrinchûkin Bank* (*Nôrin Chûo Kinkô*), which provides financial services for agriculture forestry and fisheries employees and businesses.<sup>4</sup> For high risk projects the *Nôrinchûkin Bank* or other financial organizations cannot fund, low interest capital is provided by the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Finance Corporation (*Nôringyogyô Kinyû Kôko*), which is subsidized by the central government through the main MAFF budget, and through something called the Government Affiliated Agencies budget, as well as through the Fiscal Investment Loan Program (FILP) (George Mulgan 2000:114).<sup>5</sup>

Fishing industry associations also direct government money flows to industry. Up until the 1960s the Dai Nippon Suisan Kai had been the premier industry body for distant water tuna as well as other fisheries, but from the 1960s another industry group the *Nippon Katsuo Maguro Gyogyô Kyôdô Kumiai Rengô Kai* (Federation of Japan Tuna Fisheries Cooperative Associations, also called Japan Tuna and *Nikkatsuren*) came to the fore as the main industry body for the distant water tuna fisheries, including longlining. By the 1990s Nikkatsuren represented 89 per cent of Japan's distant water tuna fishers (Bergin and Harward 1996:17). The Dai Nippon Suisankai operates at the national level, but Nikkatsuren and the fisheries cooperative associations (Gyokyô) have an active presence at three levels; municipal, prefectural and national (see Figs. 2 and 3). Nikkatsuren and the Gyokyô have undertaken a wide range of functions including: administering payrolls for fishers; recruitment; managing employment contracts; setting employment conditions; coordinating financial services through the Nôrinchûkin Bank; providing and managing port infrastructure; freighting, distributing and marketing fisheries products; conducting related enterprises such as the provisioning of fuel and fishing equipment; managing overseas access to ports and fishing grounds; lobbying; and representing industry in policy advisory committees (such as *shingikai* and *kondankai*). The extent to which the gaikaku dantai act as connective tissue between industry and government are revealed by this range of activities, because it includes tasks that might otherwise be done by government, as well as tasks that might otherwise be done by businesses themselves.

### **Fig. 2 Fisheries Cooperative Associations and Tuna Boat Owners Associations**

Almost all people working in fisheries in Japan belong to their local Gyokyô. In addition, tuna boat owners belong to tuna industry associations, Nikkatsuren or the National Ocean Tuna Fisheries Association (*Zenkoku Enyô Katsuo Maguro Gyogyôsha Kyô Kai*, or *Kinkatsuren*). Kinkatsuren offers similar services to Nikkatsuren but Nikkatsuren is larger and more powerful. Many tuna boat owners belong to both tuna associations as well as their local Gyokyô.

According to MAFF officials interviewed for this research, Nikkatsuren representatives and Fisheries Agency bureaucrats work very closely in developing and implementing policy regarding distant water tuna fisheries through meetings at which each side

presents their positions and then negotiates towards a consensus position. The outcome of this process becomes policy. Ministers are not usually involved in developing policy; policies are mostly worked out between the bureaucrats of the Fisheries Agency and Nikkatsuren.<sup>6</sup> Nikkatsuren and the Fisheries Agency also work together to monitor and regulate the distant water fleet's tuna catch. For example, for the southern bluefin tuna fishery, which has a national quota for member countries set by the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna, the quota sits with the Fisheries Agency as representative of government, yet it is Nikkatsuren that licenses longline tuna fishing companies to enter that fishery.<sup>7</sup> Another *gaikaku dantai* has also been involved in regulating distant water tuna industries. The Organization for the Promotion of Responsible Tuna fisheries (OPRT, *Sekininaru Maguro Gyogyô Suishin Kikô*) was established in 2000 to coordinate cross-sector initiatives to conserve tuna resources. OPRT lists the important stakeholders as tuna fishing organizations (including Nikkatsuren), tuna trading organizations and consumer groups (OPRT 2004). Under the auspices of OPRT these organizations work together to prevent the sale in Japan of tuna from Illegal Unregistered and Unreported (IUU) or Flag of Convenience (FOC) vessels, which means tuna caught outside the regulations of the international tuna management institutions. They have worked closely with the Japan Fisheries Agency to do this, for example by helping to develop and implement the 'positive list' system by which only tuna caught from vessels that are listed as abiding by international management and conservation rules should be imported (OPRT 2004:2).<sup>8</sup> In 2005-6 Japan's tuna fisheries management system was greatly discredited by the revelation that the fleet had been catching as much as double the national quota of the overfished species southern bluefin tuna for many years, despite Japan being a leading member of the international Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna and agreeing under international law to being bound by quotas (AFP 2006). Since then the Dai Nippon Suisan Kai has returned to a more active role in distant water tuna fisheries, providing port inspectors to check fish landings as part of the monitoring system (CCSBT 2006). In other countries inspectors would usually be employed by government regulatory bodies. In sum, Japan's distant water tuna fisheries have been very much co-managed by government and industry bodies, as is usual for fisheries in Japan (JIFRS 2004:51-55).

