

On Governor of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government

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Governor of TMG is a face of Japan second to the prime minister

The governor of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG) is described in many ways. "Tokyo, the capital of Japan, is something huge that goes beyond a framework of a local government in terms of economy and influence. Its governor can safely be described as a face of Japan second to the prime minister." That is to say, the governor of TMG is the head of an organization which holds 175,000 personnel, and whose annual budget is 12 trillion yen (including special accounts), matching those of the national governments of South Korea and India. The governor of TMG is always guarded by the security police, or S.P. of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police. That is unique to the governor of TMG compared to governors of other prefectures. He is treated as VIP like a prime minister or a political party leader. In short, he is the powerful person next to the prime minister, or a face of Japan.

The governor of TMG is always invited to a formal party for a prominent foreign guest and a biannual garden party at the Imperial Palace. For such an occasion, the wife of the governor of TMG acts as the first lady of Tokyo. Meanwhile, the governor of TMG is also the head of metropolitan government personnel who serve for 12 million Tokyo residents in 23 wards, 26 cities, five towns, and eight villages. In the case of Shintaro Ishihara, the incumbent governor, holds 63 emeritus positions. He meets with many different people, gets reported by subordinates, and attends meetings according to a schedule which is managed by the unit of five minutes. He is an extremely busy man with a hectic schedule all around the year. On the other hand, the TMG is in charge of cleaning streets and managing water supply and sewage, which are usually responsibilities of a municipal government. In that sense, governor of TMG is also described as "a mayor concurrently holding a position of governor". All these represent special administrative aspects of the TMG.

Different types of governors

No doubt, being a governor of TMG is a tough job. What kind of personality is desirable for the Tokyo governor? The NHK Broadcasting Public Opinion Research Institute conducted a "Survey of Opinions on the Tokyo Metropolitan Government" in August, 1978. According to the survey, asked about a desirable characteristic of a governor, 39 percent of respondents answered "practical", 32 percent "able to implement a plan", 30 percent "respecting public opinions", 22 percent "with a long-term vision", 20 percent "focus on social welfare," and 19 percent "political power". (The respondents were allowed to name one or two characteristics.) Thus, the outcome reflected the Tokyo residents' disapproval of ideological confrontations in the TMG. The timing of the survey was toward the end of the third term of Ryôkichi Minobe. The outcome shows that the Tokyo residents wanted a governor who could actually get the job done. For that matter, in the following April, Shunichi Suzuki, who was typically of practical-bureaucrat sort, was elected as the governor.

The types of governors in the post-war era have changed as follows.

〈Phase I〉 The 1940's and 1950's when a post-war recovery took place. In the popular elections, government-appointed governors ran for office and got elected in many cases. They were often elected for the second and third term. In terms of political parties, a vast majority of them was independent conservatives.

〈Phase II〉 The 1960's when economy grew rapidly. The local development boom spread across the country. The distribution of investments in public-work projects became a major political issue. Nearly a half of governors were members of the Liberal Democratic Party, who advocated "direct control by the central government". Many former national and prefectural parliament members took over government-appointed governors.

〈Phase III〉 The 1970's when a backlash or introspection of the rapid economic growth policies occurred. Environmental, cultural, and welfare policies were considered important in order to restore the ruined nature and society. Many governors were elected from the academic and cultural background. There were more than ten reformist governors.

〈Phase IV〉 Since the 1980's. Slow economic growth, structural recessions, budget crises in local governments, administrative reforms, and restructuring were there to stay. Practical- and bureaucratic-type governors have become dominant. About a half of governors are former officials of the former Home Ministry or local governments, which gave an impression that the era of government-appointed governors has returned.

If we look at governors of TMG in the past: Seiichiro Yasui (Home Ministry, Director of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government), 1947 to 59; Ryutaro Azuma (Professor at the University of Tokyo, IOC member), 1959-67; Ryôkichi Minobe (Professor at Tokyo University of Education), 1967-79; and Shunichi Suzuki (Home Ministry, vice-governor), 1979-95. Thus, the trend of governors of TMG was in line with, or sometimes ahead of, the national trend.

We are now in Phase V, which shows a new trend. Both the incumbent Shintaro Ishihara and his predecessor Yukio Aoshima entered politics from different fields. Ishihara was a popular novelist, while Aoshima used to be an entertainer. They are good at dealing with the media in a way fitted for the era of mass media or information. It can be interpreted, however, like Nokku Yokoyama, former Osaka governor, that they were elected on the basis of a huge number of independent voters. Therefore, it does not necessarily represent the nationwide trend. Still, since more and more people do not have an affinity to a particular political party recently, the trend may spread to other prefectures with big cities.

