

# Koizumi Diplomacy

## *Japan's Kantei Approach to Foreign and Defense Affairs*

Tomohito Shinoda

Japan's policymaking strategy in foreign and defense affairs changed dramatically in 2001 after Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi took the helm of the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party. Following a series of bland and short-lived prime ministers, Koizumi's infusion of fresh energy into a tired and opaque party has been compared with Tony Blair's successful revamping of New Labour in the U.K. Koizumi, however, had a weak power base in the party and limited diplomatic experience. How, then, was he able to exercise leadership?

Tomohito Shinoda analyzes the prime minister's role in policymaking, focusing on the assistance he receives from the Kantei, or Cabinet Secretariat, the Japanese equivalent of the American president's White House cabinet. Since 2001, the Japanese government's center of gravity for foreign policy has shifted from the traditionally dominant Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Kantei, which allowed Koizumi to exercise a top-down style of decision making. Following another decisive win in the election of 2005, he took an even more assertive leadership role in Asian diplomacy.

Through case studies and personal interviews with former prime ministers and cabinet secretaries, Shinoda looks at how Koizumi's new system operates on a practical level – how, for example, major post-2001 anti-terrorism legislation has been initiated and prepared by the Kantei – and compares its successes and failures with those of the U.S. system. With frank and engaging commentary by former officials, this book makes a unique contribution to the understanding of contemporary Japanese political affairs.

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