Locating Women's Political Engagement: Democracy in Early Cold War US and Japanese Women's Magazines, 1945–1955

Jana Aresin

ABSTRACTS

Wie wurde der demokratische Kapitalismus der USA zu einem Modell, das während des Kalten Krieges in der ganzen Welt verbreitet wurde? Welche Auswirkungen hatte dies sowohl auf die US-amerikanische Gesellschaft selbst als auch auf die Länder, die solchen ‚Demokratisierungsbestrebungen' ausgesetzt waren? Der Artikel untersucht diese Fragen in Bezug auf Demokratie und Geschlechterrollen durch eine vergleichende Analyse US-amerikanischer und japanischer Frauenzeitschriften zwischen 1945 und 1955. Die Ausweitung von Frauenrechten in Japan nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg wird oft im Kontext der Demokratisierungspolitik der US-Besatzung betrachtet. Diese Entwicklung war jedoch deutlich komplexer als eine einfache ‚Befreiung' von oben und wurde von Frauengruppen, Intellektuellen und Aktivisten verschiedenster politischer Überzeugungen beeinflusst. Gleichzeitig fanden sich auch Frauen in den USA nach dem Krieg in einer sich wandelnden Gesellschaft wieder. Der Artikel analysiert die verschiedenen Narrative über Frauen und Demokratie und ihre Zusammenhänge, zeigt Unterschiede und Parallelen zwischen den beiden Ländern auf, und untersucht einen potenziellen Transfer von Ideologien über nationale Grenzen hinweg.

How did US capitalist democracy become a model to be 'exported' around the world during the Cold War, and how did this impact US society and the countries exposed to these 'democratizing' efforts? The article approaches this question with a focus on gender and democracy by comparing texts from US and Japanese women's magazines published between 1945 and 1955. The post-war development of women's rights in Japan is often examined in the context of the US occupation's 'democratizing' policies, yet it was more complex than a 'liberation' from above and influenced by local women's groups of various political beliefs, intellectuals, and

Comparativ | Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung 31 (2021) Heft 1, S. 66–81.
DOI: 10.26014/j.comp.2021.01.05

activists. At the same time, women in the US also faced a changing society after the war. The article aims to untangle the complex set of influences and narratives informing the discourse around women and democracy, outline parallels and differences between both countries, and examine the potential transfer of ideologies and narratives across national borders.

> *Taking the defeat of Japan as an opportunity, we newly attempt the establishment of a democratic peaceful state, and in the important fulfilment of this duty, women, who make up more than half of the whole population, bear more than half of the responsibility.*[1]
>
> (Tanaka Kōtarō, "What is a Woman's Duty?")

1. Introduction

In January 1948, Tanaka Kōtarō, who had served as minister of education in the first cabinet of Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru after the end of World War II and was among the signatories of the post-war Japanese constitution,[2] opened an article in the popular women's magazine *Fujin Kurabu* (Women's Club) with the above statement. Such sentiments were not rare in the immediate post-war moment. After the defeat in a brutal war that had suddenly lost its mantel of legitimacy following surrender, intellectuals, politicians, and the wider population were faced with the question of how Japan's future could look like. In this moment of transition and uncertainty, various social and political norms and relations seemed to be open to challenge or negotiation, and the "woman question", particularly regarding the issues of suffrage and constitutional reform, soon occupied a prominent position.[3]

This process was deeply entwined with the presence of the US occupation forces, whose post-war strategy was not only concerned with the disarmament and demilitarization of Japan, but also with a wider project of "re-education" aimed at changing the population's beliefs, values, and behaviour to ensure the "democratization" of society following the US model and US political interests.[4] "Democracy" and "peace" were two key terms that dominated the rhetoric of the US occupation forces and soon entered public discourse in Japanese mass media as well. The Basic Initial Post Surrender Directive (JCS1380/15) to the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in November 1945, listed demilitarization and "the strengthening of democratic tendencies and processes in governmental, economic, and social institutions" as the basic objectives for the occupation, to ensure that "Japan will not again become a menace to

1 K. Tanaka, Fujin no shimei to wa, in: Fujin Kurabu, January 1948, p. 13. All translations from Japanese are my own.
2 K. M. Doak, Tanaka Kōtarō and World Law: Rethinking the Natural Law Outside the West, Cham 2019, pp. 70–71.
3 M. Koikari, Pedagogy of Democracy: Feminism and the Cold War in the U.S. Occupation of Japan, Philadelphia 2010, pp. 48–50.
4 Y. Tsuchiya, Imagined America in Occupied Japan: (Re)Educational Films Shown by the U.S. Occupation Forces to the Japanese, 1948–1952, in: The Japanese Journal of American Studies 13 (2002), pp. 193–213, at 194.

the peace and security of the world […].”[5] There has been much debate in historical research regarding this US project of “democratizing” Japan. Discussions address questions around the “success” of this project, the extent of the influence of different actors from both the US occupation forces and Japanese political elites, and what continuities and breaks can be observed between the post-war period and wartime or prewar Japan.[6] It is important to note, however, that “re-education” and “democratization” not only denote a particular set of more or less “successfully” conducted political, economic, and social reforms, but also comprise a specific discourse with both practical and ideological functions. Studying the discourse of democratization can give valuable insights into the formation of US and Japanese national identity, values, and social norms in the transitionary phase between World War II and the Cold War, and in how far ideologies and narratives were transferred between the two countries. To explore the gendered aspects of both Cold War ideology and the democratization discourse, I will analyse the representation of women’s political engagement in popular magazines by outlining parallels and differences between both countries and between magazines of different formats and (political) orientation to examine the potential transfer of ideologies and narratives across national borders.