Governors from the viewpoint of TMG personnel

What do TMG personnel think about governors? In the run-up to the gubernatorial election in April 1995, Tosei-kenkyu-sha ran a survey on randomly chosen 300 incumbent or retired personnel of TMG about their opinions on the gubernatorial election. The outcomes are as follows ("Tosei-kenkyu", September 1994, questionnaires collected by mail, 199 respondents).

First of all, "interest in the gubernatorial election". 69.3 percent of respondents

answered “very interested”, 28.1 percent “somehow interested”, and 2.5 percent “little interested”. Thus, it shows that most personnel were interested. The percentage of respondents who answered “interested” grows in the order of staff, sections chiefs, department chiefs, division chiefs, and retired division chiefs. In their daily operations, end-staff might feel closer to the group leader or the section chief than the governor. Yet, they are generally interested in the gubernatorial election.

The Next question was: “What does it take most to be the governor of TMG?” 65.3 percent answered “administrative skills”, 27.9 percent “political power”, 1.5 percent “name recognition”, 1.0 percent “international mindset”, and 4.5 percent “others”. Thus, “administrative skills” led the pack by a large margin. It is a manifestation of awareness that “administrative skills, particularly a coordinating ability, are essential to run a massive structure of the TMG,” and that “accurate administrative skills are largely required to steer the course in the budget crisis of the TMG.” As to political power, it is important because “strong political power is required to solve issues of the TMG, when politics at the national level is in turmoil”. It is also the case that “political power and administrative skills are equally required, but political power is particularly important in this time of a lot of changes”. A small number of respondents named “an ability to evoke an affinity in the people”, “philosophy and being visionary”, and “creativity and uniqueness”.

One could easily guess what kind of background is preferred for a governor based on these results. 61.3 percent of respondents answered “someone with experience in government jobs”, 21.6 percent “politicians”, 3.5 percent “academics/commentators”, 3.0 percent “businessperson”. That is to say, for most personnel of TMG and ward governments, the desirable governor would be a professional administrator like Mr. Suzuki. It is because “it is preferable for the governor to be neutral in case that there are changes in the national government,” and because “it is better to have someone who has worked in the administration to run a local government that is the nation’s capital and a cosmopolitan city. But a politician with experience in administration is acceptable.”

On the other hand, a respondent who answered “politician” said, “Tokyo is a huge city, which has the parliament with a complex makeup and diverse government personnel, is constantly exposed to the media, and has a variety of needs of the residents. To handle these things will take a capable politician.” A respondent who chose “others” said, “Anybody who is a world top class player, whether he/she is an urban planner, writer, media person, businessperson, or engineer”. Another said, “Someone who is visionary and capable of running a big city looking to the 21st century.

In general, Tokyo government officials prefer a governor who has experience in administration with practical skills and coordinating abilities. There was a question asking respondents to pick the best person from those who were rumored as candidates for the next governor. The largest number, or 24.1 percent of respondents chose Mr. Suzuki, the then incumbent. Later, Mr. Suzuki made a controversial remark, which implied that Nobuo Ishihara, the then Vice-chief Cabinet Secretary, as his pick for the successor. Mr. Ishihara was the No. 2 favorite of the respondents to the aforementioned question, winning 23.1 percent of the vote, followed by Tetsundo Iwakuni, the then mayor of Izumo-city, with 16.6 percent. Nobuo Ishihara is a career

bureaucrat who had served as Administrative Vice-minister of Home Affairs and Vice-chief Cabinet Secretary for a long time. His background is quite similar to that of Mr. Suzuki. Mr. Iwakuni had been a vice-president at a U.S. securities company before he was elected as mayor. He became a leading figure in forming public opinions with unique ideas and remarks. After the Tokyo gubernatorial election in 1995, he was elected to the House of Representatives. It seems that he was evaluated by Tokyo government personnel as a person with administrative skills and a vision who is capable of running a big city.

