



PROJECT MUSE®

Explaining Party Adaptation to Electoral Reform: The
Discreet Charm of the LDP?

Ellis S. Krauss, Robert Pekkanen

The Journal of Japanese Studies, Volume 30, Number 1, Winter 2004,
pp. 1-34 (Article)

Published by Society for Japanese Studies

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/jjs.2004.0021>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/55110>

ELLIS S. KRAUSS AND ROBERT PEKKANEN

Explaining Party Adaptation to Electoral Reform: The Discreet Charm of the LDP?

Abstract: This article traces the effects of Japan's 1994 electoral reform on Japan's governing party, the LDP. Factions have lost their central role in nominating candidates and deciding the party presidency but remain important in allocating party and Diet posts. Unexpectedly, *kōenkai* have grown stronger because they perform new functions. PARC remains important but diminished by the enhanced policymaking role of party leaders in the coalition government. A central theme is unpredicted organizational adaptation—"embedded choice"—since 1994. We speculate on how this flexibility of the LDP, adapting old organizational forms to new incentives, its "discreet charm," may affect Japanese politics and the LDP's potential longevity in power.

The decade that has passed since Japan fundamentally reformed the electoral system that had been in place since 1947, one that also had been used for part of the prewar period, is enough time to begin to assess the consequences of that system for the way the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) mobilizes votes, and for its internal personnel and policymaking organization. It is perhaps most surprising that the LDP continues in power

We are grateful to Gerry Curtis and Yoso Furumoto, for their interview introductions and other suggestions, and to Matt Shugart, for his insights on electoral reform consequences. We thank Len Schoppa, Ofer Feldman, and Komako Tanaka for interview suggestions; Meg McKean and Masahiko Tatebayashi for sharing their ongoing research; and Pablo Pinto, Verena Blechinger, John Campbell, Mikitaka Masuyama, Aurelia George Mulgan, Satoshi Machidori, Steve Reed, and Yutaka Tsujinaka for feedback on our research and earlier versions of this article. We are grateful to T. J. Pempel, Ethan Scheiner, Masaru Kohno, members of the Middlebury College Political Science Faculty Research Group, three anonymous reviewers, and the editors of the *Journal of Japanese Studies* for helpful comments. Ellis Krauss thanks the University of California Pacific Rim Grant Program, which funded one of his interview trips. Robert Pekkanen thanks the Henry Luce Foundation for financial support of this research. We also appreciate research assistance by Daisuke Hotta, Sumiko Tanaka, Ashley Calkins, Grace Hardy, Rika Kido, and Simon Fisherow.

even after Japan has experienced more than a decade of serious economic and financial problems, and despite the electoral reforms that diminished the rural-urban disparity in seats and changed the incentives for voters and politicians alike. How has the LDP adapted, or not adapted, to the changed incentives of the new electoral system? Why? And with what implications for Japanese politics?

The real-world stakes of the answer to this question are high. Given the political and economic miasma that was Japan in the 1990s, understanding the possibilities and realities of institutional reform is a crucial task. For example, if political organizational form and function is in the process of changing toward the British “Westminster” model of parliamentary governance with the type of party vote mobilization the reformers hoped for, and consequently the top-down policymaking patterns Prime Minister Koizumi Jun’ichirō tried to introduce, there will be important implications for policy-making. On the other hand, if the extent of change as a consequence of the electoral system reform is not as great as the reformers hoped and the analysts predict, then Japan’s very “un-Westminster”¹ politics and policy-making may continue. Whether and how the LDP has adapted to the new electoral incentives also has important consequences for the LDP’s ability to continue its dominance as the major governing party and for how it makes policy and the kind of policy it makes.

The theoretical stakes are high as well. Japan’s electoral institutions were dramatically changed in 1994. Anyone with an interest in how institutions affect politics should be interested in seeing what these changes have meant for the practice of politics in Japan.

In this essay, we offer a preliminary evaluation of the effects of that reform on these aspects of Japan’s ruling party and their consequent implications for politics and policymaking based on interviews with politicians themselves. We argue that the electoral reform has brought about, and is bringing about, changes, some foreseen and others not, in the way the LDP conducts politics and policymaking. For example, it is more difficult to win elections by concentrating only on a component of conservatives in a district; representatives have been forced to think more about the “median voter” in their districts and thus often benefit less from specialization in policy areas; and factions have lost much of their influence because they no longer can help the candidate as much in elections.

These changes, however, often involve using organizational forms established, for different original purposes, under the old electoral system.

1. Aurelia George Mulgan, “Japan’s ‘Un-Westminster’ System: Impediments to Reform in a Crisis Economy,” *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Winter 2003), pp. 73–91, and *Japan’s Failed Revolution: Koizumi and the Politics of Economic Reform* (Canberra: Asia Pacific Press, 2002).

Beneath the surface of continuity in organization, the processes and functions of electoral mobilization, factional politics, and intra-LDP policy-making in the Policy Affairs Research Council (best known as PARC, but the official English translation is Policy Research Council) *have* fundamentally changed even while the older organizational forms persist. We contend that the reason for the perpetuation of these older organizational forms is that the new electoral system continues to provide incentives for a personal vote strategy, and thus for the maintenance of the *kōenkai*, the candidate-centered voter mobilization organizations. Further, both PARC and factions remain the party's means of, and the representatives' opportunity for, managing career advancement in the LDP and government, incentives that could not be predicted by looking at changes in the electoral system alone.

We conclude that this type of LDP response to the new electoral system has brought advantages to the party, but also costs to it and to the policy-making process. The current situation of conflict and often near-stalemate between party leadership and old-line vested interests in the party, we suggest, is caused not by the failure of electoral reform to bring about meaningful change. Instead, the impasse is caused by the very type and extent of changes that electoral reform produced and the way the LDP and its representatives have adapted to them. This development itself may have significant consequences for the LDP's ability to remain the governing party, or to remain a party at all.

Electoral Systems and Electoral Reform in Japan

An emphasis on how institutions structure political outcomes has become one of the most pronounced features of political science since the advent of the "new institutionalisms."² Of course, there were many changes in Japan around the time of electoral reform, including the end of the cold war and the onset of a long-term recession, the decline of the Japan Socialist Party (JSP), the splitting of the LDP, the increased influence of television on politics, administrative reform to try to diminish bureaucratic power, and changing public attitudes toward political leadership. However, electoral institutions typically are deemed especially important because of the way they structure incentives for politicians and political parties, and frame choices for voters. Political scientists have long argued that the type of electoral system a democracy has profoundly influences its political organizations and

2. For an overview, see Peter A. Hall and Rosemary C. R. Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," *Political Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 5 (December 1996), pp. 936–58; Barry R. Weingast, "Rational-Choice Institutionalism," in Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner, eds., *Political Science: The State of the Discipline* (New York: Norton, 2002); Paul Pierson and Theda Skocpol, "Historical Institutionalism in Contemporary Political Science," in Katznelson and Milner, eds., *Political Science*.

processes. Among the most accepted propositions along these lines is that the type of electoral system—especially a single-member district or a proportional representation one—affects the number of viable political parties that can compete and whether resulting governments are most likely to be formed by a single-party or a coalition.³ Electoral-system incentives have also been linked to the organization of legislatures and the party organizations within them, as well as to the strength or cohesion of political parties in general.⁴

Political scientists of Japan also have focused on the institutional and organizational effects of electoral systems.⁵ Japan's unusual electoral system of multimember districts (MMDs) with single nontransferable votes (SNTVs) from 1947 to 1993 in which each electoral district was represented by between two and six representatives, but the voter cast only one ballot, came to be seen as fundamentally shaping the characteristics of Japanese politics during this period.

The attributed consequences of the old electoral system, especially on the ruling LDP, were myriad.⁶ They included intraparty rivalry as candidates from the same party, especially the LDP, the only party large enough to ef-

3. This literature is too voluminous to cite. The “godfather” of all the studies of this relationship between electoral systems and party systems, however, is Maurice Duverger and his seminal *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*, translated by Barbara and Robert North (New York: Wiley, 1954). A bibliography is available from the Section on Representation and Electoral Systems of the American Political Science Association.

4. Also a large literature, but see, for example, John W. Kingdon, *Congressmen's Voting Decisions* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981); Morris Fiorina, *Representatives, Roll Calls, and Constituencies* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1974); Gary Cox and Matthew McCubbins, *Legislative Leviathan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Jeffrey Cason, “Electoral Reform, Institutional Change, and Party Adaptation in Uruguay,” *Latin American Politics and Society*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (Fall 2002), pp. 89–109; and Scott J. Morganstern, “The Electoral Connection and the Legislative Process in Latin America: Factions, Parties, and Alliances in Theory and Practice” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, San Diego, 1996).

5. See, for example, Kobayashi Yoshiaki, *Gendai Nihon no senkyo* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1992), who points out (pp. 2–3) that at its simplest, even if voter behavior is exactly the same, different electoral systems will produce different results.

6. The most influential analysis from a rational choice perspective of the consequences of Japan's previous system, especially on how electoral rules stimulating intraparty rivalry led to policy specialization, is found in Mark Ramseyer and Frances Rosenbluth, *Japan's Political Marketplace* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), particularly pp. 17–37, and on factions, pp. 99–141. Of course, analysts of Japanese politics had long described the electoral system as contributing to the political characteristics we discuss below: the electoral system was seen to help produce the personal vote, *kōenkai*, and the factional role in nominations and funding. Others had also described the increasing specialization of LDP Diet members, and the growth and influence of *zoku giin* produced by long-term LDP rule and the PARC system of policymaking within the LDP. Ramseyer and Rosenbluth's major contribution was to synthesize these attributes through a logical theory of the electoral system's effects. Certainly on the eve of electoral reform in 1994, Japanese reformers had very high expectations for the results of the electoral change.

fectively field more than one candidate in most districts, competed with each other more than with other parties' candidates. To be elected the first time required securing the LDP's nomination over other worthy and competing rivals also wanting to fill that district's several slots. This contributed to the party's notorious factionalism. As faction leaders, senior LDP politicians who had ambitions to become prime minister would aid particular aspiring candidates in securing the nominations in intraparty bargaining; in exchange, those candidates, if elected, would join the leader's faction. Then, the leaders would provide financial aid to those representatives throughout their legislative careers to ensure reelection, and to secure for them useful party and governmental posts. In exchange, the leader expected his (no women have ever headed factions) faction members to support him within the party in his future bid to become prime minister.