2. The Discourse of Women and Democracy in Occupied Japan and the United States

As Tanaka’s quote above suggests, the discourse of democracy and peace was deeply intertwined with the question of women’s rights and duties in post-war Japan. This may not appear immediately obvious when surveying the early occupation documents. The JCS 1380/15 directive, which laid out the primary goals of the occupation, did not specifically address the situation and role of women.[7] The October 1945 memorandum for the “Removal of Restrictions of Political, Civil, and Religious Liberties”, that ended, among others, the Peace Preservation Law which had served as a main instrument for the restriction of civil rights in Imperial Japan, demanded the end of “discrimination on grounds of race, nationality, creed or political opinion”, but made no mention of gender.[8]
Yet among the five major demands for constitutional reform that were handed to the Japanese government by Supreme Commander Douglas MacArthur in October 1945,

5 Joint Chiefs of Staff, Basic Directive for Post-Surrender Military Government in Japan Proper, JCS 1380/15 (1945), p. 135.

6 For an overview of these debates in scholarship on the US-occupation of Japan, see J. W. Dower, Occupied Japan as History and Occupation History as Politics, in: Journal of Asian Studies 34 (1975) 2, pp. 485–504; C. Ueno, Nationalism and Gender, Melbourne 2004, pp. 6–15.

7 See Joint Chiefs of Staff, Basic Directive for Post-Surrender Military Government in Japan Proper, JCS 1380/15 (1945), pp. 134–168.

8 Office of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Removal of Restrictions on Political, Civil, and Religious Liberties, SCAPIN-93 (1945), p. 1.

legal gender equality and women's suffrage were listed in first place.[9] Although the granting of women's suffrage had already been negotiated between the Japanese government and women political organizers,[10] MacArthur's strategical move lent significant symbolical meaning and visibility to the question of women's rights, and emphasized the US' proclaimed investment in the issue. While previous studies of the occupation period have evaluated such reforms as a sign of the progressive and liberating nature of the US occupation, recent scholarship has offered a more critical assessment of the occupation's gender policies, locating them within an ideological Cold War rhetoric aimed at mobilizing women through a nominally emancipatory project that, however, was constricted by conservative norms and values. The aim behind this was the containment of more radical movements, the stabilization of a liberal democratic society, and ultimately the expansion of US power.[11] These studies situate the occupation period within a wider Cold War history and pay close attention to the ways US political interests as well as underlying ideologies and values shaped occupation policies.

The period of democratization can thus be interpreted as an early example of US Cold War politics and arguably a testing ground for Cold War information and propaganda campaigns.[12] Women took on a both practical and symbolic importance in this endeavour. Firstly, the question of women's rights soon developed into an ideological battleground in the Cold War confrontation between the US and the Soviet Union. Promoting a narrative of the US occupation forces "liberating" oppressed Japanese women from feudalistic customs gave legitimacy to the ongoing presence of the US military in East Asia and was used to ward off criticism of potential imperialistic and colonialist ambitions.[13] At the same time, the "American housewife" in particular came to represent the supposed superiority of capitalist democracy in US self-representations abroad during the Cold War.[14]

Secondly, as Elaine Tyler May has analysed in her influential study of Cold War gender relations, US foreign policy concerned with the containment of communism was reproduced within US society through a turn towards the domestic sphere as a place where "potentially dangerous social forces of the new age might be tamed".[15] This resulted in an ideology that located personal agency, success, and happiness in the home and the family,

9 E. Takemae, The Allied Occupation of Japan, New York 2003, pp. 240–242.

10 Ibid., p. 241.

11 See Koikari, Pedagogy of Democracy, pp. 17–25; L. Yoneyama, Liberation under Siege: U.S. Military Occupation and Japanese Women's Enfranchisement, in: American Quarterly 57 (2005) 3, pp. 885–910.

12 Tsuchiya Yuka interprets re-education policies as both a continuation of OWI wartime propaganda and a precursor to the "cultural Cold War" (Y. Tsuchiya, Amerika tainichi senryōgun 'CIE eiga'. Kyōiku to puropaganda no kyōkai. Amerika taigai bunka senryaku to shite no kyōiku eiga, in: Ehime Hōgakkai Zasshi 31 [2004] 1–2, pp. 109–142). Odd Arne Westad evaluates the occupation of Japan as a model for Cold War US interventionism (O. A. Westad, The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times, Cambridge 2007, p. 24).

13 M. McAndrew, Beauty, Soft Power, and the Politics of Womanhood During the U.S. Occupation of Japan, 1945–1952, in: Journal of Women's History 26 (2014) 4, pp. 83–107, at 85.