Significance and reality of the position of the governor of TMG

From the 1980's to the 1990's, practical governors with administrative skills and management abilities were highly regarded not only in Tokyo but also other parts of Japan. Reasons can be extrapolated from the above mentioned survey results of Tokyo government personnel. Shôzo Takayose sums them up as follows: ① Amid the local budget crisis, residents expected a local bureaucrat who has experience in substantial jobs and a strong connection with the national government to do good jobs as an "expert of finance". ② Ideological confrontations were not preferable for local politics, in that sense, the long-standing "neutrality" of a bureaucrat was highly valued. ③ Political parties could not provide other candidates than bureaucrats due to underdevelopment. ④ Since there were too many political parties, a bureaucrat who was not tainted by a certain political party or faction had an advantage when multiple parties chose a common candidate.

This analysis was originally made when Japan's economic growth started to slow down, but it makes sense even today. It holds true particularly with Tokyo because, as the nation's capital, it is closely related to the national government and has a huge administrative organization and a large amount of budget. To handle such a huge government, practical skills would be required. The national government and political parties highly consider the governor of TMG. The governor of TMG is clearly a special political position compared to governors of other prefectures. The peculiarities or characteristics of the governor of TMG are as follows: ① A national issue rather than a local issue is often contested in a gubernatorial election. ② With an exception of 1991, when political parties supported different candidates at the national level and the prefectural level, a candidate is usually chosen at the national-level leadership of a political party, and all-out efforts as a party to support the candidate are made. Alliances or mergers between political parties usually proceed ahead of the national politics. ③ New styles of campaigns, for example, a personality-oriented election, a symbol-oriented election, or a celebrity-featured election, are experimented and executed ahead of any other places in the country, which will have a nationwide influence.

For the election in April 1991, there was a cooperative relation between the Komeito and the Democratic Socialist Party with an eye on a legislation concerning the waterfront development. Mr. Suzuki, the then incumbent governor, had become rather elderly, already served for 3 terms in office, and built a grandiose office complex for the TMG. The central leadership of the LDP decided that it could not win, if it supported Mr. Suzuki with such a disadvantageous set of conditions, and acted against

the intention of Mr. Suzuki and the prefectural-level leadership. That is why there was inconsistency in the LDP regarding the 1991 election. It was not because the LDP did not give a high regard to the position of governor of TMG. A Tokyo gubernatorial election is considered to be crucial in unified local elections. The outcome has a great effect on mayoral and municipal parliamentary elections in other places. It is indeed “the position second to the prime minister”. In spite of awareness of the importance of the position of the governor of TMG, the national government and ministries and agencies are said to be aloof to affairs of the TMG. This is reflected in a remark by Mr. Yasui, a former governor, when he said that the Capital Construction Law of 1950 has in effect become a dead letter because the central government considered Tokyo as just another prefecture and did not recognize its unique characteristics and functions as the nation’s capital.

The national government has tried to put the TMG under its jurisdiction, arguing that the capital should be under direct control of the national government, and that the governor of TMG should be appointed by the national government. The governor of TMG is considered by the US and some other countries as an equivalent of a combination of the New York City mayor, the New York state governor, and the Washington D.C. mayor. He is treated as high-ranking as the Speaker of the House of Representatives or the Chief Cabinet Secretary outside Japan, but not within the country. At a formal dinner at the Imperial Palace or a luncheon hosted by the prime minister, he is positioned as the highest ranking private citizens below cabinet ministers. Former Governor Minobe was discontent with this. He said that the Tokyo governor was greater than ministers who were in charge of only a part of the national government because the Tokyo governor was directly elected and responsible for governing 11 million residents. His remarks must have had something to do with how the governor of TMG is treated.

Recently, as Tokyo becomes even more important both socially and economically, the importance of the governor of TMG is also growing. Still, in terms of legal positioning and authorities, the governor of TMG is no different from other prefectural governors, except that he concurrently holds the position of mayor of 23 wards. He perform administrative jobs for the TMG as well as ones commissioned by the national government according to law. He is under instruction and supervision of a cabinet minister. As the nation’s capital, Tokyo accommodates the Diet building and foreign embassies, which house important figures. The TMG is responsible for guarding and protecting such important facilities and people. The governor of TMG is also responsible for external relations, including entertaining important overseas visitors. Some of his jobs are of the nature of a diplomat’s.

