Japanese Journal of Political Science 3 (2) 275–279 Printed in the United Kingdom © Cambridge University Press 2002

Executive Turnovers in 2002

MASARU KOHNO WITH JUN MIZUTANI
Aoyama Gakuin University. Email: kohno@sipeb.aoyama.ac.jp

From the latter half of 2001 to the middle of 2002, prime minister Junichiro Koizumi was plagued by a series of scandals and administrative mishandlings, which led to some important executive turnovers. Although Koizumi has thus far upheld his principle of 'one cabinet, one minister' for the sake of policy stability, his campaign promise not to reshuffle cabinet has already been compromised somewhat, and is likely to be abandoned entirely in the near future.

Among various incidents, most consequential for Koizumi's fate were the ones which involved the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. By the summer of 2001, it became clear that Katsutoshi Matsuo, the former head of the now-defunct Overseas Visit Support Division, had embezzled a large sum of ministry's 'secret funds' (i.e., funds allocated for use in the ministry's diplomatic operations) for his own private purposes. Backed by an overwhelming public support, Minister Makiko Tanaka confronted the scandal, harshly criticizing those top bureaucrats who had the responsibilities to oversee the Division. On 3 August, Koizumi himself decided to punish four successive vice ministers. Shunji Yanai (then the ambassador to the United States), Kunihiko Saito (then the Governor of Japan International Cooperation Agency) and Sadayuki Hayashi (then the ambassador to Great Britain) were all removed from their respective positions, and the incumbent vice minister Yutaka Kawashima was replaced by Yoshiji Nogami.

This process left two seeds for further embarrassing developments. First, the rift between Tanaka and senior bureaucrats within the Ministry reached the point where the trust and communication had completely broken down. It was reported that Tanaka would have preferred to have Ryozo Kato, not Nogami, as her right-hand man, but Tanaka was forced to accept Kato's appointment as the new ambassador to the United States. Second, as the Ministry became increasingly dysfunctional, the relationship between Tanaka and Koizumi also soured. Koizumi, and his spokesperson Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda, began publicly questioning Tanaka's administrative skills.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1468109902002086 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The tension surrounding the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reached a peak when Tokyo hosted a multinational meeting for the reconstruction of Afghanistan in January 2002. In the midst of the two-day meeting, it was publicized that a politician known for his vast influence in foreign policy, Muneo Suzuki, had made the Ministry cancel an NGO's participation in the meeting. Despite Suzuki's denials, Tanaka believed the NGO's side of the story. Her deputy, Nogami, on the other hand, consistently claimed, even by testifying in the parliamentary hearings, that Suzuki made no interference. Fed up with the standoff, Koizumi decided to remove both Tanaka and Nogami. On 1 February, the Minister of Environment Yoriko Kawaguchi was appointed as Tanaka's successor, while Hiroshi Ohki was named to fill Kawaguchi's position. Two weeks later, Yukio Takeuchi, then the ambassador to Indonesia, was appointed as the new vice minister.

Tanaka's dismissal was a major blow to the Koizumi government. Tanaka had been a key Koizumi ally when he ran for the leadership of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Tanaka's appointment, which was controversial from the beginning, was Koizumi's own decision, and he had to take the responsibility of the original appointment. Moreover, Koizumi's approval rating declined substantially, right after Tanaka left the office. Tanaka was an extremely popular politician, and her tireless and seemingly lonesome venture to reveal the coordinated bureaucratic cover-up over the Suzuki incident had wide public sympathy. Finally, Tanaka's departure also meant that Koizumi's principle of 'one cabinet, one minister' had been compromised. Though the Tanaka case was certainly exceptional, the decision to remove Tanaka made Koizumi more vulnerable to the pressure from many LDP members calling for a major cabinet reshuffle.

The other notable incident involved the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. In September, 2001, the Ministry made it public that a dairy cow having contracted mad cow disease ('BSE') had been found in Japan for the first time. For months after that, the Ministry came under sustained criticisms for failing to take appropriate measures promptly. Finally, on 8 January 2002, vice-minister Hideaki Kumazawa resigned and was replaced by Yoshiaki Watanebe. On 5 April, the opposition parties presented a motion of censure against the Minister, Tsutomu Takebe. Although the Komei Party, one wing of the three-party governing coalition, agreed with the opposition, the motion was denied, and Takebe thus survived the crisis.

Some speculated that Koizumi's determination to protect Takebe at all cost was to show his commitment toward the 'one cabinet, one minister' principle. It must be stressed, however, that, even aside from Tanaka's case mentioned above, this principle has already been compromised, because Koizumi switched a large part of his political appointees at the levels of senior vice-minister (Fuku-Daijin) and parliamentary secretaries (Seimukan) in September 2001 and January 2002 (see table 1).