Fishing industry bodies are sites for amakudari. Local branches of the tuna associations are headed by fishermen, but 'industry' people *per se* do not hold executive office at the prefectural and national level of the tuna associations. Executive and senior staff positions at the higher levels are predominantly held by former or seconded Fisheries Agency bureaucrats. For example, Ueda Yamato had a career in the Fisheries Agency, ending up as head of the Pelagic Fishery Department. Upon retirement Ueda became President of Nikkatsuren in 1985, a position he held for more than 15 years. Other post retirement positions Ueda has held include Managing Director of the Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation and Managing Director of the Dai Nippon Suisan Kai (Shiraishi 1999). The current President of the Dai Nippon Suisan Kai, Nakasu Isao, is concurrently President of the OPRT. Since ex-bureaucrats have connections of influence over current bureaucrats in MAFF via their status as senior (*sempai*), their post-retirement positions tie the industry bodies very closely to MAFF.<sup>9</sup> Fishing industry bodies do not purely represent industry, they may equally be said to represent MAFF.

Furthermore, large industry associations in Japan may develop their own corporate interests (George Mulgan 2000:64-69). Nikkatsuren employed hundreds of administrative staff, was largely led by ex-bureaucrats, and had its own revenue raising enterprises. (By the mid-2000s financial and other difficulties caused a drastic downsizing of the organization, and many of its revenue raising activities were discontinued.) It is understandable Nikkatsuren could have developed a corporate identity somewhat at variance with its tuna fishing company membership. When we interviewed Japanese longline tuna company owners in 2002-3 several owners often said they wished the Australian government would lift the ban on Japanese fishing vessels from docking at Australian ports. In fact, in May 2001 The Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Alexander Downer had announced the 'immediate lifting of the bans currently in place on Japanese fishing vessels visiting Australian ports' (DFAT 2001), and this was reported in an Australia-focused Japanese language wire service (NNA 2001). Yet a year or two later many Japanese tuna boat owners thought the ban was still in place. Clearly Nikkatsuren had not effectively disseminated information about the lifting of the ban to its membership. One possible reason for this is that in the years Japanese tuna vessels had been operating in the southern Indian and Pacific Oceans without being able to dock and refuel in Australian ports, Nikkatsuren developed its

method for refueling longliners at sea. Some Australian tuna boat owner interviewees expressed the opinion that Nikkatsuren had a vested interest in Japanese longliners not using Australian ports, so Nikkatsuren could maintain its business provisioning fuel to the longliners.<sup>10</sup> Certainly, Nikkatsuren's failure to effectively disseminate accurate information about the lifting of the ban seems somewhat at odds with Japanese tuna longline industry interests.

### **Fig. 3 Dai Nippon Suisan Kai (Great Japan Fisheries Association)**

Although Nikkatsuren supplanted the Dai Nippon Suisan Kai as the leading body for distant water tuna fisheries in the 1960s, the Dai Nippon Suisan Kai remained important, and has exceedingly high connections to government. The Honorary President of the Dai Nippon Suisan Kai, until his death in 2004, was former Prime Minister Suzuki Zenko.<sup>11</sup> Members of the imperial family have always been involved with the organization. In addition to having such high government connections, the Dai Nippon Suisan Kai membership is made up of hundreds of organizations from all facets of Japan's marine industries from fishing to trading, processing, shipping, marketing, and investing (Dai Nippon Suisankai 1998). This large, broad and high-ranking membership means the Dai Nippon Suisan Kai is a useful forum for cross-sector collaboration on fisheries issues, as evidenced by its role in establishing several important gaikaku dantai (Dai Nippon Suisankai 1998).

From the inception of modern distant water fisheries more than a century ago, Japanese tuna fisheries have been co-managed by government and industry, and this governance has always involved extensive use of public money to support industry (as in many other countries). The next section of this paper looks for evidence of the neo-liberal turn in Japanese fisheries management and areas of government support for fisheries businesses.

### ***Neo-liberalism in Fisheries Management?***

The neo-liberal turn in fisheries management is reflected in a range of policy orientations such as user-pays for government-provided services, strengthening property rights in fisheries access, stepping back from shaping of fisheries through regulating inputs such as gear and instead regulating outputs (catch) and leaving it to industry to

decide about inputs. Connected to the emphasis on regulating by output is the very contentious neo-liberal fisheries management tools, the Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ). Only a handful of governments that have arguably gone further down the track in implementing neo-liberalism, such as Iceland, Australia and New Zealand, have introduced ITQs to fisheries, and debate is fierce about whether or not the outcomes of ITQ fisheries are a good thing.

Japan's fisheries management tools are heavily weighted towards the inputs end of the spectrum, involving mostly restrictions on gear and access to fisheries resources. Access and gear are mostly allocated through the fisheries cooperatives; particular fishers are permitted to use certain gears in certain areas. Allocation is worked out through the politics and systems of the relevant cooperative, not via market mechanisms. Although at various stages in the last century fishing rights were tradable, none of the Japanese fisheries people contacted for this research believe output controls (such as quotas) administered through a market mechanism (being individually transferable) would be a good way to manage Japan's fisheries.