Redrawing the profile of the governor of TMG

Nobody can deny that the position of the governor of TMG is important. He is the face of the nation’s capitol, Tokyo, a powerful figure next to the prime minister, is almost automatically appointed to the president of the National Governors’ Association. His words, deeds, and policies affect local governments across the country. Important as the position is, the profile of the governor of TMG is not so clear. Unlike New York City mayors, California governors, New South Wales governors, there is no

established image of the governor of TMG. Authorities of Japanese governors and mayors are limited compared to their counterparts in the US, Germany, and Australia. Authorities of Japanese governors and mayors are in many cases constrained by the national government. As a result, they can not talk about a long-term vision or a future plan of the prefecture or municipality of which they are in charge with their own words. It is symbolic that they do not have an authority to issue local government bonds.

Governors and mayors are politicians, who should share their visions and dreams with residents. In reality, however, they can not afford much time and energy to do that. Instead, in order to maintain a good relation with the national government, they strive to smoothly perform the administrative duties commissioned by the national government, for which they are evaluated.

The tendency intensifies deeper in the administration. A comment regarding the aforementioned survey of active and retired Tokyo government personnel goes, "After World War II, two "academics", Azuma and Minobe, assumed the position of the chief executive officer of the TMG. Azuma left everything to the vice-governor. Minobe could not be "relevant", leaving all important affairs of the TMG to outside parties with no relations with the TMG. Such abnormal situations continued for some time. Learning from such a mistake, Tokyo government personnel, including retirees, have probably come to chose someone with the administrative capabilities and experience in the government. (*'Ishiki-chôsa ni miru tochiji-sen'*, "Tosei Kenkyû", July 1994 issue)

That is to say, the profile of a governor of TMG is drawn according to the logic of the government alone. The governor of TMG has cooperative or confronting relations with various political entities. As important the administrative abilities and the management capabilities are, they are not all what it takes. The governor of TMG is, at the end of the day, related to Tokyo residents, through the media and bureaucracy. It seems, however, the basic function of the governor of facing the residents and addressing issues of their concern is taken lightly. The managerial aspect of the governor's jobs of offering administrative services without disruption according to the set rules is disproportionately emphasized.

Mr. Minobe, who was an amateur in terms of government and administration, repeatedly said that "the protagonist of politics of the TMG is the Tokyo residents". His political base was always the Tokyo residents. The greatest achievement of the Minobe administration is said to be that he made the Tokyo residents and the TMG closer to each other. He held a certain political position at the time. There were various constraints. Yet, he strove for realization of the open administration by full disclosure of information related to the administration and encouraging the residents to participate in affairs of the TMG.

It is said that the mayor is a kind of medium of the unity of residents. If a mayor is aware of that and has taken on such an attitude, dialogues with and participation by the residents can be substantial. *Kôzô Igarashi*, a former Asahikawa mayor, said, "Recently, more and more mayors are former bureaucrats, but it should not be the case. A mayor should be elected from ordinary citizens, and do jobs as a representative of the citizens while in office as the mayor, and become an ordinary citizen again after his/her term expires. That is what is important for the mayor of a municipality." From such a perspective, it could be said that Mr. Minobe was a professional politician

because he clung to an amateur's point of view.

As a recent trend, a governor with a clear message is elected. Among those governors are Masayasu Kitagawa, a former governor of Mie prefecture, Shirô Asano, the governor of Miyagi prefecture, Yoshihiro Katayama, the governor of Tottori prefecture, and Yasuo Tanaka, the governor of Nagano prefecture. Instead of ascending the ladder of a local political circle to become a governor, a notable number of governors are former bureaucrats of Diet members in their 40's or 50's. In prefectures with such "reformist" governors, the prefectural politics has been activated. According to an opinion poll by Asahi Shimbun before the unified local elections in April 2003, as many as 63 percent of respondents with the voting right answered that they would "take into consideration" a candidate's attitude toward the Iraq War either "greatly" or "to a certain extent". The most important thing when choosing whom to vote for a governor or a mayor, 42 percent of respondents answered "electoral pledges", exceeding "personality", which accounted for 35 percent. This trend is stronger with younger voters in big cities. Only eight percent answered "political party", underscoring a trend that fewer people now have an affinity to a certain political party regardless of places. (Asahi Shimbun, April 1, 2003)

Tokyo is a cosmopolitan, and the TMG is a massive organization. That is why the governor of TMG should have a strong leadership and a sense of balance to grasp the overall picture, to show the residents a vision for Tokyo and the TMG, to mobilize the TMG bureaucracy and other resources both tangible and intangible for that objective. The necessary and sufficient condition for redrawing the profile of the governor of TMG is that it is done from the viewpoint of and according to logic of Tokyo residents.

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