14 J. Bardsley, Women and Democracy in Cold War Japan, London 2014, p. 10.

15 E. T. May, Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era, New York 1999, pp. xxiv–xxvi, at xxiv.

particularly for women, and favoured "private and personal solutions to social problems" over political activism.[16]

This development went hand in hand with rising interest in and growing influence of psychology as an academic discipline since World War I, and its increasing extension into general public discourse and mass media after World War II.[17] The prevalence of psychological language influenced notions of democracy and citizenship in the US and consequently shaped the way "democratization" efforts in Japan were approached. In the past, citizenship in a democratic society had been understood primarily as a set of political and economic rights and duties. Yet in the post-war moment, the relationship of the individual to the state and the national community was increasingly concerned with defining a "democratic personality" that would ensure the population's emotional and mental strength supposedly necessary for political stability.[18] These notions of democracy and citizenship were transferred to Japan via the US occupation policies that emphasized the need for educational programmes to build a "democratic spirit" under the leadership of strong political elites.[19] This turn from a focus on political rights to consensus, stability, and a preoccupation with strengthening the population against subversive ideas was closely connected to growing tensions between the US and the Soviet Union. It contributed to the eventual "reverse course" of US occupation policies in 1947 and 1948, which resulted in anti-communist purges and the suppression of the labour movement in Japan. Eventually it shifted attention from labour rights to the furthering of economic growth in collaboration with conservative elites.[20]

This development renders visible that the US project of democratization of post-war Japan was not merely an endeavour to reform political and economic structures and institutions. The interpretation of democracy as a mindset or personality trait brought into focus the democratization of the people as individuals and as a national community through 're-education'. It further imagined virtually all aspects of everyday life, from workplace cultures and family relations, to ways of dressing, speaking, or organizing a household, as relevant for democratization, American style. Subsequently this often led to the conflation of political, social, and cultural ideals and norms associated with the United States. And more often than not, women found themselves at the centre of these debates and attempts to reimagine a society among transnational and local influences, prewar continuities and radical new beginnings.

16 Ibid., p. xxv.

17 J. Capshew, Psychologists on the March: Science, Practice, and Professional Identity in America, 1929–1969, Cambridge 1999, pp. 1–3, 242–243.

18 A. Friedman, Citizenship in Cold War America: The National Security State and the Possibilities of Dissent, Amherst 2014, pp. 17–18.

19 J. Miller, Cold War Democracy: The United States and Japan, Cambridge, MA 2019, pp. 12–13.

20 Ibid., p. 28.

3. Negotiating Women's Place in Society in Post-war Mass Media

To analyse and understand the discourse around democracy and gender relations in occupied Japan, print mass media, and in particular, women's magazines, are a rich and complex historical source to draw from. Women's magazines are a medium with relatively easy access for a large part of the population, and they target women as a distinct audience. Usually containing a combination of entertainment, educational articles, and practical advice, they claim to represent relatable or idealized depictions of women's everyday life and offer direct or implied guidance on how to appropriately "be a woman" in various social contexts.[21]

Both the United States and Japan had a significant prewar history of magazine publishing, including high-circulation commercial women's magazines. In Japan, the turn of the twentieth century saw the establishment of a growing variety of women's magazines whose circulation numbers rose massively throughout the 1920s and firmly anchored women's magazines in public consciousness.[22] Building on a long tradition of publishing and reading, rapid industrialisation and the shift from woodblock printing to moveable type at the end of the nineteenth century led to a significant expansion of the publishing sector and made books and magazines accessible to the wider population, including the working class.[23] In the United States, magazine publishing dates back to the mid-eighteenth century and soon fulfilled an important role in circulating information, creating a sense of community, and integrating and organizing social, political, and economic spheres through the process of production, distribution and consumption of magazines.[24] During World War II, the respective governments of both countries had attempted to influence and control women's (and other) magazines to varying degrees to promote loyalty to the nation and devotion to the war effort.[25] Following the end of World War II, direct government control of the media was officially banned in the US through the Smith-Mundt-Act of 1948, yet less direct forms of influence remained.[26] In occupied Japan on the other hand, wartime era laws and regulations that had enabled control of the media were abolished, yet swiftly replaced with the US occupation's own institutions for influencing and censoring media, coordinated and executed by the

21 Barbara Sato and Sarah Frederick describe the emergence of women readers as a distinct consumer audience and the effect of this on representations of women's everyday life and shared identity in the interwar period in Japan, see B. Sato, The New Japanese Woman: Modernity, Media, and Women in Interwar Japan, Durham 2003, pp. 78–82; S. Frederick, Turning Pages: Reading and Writing Women's Magazines in Interwar Japan, Honolulu 2006, pp. 4–6.

22 Frederick, Turning Pages, pp. 6–10, at 10.

23 A. T. Kamei-Dyche, The History of Books and Print Culture in Japan: The State of the Discipline, in: Book History 14 (2011), pp. 270–304, at 276–277.

24 H. Haveman, Magazines and the Making of America: Modernization, Community, and Print Culture, 1741–1860, Princeton 2015, pp. 7–10.