With several candidates from the LDP to choose from in their district, voters cast their ballots based on a "personal vote" for a candidate rather than on party loyalty or on issue or policy positions.⁷ The LDP was faced with a difficult coordination problem. It needed to win multiple seats in most districts in order to secure a majority in the Diet. Candidates, moreover, were limited in distinguishing themselves on policy platforms from other candidates from the same party (to avoid having the party run against itself). Instead, to reliably divide the vote, candidates of the same party appealed to voters based on constituency services and loyalty bred by mobilizing voters into personal candidate support organizations (*kōenkai*), and delivering particularistic benefits ranging from bridges and dams to roads and agricultural subsidies to the district, asking for recognition from their constituents for their efforts ("credit claiming" in the jargon of political scientists).

To secure this "pork" for their constituents and "credit claim" for doing so, LDP representatives joined specific divisions of the party's Policy Affairs Research Council (PARC), which also provided them with expertise and contacts with interest groups and officials in that sector. Over time, they would rise through party and governmental ranks related to their specific

7. The "personal vote" is a vote for a candidate based on personal characteristics, distinguishing it from a vote based on platforms. The term was developed in the study of American politics. Technically, personal vote and *kōenkai* are not identical: the politician may receive many personal votes from people who do not belong to the *kōenkai*, and some in the *kōenkai* might be attracted to the politician for policy reasons. In practice, however, *kōenkai* and the personal vote overlap considerably and certainly a decline in personal vote would be reflected by a decline in the *kōenkai*. For example, national surveys of *kōenkai* members asking why they join show that the overwhelming bulk join for personal reasons (personal connections, 54.2 per cent; connections through work, 25.1 per cent). Those who join because of policy are at most 26 per cent (and the response category also includes personal characteristics). *Heisei 12-nenban yoron chōsa nenkan: zenkoku yoron chōsa no genkyō* (Tokyo: Cabinet Ministers' Secretariat Public Relations Office, 2001). On the American case, see Bruce Cain, John Ferejohn, and Morris Fiorina, *The Personal Vote: Constituency Service and Electoral Independence* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987).

policy areas and be acknowledged as members of the group of influential veteran LDP politicians able to dominate party policymaking in that sector (*zoku giin*) and to force the bureaucracy to adhere closely to the party's political needs. In the process, *zoku giin* and factions wound up helping to severely undermine the power and influence of the LDP prime minister in policymaking.⁸ Political scientists attributed to the electoral system, in whole or part, most of the characteristics we have come to associate with the LDP and its rule.

Thus, political scientists saw the prereform system contributing to, or even causing, personal vote mobilization (through the *kōenkai*), the importance of pork-barrel policymaking for constituents, specialization of Diet members in PARC that led to the phenomenon of *zoku giin*, and intraparty competition and factions. LDP reformers and the public by the early 1990s went much further in their attribution of the old electoral system's consequences, also coming to believe that its list of sins should include money politics and corruption, the power of special interests, the lack of debate on the issues in election campaigns, and one-party dominance. When a coalition of splinter parties from the LDP and former opposition parties dedicated to political reform took power in 1993, it succeeded in passing in 1994 electoral reform and campaign finance reform bills that eliminated Japan's old electoral system.⁹

The new electoral system adopted was a hybrid system of 300 single-member districts (SMD) as in the United States and Britain, among others, and 200 (later amended to 180) proportional representation (PR) seats as in many continental European parliamentary systems. The hybrid nature of the system was the result of pure political compromise between the reformist coalition and LDP members, whose votes were needed to get the bills through the House of Councilors (the Upper House of the Diet), but was not unique. Indeed, so many nations recently have moved toward this hybrid form to gain the benefits of both equitable distribution of seats to votes and individual representation of geographic units that such mixed electoral systems may well "prove to be *the* electoral reform of the twenty-first century, as PR was in the twentieth century." Italy, New Zealand, and Venezuela reformed their electoral systems to variations of such hybrid systems about the same time as Japan.¹⁰

8. Kenji Hayao, *The Japanese Prime Minister and Public Policy* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993), especially pp. 96–121 and 141–56; Aurelia George Mulgan, "Japan's 'Un-Westminster' System" and *Japan's Failed Revolution*.

9. On this process, see Gerald Curtis, *The Logic of Japanese Politics: Leaders, Institutions, and the Limits of Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 137–70.

10. Matthew Soberg Shugart and Martin P. Wattenberg, "Introduction," in Shugart and Wattenberg, eds., *Mixed-Member Electoral Systems: The Best of Both Worlds?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 1, 2; Matthew Soberg Shugart, "Electoral 'Efficiency' and the

Unusual in the Japanese case, however, were complications that resulted from a compromise between the LDP, which favored a pure SMD system, and the other, smaller parties that would have been advantaged with a pure PR system. These complications also gave the incumbents who voted for the reform a better chance to remain winners under the new system. The most important of these complications were that proportional representation was regional rather than national, and candidates who failed in the single-member districts could be listed on their parties' PR list and still win a seat if they were listed high enough—these are called “zombie” candidates in Japan because they can rise from the dead! Parties received seats proportional to their share of the vote in the PR bloc. As more than one candidate could be listed in a rank on the parties' list, winners among the SMD losing candidates at the same rank would be determined by the proportion of the vote they won in their SMD races. This may be called a “best loser” provision for short.¹¹

Thus, in the two elections of 1996 and 2000, Japanese voters had two ballots to cast for the House of Representatives (the lower, more powerful house in Japan): one for their local representative in the single-member district, which had smaller geographic boundaries than the previous multi-member districts, and one for a party (in 2000 they also had the option to cast it for an individual on the list) in one of the 11 regional proportional representation blocs.

The Consequences of Reform

There is now a burgeoning literature on the effects of these electoral reforms of 1994. Some of these works have been primarily about the effects

Move to Mixed-Member Systems,” *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 20 (2001), p. 178. There are two forms of such systems, a “compensatory” version, like Germany’s system, and the form to which New Zealand and Venezuela moved, so that the results of the SMD races are compensated for to produce overall seat results that emulated proportionality of seats to votes. The other type is the “parallel” form in which the SMD and PR portions are largely separate and overall results are not necessarily proportional. Japan and Italy adopted this latter type.

11. This process is reviled in the press, where it is treated as a repudiation of the people’s will destructive to democracy. Press complaints began almost from the moment the first zombie representative was elected, but diminished somewhat after 2000 revisions in the electoral law disqualified candidates who failed to collect at least one-tenth of the effective vote in a single-seat district (nine candidates were elected in 1996 with fewer than one-sixth of the votes in the SMD in which they ran). This vitriol should not disguise the reality that dual candidates are quite common in mixed systems. It is the even ranking of SMD candidates in the PR section that has such a powerful impact. Our thanks to Matt Shugart for emphasizing the importance of this provision and giving it the “best loser” appellation. Italy’s reform also has an unusual feature called “scorporo” that compensates smaller parties in the PR portion. See also Margaret A. McKean and Ethan Scheiner, “Japan’s New Electoral System: La plus ça change . . .,” *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 19 (2000), pp. 447–77.

of the mixed-member system on the number of parties or of campaign finance reform on levels of corruption. Others, and the ones we are most concerned with here, were about how electoral reform would affect the LDP's candidate-centered mobilization of the "personal vote," and the LDP's party organization and policymaking structure. More recently, a number of observers have contributed empirical analyses of what has actually changed due to electoral reforms.¹² Thus, almost a decade after the reforms were implemented, we are beginning to get a more complete picture of the changes the electoral reforms have wrought.

In terms of the party system, the results thus far appear to confirm some effects that political scientists would have predicted. The following is fairly clear: the LDP is able to continue being the largest party, for example, because it can be successful in the 300 SMD-seat portion of the system; it has difficulty remaining the sole governing party because the 180-seat PR portion gives incentives for smaller parties to continue to exist and deprive the LDP of a majority of seats, thus producing a limited multiparty system with coalition governments; and interaction effects on voting across the two types of systems, and the "best loser" provision, potentially complicate what might have been independent effects of each type of system.¹³

What has been less clear, however, are the more "microlevel" effects of the electoral change on the LDP's organization and modes of operation, in-

12. See, for example, Karen E. Cox and Leonard J. Schoppa, "Interaction Effects in Mixed-Member Electoral Systems: Theory and Evidence from Germany, Japan, and Italy," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 9 (November 2002); Steven R. Reed, "Evaluating Political Reform in Japan: A Midterm Report," *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (November 2002); Curtis, *The Logic of Japanese Politics*. Also, it is important to note that many electoral regulations that contributed to the personal vote did not change, and this is covered very well in Raymond V. Christensen, "Putting New Wine into Old Bottles: The Effect of Electoral Reform on Campaign Practices in Japan," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 38 (1998). See also Erik S. Herron and Misa Nishikawa, "Contamination Effects and the Number of Parties in Mixed-Superposition Electoral Systems," *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 20 (2001). Some authors made logical theoretical deductions even before the reforms about the consequences of any hypothetical change in electoral system and implicitly or explicitly included claims about the effects of the transformation from the old to the new system. These include Ramseyer and Rosenbluth, *Japan's Political Marketplace*; Peter F. Cowhey and Mathew D. McCubbins, "Introduction," in Cowhey and McCubbins, eds., *Structure and Policy in Japan and the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Recent empirical work is found in Michael F. Thies, "Changing How the Japanese Vote: The Promise and Pitfalls of the 1994 Electoral Reform," in John Fuh-sheng Hsieh and David Newman, eds., *How Asia Votes* (New York: Chatham House, 2002); Steven R. Reed and Michael F. Thies, "The Consequences of Electoral Reform in Japan," in Shugart and Wattenberg, eds., *Mixed-Member Electoral Systems*, pp. 106; Gary W. Cox, Frances Rosenbluth, and Michael F. Thies, "Electoral Reform and the Fate of Factions: The Case of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 29 (1999); and Cheol Hee Park, "Factional Dynamics in Japan's LDP since Political Reform," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (2001), pp. 428–61.