Japan's distant water longline tuna fisheries management is very complicated, involving both domestic regulation and international regulation. The Japanese government regulates the fishery by capacity (inputs) usually defined as the number of vessels, but international management of the southern bluefin fishery, for example, is by quota (tons of fish caught). Australia manages its national portion of the southern bluefin tuna catch also by quota, individually transferable, most of which is held by a dozen or so fish ranching businesses based in Port Lincoln, South Australia. For the Japanese longline fleet the globe is divided into fishing grounds that are allocated among the fleet by lottery. Those who are allocated to a suitable area for southern bluefin tuna catch as much as they can until the national quota is reached, then the fishery season for that species for the Japanese fleet is declared closed and no more may be caught. As mentioned previously, there were serious flaws in this system enabling systematic long term overcatching (revelation of which the Japanese side has countered by asserting that there are also flaws enabling overcatching in the Australian system [CCSBT 2006]). Nevertheless, there is no sign of changing the management of Japanese distant water tuna fisheries to a more neo-liberal form of governance.

***Neo-liberalism in the Gaikaku Dantai?***

Privatization is a key neo-liberal policy, and there has been very little privatization of fisheries related gaikaku dantai. The Norinchukin Bank was 'privatized' in 1986, but in 2000 most of the executive and staff of the bank continued to be seconded or retired MAFF bureaucrats, and the bank continued to be subject to MAFF direction via regulations (George Mulgan 2000:115).

One form of privatization associated with neo-liberalism that may appear to have relevance for Japan's fisheries management is a phenomenon that has been called the 'privatization of governance' (Jayasuriya 2003). Particularly in the fields of domestic welfare and international aid, civil society organizations are being used to deliver services that had previously been delivered by governments. Japan's co-management of fisheries could seem on the surface to fit this model. However, Japanese co-management of fisheries far pre-dates neo-liberalism, and also could not be characterized as a way of shrinking government or withdrawing government from a sector, indeed it has often operated in reverse.

After long having been considered a best practice model of resource governance (Ruddle 1984) the Japanese fisheries cooperative association system has since the early 1990s been widely recognized as having serious problems. Forty per cent of municipal Gyokyô are in deficit and have been since 1993 (JIFRS 2004:42-48). Other problems include the aging of the workforce and a lack of young people willing to go into fishing as a career, meaning declining industries and memberships. Several solutions to the problems of the Gyokyô were offered in a booklet on Japanese fisheries authored by prominent fisheries academics as well as a manager from Zengyoren (the peak body for local fisheries cooperative associations) and the Managing Director of the OPRT. No mention was made of reducing the level of government support, or reforming the relationships between government and business via the Gyokyô and other industry associations. Remedies proposed for fiscal mismanagement were to improve the training of Gyokyô employees, and to reduce costs through downsizing and rationalizing Gyokyô (JIFS 2004:42-48).

Rationalization is another key neo-liberal policy (although it is also part of other public policy philosophies, some of which pre-date neo-liberalism), but like privatization it has



not advanced far in fisheries related *gaikaku dantai*. Rationalizing the Gyokyô system by reducing the number of municipal Gyokyô (every fishing municipality has had its own Gyokyô) was actually tabled as far back as the 1970s when the government and Zengyoren wanted to amalgamate smaller Gyokyô with larger ones (Kalland 1981:143). Then in the late 1990s the dozens of municipal Gyokyô in each prefecture were due to be merged into single prefectural level bodies, with branch offices in key fishing municipalities.<sup>12</sup> Failure to substantially rationalize the Gyokyô despite rationalization being on the agenda for 30 years indicates substantial resistance to rationalization in the Gyokyô, meaning it may still not occur for some time.

### ***Neo-liberalism in Public Works for the Tuna Fleet?***

One of Koizumi's pledges for economic reform has been to stop the wasteful public works projects that have been one of the hallmarks of Liberal Democratic Party dominance, especially in rural areas. Public works are desired because of the economic benefits large construction projects can bring. Impressive constructions can also bring status and civic pride for regional towns, helping them aspire to the image of modern Japan, which is largely seen as being located in the cities. During the 1990s, in a failed attempt to reverse the recession, the Japanese government spent ¥120 trillion in fiscal stimulus packages, much of which was unfortunately spent on public works that did not usefully serve the Japanese populace (Carpenter 2003:119). Some of the spending on public works was for infrastructure for distant water tuna fisheries.

The case study of Kushikino, a small city in Kagoshima Prefecture in the south of Kyûshû (see Fig. 1), is an example of the kind of public work Koizumi campaigned against. Kushikino has long hosted distant water tuna fisheries (see Table 3), and it represents itself as a tuna town. For example, in the early 2000s there was a regional tourism program called '*Maguro Râmen*', involving seven local restaurants developing and selling a new noodle soup dish – tuna ramen. Nikkatsuren and a group called the *Kushikino Maguro Râmen Kyôei Kai* (Kushikino Tuna Mutual Prosperity Society) produced a *Maguro Râmen Map* to show visitors where the restaurants selling tuna ramen were, in relation to other notable features and tourist spots in the city. Participating restaurants had brightly colored flags advertising *Maguro Râmen* flying outside their doors as part of the promotion.