25 J. Keohane, Communist Rhetoric and Feminist Voices in Cold War America, London 2018, p. 5; B. Kushner, The Thought War. Japanese Imperial Propaganda, Honolulu 2005, p. 185.

26 Keohane, Communist Rhetoric and Feminist Voices, p. 6.

Civil Information & Education Section (CI&E) and the Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD).[27]

Both in post-war Japan and the United States, women's magazines can be considered a significant media form for the discussion and transmission of ideals and norms of womanhood that were closely linked to a wider ideological discourse around the nature of democratic capitalist society. The close connection of commercial women's magazines to advertising and consumption turned them into an ideal platform for Cold War narratives highlighting the importance of family, domestic life, and the achievement of a middle-class lifestyle shaped by access to consumer goods. In Japan, the extensive publishing sector recovered faster than any other part of the economy, and many magazines continued with only short interruption into post-surrender Japan or were relaunched soon after.[28] At the same time, despite the prevalence of dominant narratives of containment in the US and the close control of publishing in Japan, some magazines retained their potential for critique and resistance, giving voice to those on the margins of society. This included parts of the working classes, ethnic and racial minorities, and political dissidents, most prominently communists and other leftists, who were disillusioned with the hegemonic discourse and policies of US capitalism. Alternative narratives appeared in smaller, sometimes independent, or non-profit magazines, and references to popular women's magazines served as starting points for a wider critique of post-war gender relations in other types of publications.[29]

Among the most popular and commercially successful women's magazines in post-war Japan were those that had been founded in the early 1920s and had survived the wartime years by adapting to patriotic language and support of the war, and those that were newly established right after surrender.[30] The former, such as *Fujin Kurabu* and *Shufu no tomo* (Housewife's Friend), resumed publication after only a short interruption at the end of the war; now, however, under strict control of the CCD.[31] The latter, for instance *Fujin Seikatsu* (Women's Life) and *Shufu to seikatsu* (Housewife and Life), were mostly founded around 1946 and 1947 and largely emulated the style and structure of the older magazines.[32] In addition, older magazines that had been banned during the war years due to their more overtly political stance or refusal to ideologically support the war were relaunched. These included intellectual middle-class magazines such as *Fujin Kōron*

27 McAndrew, Beauty, Soft Power, and the Politics of Womanhood, p. 86; H. Miki, Senryō to josei zasshi. 1945 kara 1949 nen, in: Kindai Josei Bunkashi Kenkyūkai (ed.), Senryōka josei to zasshi, Tokyo 2010, pp. 16–60, at 18–19.

28 J. W. Dower, Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II, New York 2000, pp. 180–181.

29 C. A. Gayle, Collapsing Past into Present: The Occupation of Japan as Seen in the Journal New Women, in: C. de Matos/M. E. Caprio (eds.), Japan as the Occupier and the Occupied, Basingstoke 2015, pp. 191–205, at 192–193; Keohane, Communist Rhetoric and Feminist Voices, pp. 16–17.

30 H. Matsuda, America, Modernity, and Democratization of Everyday Life: Japanese Women's Magazines during the Occupation Period, in: Inter-Asia Cultural Studies 13 (2012) 4, pp. 518–531, at 520–521.

31 Miki, Senryō to josei zasshi, pp. 16–17.

32 Ibid., p. 28.

(Women's Review) and leftist working-class magazines such as *Hataraku Fujin* (Working Woman).[33]

In the United States, the 1940s and 50s were dominated by a number of high-circulation magazines that had been established throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as the *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Woman's Home Companion.* These magazines fell into the category of consumer or "service" magazines heavily focused on advice, guidance, and, increasingly, advertising of consumer goods. They were primarily aimed at helping women fulfil their roles as wives and mothers whereas political topics regarding women's rights, suffrage, or abortion were less common.[34] This bulwark of conservative and consumer-oriented magazines was gradually weakened by a diversification of the market, eventually producing more specialized magazines that took into account changing lifestyles and values. However, this process remained slow throughout the 1950s and only took off on a larger scale in the 1960s.[35] Overtly leftist women's magazines comparable to those in Japan were absent from the US magazine market. Instead, women writers on the left kept to general audience leftist periodicals and newspapers such as the *Daily Worker* or *New Masses* to criticize and challenge mainstream representations of women, for example by highlighting women's role in political and social history.[36]

To summarize, both Japan and the United States were equipped with an extensive and increasingly differentiated market for the production and distribution of magazines. In the immediate post-war years, women's magazines were among the most accessible media formats, and their specific targeting of women as an audience as well as their often prescriptive or advisory tone (through advice columns, practical tips on a variety of topics, and "expert" articles, often written by psychologists) turn them into an important source for the study of changing discourses on women's roles, rights, and responsibilities in society. The close connection between print media, the economic sphere of consumer goods, and (in Japan) institutional censorship and control, further tied them to emerging Cold War ideology. A comparative approach between the US and Japan can give an insight into the extent to which US norms and ideals were transferred to Japan through occupation era media control and "re-education" attempts, and in what ways they were accepted, rejected, or transformed through processes of translation and interpretation. It can also illuminate the tensions growing in both countries between normative ideals and everyday realities, and between growing Cold War containment discourses and leftist and other women's rights movements opposing such containment. In the following analysis, I will outline a number of different narratives regarding the political role of women

33 Ibid., pp. 17, 28.

34 K. L. Endres, Introduction, in: K. L. Endres/T. L. Lueck (eds.), Women's Periodicals in the United States: Consumer Magazines, Westport 1995, pp. xi–xvii, at xiii–xv.