Now that Koizumi no longer enjoys high popularity among the public, he has to cultivate amicable relationships with senior and powerful members in his own party.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1468109902002086 Published online by Cambridge University Press

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1468109902002086 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Table 1

		1-May-01			21-Sep-01			8-Jan-02		
Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications	Senior Vice Minister	K. KOSAKA	LDP	R				G. SATA	LDP	R
		K. ENDO	KP	(R				K. WAKAMATSU	KP	R
	Parliamentary Secretary	Y. SHINDO	LDP	R				M. TAKI	LDP	R
		Y. YAMANA	KP	R				T. KONO	LDP	R
		S. KAGEYAMA	LDP	C	T. YAMAUCHI	Ldp	C			
Ministry of Justice	Senior Vice Minister	S. YOKOUCHI	LDP	R						
	Parliamentary Secretary	Y. NAKAGAWA	LDP	C				H. SHIMOMURA	LDP	R
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Senior Vice Minister	S. SUGIURA	LDP	R						
		S. UETAKE	LDP	R						
	Parliamentary Secretary	K. MARUYA	KP	R				K. MATSUNAMI	CP	R
		T. KOJIMA	LDP	R				K. MIZUNO	LDP	R
		T. YAMAGUCHI	LDP	R				M. IMAMURA	LDP	R
Ministry of Finance	Senior Vice MInister	S. MARAKAMI	LDP	R				T. TANIGUCHI	KP	R
		M. WAKABAYASHI	LDP	R	H. OTSUJI	LDP	C			
	Parliamentary Secretary	K. NAKANO	LDP	R				Y. YOSHIDA	LDP	R
		T. HAYASHIDA	LDP	R				K. SUNADA	LDP	R
Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology	Senior Vice Minister	F. KISHIDA	LDP	R						
		T. AOYAMA	LDP	R						
	Parliamentary Secretary	Y. IKENOBO	KP	R						
		Y. MIZUSHIMA	LDP	C	T. KANO	LDP	C			
Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare	Senior Vice Minister	K. MASUYA	KP	R				Y. KANO	LDP	C
		C. NOONO	LDP	C				K. MIYAJI	LDP	R
	Parliamentary Secretary	T. SATO	LDP	R				N. TAMURA	LDP	R
		T. TAURA	LDP	C	K. KUNO	LDP	C			

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1468109902002086 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Table 1 (*continued*)

		1-May-01			21-Sep-01			8-Jan-02		
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries	Senior Vice MInister	T. ENDO	LDP	R						
		N. TANAKA	LDP	C	T. NOMA	LDP	C			
	Parliamentary Secretary	M. IWANAGA	LDP	R				M. MIYAKOSHI	LDP	R
		M. KUNII	LDP	C	H. WANAGA	LDP	C			
Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry	Senior Vice Minister	K. FURUYA	LDP	R						
		I. MATSUDA	LDP	C	Y. OSHIMA	LDP	C			
	Parliamentary Secretary	H. OMURA	LDP	R				M. SHIMOJI	LDP	R
		T. NISHIKAWA	CP	R				A. MATSU	KP	C
Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport	Senior Vice Minister	S. SATO	LDP	R						
		S. IZUMI	CP	C				S. TSUKIHARA	CP	C
	Parliamentary Secretary	T. KIMURA	LDP	R				Y. SUGA	LDP	R
		K. TANAKA	LDP	R				Y. TAKAGI	KP	R
		H. KIMURA	LDP	C				H. MORISHITA	LDP	C
Ministry of Environment	Senior Vice Minister	H. KAZAMA	KP	C				E. YAMASHITA	KP	C
	Parliamentary Secretary	A. NISHINO	LDP	R				T. OKUTANI	LDP	R
Ministry of State	Senior Vice Minister	S. NAKAMURA	LDP	R				A. KUMASHIRO	LDP	R
		T. MATSUSHITA	LDP	R						
		Y. MURATA	LDP	R						
	Parliamentary Secretary	Y. SAKAUE	LDP	R				C. KAKAZU	LDP	R
		H. WATANABE	LDP	R				S. OKUYAMA	LDP	R
		T. NAKAMICHI	LDP	C				I. KAMEI	LDP	C
The Defense Agency	Senior Vice Minister	K. HAGIYAMA	LDP	R						
	Parliamentary Secretary	C. KAKAZU	LDP	R				T. KIMURA	LDP	R
		K. HIRASAWA	LDP	R				Y. YAMASHITA	LDP	C

Notes: (LDP) Liberal Democratic Party, (KP) the Komei Party, (CP) the Conservative Party.
(R) refers to House of Representative, (C) refers to House of Councillors.

It is increasingly difficult for him to ignore calls of those LDP backbenchers waiting their turns to occupy ministerial positions. It is thus very likely that his principle not to shuffle cabinet will in the near future be abandoned entirely.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1468109902002086 Published online by Cambridge University Press