**Table 3. Distant Water Tuna Fleets: Kushikino City, Kagoshima Prefecture, and Japan 1976-1987 (No. of Vessels, Catch in Metric Tons, Catch Value in ¥'000,000)**

Kushikino City Hall lists tuna as one of Kushikino's specialities (*tokusanhin*) (Kushikino City 2002:20). A City Hall pamphlet from 2002 displays the recently completed outer harbor center top in an aerial photograph of the city, juxtaposed with the City Hall's three future-oriented *machizukuri* slogans, one of which reads: 'aiming for a town developing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, vital infrastructure for the city's potential' (authors' translation) (Kushikino City 2002:22-23).<sup>13</sup> Photos of tuna longliners are featured in a City Hall brochure representing local fisheries, along with this passage:

The fishery of Kushikino City centers around deep-sea tuna fishing and the coastal fishery. We have improved fishing ports and fishery-related facilities, and are working hard to make a mother port base for tuna fishing as well to revitalize the coastal fishery to combat the industry's difficulties (authors' translation) (Kushikino City 2002:32-33).

The outer harbor was specifically built for longliners because the inner harbor used by all the other local fisheries was too small. The outer harbor project was first announced in 1971, and various aspects of the project, such as wharfing facilities and cold storage were built in stages during the 1970s and 1980s (Fushuku 1989). During that time fewer and fewer of the Kushikino fleet were landing their catch and taking on fuel, gear and bait at Kushikino. Instead many of them came and went from Shimizu and Yaizu, which are close to Tokyo, making the overland transport of fresh/frozen fish to the main market in Tokyo easier (see Fig. 1 and Table 4). As the Japanese tuna industry consolidated operations at Shimizu and Yaizu these ports also became cheaper than Kushikino for fuel, gear, bait and other supplies. Yet construction of the outer harbor proceeded during the 1980s and 1990s. By the year 2000 no longliners had been landing their catch at Kushikino for years, although around 20 companies based their offices and registered their vessels in Kushikino, and some longliners docked there once every five years or so for repairs. All of the people we interviewed in Kushikino, including officials in City Hall, knew that the longliners did not use Kushikino as their regular port, and none suggested this would change in the future. There are sound reasons the City Hall might want to claim identity with the tuna industry, and want to attract large public works, but the Kushikino outer harbor seems to have been a very costly (compared to benefit) way to satisfy those wants. The sense that the port was an

example of LDP pork barreling was supported by one of the distant water tuna longline company owners we interviewed in Kushikino, who said that even if they disagreed with LDP policies the whole industry uncritically supported the LDP because the LDP has supported the industry.<sup>14</sup>

#### **Table 4 Kushikino Tuna Boats Loading Patterns by Port 1986**

Kushikino is one small city so we cannot extrapolate from this example to say that all tuna port-related public spending was equally unreformed. A general lack of neo-liberalism in public spending was evident in MAFF responses to the recession, however. MAFF was one of the most Keynesian of the Ministries, attempting to fix the recession by increasing public spending to more than 50 per cent of its budget (George Mulgan 2003:171-74).

#### ***Neo-liberalism in Fleet Reductions?***

Previous discussion outlined government subsidies for structural adjustments to the tuna longline industry during the 1970s and 1980s. Since 2000 the longline fleet has again been in serious financial trouble, and structural adjustment has been one solution tabled. This has dovetailed with increased efforts to respond to international criticism of the environmental effects of longline tuna fishing. In 1999 the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization recommended that the world long lining fleet should be reduced immediately by 20 to 30 per cent in order to counteract over fishing of large tuna species for the sashimi market (FAO 1999). The Japanese tuna industry responded by announcing a reduction in the Japanese fleet by this proportion over the next couple of years. The vessel owners whose boats were scrapped as part of this fleet reduction were compensated through a government sponsored boat buy-back scheme. Nikkatsuren administered the fleet reduction by selecting companies that were not profitable or lacked a successor to carry on the company, and sent instructions down the line to the prefectural level then the municipal level that those companies would surrender their vessels.<sup>15</sup> According to Sato Yasuo of Nikkatsuren the buy-back scheme cost USD\$335,000,000 (JPY¥40,025,800,000 at a 2001 exchange rate) of which 70 per cent was funded by public money,<sup>16</sup> so in recent years direct subsidies are still as much a tool of governance in Japanese tuna fisheries as they were during the twentieth century. Japan is by no means the only country to employ such measures, for example the

Australian government in 2005 and 2006 took advantage of a budget surplus to offer AU\$220 million in a buy-back and structural adjustment scheme (DAFF 2007).

These examples from the Japanese tuna longline industry support the conclusions of researchers who have been following the general theme of structural reform in Japanese governance. Koizumi and predecessors who promised reform have made only limited headway in reducing the capacity of the ministries to disperse public money and cement corporatist relations via the *gaikaku dantai* (George Mulgan 2002:25-33; Carpenter 2003; Amyx and Drysdale 2003:5). The reform agenda has progressed differently in different ministries; there is evidence that the Ministry of Economics, Trade and Industry (formerly MITI) has arguably taken the reform agenda on board, is deregulating and focusing government assistance to industries that are competitive (Kohno 2003; Noble 2003). It is not yet clear whether the turn towards neo-liberalism established by Koizumi will survive him, with neither his immediate successor Abe Shinzo nor the newest PM Fukuda Yasuo being as obviously supportive of neo-liberalism as Koizumi was. Both Fukuda and the other candidate in the LDP reshuffle to replace Abe, Aso Taro, pledged to strengthen support for rural areas and sectors hurt by Koizumi's reforms, and critics of Fukuda predict he will backpedal on some of Koizumi's structural changes (China Daily 2007). Senior influential figures vary in their attitudes towards neo-liberalism, with the Governor of the Bank of Japan Fukui Toshihiko saying that each economy is distinct, no one measure such as inflation targeting (a key neo-liberal measure) fits all, and Japan must 'write its own textbook' (Fukui 2007). On the other hand, the Chairman of the peak body for business Keidanren, Mitarai Fujio (head of Canon) is more neo-liberal. He has been described as a 'Japanese version of the "Chicago Boys"', and a 'disciple of Milton Friedman' (Uchihashi 2007).