13. On interaction effects with a hybrid system, see for example, Cox and Schoppa, "Interaction Effects."

cluding *kōenkai* and vote mobilization, factions, and PARC and policy-making. The predictions and findings on these important aspects of governing party politics have been diverse. Some prognosticators have been quite cynical about the prospects for change, others more optimistic.

Part of the problem has been that much of the theory of how electoral systems affect politics is based on explicit or implicit assumptions about the incentives of politicians and parties, yet few if any studies have actually asked the politicians themselves whether and how their behavior has changed, and why.¹⁴ Deductive, logical attributions of “incentives” must be investigated empirically to determine whether and how institutional change actually affects the motivations and behavior of politicians. Below we present the findings of our research using an initial set of interviews that undertook to do exactly this—a preliminary evaluation of the changes electoral reform has wrought and is bringing to key components of the LDP’s organization, based on a series of interviews with sitting Diet members of the LDP, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), and the Clean Government and New Conservative Parties (including two former prime ministers, former cabinet ministers, current deputy party secretary-generals, politicians elected only once as well as veterans, and members of the House of Councilors), along with LDP party headquarters staff and political journalists.¹⁵

We concentrate below on changes in three areas: the role of PARC and *zoku giin*, factions, and *kōenkai*. These are all mainly issues of the LDP, its representatives’ careers, policymaking, and the organization and process of vote mobilization. We focus on these internal party attributes and functions because analysts, often and to a great degree, attributed their origins to the old electoral system, and these should show the most immediate effects from the change in Japan’s electoral system.

Our findings indicate a more complicated answer to the question of whether Japanese politics has been transformed to a different model of vote

14. Studies have been based on observation primarily, or some excellent intensive case studies of particular areas as in Otake Hideo, ed., *How Electoral Reform Boomeranged: Continuity in Japanese Campaigning Style* (Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 1998); and Cheol Hee Park, *Daigishi no tsukurarekata* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 2000). Both the latter, however, are based on research before the 2000 election.

15. We interviewed a total of 23 persons in Tokyo in the fall 2001 and the spring of 2002. Two Diet members were interviewed twice and one interview was conducted as a joint interview with three people. The politicians interviewed were from different parties, and from a range of home districts, who have been elected a various number of times. We addressed issues of bias by paying careful attention to the range and characteristics of the sample of interviewees. The interviews focused on electoral reform, campaign finance reform, administrative reform, politician-bureaucrat relations, constituency representation, party organization, *kōenkai*, factions, PARC, *zoku*, policymaking, and career advancement. Most interviews were conducted by both authors, but several were conducted by one of the authors alone. Interviews ranged from one hour to one and a half hours in length and were conducted in Japanese (except two conducted in English). Interviewees are identified herein only as A, B, C, etc., along with an indication of their positions.

mobilization and party organization than a simple “yes” or “no.” Some predictions and analyses about real changes are confirmed by our findings, especially about the changed incentives and consequent adaptation of behavior by many individual politicians; but we also discover that any expectations about the demise or complete transformation of the particular organization forms in that adaptation may be frustrated. Finally, we end with some implications of our findings for the LDP and Japanese politics.¹⁶

Kōenkai

Reformers as well as analysts expected that the new electoral system would eliminate the need for the personal vote, and therefore by implication the utility of the *kōenkai*, the chief organization by which it was gathered. Instead, the new system would force candidates to broaden their appeal, move toward the median voter, and compete on issues.¹⁷ Some predicted that the *kōenkai* would be, and by 1996 that it already was, transforming into the local party branch, in part because of new campaign financing regulations that allowed contributions, and national party distribution of funds, to local party branches.¹⁸ There is indeed a notable increase in the number of party branches, springing up according to one recent newspaper article like “bamboo shoots after a rain,”¹⁹ because of the change in campaign finances.

We find, however, that *kōenkai* continue to exist and that they have not completely been subsumed into the local LDP party branches.²⁰ Even in the face of decline in party support, *kōenkai* membership has remained strong, if possibly not as strong as previously.²¹

This has happened for several important reasons. First, as Christensen

16. We also intend to continue researching these issues and combine analysis of an extensive data set with a large selection of in-depth interviews with politicians.

17. Curtis, *The Logic of Japanese Politics*, p. 138; Thies, “Changing How the Japanese Vote,” p. 103.

18. Curtis, *The Logic of Japanese Politics*, pp. 165–66.

19. *Yomiuri shinbun*, December 27, 2001.

20. Predictions ranged widely. Haruhiro Fukui and Shigeo N. Fukui wrote in 1996 that the electoral system change might make the *kōenkai* “unnecessary and even irrelevant” although they may survive for a while. (Haruhiro Fukui and Shigeo N. Fukui, “Pork Barrel Politics, Networks, and Local Economic Development in Contemporary Japan,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 36, No. 3 [March 1996], pp. 268–86, quotes from p. 284 and p. 285 respectively.) Not all political analysts saw *kōenkai* as doomed, and their survival confirms the prescience of Abe, Shindou, and Kawato prior to the electoral reform. They warned that the *kōenkai* was not necessarily going to disappear. (Hitoshi Abe, Muneyuki Shindou, and Sadafumi Kawato, *The Government and Politics of Japan*, trans. James W. White [Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1994], pp. 180–81.) It also confirms the finding of Raymond V. Christensen for the 1996 election (Christensen, “The Effect of Electoral Reform”).

21. *Kōenkai* membership has increased since the 1960s. In 1967, membership was only 5.8 per cent (Curtis, *Election Campaigning, Japanese Style*, pp. 133–36). See also Yamada Masahiro, “Jimintō daigaishi no shūhyō shisutemu” (Ph.D. diss., Tsukuba University, 1992).

argued,²² the continuation of strict restrictions on candidates' campaign activities means that there are few other ways to reach the voter. The wider constituency that the Diet member from a single-member district must represent does not eliminate the need for a personal vote. Reformers forgot that the personal vote exists in SMD systems elsewhere, such as in the United States.

The candidates usually cannot or do not want to substitute a local party branch for the *kōenkai*, for several reasons. One is the simple fact that local party branches are still weak and very much the responsibility of the now-lone LDP representative in the district. One representative told us clearly that the party branch and his office are now synonymous and that if he is going to rely on the staff, he wants them to do policy-related activity, but the expertise just doesn't exist and he winds up doing everything himself.²³ So there is little incentive for candidates to rely heavily on the party branch.

But why not just convert the *kōenkai* into the party branch? One obstacle is the "best loser" provision of the hybrid electoral system whereby losing candidates in the SMDs may still be elected on the proportional representation list. If the LDP ranks candidates who are also running in SMDs equally with others on the party's PR list, which candidate(s) actually gets a seat depends upon the proportion of that candidate's vote in the SMD constituency. Therefore, in addition to the usual motivation to attract votes to try to win in the SMD, even if they don't expect to win there, politicians still have great incentive to attract as many votes for themselves as they can—including *personal* votes in addition to party votes. They cannot rely solely on party voters to get them a seat in the PR portion.

A related and perhaps the most important reason is that the wider base required in the SMD-PR system requires the Diet member to get votes from more than party supporters.²⁴ One representative put it this way: "My *kōenkai* is 10,000 people, the LDP organization is 5,000. Therefore, they're totally different. However, they also have a 'link.' Still, essentially, I think I'd like to make them the same organization but, after all, in it [the *kōenkai*] are those who hate the LDP but like me."²⁵

Especially in districts where the LDP is not particularly popular, Diet members feel pressure to develop, not eliminate, *kōenkai*. One representative pointed out to us that in his district only about half of the people who vote for him vote for the LDP in the PR elections: "Therefore, in short, it's 'I'll join because it's his *kōenkai*,' but when I ask them to join this or that

22. Christensen, "The Effect of Electoral Reform."

23. Second interview with A, young LDP member of the House of Representatives, Tokyo, June 27, 2002.

24. An electoral consequence, incidentally, presciently described for the agricultural sector by Aurelia George Mulgan, "'Japan Inc.' in the Agricultural Sector: Reform or Regression?" *Australia National University Pacific Economic Papers*, No. 314 (April 2001).

25. Interview with B, an SMD LDP member of the House of Representatives and a former minister, Tokyo, December 7, 2001.

branch of the LDP, the overwhelming numbers of people these days say 'I hate the LDP!' Thus, because they support me, they enter my *kōenkai*."²⁶

Diet members emphasized to us that in order to feel secure of victory in a single-member district, they had to secure a large number of votes from non-LDP voters. Under the old system, LDP *kōenkai* were assumed to be only for conservative supporters who liked the LDP. We were surprised, however, to find how many LDP representatives now had extremely diverse *kōenkai* members and supporting voters, including many who were supporters of other parties. One former LDP prime minister, Kaifu Toshiki, now with the New Conservative Party that is in the governing coalition, showed us an article from a regional newspaper during the last election that indicated that while he retained close to 70 per cent of LDP supporters in his district, he received over 80 per cent support from Clean Government Party (CGP) voters. This may not be surprising, considering his party is in the coalition government with the LDP and CGP. But the article also indicated he received 10 per cent of the vote of Communist Party supporters.²⁷ Other LDP representatives confirmed the diversity of their *kōenkai* members and the inclusion of even leftist party supporters who in local or the PR portion of House of Representatives elections probably voted for other parties.²⁸

The widely noted phenomenon of decreasing party identification also contributes to this function of the *kōenkai*.²⁹ Japanese identify themselves as supporters of a party less than citizens in any other consolidated democracy. When less than a third of voters identify themselves as LDP supporters, candidates must seek nonparty voters with greater urgency. The natural vehicle for this search is the *kōenkai*, but of course participation in a *kōenkai* likely contributes less to party identification than would a party branch. In this way, *kōenkai* are both a solution to and a potential additional cause of diminishing party identification. Some representatives indicated to us that there was a distinction here between urban and rural constituents. In at least some districts, in rural areas members of a *kōenkai* are more likely to be LDP supporters—perhaps as many as 70 per cent—than in urban areas, where the proportion of LDP voters in a Diet member's *kōenkai* may be half or less.³⁰

Thus, it is important to note that the new electoral system itself has abetted the continuance of the *kōenkai*. Voters can identify themselves as non-

26. Interview with C, a junior SMD LDP member of the House of Representatives from an LDP political family, Tokyo, December 11, 2001.