35 Ibid., p. xv.

36 K. Weigand, Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation, Baltimore 2001, pp. 119–121.

in a democratic state as found in both high circulation commercial women's magazines and in smaller, more specialized publications and relate them to these questions.

4. Women and Democratic Citizenship: Competing Narratives in Post-war Women's Magazines

How was the role of women in society and, particularly, their political role in a democracy represented in the post-war moment? As discussed above, the end of World War II marked a brief moment of disruption and transition for both the United States and Japan, and this notion of change is visible in women's magazines of the time. Naturally, the necessity of social and political change was far more evident and pressing in Japan than it was in the US. After defeat in a devastating war, much of the country's cities lay in ruin, political and economic elites were disbanded or placed under foreign control, and previous social and political structures, norms, and rules were increasingly challenged or underwent more or less successful reforms, both by the occupation forces and by various local actors. This reality is reflected in countless articles in women's magazines at the time that set out to ask the questions of where Japan had "gone wrong" to end up in this situation, what needed to be done to rebuild the country, and what the place of women should be in this process. A general line of argumentation present in most of these articles is a juxtaposition of democracy and modernity with feudalism. This narrative, strongly promoted and disseminated by US occupation forces, argued that Japanese imperialism and militarism were the result of an "incomplete modernization" that had caused people to blindly follow authority. A reform of Japanese society into a peaceful nation needed to go hand in hand with a "modernization" not only of political or economic structures but of traditions, beliefs, and the social relations they produced.[37] Women took on a special position in this narrative, being portrayed as the victims of feudalistic and militaristic society in special need of "liberation", yet also as the ones most deeply mired in tradition due to their assumed confinement to the family and the private sphere.[38] As these articles attempted to offer visions of an idealized democratic future for Japan, references to tradition and modernity, and the women's role in upholding or reforming seemingly "backwards" structures became a central element.

In the United States, the nation which had emerged victorious from the war, no such loss of legitimacy and scrutiny of traditions occurred. However, the war and the post-war moment brought social and economic change to the United States as well, resulting in an often contradictory and multifaceted transition period from war to peace, as different social groups' and political actors' interests and visions for post-war society collided.[39] At the same time, the wartime disruptions and the looming threat of a conflict with the So-

37 Miller, Cold War Democracy, pp. 32–35.

38 Koikari, Pedagogy of Democracy, pp. 94–95; Yoneyama, Liberation under Siege, p. 892.

39 L. McEnaney, Postwar: Waging Peace in Chicago, Philadelphia 2018, pp. 1–3, 10.

viet Union prompted attempts to reaffirm presumed shared values and gender norms.[40] Furthermore, US foreign policy of "democratizing" and "re-educating" Germany and Japan, an endeavour later extended to the rest of the world in the ideological Cold War, necessitated a strengthening of the country's own identity as a democratic and capitalist role model for the world.[41]

Despite the shared recognition of women's significance and responsibility to contribute and strengthen democracy, the magazines located the potential for women's political engagement in different spheres: the family, civil society, institutionalized politics, or the workplace. They further differed in the way they imagined women's political agency, ranging from "cultural influence" as educators, to voting power, the possibility of running for political office, or engaging in grassroots and labour activism. In the following, I will outline three main approaches present in articles from the late 1940s and early 1950s in both the United States and Japan, and analyse their similarities and differences. The first approach imagines women's political agency primarily in the intersection of the family and civil society. The second approach negotiates women's relation to political institutions of the state through voting, party membership, or professional political careers. The third approach conceptualizes women as potential activists in grassroots movements or labour unions.

The first approach of defining women's political role is most common in conservative and commercially successful magazines. It references early Cold War ideals of domesticity and the importance of the family, and supposes that women's political power lies not in their participation in conventional forms of political engagement, but in their role as mothers and educators. Women are portrayed as a moral authority, responsible for the reproduction and transmission of values and norms to the younger generations. In an article from the July 1945 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal,* the author claims that women play a major role in "setting the moral temper of a nation […] [as] their husbands are influenced by their moral concepts, and their children are formed by them."[42] This rhetoric references a public discourse that viewed democracy increasingly as a "mindset" defined by personal morals, rather than as a political system. Another article from the same year defines the purpose of "democratic education" as "the creation of good human beings, who are taught from earliest childhood that the perfection of *themselves* is the chief democratic task".[43] This narrative is in line with the emphasis of individualism as a key aspect of US democracy and shifted questions of democratic rights and responsibilities for women from organized politics to community and family relationships.[44]

40 M. Nolan, Consuming America, Producing Gender, in: L. R. Moore/M. Vaudagna (eds.), The American Century in Europe, Ithaca 2018, pp. 243–261, at 252–254.