MAFF, in any case, has been one of the Ministries least inclined to adopt neo-liberal reforms (George Mulgan 2003). This is at least in part due to the public policy philosophy prevailing among fisheries stakeholders. The following section explores ideas about governance in representations from key stakeholders in tuna industries, in order to estimate the normative strength of neo-liberal discourses relative to other

philosophical frameworks and thus the likelihood that key stakeholders will champion neo-liberal reforms.

## GOVERNANCE PHILOSOPHY

Ever since Japan entered into the modernization race with the Western powers in the late 1800s, the belief that Japan is a resource poor country has influenced political and economic decisions. Famines, especially those after World War II, have been used to support the argument that Japan should have self-sufficiency in basic foodstuffs. An opinion poll by the Prime Minister's Office in 2000 found that 78 per cent of Japanese were concerned about the stability of food supplies in the future, and 95 per cent called for the government to ensure national food security (MAFF 2003). The mass media disseminates the discourse of dependency on imports, helping to keep fear about food security alive (Bestor 1999:167), even though famine seems a highly unlikely scenario in contemporary Japan. This argument in relation to government support of Japanese rice production is well known.<sup>17</sup> The same principles are invoked with regard to Japanese fisheries, including distant water tuna fisheries. The special place of food production in Japan's political landscape plays a significant role in legitimizing government support for Japan's distant water tuna fisheries.

We interviewed members of the non-government consumers' organization *Shōdanren* for their views on sashimi tuna.<sup>18</sup> The *Shōdanren* members said Japanese consumers tend to prefer domestically produced food because they believe that it is more likely to be healthy and safe to eat than food produced overseas. They also said Japanese consumers believe some goods, such as sashimi tuna, are better quality when produced by Japanese than by non-Japanese, so consumers are willing to pay up to 50 per cent more for domestic rather than imported food. The *Shōdanren* members raised the issue of Japan's low rate of food self-sufficiency, saying they felt the current rate of 40 per cent domestic food production was too low, and that Japanese consumers felt that a rate of '80 something per cent' self-sufficiency in food was the right level.

The *Shōdanren* discussion of food self-sufficiency ended with a strong statement from one of the interviewees saying that globalization was going too far and that she felt it reasonable that Japanese 'citizens' should defend their food self-sufficiency. The word she used for 'citizen' was '*kokumin*', literally 'nation-people'. Other words she could

have used are 'consumer' (*shôhisha*) or another word for 'citizen' '*shimin*' (literally 'city-people'), which is often used for 'citizen' in a civil society sense, such as in 'citizens' movements' (*shimin undô*). Her choice of the word 'kokumin' hints at the consumer nationalism undercurrent pervading the food security and food self-sufficiency debates in Japan. The interviewee may indeed have been demonstrating resistance against globalization (in which neo-liberal discourse plays an important role) by performing identity this way in representing Japanese fisheries to two foreign researchers.

Labelling social features in Japan 'nationalist' can be very contentious because of undesirable associations with Imperial Japan's militarist ultranationalism, and continuing sentiments along these lines held by small numbers of right wing groups (McVeigh 2004). The nationalisms described in this paper are not militarist or ultranationalist, but are the 'banal' forms of nationalism discussed by M Billig (1999) that are endemic in the contemporary normative system of nation-states. We are not trying to make the case that fisheries related nationalism is stronger in Japan than other countries, it is strong in many places (see Barclay 2008; 2008), rather, we aim to identify the roles played by everyday forms of cultural nationalism, economic nationalism and consumer nationalism.

Patricia Maclachlan has theorized a kokumin aspect of Japanese consumer identity, arguing that historical developments during the twentieth century caused Japanese consumers to be politically different to consumers in the English speaking world (Maclachlan 2004). Before and during World War II part of the difference was that consumption was seen by many Japanese as shameful waste, because of an ethic of personal frugality in order to be able to devote resources to the national endeavor. Then in the postwar period, with famines and chaos as Japan rebuilt itself, consumers sided with producers in a joint effort to achieve national food self-sufficiency. Consumers thus developed a 'survivor' identity that was teamed on the same side as, rather than in opposition to, food producers. This post war survivor consumer identity again connoted a sense of pulling together for the nation. Maclachlan notes that the 'survivor' kokumin aspect to Japanese consumer identity that has meant consumers' movements have supported agricultural protectionism, even though this means they pay several times the world price for rice.