27. *Chūnichi shinbun*, June 20, 2000.

28. In fact, coalition government probably also contributes to the broadening of the *kōenkai*. The logic is this: if a voter supports Party A, but the SMD legislator is from Party B and Party A and Party B are in coalition, the voter might feel that the SMD legislator nonetheless represents the voter and join his or her *kōenkai*.

29. This literature is particularly widely developed by Japanese scholars. For a leading example, see work by Ikuo Kabashima including "The Instability of Party Identification among Eligible Japanese Voters," *Party Politics*, Vol. 4 (November 1998), pp. 151–76.

30. Second interview with A.

LDP and vote for the other parties they may support for other reasons in the PR vote, but still vote for the LDP candidate, especially the incumbent, in the SMD portion of the election for the personal services and district benefits the candidate can bring.³¹ The *kōenkai* allows the LDP as the largest party a means to hang on to its own supporters and to attract those of the smaller parties through a personal vote.

Finally, the personal vote continues because those in business who deal with customers do not necessarily want to be identified with a particular party: “The people who sell to customers in service industries, as you’d expect, don’t want to go into a specific political party, whether LDP or DPJ. . . . Therefore, they’re saying ‘Well, I won’t join a party but I’ll become a member of that representative’s *kōenkai*.’”³²

Above and beyond the persistence of the *kōenkai* as an electoral organization device, however, there are broader and more fundamental implications of its continuation. The electoral reform intending to end the personal vote also was supposed to create politicians who emphasize different policy preferences, carry out more programmatic campaigns, and produce more policies oriented toward securing public goods.³³ Will the continuation of *kōenkai* and the mobilization of a personal vote through it negate such consequences permanently? Or will the need to cater to a broader constituency *within* the *kōenkai* now lead to the predicted outcomes, even if in somewhat altered form? As we discuss in the conclusion, we also find that the existence of the *kōenkai* touches upon a number of important theoretical issues of constituency, including helping to solve the problem of increased “constituency span” that we introduce below.

Factions

Some journalists and academics expected that the adoption of a single-member district system (again the logic holds also for a mixed system) would severely weaken, or perhaps even lead to the demise of factions. As early as the 1960s, the *Asahi shinbun* predicted that “if a single-member

31. Some analysts have argued that voters do not have as much incentive to be “strategic” about voting for the largest parties in the SMD portion of such mixed systems as they do in “pure” SMD, and this would increase the utility of a *kōenkai* that mobilized other party supporters. See Herron and Nishikawa, “Contamination Effects.”

32. Joint interview with three LDP headquarters staff members, Tokyo, June 27, 2002.

33. See, for example, Cowhey and McCubbins, “Introduction,” pp. 258–59; Thies, “Changing How the Japanese Vote,” p. 105. On the other hand, Yamada and Otake argue that SMDs spur local legislators to get out the organized vote. See Hideo Otake, “How a Diet Member’s Koenkai Adapts to Social and Political Changes,” and Masahiro Yamada, “Nukaga Fukushima: Climbing the Ladder to Influence,” in Otake, ed., *How Electoral Reform Boomeranged*. The declaration of “manifestoes” by Prime Minister Koizumi Jun’ichirō and the DPJ leader Kan Naoto in July 2003 came too late for analysis in this article, but could be a strong step toward campaigning on platforms (both appear in the August 2003 issue of *Chūō kōron*).

constituency [system] is created . . . the factions will naturally disappear.³⁴ Mark Ramseyer and Frances Rosenbluth explicitly argued that factions existed in the LDP due to the need for vote division in the single nontransferable vote system: “the electoral system alone is sufficient to explain the survival of LDP factions.”³⁵ Finally, Masaru Kohno argued that “factions persist because they meet the electoral incentives of rational LDP candidates,” but that there were also “secondary incentives” in the form of their function in aiding promotion to party and government positions.³⁶

Recent analyses have conceded the continuing existence of factions, while also arguing that factions have been fundamentally transformed from their pre-1994 functions.³⁷ Here, our findings confirm those of several other recent analyses. Factions have not yet withered away, despite the electoral change; but their role *has* changed.

How have factions been transformed? First, factions’ decisive role in determining the LDP party president (and thus the prime minister) seems to have been at least partially compromised recently.³⁸ The year after the 1994 electoral reform, Hashimoto Ryūtarō defeated Kōno Yōhei with the support of LDP backbenchers.³⁹ In 1998, the Obuchi Keizō faction ran two candidates—Obuchi himself and Kajiyama Seiroku. Most dramatically, in 2001 Koizumi Jun’ichirō won the party presidency even though the faction bosses were lined up behind another candidate—ironically, Hashimoto this time. Factions still count in influencing who becomes prime minister, but they are no longer the whole “game.” And several of our respondents emphasized that loyalty to factions and the personal leadership of old-time faction bosses that inspired it also have disappeared: “Different from the past, there are many factions that lack loyalty.”⁴⁰

34. See Thayer, *How the Conservatives Rule Japan*, p. 141, quoting from an *Asahi shinbun* article, September 14, 1964, p. 4.

35. Ramseyer and Rosenbluth, *Japan’s Political Marketplace*, p. 59. They also stressed the importance of the party presidential selection rules. This differs in emphasis from Thayer, *How the Conservatives Rule Japan*, p. 21, who argued that the electoral system was only one contributing cause of the growth of LDP factionalism, but that more important was the means of selecting the party president. See also Morganstern, “The Electoral Connection and the Legislative Process in Latin America.”

36. Masaru Kohno, “Rational Foundations for the Organization of the Liberal Democratic Party in Japan,” *World Politics*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (April 1992), pp. 385, 391.

37. Thies, “Changing How the Japanese Vote”; and Cox, Rosenbluth, and Thies, “Electoral Reform and the Fate of Factions.”

38. Thies, “Changing How the Japanese Vote.”

39. See *ibid.*, pp. 49–55. LDP officials also expected an end to factions. “With the abolition of the medium-sized electoral district, there would be a single LDP candidate in 300 districts, and factions were expected to dissolve.” Mabuchi Etsuo, *Jimintō no kenkyū* (Hama-matsu: Shizuoka Shinbunsha, 2001), p. 202.

40. Interview with D, a PR LDP member of the House of Representatives, Tokyo, December 2001.

Although the maneuvers leading up to the LDP party presidential election of September 2003 were still in process when we were copyediting this article, we note that its major strife seems not to have been between factions, as much as within them. Many factions, including the largest, Hashimoto faction, are having difficulty agreeing on a unified candidate in the race. This recent process graphically constitutes further evidence for our argument of the decline of factional loyalty, cohesion, and influence in the party's selection of its leader and prime minister, and the shift of emphasis within the party from personal faction to policy conflicts.⁴¹

A second way factions have been transformed is the loss of their importance in helping candidates in elections, first for district elections nominations, and secondarily with money. Factions were crucial in determining the nominations under the old electoral system and for otherwise aiding their faction member in a particular district to get elected in rivalry with party colleagues who belonged to other factions. Under the new system, some argue factions have not played a role in determining nominations either for SMD districts or the PR lists.⁴² Sometime before the new electoral system, the role of factions in directly providing money to their members for their elections and *kōenkai* had declined in favor of the candidates making their own connections to business to raise funds directly, even if those connections were often made with the help of the faction leader.⁴³ The new campaign regulations that first limited, and now forbid, contributions to any organization except the party have further undermined factions' financial role for Diet elections.

The result is that our interviews confirmed that Diet members no longer see factions as relevant at all for any sort of electoral help: "Factions had three roles, the most important one was helping you in the election. Until now you had an electoral struggle with a member of another faction but since it's SMD, it's one person for the party. Therefore, it no longer has any function."⁴⁴ Others agreed: "I don't necessarily think the factions of old were bad, but ultimately things are different than in the multimember district system. Nobody looks after you in elections [*senkyo no mendō o miru*] any more."⁴⁵

Even if this is true of most SMD incumbents, it remains to be determined by empirical investigation whether first-time nominees in a district can do completely without faction help, or PR candidates without faction help can be ranked in a "safe" position on the party list. It is quite clear, however, that factions remain very important in one regard: allocation of posts

41. See "Hashimoto jishutōhyō e," *Asahi shinbun*, September 3, 2003, p. 1.

42. Cox, Rosenbluth, and Thies, "Electoral Reform and the Fate of Factions," pp. 42–43.

43. Gerald Curtis, *The Japanese Way of Politics* (New York: Columbia, 1988), p. 175.

44. Interview with C.

45. Interview with D.

and thus career advancement, as Steven Reed and Michael Thies have argued: “the final role of factions—post allocation—seems to have survived intact.”⁴⁶ Our interviews confirmed the assertions of others⁴⁷ that this is the one area that still provides incentives to belong to a faction. As one Diet member succinctly put it,

the function of factions now is personnel only. It’s the faction that recommends a minister, or me to my past committee. However, Koizumi didn’t do factional nominations for minister; even so, for vice-minister and secretary it was still faction recommendations. Therefore it was a really incomplete reform. After that the factions decided all the PARC research committees and divisions and so forth. Thus, ultimately only this personnel power is the reason for the continuance of factions now.⁴⁸

Moreover, as Koizumi’s popularity waned, his ability to disregard factions in selecting even cabinet members disappeared. In replacing scandal-plagued Ōshima Tadamori in April 2003, Koizumi was forced to turn to faction leaders to find a replacement.⁴⁹

Several of our interviewees, both in and out of factions, vividly illustrated the continuing importance of factions in the allocation of party and Diet posts. One respondent said the process of distribution of these posts was “simple”—“it’s factions, eh? They’re responsible for the distribution of committee and then [PARC] division [posts]; it’s all factions.” He then went on to describe and give examples of how the deputy chairmen (*kokkai taisaku fukuin chō*) of the Diet Affairs Committee all come from factions and bargain among each other and also with the other parties’ equivalent leaders to settle the specific distribution of Diet committee posts. He further elaborated on how the LDP’s vice secretary-generals (officially, acting secretary-generals; *fukukanjichō*) horse trade and settle among themselves the division chairs and vice-chairs of PARC, as well as the personnel in over 100 special, issue, and research committees (*tokubetsu inkai*; *mondai inkai*; *chōsakai*) so that their faction’s Diet members can go to their constituents bearing many titles in the party’s policymaking apparatus.⁵⁰

Perhaps even more graphic testimony to the continued power of factions, despite the electoral reform, in the allocation of party and Diet posts came from those who were not members of a faction and did not get their preferred postings:

46. Reed and Thies, “The Consequences of Electoral Reform,” p. 393.

47. Thies, “Changing How the Japanese Vote”; Cox, Rosenbluth, and Thies, “Electoral Reform and the Fate of Factions”; and Park, “Factional Dynamics in Japan’s LDP,” who also stresses the continuing party management functions of factions.