41 L. Belmonte, Selling the American Way: U.S. Propaganda and the Cold War, Philadelphia 2008, pp. 7–10.

42 B. Blackman Gould, Women and Peace, in: Ladies' Home Journal, July 1945, p. 102.

43 D. Thompson, Education for Democracy, in: Ladies' Home Journal, March 1945, p. 166.

44 J. Weiss, "Fraud of Femininity". Domesticity, Selflessness, and Individualism in Responses to Betty Friedan, in: K. G. Donohue (ed.), Liberty and Justice for All? Rethinking Politics in Cold War America, Amherst 2012, pp. 124–153, at 138–139.

In the *Fujin Kurabu* article quoted above, Tanaka argues in a similar way that "it is the housewife who judges if the child is really acting in an upright and morally correct way or not, and who has the opportunity to give proper guidance".[45] His argumentation implies that the role of women as educators is not an addition but a substitute to an active role in politics. This is justified by a "separate but equal" logic, arguing that "men generally have the characteristic of exhibiting creativity, whereas women have the special talent of interpreting and reproducing the things men have masterfully created."[46] Following this rhetoric, political agency as a process of active production and change of laws or systems is the place of men, whereas the women's role is to reproduce and transmit the norms and values of the political status quo in the domestic sphere.

Both in the US and the Japanese magazines, this narrative of women as moral authority and educators whose role is to raise "democratic" (and, by implication, anti-communist) citizens, rather than to participate in politics themselves, is frequently connected to a rhetoric of women as peacekeepers. Referring to the post-war world in 1945, a *Ladies' Home Journal* article claims that "in this broken world the instinct and experience of women is perhaps the strongest force for reconstruction of a tolerable human society."[47] A similar article states that "[w]omen can make a true contribution to preserving peace" and likens the process of peacebuilding to a healthy marriage that is "generous, tolerant and kind".[48] Tanaka's article goes as far as calling women "apostles of peace" (*heiwa no shito*) and draws a similar parallel between the creation of a "healthy" family and home to that of a peaceful world.[49] By likening international politics to family and marriage relations and portraying the household as the smallest unit of society and as the foundation of social stability, women – who are assumed the driving force in ensuring such harmonious family life – are both elevated symbolically and constrained practically.

This does not mean to say that representations of women engaged directly in the traditional sphere of party politics are completely absent, albeit they are less common. In the US, they appear most frequently in magazines aimed at working and professional women such as *Independent Woman*. Whereas mainstream commercial magazines also include articles on political topics, they rarely represent women as active participants in the political sphere. *Independent Woman,* on the contrary, frequently features women as activists, or in political offices, both in the United States and abroad. It is notable that the portrayals of these politically active women make use of various strategies to attenuate the image of influential, independent, and potentially subversive women. In a 1950 article about the US ambassador to Denmark, Eugenie Anderson, a description of her political career and achievements is followed by the assertion that "[t]hrough all Mrs. Anderson's activities runs the golden thread of a happy marriage" and that she was

45 Tanaka, Fujin no shimei to wa, p. 14.

46 Ibid.

47 D. Thompson, A Call to American Women, in: Ladies' Home Journal, August 1945, p. 6.

48 Blackman Gould, Women and Peace, p. 99.

49 Tanaka, Fujin no shimei to wa, pp. 14–15.

"always encouraged by the interest, advice and assistance of her husband."[50] The continued attention of women to their family, despite a political career, and the importance of familial support for achieving this goal, reappears throughout many articles. Whereas the article on Anderson concludes that "the healthy, wholesome family which has made it possible for her to pursue her political interests […] give[s] hope to the women in this country who are attempting to do the several jobs as wife, mother, homemaker and citizen",[51] another story about a female politician in the Philippines featured in the same issue quotes her as saying about politics: "Only the big in heart should venture into this field. And only single women or widows should attempt it, for it calls for dedication."[52] Throughout the magazines, engaging in politics professionally is represented as something that is possible, yet difficult, for women. Rather than being a normal and common way of exercising one's democratic rights, it is portrayed as depending on exceptional circumstances such as a husband who can work from home, a supporting family, and special talent and dedication. In the absence of these conditions, it implies the need for personal sacrifices such as giving up on the idea of marriage and family.

Another way of participating in politics that demands less commitment is voting in elections. Since women in the US had already been granted suffrage 25 years prior to the end of World War II, and given that voting does not demand major changes to established lifestyles, it is not surprising that elections are a less pressing topic in most US women's magazines of the time. In Japan, on the other hand, where women's suffrage was a newly gained right, there are a number of articles dedicated to the topic, usually explaining aspects of the political system and the election or giving advice on how to vote. Frequently the format of such texts is that of a conversation or an interview, usually including a woman asking a male "'expert" questions on a political topic. A *Fujin Kurabu* article from 1952 features a woman called Shirai Chieko, who is introduced as the wife of a medical doctor, asking journalist and critic Abe Shinnosuke about the general election of October 1952, the first after the end of the occupation. The general argument underlying the conversation is that women voters have significant political power that they do not yet know how to use. Starting from the observation that women make up more than half of eligible voters, the article proclaims in a sub-headline that "the right and wrong of politics is decided through the power of women."[53] Further, Abe observes that in the last election it "became difficult for candidates to get elected if they treated women voters carelessly."[54] In the following discussion about voting behaviour, women are cast in the ambivalent role of being simultaneously more and less suitable than men for participation in a modern democracy, making use of a rhetoric of maturity and innocence. Abe states that women's presumed lack of experience in politics means that "they have not