A kokumin consumer identity is also visible in representations of fisheries by the Tokyo-based consumers' group Women's Forum for Fish (WFF, in Japanese *Ūmanzu Fuôramu Sakana*). Shiraishi Yuriko started the WFF organization in 1993 after realizing the extent of Japan's reliance on seafood imports,<sup>19</sup> because she felt Japanese consumers should be better educated about this important part of their diet. In written material Shiraishi uses the word *shôhisha* (consumer), not *kokumin* (Shiraishi 2004), although she has used the word *kokumin* in spoken representations, such as when part of a panel at the biennial conference of the International Institute for Fisheries Economics and Trade in Tokyo in July 2004. Shiraishi may have used *shôhisha* and *kokumin* differentially because *kokumin* identity is 'rarely evoked in movement discourse' because it is an explicitly nationalist term which sits uneasily with progressive social movements in post-war Japan (Maclachlan 2004). Perhaps Shiraishi did not feel comfortable using the more contentious word *kokumin* in her more formal and recorded written representations, but felt safe to use it orally at the conference, particularly since she and fellow panelist well known nationalist fisheries bureaucrat Komatsu Masayuki had the day before returned from an International Whaling Commission meeting. Economic and cultural nationalisms are evident in various representations Shiraishi has made about fisheries issues, interwoven with internationalism.

Shiraishi has allied consumers not only with Japanese producers, but with producers the world over who supply the Japanese market. She has called for dialogue with seafood producers everywhere in order to educate Japanese consumers. Furthermore, she wants tuna producers, governments, traders and consumers to work together against the IUU (illegal, unregistered and unreported) and FOC (flag of convenience) tuna fishers, who endanger stocks and undermine tuna fisheries operating in accordance with international and national measures to protect stocks (Shiraishi 1999a; Shiraishi 1999b). These aspects of Shiraishi's representations are internationalist.

Shiraishi also calls for an alliance of 'fish food culture' (*gyoshoku bunka*) countries of Asia against the hegemony of the 'meat food culture' countries of Europe and North America. In Japan government support for fisheries is often seen as legitimate because of concerns about food security and the need to preserve cultural heritage in certain food

production areas (Bestor 2004:167). Food is a prominent part of culture at all levels in Japanese society, and is used as a marker of cultural identity, both for regional differences within Japan and between Japanese and foreigners (Bestor 1999). Fish food culture—the arts of fishing, preparing and consuming fish—is seen by many as an essential part of Japaneseness. One way this form of national identity may be asserted is through representations of Japan having a fish food culture versus the meat food culture of the ‘West’ (Bestor 1999; Hirata 2004). The fish food culture aspect of Shiraishi’s representation is thus both internationalist and culturally and economically nationalist.

Economic nationalism is evident in Shiraishi’s assertion that increasing world population will put pressure on food stocks such that there will be a ‘fish war’ (*osakana sensô*) in the twenty-first century. She asks Japan what it will do regarding this situation (*dô suru, Nippon?*). She deplores the fact that Japanese consumers feel no sense of danger that half of their seafood is imported and had predicted that soon it will not be possible to buy fish from other countries (Shiraishi 2004).

Consumers’ allegiance with domestic producers because of fears about food security and desires to preserve Japanese fish food culture in Japanese consumer discourse helps legitimize continued government assistance to distant water tuna fisheries. Bureaucrats governing distant water tuna fisheries usually represent the issues similarly to the consumer activists quoted above. Komatsu Masayuki has been a key figure in Japanese distant water fisheries governance over the last decade. A senior bureaucrat with the MAFF, he has been the Japanese Head of Delegation in international tuna management commissions and also been a vocal presence at meetings of the International Whaling Commission. Komatsu is more outspoken and confrontational than many of his colleagues but it is fair to say he represents the prevailing public policy philosophy of the Japanese government regarding distant water fisheries.<sup>20</sup> According to Komatsu:

Japan cannot continue simply relying on imported food. Can we afford as a country to be dependent on others, such as the United States or Australia, for our basic foods? Will we always have enough precious dollars to import what we need? It is the answers to these questions that should tell you why I firmly believe that we need to become more self-sufficient for reason of our national health and at the most basic level, to guarantee the supply of food to our people (as quoted in Smith [2004], translation R. Smith).



Komatsu's representation is nationalist in that his 'us' and 'our' signify Japan, not some transnational alliance of fish consumers or producers. He usually frames issues along national lines in terms of 'us' versus 'them'.<sup>21</sup> In Komatsu's vision the role of fisheries governance is to promote Japanese fisheries for the sake of the Japanese nation. This vision legitimizes government support for fisheries, which is antithetical to neo-liberalism. Komatsu's vision is also incompatible with neo-liberalism in that he is anti-globalization in terms of fisheries trade liberalization.<sup>22</sup> He has said that 'Japan does not need globalization', and that importing 'too much' tuna is 'bad for Japan'.<sup>23</sup> Other MAFF officials also assert that national interest should be balanced against globalization. In response to calls for further trade liberalization under the World Trade Organization MAFF has said 'further radical reforms will ... deteriorate food self sufficiency and multifunctional benefits. This must be a huge loss for *the Japanese* and their *national* economy.' (MAFF 2003, italics added).