48. Interview with C.

49. *Asahi shinbun*, April 2, 2003.

50. Interview with E, an LDP Diet member elected a few times and a member of one of the LDP’s largest factions, Tokyo, July 4, 2002.

I'm not in a faction. The way someone got put into those committees was completely from factional order, and ultimately the nonfaction guys are put into what's left. So, since no one wanted X and Y committees, since there wasn't anyone, in the end I was diverted into these. Well, there's nothing I can do about it.⁵¹

Recall too that such party and Diet postings ultimately prepare and test Diet members for their higher postings as PARC division chairs, Diet committee chairs, and cabinet ministers and junior ministers. Factions may have lost many of their roles and functions in nominations and financing in part because of the new electoral system, but it is no wonder that an LDP party executive intimately involved in this process can tell us "the function that remains the most is 'posts.'"⁵² Factions have retained their considerable influence over the party and government career paths of their members.

PARC and Zoku Giin

Analyses of the old multimember system had contended that PARC served a vote division function through specialization. Faced with the need to elect multiple candidates from a single district, and precluded from policy differentiation among these candidates, the argument went, the LDP allowed or encouraged different Diet members to specialize in different kinds of disaggregable goods, or "pork."⁵³ In other words, one LDP Diet member would become the "rice specialist" while another would become the "construction specialist." This specialization would coordinate the votes from the LDP's core constituencies so that they were not wasted, and the LDP would maximize its winning seats. Specialization was achieved primarily through PARC committee (*bukai*) assignments.⁵⁴

Assuming that specialization was only for "credit-claiming" in elections, some logically predicted that the single-member district system would lead to the disappearance of PARC and that Japan would come to

51. Interview with F, junior Diet member from Tokyo district, Tokyo, July 9, 2002.

52. Interview with G, LDP party executive involved in post allocation, Tokyo, July 1, 2002.

53. Ramseyer and Rosenbluth, *Japan's Political Marketplace*; and McCubbins and Rosenbluth, "Party Provision for Personal Politics."

54. However, it is important to note that later Tatebayashi and McKean presented revisionist findings on PARC prior to the electoral system change. Their analysis confirmed that PARC did serve a vote division function, but challenged this notion of "pork specialization." They did find some specialization for representatives, but found it geographically. Those with concentrated bases (*jiban*) delivered pork to their districts but did not specialize, while those who specialized didn't necessarily do so with pork. See Masahiko Tatebayashi and Margaret McKean, "Vote Division and Policy Differentiation Strategies of LDP Members under SNTV/MMD in Japan," paper presented to the Conference on Citizen-Elite Linkages, Duke University, March 30-April 1, 2001, and to the Association for Asian Studies, Washington, April 4-7, 2002.

more closely resemble the British model of party organization and vote mobilization. For example, Peter Cowhey and Mathew McCubbins argued in 1995 that: “If it is true that the *raison d’être* of the PARC committee structure is to aid in district-level vote division, then we should expect to see nothing short of its demise.”⁵⁵

Nine years after electoral reform, PARC has changed but continues to exist. Gerald Curtis pointed out as early as 1988 that PARC has three main functions: educate Diet members; provide a means by which Diet members can signal to constituents; and allow Diet members (especially *zoku giin*) to have some influence over policy.⁵⁶ Although signaling to constituents and “credit claiming” for influence on policy in specific areas have been severely weakened, the other two functions remain and thus PARC has not disappeared.

In our research, we found that the PARC role has been transformed by the change in the electoral system but somewhat differently than some had predicted. The representative from the SMD and the PR representative alike must now represent a wider diversity of constituents. Staff members at LDP headquarters we interviewed were articulate in comparing the requirements for election under the single-member district and under the old multimember district:

In the case of the single-member district, increasingly you have to gather [votes] equally from both agriculture and small and medium-sized enterprises in the district. Hitherto, to give an extreme example, you could win with one-fifth of the votes in a five-person choice. . . . [Now] over half is necessary. But there aren’t nearly enough votes for that in one organization. So you depend on various sources and become an “almighty expert” in everything. In a single-member district, you can’t win without obtaining the support of several strata, several occupations, several industries.⁵⁷

As a result, Diet members, especially those elected from single-member districts, have less need to specialize either geographically or in a particular policy area, but instead now need wider policy expertise in several policy areas.⁵⁸ One representative put it like this:

I think that the thing the SMD electoral district has changed in the consciousness of politicians is that politicians are now studying more. In other

55. Cowhey and McCubbins, “Introduction,” pp. 257–58. Cowhey and McCubbins’s prediction was based on the elimination of the SNTV and should hold true even under a mixed system.

56. Curtis, *The Japanese Way of Politics*, p. 114. See also Inoguchi Takashi, *Gendai Nihon no seiji kiso* (Tokyo: NTT Shuppan, 2002), pp. 107–44 and 310–15.

57. LDP headquarters staff interview, Tokyo, June 27, 2002.

58. As noted above, George Mulgan observed this for the agricultural sector in “‘Japan Inc.’ in the Agricultural Sector.”

words, when it became the SMD, we had to respond on all issues, finance, agriculture, and defense issues too. . . .I'm saying that it indicates an "all-round player." . . . When it was the multimember district, you had to completely be specialized into your own niche [*sumiwakerarechau*].⁵⁹

Incentives for specialization *have* diminished. Equally important, the party no longer has a need to differentiate multiple candidates in one electoral district either geographically or by policy expertise. Accordingly, the LDP has changed the rules of PARC affiliation. Prior to the 1994 electoral changes, LDP Diet members could belong to only two PARC committees. This limitation created specialization. Since 1994, however, the LDP now permits LDP Diet members to belong to as many PARC committees as they wish. Formal limits are imposed only at the executive level.

Therefore, those like Cowhey and McCubbins who predicted a decline in specialization were right in essence, but not in form: specialization through PARC has diminished due to the change in the electoral system; on the other hand, we did not see PARC's "demise," as was also predicted. And, no one is predicting its demise anytime soon. Why not?

Not all Diet members have less need for specialization under the new system. Those elected from the PR portion of the new system can, and, indeed, may well need to, specialize in specific, widely dispersed interest groups, and thus policy areas, exactly because their constituencies are wider than single-member districts. If SMD candidates can't win by focusing on a single narrow stratum of voters, a party can gain votes for itself in the PR district by catering to specific, albeit larger, groups: "The PR representatives also, indeed, increasingly, are variously specialized! For example, a person in the past might have done something to help a specific postal branch, but increasingly with just a special connection to post offices, they could have the votes to win and so they're going to somehow strengthen that."⁶⁰ If the change from multimember districts has provided incentives for single-member district candidates to specialize less because of the increasing diversity of their smaller constituency, the PR portion has perhaps provided some incentives for those on the party list to specialize more, if across a wider geographical area.

Perhaps most important, our evidence indicates that, as in the case of factions, PARC survives because it did not serve merely an electoral specialization and "credit-claiming" function, and that the other functions Curtis described have continued, and continue also to remain useful to both the party organization and to the individual Diet members.

59. First interview with A, a junior LDP member of the House of Representatives, Tokyo, November 30, 2001.

60. Joint interview with three LDP headquarters staff members, Tokyo, June 27, 2002.

PARC is an important policy training ground for Diet members to learn about the wider diversity of policy areas they need to know in the new electoral system and also for them to begin training in a few specialized areas if they wish to move up in the party and become *zoku giin*. In other words, from the Diet member's perspective, PARC retains important benefits for career advancement. From the LDP perspective, PARC remains a means to develop future party leaders. Executive ranks of PARC committees still maintain restrictive and exclusive rosters.⁶¹ These are assignments made by appointment only.

Under the old electoral system, in effect, the LDP maintained a "two-tiered system combining both seniority and expertise."⁶² Through service on the parallel tracks of PARC executive positions and House of Representative committees, and seniority within factions, a pool of talented and knowledgeable leaders was created from which appointments to, first, sub-cabinet and then cabinet positions were made. These leaders over time in the postwar period managed to know enough about policy in their areas of expertise to ensure that the bureaucracy remained responsive to the needs and desires of the party and its constituents.

There is no evidence that this function of PARC has been affected by the electoral system change. Diet members continue to receive training in the wide variety of areas needed to respond to diverse constituencies in SMD and in PR regional bloc districts to help them gain reelection especially in their first few terms, and also, through advancement to the executive ranks of PARC divisions, the specialized training they need to advance in their party and ultimately government careers.

Another important but little-understood function of PARC has also been threatened but not eliminated. One of the most neglected and ignored functions of the PARC divisions has been to allow the LDP to maintain party discipline on legislation by an institutionalized structure that makes it virtually impossible for backbenchers to oppose a policy or have influence over legislation that the specialized *zoku giin* want. Simultaneously, it made it difficult for party leaders to impose their will on any policy that the PARC divisions and *zoku giin* wanted—or likewise to get legislation passed that the *zoku giin* opposed.