50 G. F. McQuatters, Representing U.S. – an American Family, in: Independent Woman, January 1950, p. 4.
51 Ibid.
52 M. L. Fisher, Portia of the Philippines, in: Independent Woman, January 1950, p. 8.
53 Watashitachi wa dare ni tōhyō sureba yoi ka, in: Fujin Kurabu, November 1952, p. 110.
54 Ibid.

lost their innocence" and "are not corrupted" as men who "do not vote decently."[55] On the other hand, he expresses his concern about women's susceptibility to bribery, and predicts that without the development of a sense of responsibility, women "will get worse than the average male voter".[56]

The importance of education and self-awareness for a functioning democracy is a common theme in both the Japanese and the US magazines, although in the latter they are less explicitly about women, but rather about the population as a whole. This double-edged argument takes on a different meaning in different contexts. Some articles are seemingly inspired by a genuine concern about the ability of individuals to make informed choices in order to protect their interests, such as an *Independent Woman* article from 1945 that defines being a citizen as "being conscious of your own community" through "building an understanding of government and how it works, as well as voting and getting others to vote".[57] Other articles conceptualize the informed democratic citizen primarily as one with the "correct" morals. In most of the articles, this argumentation is tied to an emerging anti-communist rhetoric and an emphasis on consensus and stability, as seen in a *Ladies' Home Journal* article describing "[p]ublic mores, public opinion […] [as] a powerful factor in conserving society" and a "constitutional order" supposedly necessary for guaranteeing civil liberties.[58] Another article explicitly highlights the importance of "moral education" and its primary aim "to reduce, rather than increase, tensions between economic, racial and social groups."[59]

In contrast to this passive view of democracy as consensus culture that upholds a political and economic status quo and as being enforced through appeals to morals and conformity, a number of smaller political women's magazines imagined more active and radical ways for women to make use of their political rights – in the form of grassroots and labour activism. Articles in leftist magazines such as *Hataraku Fujin*, which had been founded in 1932 by the Communist Party (JCP) affiliated Federation for Proletarian Culture in Japan (*Nihon puroretaria bunka renmei*),[60] frequently represented activism in the form of strikes, demonstrations, or petitions, not only as possible, but natural and even necessary forms of political engagement for women, often with reference to the history of labour activism in other countries. A 1948 article on the history of International Women's Day calls for Japan's working women to "not limit […] [themselves] to the powerlessness of tears and complaints" and rather "to forcefully take the first step towards creating a democratic people's government".[61] Interestingly, the historical examples of women's labour activism around the world are not only taken from Europe, Russia, and

55 Ibid., p. 111.
56 Ibid.
57 Anonymous, Citizens by choice or chance?, in: Independent Woman, June 1945, p. 157.
58 D. Thompson, To Protect Civil Liberties, in: Ladies' Home Journal, January 1948, p. 12.
59 C. Gauss, The Aims of Education, in: Ladies' Home Journal, January 1948, p. 155.
60 M. Karlsson, United Front from Below: The Proletarian Cultural Movement's Last Stand, 1931–34, in: The Journal of Japanese Studies 37 (2011) 1, pp. 29–59, at 46–47.
61 T. Matsuda, Kokusai fujin dē wo mukaete, in: Hataraku Fujin, March 1949, p. 17.

China, but also reference "American working women" who "combined their demands as workers and their objective to obtain suffrage" in the early twentieth century.[62] This mention of the US as a favourable example for labour activism is remarkable, as it was apparently included despite, or maybe because, of the US occupation's political turn against Japanese labour unions from 1948 onwards.[63]

Despite these idealistic calls for action, most articles recognize a lack of knowledge and participation of women in political activism and even the simple act of voting, yet they identify different causes of and solutions to this problem. Some articles, usually written by men, place the responsibility on women themselves to "make [their] own political efforts" rather than receiving "special treatment".[64] Women writers, on the other hand, seemed to be more understanding of the difficulties faced by women due to their double role as workers and homemakers as well as social norms and rules limiting their political agency. A 1947 article blames "the customs of the family" and "the principles of the father" as aspects limiting women in society, and demands simple steps to make labour activism more accessible to women in the face of these social norms, for example through holding and finishing labour meetings earlier.[65] Another article notes that women rarely connect their personal everyday struggles to a larger political picture and calls for a change of mindset and self-awareness reminiscent of the psychological views on democratic citizenship common in the US at the time. However, in contrast to many of the US magazines, the importance of a democratic mindset does not lie in stability and consensus, and the role of women is not the reproduction of this mindset in the family as educators. In the aforementioned and many other articles in *Hataraku Fujin,* the change of mind is presented as necessary for women to step out of the home and engage in community and labour activism. The article laments that "ordinary women only use their sense to protect that small place called their home" and that "they are indifferent to anything outside of it".[66] It concludes that "as we are now trying to rebuild Japan as a democratic Japan […] we should all join hands and turn towards big aims that surpass individual feelings."[67] This adoption and reinterpretation of a "democratic mindset" is also identified by Miller in what she refers to as a moment of "vibrant public advocacy" in post-war Japan that imagined a "democratic spirit" not as a set of morals defined by elites, but as the "authentic […] interests of the people" represented by a critical civil society holding the state accountable.[68]