While national boundaries are emphasized in these representations, not only are boundaries between producers and consumers underplayed, boundaries between industry and government are also underplayed. In a neo-liberal vision government and industry are normatively distinguished from each other as different kinds of institutions, which should be kept separate. The vision demonstrated in the MAFF representations above is more corporatist than neo-liberal. The first section of this paper showed the corporatist structure of relations between business and government, especially via the *gaikaku dantai*. These MAFF representations show the normative counterparts to those structures.

If neo-liberal discourses had much salience among Japanese stakeholders the close relationship between business and government in fisheries would be represented as a bad thing, or at least the representations would contain some kind of attempt to justify the close relationship, but Japanese fisheries stakeholders usually represent the close relationship positively. For example, in a booklet explaining Japan's fisheries produced by fisheries bureaucrats, academics and *gaikaku dantai* industry representatives for an international fisheries conference held in 2004, the close relationship between government and industry is presented as a unique form of fisheries co-management that enables local fishers to participate effectively in governance (JIFRS 2004:51-55). The booklet contains the following statement about problems in Japanese fisheries seen as

being caused by globalization: 'the Japanese *government* and the fishing industries doing their utmost to maintain these industries' (italics added) (JIFRS 2004:95).

According to neo-liberal principles governments should not try to maintain industries if they are unable to prosper in competition with the rest of the world, rather they should be allowed to decline. So the authors of this booklet are clearly not significantly influenced by neo-liberal ideas.

Moreover, the concern with food self sufficiency that pervades representations of fisheries governance issues in Japan runs counter to neo-liberalism. In a neo-liberal vision food security is ensured by generating wealth so people can buy their food from wherever producers can produce it most cost effectively. Neo-liberalism requires faith in the wealth generating and distributing capacities of international trade, and it also requires faith that international lines of supply will remain open. Japanese governance philosophy as evident in discourses around distant water tuna fisheries has faith in trade bolstered by a supportive state rather than faith in trade alone. The philosophy that legitimizes government support for Japanese distant water tuna fisheries because of concerns about food security and self-sufficiency is more neo-mercantilist than neo-liberal. Various kinds of nationalism, corporatism and anti-globalization are more apparent influences than neo-liberalism on prevailing public policy philosophy in this sector in Japan.

Considering the prevalence of neo-liberalism in policy circles internationally (even if it is practiced unevenly and vocally opposed by some minority parties and social movements), the lack of neo-liberal norms in Japanese public policy debates surrounding the governance of distant water tuna fisheries is striking. Hirata's work on norm diffusion with regard to whaling helps explain this phenomenon (2004). She argues that the prevailing international anti-whaling norm has not diffused to Japan because the domestic political context has not been amenable to this norm. In fact, not only did the norm not diffuse, domestic resistance was inspired against it. Resistance was inspired because the international anti-whaling norm was framed as an attack on Japanese culture.

There are some parallels with whaling in the tuna situation. Environmental organizations such as Greenpeace, which are identified as Western in Japan, campaign

against tuna long lining and accuse Japan of eating 'too much' tuna. Greenpeace's stance is resented as anti-Japanese by many Japanese people involved in fisheries. Japan's fish food culture and Japan's food security are seen as being at stake in debates over government support for distant water tuna fisheries, so neo-liberal reforms may be framed as being against national economic and cultural welfare. Attempts to reduce or change the nature of government support for these fisheries may be framed as attacks on Japan, and therefore represented as illegitimate. The normative framework for governance of Japan's distant water tuna fisheries therefore supports the status quo in fisheries governance. Norms alone do not determine governance, so a severe economic downturn in tuna fisheries or some other shift in the situation could render this normative tendency less effective. At the time of writing, however, the prevailing public policy ideology regarding tuna fisheries visible in representations by key stakeholders indicate that these stakeholders are unlikely to support neo-liberal reforms, indeed they are more likely to oppose them.

## CONCLUSIONS

The governance of Japan's distant water tuna fisheries has been characterized by a high degree of co-management between industry and government, as have many sectors in Japan's economy. The *gaikaku dantai* layer of public corporations acts as a conduit for policy collaboration and for the spending of government money to support industry. Our research shows that neo-liberal reforms introduced by Koizumi were not evident in governance of distant water tuna fisheries under the MAFF to the mid 2000s, in terms of decreasing economic intervention and increasing the role of market mechanisms in shaping industries.

Norms of tuna fisheries governance in key stakeholder groups in Japan, such as the bureaucracy, consumer groups and academia, dovetail with structural inertia of entrenched vested interests against neo-liberal reform. In tuna fisheries the politically powerful discourses of food security and cultural heritage are pitted against neo-liberalism, strands of which are framed as excessive globalization by key stakeholders. Neo-liberalism is not visible in public policy representations by stakeholders in tuna fisheries, indeed there are indications that a push towards neo-liberalism in tuna fisheries would be framed as anti-Japanese and therefore be resisted. Even if other sectors of the Japanese economy become more neo-liberal, the domestic normative context makes it likely arguments would be mounted to protect tuna fisheries as a special case, much as agricultural production has been protected.