It has scarcely been noted in the literature that the LDP is an unusual party—it has never had the party whips to persuade backbenchers to support the party's bills and to enforce discipline. This is particularly surprising given that the multimember district system, unlike, for example, a pure

61. Our thanks to Tatebayashi Masahiko for providing us with copies of these recent rosters.

62. David Epstein, David Brady, Sadafumi Kawato, and Sharyn O'Halloran, "A Comparative Approach to Legislative Organization: Careerism and Seniority in the United States and Japan," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (July 1997), p. 992.

proportional representation system, gave centralized party leadership little leverage over its members because of the personal vote mobilization that the system induced. Even in pure SMD systems, the role of party whip was necessary because of the ability of legislators to be elected without total dependence on the national party, thus the role of majority and minority leaders and whips in the U.S. Congress. But even in more centralized British parliamentary democracy, although backbenchers of the majority party can occasionally not vote with the government, the party whips provide two-way communication between the prime minister and the rank-and-file members of Parliament and enforce discipline on government bills.⁶³

In Japan, such two-way communication to a large extent is carried out via the factions,⁶⁴ but how is vote cohesion in the party maintained without whips? To an extent not recognized previously, the PARC structure and LDP *zoku giin* serve the role that party whips serve in other parties. First, under the multimember district system with limited membership service on specialized divisions, all those who weren't in the relevant division had little say on or input into bills in that policy area. New members of a division whose policy ideas differed from that of the ranking leadership of that division, i.e., the *zoku giin*, could and would be booted off the committee. One of our interviewees explained that this had happened to him when he questioned the construction of nuclear power plants on the Commerce and Industry Division of PARC. He was kicked out of the division (*kubi ni narimashita*).⁶⁵ The PARC structure thus ensured that only legislation favored by and approved by the division executives went to the top leaders of the party for approval.

Further, informal norms gave top party leaders, including the chair of PARC, the power to block any bills proposed by backbenchers independently, despite the fact that this contradicts Diet law. Diet law allows bills to be proposed with the support of 20 members. Yet when the Diet member cited above and others introduced a bill, the House of Representatives' Secretariat (Shūgiin Jimukyoku) refused to accept it without the seals (*hanko*) of four party leaders: the secretary-general, the chair of PARC, the chair of the Executive Council, and the chair of the Diet Strategy Commit-

63. Richard Rose, *The Prime Minister in a Shrinking World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), pp. 139–43.

64. In fact, the LDP today officially justifies factions on this basis. Faction offices were nominally closed in December 1994 (though none did). In 1999 the charade ended and the LDP Party Reform Headquarters accepted factions because of the “important role that factions have played in unifying the will of a large political party containing almost 400 Diet members and fostering communication within it” and their continuing role in party presidential selection (LDP website <http://www.jimin.jp/jimin/english/overview/10.html>). See also Kurimoto Shin'ichirō, *Jimintō no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Kōbunsha, 1999), pp. 60–62.

65. Interview with C.

tee. When the member threatened legal action, they said, "Go ahead." He shrugged when he mentioned how other Diet members had tried it and the Supreme Court refused to intervene on the grounds that it was an internal Diet matter.

Now that Diet members can join and participate in any division's meetings, obviously this function has been loosened somewhat. But with the directors (*riji*), vice-chairs, and chairs of each division, who are the *zoku giin* and *zoku-giin-in-training* for future careers in the party and Diet, still in charge of the committee, they can nonetheless control the bills that come from below to some extent and manage opposition to them. This can help the prime minister if he gets the cooperation of *zoku giin* and other party leaders on his bills; but it can also serve as a means of resistance to his policies and provide leverage to force him to compromise if he does not.⁶⁶ It also can provide an effective barrier for reform-oriented backbenchers to influence policy.

PARC retains an additional benefit for the party. It remains an important arena of policymaking, the third function identified by Curtis. Many LDP policies eventually adopted still "bubble up" from PARC divisions controlled by *zoku giin* in that area: "Even now the specialist *zoku giin* exist and are strong."⁶⁷ This is despite the fact that PARC's role in policymaking has been partially undermined and challenged by three factors, two unrelated to the electoral system and the other an indirect consequence of it. First, in certain areas, younger Diet members with particular kinds of specialized backgrounds on certain divisions during the last two to three years have begun to influence the content of legislation. This is especially true in areas in which high technical expertise is necessary such as finance and information technology (IT), where older Diet members and bureaucrats can't compete on technical knowledge. This has given birth to the phrase "seisaku shinjinrui" (loosely translated as Policy Generation X) to refer to these newly influential backbenchers.⁶⁸

The second factor undermining PARC's policymaking role is that many policy issues today cross between the specialized jurisdictions of the bureaucracy and the *zoku giin*.⁶⁹ The third is a second-order result of the electoral reform to a hybrid SMD-PR system: coalition government. SMD cre-

66. George Mulgan's *Japan's Failed Revolution* provides a comprehensive argument on this point.

67. Interview with H, a young PR LDP member of the House of Representatives, Tokyo, November 30, 2001.

68. Ibid. The term *seisaku shinjinrui* originated in 1998 in media reports highlighting the prominent policy role played by younger DMs, particularly in the policy response to the financial crisis of 1997.

69. First interview with A.

ates majorities, but PR helps sustain minority parties and thus makes the attainment of a majority party much less likely. Indeed, since electoral reform, coalition government has become the norm in Japan.

Previously, PARC was important for the opportunity it gave the leaders of its division to exercise direct control over the ultimate content of policy. Coalition government, however, requires coordination of party leaders to decide policies. In the LDP-CGP-Conservative coalition, several important issues have been determined in the “Three-Party Conference” of the leaders of these parties instead of bubbling up from within the LDP PARC divisions as previously. This creates more of a “top-down” dynamic, diminishing the “bottom-up” policymaking role of PARC: “The ‘bottom up’ places of PARC are still ‘bottom up,’ but after all . . . the things that are being decided at the top by the coalition are becoming very numerous.⁷⁰ This Diet member went on to give examples of where such top-down decision making has caused resentment within the LDP but explained that the majority of bills still come from the bureaucracy and go through the “bottom-up” procedures.

Indeed, much of the drama of contemporary Japanese and LDP politics is now found in the current dynamic of an active and popular prime minister trying to lead on certain issues according to a Westminster (or even “presidential” model) through the Three-Party Conference in conjunction with his coalition party partners, but coming into conflict with the entrenched interests and continued prior policymaking power of the *zoku giin* in these PARC divisions. Examples are legion and several recent issues illustrate this pattern, including that of raising health care system premiums for salarymen. Koizumi first induced a reluctant Clean Government Party to agree, and then clashed with the *zoku giin* in his own party who were closely tied to the Japan Medical Association which opposed the hike.⁷¹ We discuss the causes and implications of this pattern in our conclusion.

To sum up, rumors of PARC’s death are greatly exaggerated. It has ceased to play the same role in Diet member specialization because there is no need to elect multiple candidates of the same party from a single district. However, it continues to exist because it plays other nonelectoral roles. First, it is an important avenue of career advancement and specialization for Diet members and a means of training future leadership for the party. Second, it is an important if now challenged structure for policymaking, and its structure and norms are still a means for specialized *zoku giin* to function as “gatekeepers” over the policy and legislative agenda of individual members and the bureaucracy in the party’s and government’s legislative process.

70. Interview with C.

71. On the increasing centralization of policymaking under Koizumi, see for example “Naikaku shudō kyōka e seisaku kettei ichigenka,” *Asahi shinbun*, December 8, 2001.

Implications

Our findings present us with a paradoxical response to the question of whether electoral reform produced change in the organization and behavior of the LDP and its representatives, the kind of changes that reformers or political scientists expected. The answer is that it did; and yet the persistence of institutional features that some expected to disappear also needs to be explained.

In general, we confirm many of the tendencies predicted by political scientists, particularly the new and changed vote mobilization incentives, the decline and changing role of factions, and the decline of some forms of specialization in PARC. Disillusioned Japanese citizens and journalists on both sides of the Pacific who believe that nothing has changed as a result of electoral reform are quite wrong. Institutions and institutional change *do* matter: *kōenkai*, factions, and PARC no longer operate the same way or perform exactly the same roles as they did before electoral reform. And the changes that have occurred in role and function have been in the direction that electoral theorists would have predicted, given the particular type of new electoral system instituted in Japan.

On the other hand, given these alterations in role and function, the fact that organizations some reformers and analysts thought would disappear have not withered away is the surprising finding that requires explanation. Why is this so, and what do we learn from answering this question about how to revise theories and predictions of electoral change?

First, concentrating on the electoral system alone as an independent variable ignores other intraparty organizational and policymaking functions. Our results highlight the importance of multifunctionality and interrelationship in all these institutions—PARC, factions, and *kōenkai*. Seeing electoral systems as determinative collapsed these institutions into purely their electoral functions. However, all of them performed a variety of functions for the party and for the individual politician. PARC was important for “specialization” and vote division. However, PARC was and is also important for members’ career advancement, and party leadership training, policymaking, and policy discipline. Factions were important for helping their members’ endorsement and money for elections, but they also performed the function of distribution of party and governmental posts and thus career advancement.

Second, even to the extent that theories and predictions were correct to focus on changed electoral incentives, most studies focused exclusively on the need of candidates to cater to the “median voter” and assumed this meant the need to move away from the personal vote forms of organizations to wider-based appeals. They thus ignored an important new incentive of the SMD-PR mixed system. This is what we call the increased “constituent

span” for SMD Diet members. Under the old system, specialization, either by bringing pork to a geographically concentrated portion of the whole constituency or differentiating oneself on other policy grounds from rival fellow-party candidates,⁷² could be pronounced for LDP Diet members. The SMD representative, however, must represent the interests of a larger swath of his constituency.

Specialization no longer pays as well, and politicians must become more generalist than before. We have seen Diet members responding most to the increased range and diversity of voters and interests whom they must now represent. The most important aspect of the switch from multimember districts to single-member districts and proportional representation so far is greater incentives to respond to the increase in the standard deviation of the range of constituents that the Diet member must represent through learning more about many issues and by organizing them through continuing the personal vote. Single-member districts did not eliminate the need for a personal vote, nor is appealing to a wider variety of voters, including a hypothetical “median voter,” inconsistent with maintaining a *kōenkai*.

The new electoral system itself also has contributed to the continued existence of the *kōenkai*, as the SMD Diet member needs to get votes from “ticket-splitters.”⁷³ These voters would not join a local LDP branch. They don’t vote for the LDP. They don’t necessarily even like the LDP as a party. The *kōenkai* is useful to mobilize these voters. Furthermore, SMD Diet members are reluctant to let the party use their *kōenkai* for election campaigning. Here the interests of the party and of the politician can come into open conflict. Diet members claim that if their *kōenkai* are used to support the LDP proportional representation campaign, they will lose precisely those ticket-splitters they need to win. Many LDP politicians find that they need to attract ticket-splitters in order to win election in their single-member districts, which provides an incentive to maintain *kōenkai*. Moreover, this means that the median voter for the district might or might not identify with the LDP. Constituency span would have been increased even in the transition from SNTV to SMD. It is increased even more by the necessity of obtaining votes from outside of the party supporters.⁷⁴

72. On the two different types of “specialization,” see Tatebayashi and McKean, “Vote Division and Policy Differentiation Strategies.”