62 Ibid., p. 16.
63 J. W. Dower/T. Hirata, Japan's Red Purge: Lessons from a Saga of Suppression of Free Speech and Thought, in: The Asia Pacific Journal. Japan Focus 5 (2007) 7, pp. 1–7, at 6.
64 T. Kamiyama, Senkyo ni onna no chikara wo shimese, in: Hataraku Fujin, July 1947, p. 16.
65 S. Hani, Dokuritsu, jiyū, kōfuku, in: Hataraku Fujin, October 1947, p. 51.
66 T. Okakura, 'Onna Daigaku' wo suteru, in: Hataraku Fujin, August 1947, p. 37.
67 Ibid., p. 38.
68 Miller, Cold War Democracy, p. 17.

5. Conclusion

Despite the diversity of narratives regarding women and democracy, most of post-war women's magazines in the United States and Japan share one characteristic: the recognition of a need to discuss and redefine the role of women in a democratic society. Informed by an underlying notion of social change and a global order in transition, many articles seem to be driven by the need to describe anew the place of women, or at least to reaffirm previous "common-sense" notions perceived as in danger of being challenged or eroded.

However, the answers that they offer for this question differ. Regarding political participation, most mainstream magazines in the US were dominated by an ideology of domesticity and "separate spheres" that imagined women's political engagement and their rights and duties as citizens as mediated through their position in the home and family, rather than advocating direct participation in the political sphere. Japanese mainstream magazines show similar narratives and lines of argumentation, yet it is noticeable that the clear separation of the private sphere of the home for women, and the public sphere of politics for men is less fixed. This tendency seems to be related to the greater disruption of social, political, and economic life in Japan that arguably made the separation of the home and "the public" impossible, particularly in the face of food and housing shortages as well as a political system still in the process of regaining its legitimacy. In the US, the idealized vision of a middle-class family with a fulltime housewife and a working husband remained unobtainable for a significant part of the population as well. Yet in comparison to Japan, an economically comfortable white middle-class that had already achieved or was close to achieving this ideal in the near future had developed enough as to render these representations of family life plausible and discursively sustainable.[69]

More progressive magazines in both countries questioned this ideology and offered alternative stories of women taking on political offices, casting their vote in elections, and participating in various forms of activism, from community organizing to more radical forms of labour activism. However, whereas in the US even more progressive magazines clearly distanced themselves from "feminists" and leftist women, often by emphasizing that political engagement would not threaten women's role as mothers and homemakers, in Japan, leftist and working-class women's magazines openly discussed how women could achieve independence and leave the narrow confinement of the home and family. In the US, leftist ideas were largely absent from women's magazines due to a more severe anti-communist climate, whereas leftist periodicals and newspapers were resistant to discussing gender and the special situation of women in addition to class. Political and ideological camps appear already more fixed and oppositional in comparison to Japan, where the establishment of new political groups and the re-emergence of those

69 May argues that increasing wages and the rapid expansion of suburbs after World War II created cautious but optimistic attitudes among the middle and upper working classes. Investing into one's home in particular was considered a safe and rational way of spending money, see May, Homeward Bound, pp. 147–148.

banned and persecuted during the war seemingly left more opportunities for cooperation and a more far-reaching embrace of leftist ideas.[70] Despite the speed with which Cold War polarization was transferred to Japan alongside US democratization policies, public discourse initially allowed more space for discussions of democracy outside the communist-capitalist binary as people "fought to negotiate a third way" outside of "Western- or Eastern-bloc values, politics, and aesthetics".[71] Nevertheless, the "normalization" of social and economic relations in Japan, following economic recovery in the wake of the Korean War and the return to a conservative government and persisting prewar bureaucratic structures as a result of the US occupation's reverse course and clampdown against labour unions and leftists, weakened this tendency and resulted in an embrace of a more conservative consumerist lifestyle in mass media similar to that of Cold War US society. As democracy and politics were increasingly conflated with economic advancement, consumer goods, and US popular culture and lifestyle, similar ideals of the nuclear middle-class family and domesticity began to dominate mass media[72] and pushed more progressive discussions of gender roles, women's rights, and political engagement to the margins of public discourse.

70 H. Masuda, Cold War Crucible: The Korean Conflict and the Postwar World, Cambridge, MA 2015, pp. 26–28.
71 A. Sherif, Japan's Cold War: Media, Literature, and the Law, New York 2009, p. 7.
72 M. D. Smith, Mass Media, Consumerism and National Identity in Postwar Japan, London 2018, pp. 17–20.