Although we argue that neo-liberal reform in Japan's distant water tuna fisheries is unlikely in the foreseeable future, it remains a possibility. Public dissatisfaction with the waste and corruption of the old corporatist system may be harnessed to the neo-liberal cause, although at present it seems that increasing social inequity is being blamed on Koizumi's reforms and the manufacturing led economic recovery is being seen as evidence that Japan does not need further Koizumi-style reform (Curtis, Makihara and Ôta 2006). However, Japanese tuna fisheries' ongoing economic difficulties, the fall of Nikkatsuren and disarray in MAFF undermine the status quo in both structures and norms, and if the industry collapses or shrinks to a far less significant proportion of the market its lobbying power may be reduced. Japan's tuna fisheries may yet feel the effects neo-liberalism.

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## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> 'Neo-liberalism' is an imperfect term for many reasons, including the fact that rather than being a new form of liberalism it mixes strands of liberalism with strands of conservatism. Furthermore, people who espouse neo-liberal tenets do not usually apply the term to themselves, indeed it is often used (pejoratively) by opponents of neo-liberalism. However, it is the only available term for this style of governance, and is widely used in political economy literature.

<sup>2</sup> When senior officials retire they are banned from taking positions in the private sector proper for two years, but they are allowed to take up positions in *gaikaku dantai* corporations/organizations, which gives them a continued income until they can move on to the private sector proper, or they may stay in the *gaikaku dantai*.

<sup>3</sup> For example the Seamen's Insurance Foundation *Zaidan Hôjin Senin Hoken Kai*, see [www.sempos.or.jp](http://www.sempos.or.jp) (accessed 22 March 2005).

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.nochubank.or.jp/business/02.shtml> (accessed 14 March 2005).

<sup>5</sup> In Japanese the FILP is *Zaisei Tôyûshi Keikaku*, or *Zaitô*. FILP money comes not from taxation revenue, but from the post office savings account pool, to which the Japanese government has access for spending on public projects and programs. The FILP is immense, it has long been the largest savings pool in the world. Because it is so commonly used for government spending the FILP is also called the 'second budget'.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Tamai Tetsuya, Japanese Embassy, Canberra, April 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Mae Akihiro, Fisheries Agency, Tokyo, January 2003.



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<sup>8</sup> The legislation for regulating imports is the 1996 Law on Special Measures for the Promotion of the Conservation and Management of Tuna Stocks, also called the Tuna Management Act.

<sup>9</sup> Senior/junior (*sempai/kōhai*) relations are a fundamental organizing principle in Japanese society.

<sup>10</sup> Various Australian tuna fishing and aquaculture company owners interviewed in 2002-3.

<sup>11</sup> Suzuki had originally studied fisheries at college, and then worked in organizations connected to the fishing industry until entering politics in 1947. He was the Minister of MAFF for several years in the 1970s, before becoming Prime Minister in 1980.

<sup>12</sup> This was according to Kagoshima Kengyoren (the prefectural level between the municipal Gyokyo and the national peak body Zengyoren) officials during a fisheries study tour organized by the Kagoshima University Marine Social Science Department for visiting scholars from Indonesia and the Philippines, 19-21 November 1998.

<sup>13</sup> *Machizukuri*, literally 'town-making', is a local government activity (often funded by the national government in rural areas) aimed at generating a communal sense of place and belonging. It involves slogans, public buildings and events such as festivals.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with [name withheld], Kushikino, January 2003.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Sugai Hiroshi of the Kagoshima Prefecture Skipjack and Tuna Fisheries Cooperative Association, June 2003.

<sup>16</sup> Sato Yasuo's reply to authors' question in a panel discussion on vessel buy-backs as a fisheries management toll during the biennial conference of the International Institute of Fisheries Economics and Trade in Tokyo, July 2004.

<sup>17</sup> For a thorough examination of the politics of Japanese agriculture see George Mulgan (2000).

<sup>18</sup> *Zenkoku Shōhisha Dantai Renraku Kai*, usually referred to as *Shōdanren*, or 'Consumers Japan' in English. Interview with Kanda Toshiko, Itō Yasue and Hasuo Takako in Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, May 2003.

<sup>19</sup> According to MAFF (2003) Japan imports 60 per cent of its food supplies, measured in caloric intake. In the 1970s Japan was the world's largest seafood exporter, by 2001 Japan had become the world's largest seafood importer, with 23% in value and 14% in volume of world production (JIFRS 2004).

<sup>20</sup> According to Hirata (2004), opinion on whaling in MAFF is not unified, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs often disagrees with MAFF stances taken on whaling, but the pro-whaling group, led by Komatsu, is dominant and their agenda prevails. Komatsu's position vis a vis MAFF and MoFA on tuna issues is similar.

<sup>21</sup> This style generates political capital in that domestic contesting voices can be devalued because they seem to be against the nation. Hirata (2004:194) notes the political device of framing issues as 'us' versus 'them' in the whaling dispute has helped marginalize domestic anti-whaling voices.

<sup>22</sup> Quentin Grafton has pointed out (pers. comm. 2005) that Komatsu is not anti-globalization in terms of access for Japan's offshore and distant water fleets. Indeed, since Japan's domestic fishing grounds are fully exploited, unless there is a major increase in aquaculture, his call for greater food self-sufficiency must logically mean additional Japanese fishing in overseas fishing grounds.

<sup>23</sup> These comments were made by Komatsu in a panel discussion at the biennial conference of the International Institute for Fisheries Economics and Trade in Tokyo, July 2004.