73. On predictions of possibilities for ticket-splitting made before the 1996 election, see Christensen, “The New Japanese Electoral System,” pp. 62–64.

74. An additional and perhaps temporary complication comes from the adoption of the “Costa Rican System” of alternation. Because of the change to SMD-PR to SNTV, many politicians found themselves seeking to become the party nominee for a district that also contained another powerful LDP politician. Nakasone Yasuhiro agreed to forfeit the SMD district in exchange for a guarantee of a permanent listing at the top of the party list in his region. Other politicians agreed to alternate with their intraparty rival. In other words, Politician A would run

The provision in the new system that allows losers in the SMD election to be able to gain a seat through the regional PR system strengthens the incentives to continue to mobilize a personal vote through the *kōenkai*. Because this “insurance” provision ultimately depends on which LDP candidates at the same rank in the PR party list for that region gain the highest proportion of votes in their SMD district, candidates have every reason to strengthen their personal vote above and beyond that of their own party supporters. The continuation of draconian restrictions on election campaigning further maintains the value of this type of organization as a means to reach voters.⁷⁵

Although the SNTV system created specialists of one sort or another for electoral success as well as governing, the new system requires generalists for electoral success but specialists for governing. The LDP as a whole, however, still needs specialists for governing, and PARC exists to train them. Diet members, especially newer ones, nonetheless are now required also to be generalists to cope with the new and more diverse types of SMD and regional bloc PR constituency demands. The change in PARC membership rules reflects this changed need. This is the reason that PARC did not simply keep the same rules but altered the way it, *de facto*, promoted specialization to serve the needs of politicians to be generalists by allowing open membership at the nonexecutive level.

Some observers believe that movement toward responding to constituents’ broader policy preferences may already be occurring.⁷⁶ But to the extent that it has, it has not been through the elimination of the *kōenkai* and a form of personal vote but rather through its broadening and diversification. As Diet members adapt to the new system, they know that, as the sole LDP candidate in their constituencies, they must continue to cultivate a personal vote; but that vote now must come from non-LDP or even nonconservative supporters in order to gain the larger majority or plurality of votes the SMD requires. Therefore, they must respond to a broader array of demands and needs, on a wider range of issues, from *kōenkai* members. Analysts have tended to see the maintenance of the personal vote and the *kōenkai* as antithetical to broader-based policy appealing to the median voter; but it is thus through the continuation of the *kōenkai* and a new form of personal vote that

on PR and Politician B in SMD in the first election, and in the next election, Politician B would take the PR and Politician A would get the SMD. This meant that even the PR politician—looking ahead to the SMD race—would want to maintain a *kōenkai*. In March 2003, the LDP decided that no new cases of Costa Rican alternation would be allowed although this was not expected to go down smoothly with those expecting to “inherit” incumbent “Costa Rican” seats (*Yomiuri shinbun*, July 14, 2003).

75. See Christensen, “The Effect of Electoral Reform,” for this argument in the 1996 election.

76. Shugart, “Electoral ‘Efficiency.’”

such movement toward broader-based policies and the median voter may be taking place.

A third area for refining our theories of systemic change is the second-order effects of electoral reform. The diversity of cross-party support for the incumbent under the new system is one example. The electoral system in place, however, also creates a much greater likelihood of coalition governments than would a pure SMD system. And, the existence of a coalition government is critically important for the policymaking process. To the extent that PARC's role in policymaking has diminished at all, it is due to the increased importance of top party leaders in making policy and their ability to sidestep the *zoku giin*. This increased centralization need and opportunity is a direct result of the greater coordination needs in a coalition government.⁷⁷

Finally, we should get away from the implicit assumption that the consequences of a newly adopted electoral system can be predicted completely from its logical consequences in the abstract. New electoral systems do not appear *de novo* in established democracies, but too many electoral analyses posit a new electoral system's effects in the abstract, as if they were being imposed in a vacuum rather than grafted onto entrenched organizations created for a previous system.

Although distinct, these findings are largely consistent in orientation with an important and increasingly prominent research program in the social sciences, namely, historical institutionalism.⁷⁸ It is important to note that our argument here goes beyond the obvious assertions that there are transition periods in which older habits and patterns temporarily persist, i.e., inertia and the "stickiness" of institutions and their "sunk costs." One problem with this type of assertion, identified by Reed and Thies, is the lack of specificity concerning how long the transition period lasts and how transitions actually take place.⁷⁹

77. See Robert Pekkanen, "Japan's New Politics: The Case of the NPO Law," *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Winter 2000), pp. 111–46, for a detailed example of how this influences policymaking. Pekkanen maintains that the "NPO Law" of 1998 passed the Diet in large measure because of the exigencies of a coalition government.

78. See especially Schickler, *Disjointed Pluralism*, and Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, eds., *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*. We also find our arguments congruent with the new writings in the field of American political development highlighting "intercurrence." See Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, "Institutions and Intercurrence: Theory Building in the Fullness of Time," *Nomos*, Vol. 38 (1996), pp. 111–46. From a different perspective, see also Katō Shūjirō, *Nihon no senkyo* (Tokyo: Chūkō Shinsho, 2003), pp. 172–73.

79. For example, Thies, while admitting that the 1996 election did not exactly live up to the hypotheses of reformers, asserts that future trends will be different: "Just because campaign strategies did not change in the first election under the new rules does not mean they will never change." (Thies, "Changing How the Japanese Vote," p. 104.) A valid point, but one that still assumes the change must be in the direction and form predicted. On this point, also see Reed and Thies, "The Consequences of Electoral Reform," pp. 402–3.

Our assertions are more fundamental and related to these last points raised by Reed and Thies. First, there is a path dependence to organizational development. By this we mean that beyond simple inertia, prior choices of organizational formats to fulfill functions under one system will at least partially shape and constrain the choices of organizational functions under the new system. Second, organizational forms from previously used systems will persist because they perform more than just electoral functions even in the new system. Third, politicians may and are likely to adapt those familiar forms to new rational purposes in the new system. They make “embedded choices”—decisions made under constraints and circumstances in part created by the extant system and influenced by the temptation to reshape existing organizations to new purposes rather than create new ones from whole cloth.

The continuance of *kōenkai* is a good example. If the current electoral system were to be created *tabula rasa*, it is doubtful whether any politician would establish a *kōenkai*. However, *kōenkai* did exist when the electoral system was established. Under the new rules, too, any politician with a *kōenkai* already established would find it worthwhile to maintain it, for the reasons we argued above. In other words, some personal vote was still useful and the existing *kōenkai* a way to maintain it. The decision to continue *kōenkai* was an “embedded choice.” Existing organizations are as likely to be adapted to somewhat different functions in a new electoral system, as old organizational forms are to be scrapped and totally new ones created. Changed systems and incentives do not necessarily require replacement of organizations, merely their adaptation.⁸⁰

Thus, our point about the relative lack of organizational change as a result of electoral reform obviously does not imply a lack of change, *per se*. Even where organizations continue to exist, the functions they have performed have been altered in many cases to adapt to the new incentives. Changes in function need not always involve the disappearance of organizational forms.⁸¹

The persistence of organizations, however, means the creation of contradictory incentive pressures on Diet members and the party itself. If the new electoral system provides incentives to become more policy-oriented, it

80. Thies seems to acknowledge this where he sees factions developing increasing policy/ideological orientation, i.e., persisting but performing a different role. See Thies, “Changing How the Japanese Vote,” p. 107.

81. Obviously our argument also does not extend beyond the changes wrought or not wrought by the electoral system. Changes due to the impact of Japan’s role in the international economy—such as those described by T. J. Pempel in “Regime Shift: Japanese Politics in a Changing World Economy,” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Summer 1997), pp. 333–61, and in *Regime Shift* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998)—may still transform party and political incentives in other ways.

also provides legislators a means to retain a personal vote to mobilize non-party supporters to win in the SMD or in the PR portion; if it induces Diet members to become, and the party to encourage, generalists to cater to broader constituency demands than before, at the same time advancing in the party and having influence on policymaking requires them to become specialists within PARC and also to become more closely tied to particular interests; if it undermines the electoral functions of factions for the individual Diet member, it also does nothing to undermine the importance of factions in determining future party and governmental positions. Part of the “embedded choices” of change made to adjust to incentives of the new electoral system are those that may perpetuate prior organizations. And contrary incentives of change and continuity for each Diet member can also result in the creation of contrary interests within the party as a whole.

Conclusion: Adaptation, Persistence, and Resistance

Our findings of change, incomplete transformation, and adaptation have numerous implications for the study of the LDP and Japanese politics and policymaking.⁸² In this conclusion, we trace three major implications. The first is that the party and its representatives have, on the one hand, rapidly and flexibly adapted to the changed system—for example, shifting the purposes of *kōenkai* to the new SMD system with one representative and a broader “constituency span,” and opening up PARC divisions to all members to allow them to serve wider constituency interests. Yet, while so doing, they have preserved prior functions of their constituent organizations by continuing to serve needed functions even under the new system—retaining PARC divisions as training grounds for future party and governmental leadership posts to ensure a cadre of politicians able to handle the demands of policymaking and the bureaucracy, or retaining factions as a means of coordinating and distributing career positions within the party and government. Whatever future advances the DPJ may (or may not) make, these features will continue to ensure that as long as the LDP does not split, it will remain either the governing party or the main alternative to it.⁸³ This

82. Our findings should be tested comparatively. As a comparison to Japan, it would be interesting to see how politicians in other democracies that went from more party-oriented and larger constituencies adapted their vote mobilization and organizations to SMD. If we are right both about the path dependence and adaptability of these vote mobilization organizations and procedures and the “constituency span” of SMD systems as an important variable, we would expect differences in adaptations even when the new systems move to more similar electoral systems. We plan comparative research along these lines, for example, comparisons with Italy and New Zealand.

83. Moreover, Ethan Scheiner argues that one of the LDP’s traditional major advantages over the opposition parties was its ability to recruit experienced politicians from local politics and former officials from the bureaucracy who were “quality” candidates and then give them

potential quiet flexibility of response both to the general constituency incentives of the new electoral system and to the continuing specialized interests of the old is the “discreet charm of the LDP” to which our subtitle refers.

Further, our findings indicate that the long-term trend that began at least in the 1980s toward greater politician influence in policymaking and diminished bureaucratic influence,⁸⁴ due in large measure to the politicians’ enhanced expertise gained as *zoku giin*, is likely to continue despite the electoral reform incentives for representatives to also become generalists in responding to wider constituency demands. The continuation of PARC, its perpetuation as a training ground for career advancement in the party, and consequently also the continuation of the production of experts who can compete with and manage bureaucrats on policy issues will likely see to that. The continuation of *kōenkai*, to the extent that it contributes to incumbency advantage for candidates in the SMD districts, will only reinforce the maintenance of politician influence.

Second, our findings contain implications for questions about the balance of power between individual LDP legislators and the party—clearly salient for contemporary Japanese politics. Even with the new electoral system, the persistence of PARC and the *zoku giin* means also the continuation of a form of government that is not cabinet government. By this we mean that politicians are engaged in governing, but that cabinet members do not serve as executives in the same sense as in the British Westminster system. Thus, as one of our interviewees put it succinctly, “those in the LDP who have power don’t go into government,” and since ministerial posts are primarily seen as career capstones, they are changed frequently and ministers are people who have no real power.⁸⁵ We also note that bills drawn up by the cabinet cannot be introduced to the Diet unless they have been approved by the LDP’s Executive Council. Instead, cabinet-drafted bills are subject to review by the LDP’s PARC. Relevant divisions of this body get opinions from

even more policymaking experience and expertise as they ascended the LDP ladder, compared to the fewer and seemingly inexperienced candidates recruited by the opposition parties. See Ethan Scheiner, “Democracy Without Competition: Opposition Failure in One-Party Dominant Japan” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 2001), and “The Underlying Roots of Opposition Failure in Japan: Clientelism + Centralization = Local Opposition Failure,” Middlebury College Rohatyn Center for International Affairs Working Paper Series, 2003. We have added the notion here of intra-LDP acquired training and expertise.

84. There has been a large literature on this phenomenon in Japanese politics in the last two decades. As a sample of some of the earliest works, see Muramatsu Michio, *Sengo Nihon no kanryōsei* (Tokyo: Tōyō Keizai Shinpōsha, 1981); Michio Muramatsu and Ellis S. Krauss, “Bureaucrats and Politicians in Policymaking: The Case of Japan,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 78, No. 1 (March 1984); Satō and Matsuzaki, *Jimintō Seiken*; and Inoguchi, “*Zoku giin*” *no kenkyū*.

85. Interview with C.

interest groups and the bureaucracy. They can also modify draft bills. After they have screened it, a draft bill is sent to the Policy Deliberation Commission, and then to the General Council, nominally the LDP's decision-making body, for approval. Only after this is the bill presented to the Diet.⁸⁶

The perpetuation of organizational forms such as PARC divisions, however weakened or challenged, also means that neither is Japan a typical form of "party government." We have claimed above that the party whip role as well as the policy formulation role are played by the *zoku giin* structure.⁸⁷ Further, there is no centralized party leadership with complete control over district-level nominations. The LDP, for example, allowed prefectural and district branches to first nominate candidates even after the electoral transition.⁸⁸ This very much decreases the leverage of the party *vis-à-vis* the individual member. By contrast, British prime ministers have substantial powers over renomination even of incumbents and have been known to warn backbenchers not to "bark" too much or "get vicious" on opposing the government on votes, because such a politician may find that "he may not get his license renewed when it falls due,"⁸⁹ implying that British prime ministers can deny the recalcitrant politician his party's nomination next time out.

Given these trends, candidates elected from SMDs may have the potential to become even more independent of party leadership. But the influence of party leaders over individual Diet members may be enhanced by coalition

86. Apparently, prior inspection by the party didn't begin until 1962. See Tsutomu Nishioka, "Reforms Upset LDP Applecart," *Daily Yomiuri On Line*, March 18, 2001 (<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/newse/20020318wo01.htm>, accessed April 20, 2003). Today this practice receives considerable criticism in the press. See, for example, "Pork-barreling Still Rampant," *The Japan Times*, July 2, 2002.

87. "Party discipline" functions may have been intentionally inherent in the practice from the beginning and not just an inadvertent consequence of it. According to Takeshi Uemura, "Bill Screening System Should Go," *Daily Yomiuri On Line*, February 15, 2002 (<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/newse/20020215wo05.htm>, accessed April 20, 2003), the origins of the system date to a request by Akagi Munenori, then chairman of the LDP General Council, in February 1962 to Chief Cabinet Secretary Ōhira Masayoshi that all cabinet-drafted bills be referred to the General Council before they were presented to the cabinet. This was justified on the grounds that without it, both opposition party and LDP Diet members could delay bills on the floor and create confusion in the Diet, as had apparently happened previously.

88. Cox, Rosenbluth, and Thies, "Electoral Reform and the Fate of Factions," p. 43.

89. Rose, *The Prime Minister in a Shrinking World*, p. 142. British parties do not have primaries for candidates, which is one important factor. Scholars of American politics have examined conditions under which the party exercises more or less control over legislators. Reliance on party label (instead of personal vote) increases the dependence of legislators on the party, and parity in the balance of power between the parties does the same. The implications for Japanese politics are clear. The power of *kōenkai* will diminish party control, but the LDP's inability to hold a dominant majority will enhance it. On the American case, see John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

government, the party list portion of the new mixed electoral system, the more party-centered and -controlled financing of elections brought about by campaign finance reform, and television's contribution to the influence of the prime minister.

Third, these contrary incentives are also related to an important shift in the locus of intraparty conflict. We suggest that the high level of conflict in the LDP in the first few years of the twenty-first century reflects a shift from vertical cleavages (i.e., along factional lines) to horizontal cleavages (i.e., vested interests' "forces of resistance" versus reformers). This can be understood in part due to the nature of the transformation of the LDP organizational structure. Surprisingly, it has gone unnoticed or misunderstood, to our knowledge, that current conflict in the LDP is a policy conflict. Proponents of the electoral reform in 1993 argued that it would bring about a two-party system in which candidates ran on policy platforms. That has not happened, nor is it likely to anytime soon. However, the most important debate in the LDP, and one that is bringing about real conflict, is a policy issue: reform. Simply because one side is identified by opponents or critics with a conservative or self-interested unwillingness to change to address a pressing crisis, we should not lose sight of the fact that these are policy disagreements. Comparing the contemporary fissure lines with those of the intra-LDP personal power conflicts of the past (e.g., the struggle between Ōhira Masayoshi and Fukuda Takeo) should make this abundantly clear.

The changes in three organizational elements examined above can explain the shift in the locus of conflict. The persistence of *kōenkai* permits SMD incumbents to have a secure power base, meaning they are less vulnerable to party (or prime minister) sanctions. The reformist Prime Minister Koizumi also was ineffective in enhancing his power by eliminating factions, as we discussed above. Finally, the continued strength of PARC has been critical to the strength of *zoku giin*, particularly those who represent "vested interests" and oppose either the prime minister or reform legislation in general. It is no accident that the main lines of intraparty cleavage within the current LDP are no longer just the "vertical" ones of personal factional strife, but also the "horizontal" ones of leadership versus the resistant remaining specialized interests within the party. It is not simply an issue of party control or lack thereof; the type of conflict has also been transformed.

Thus, two contrary hypothetical scenarios for the LDP's future emerge from our findings. The first is that the adaptation and innovation of the LDP to the new electoral system—preserving its policymaking expertise even while responding within the new districts to wider constituency demands, the training of "generalists" as well as experts to process policy and check bureaucratic influence, the diminution of factional influence, and the continued disadvantages faced by the opposition parties, combined with the

possibility that future prime ministers can manage their media image—will allow the LDP to maintain its dominance into the foreseeable future. The new internal policy conflicts could remain managed and manageable, and therefore generally be no more threatening to LDP dominance than the perennial old factional battles were.

There is an alternative scenario that is equally possible, however, namely that the internal policy tension described and the kind of political battles we have witnessed between more reformist leaders and entrenched specialized interests along essentially policy lines persist and intensify. Eventually some of these policy cleavages may cumulate, potentially splitting the party and ushering in a recombination of the party system. It is impossible to tell at this point which of these scenarios, or which combination, will eventuate.

Ultimately, it is important to understand exactly how and why organizational forms and practices are persisting or changing shape and function after electoral reform to understand what this “transition period” in Japanese politics means. If it is a mere way station on the road to the kind of electoral and party politics and policymaking theoretically produced by pure SMD and pure PR systems, then the battles between Prime Minister Koizumi and the *zoku giin* will have been of only passing and temporary significance. If, however, these forms persist and adapt and change, but do not disappear, even while their functions may be altered, then the current patterns, and the possible consequences that can flow from them, may be with us for some time, despite and because of the new electoral system. The conflict within the LDP and within each of its Diet members between changing individual and party incentives and persistent organizational forms with differing incentives may well continue.

Under the old system, the prime minister was very much a creature of the party and its factional balance and *zoku* influence.⁹⁰ A continuation of the 1955 system or an electoral reform that had not produced any change at all might well not have produced a prime minister and coalition government trying to change, and succeeding even as much or little as they have; an electoral reform that produced what the reformers intended or the type of party organization, electoral mobilization, and party organization political science theorists tell us SMD and PR systems in the abstract tend to produce would have resulted in even more change. The disillusioned and frustrated are wrong to think that no change has occurred; the theorists are wrong to think change would occur necessarily in the forms they predicted.

Put another way, the current “no man’s land” of Japanese politics—neither the old “1955 system” nor a real Westminster model of parliamen-

90. See, for example, Hayao, *The Japanese Prime Minister*, pp. 96–121 and 146–49.

tary politics as in England—and the highly conflictual prime minister versus *zoku giin* battles may *not* be because nothing has changed since the electoral reform, but because it *has*, but in a particular, adaptive manner, shaped by politicians making strategic choices while embedded in an existing context.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO, AND MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE