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Japanese Electoral Politics: Reform, Results, and Prospects for the Future

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the motives behind, changes made by, and the consequences of the Japan's 1993 electoral reform that completely overhauled the electoral system. It begins with some background information that leads to the earth-shattering event in 1993 that ousted the ruling Liberal Democratic Party from power for the first time since 1955. Then it explains and analyzes the old and new electoral systems. Finally, it concludes with the analysis of the 2003 elections, which was the third and latest election to be held under the new system.

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Part I

Introduction

Chapter 1: The Lost Ten Years

In an interview conducted by the Yomiuri Shinbun newspaper in May of 2003, then-vice-speaker of the Lower House Watanabe Kozo called the past decade of Japanese politics "The Lost Ten Years."[1]

Although the term is used more commonly to describe the Japanese economic stagnation of the 1990s, in many ways his use of the term to describe politics was equally appropriate. In 1993, an earthquake occurred in Japan, sending the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) out of power for the first time since 1955. There was great hope that the talk of reform, which had been going on for decades, would finally transform itself from rhetoric to reality, cleaning up the scandal-ridden, corrupt politics that had brought down several governments and veteran politicians since the 1970s.

Ten years later, in November of 2003, the Japanese public went to the polls and once again gave the LDP the most number of seats in the Lower House. Just as importantly, the LDP and its two coalition partners had won a comfortable majority in the Diet, delivering an electoral victory to Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro and once again keeping the LDP in power.

On the surface, the story is a simple one: in 1993, the LDP lost power, but ten years later they remain as entrenched in the workings of government as ever. Therefore, one can understand the sense of disappointment and disillusionment that is prevalent not only with the Japanese public, but also with many politicians about what could have been. The 3 part series, each with 5 articles, entitled "Impeded: 10 Years of Political Reform" (頓挫　政治改革１０年) that the Yomiuri Shinbun ran in the middle of 2003 reflected that

sentiment. Marking the 10th anniversary of the biggest event in post-war Japanese politics, the collection of 15 articles included interviews with politicians who were key characters in 1993 and subsequent events, analysis of the current Japanese political environment, and reflections on what had changed, and not changed, in politics during the past ten years. The common tone was regretful not only because the reform was left unfinished, but also because the fundamental problem of corruption has not gone away.

As with any story, however, the realities are more complicated. In a way, of course, politics as usual has not changed, with the LDP in power as it has always been since 1955, with the exception of ten months between 1993 and 1994. Yet, if the 2003 elections showed anything, it is that there are some significant changes in the way Japanese politics operate today from how it used to operate.

Most importantly, the so-called "1955 System," whether one calls it a one-party, a one-and-one-half-party, a two-party, or a multi-party system—all of which are accurate descriptions of the system[2] --is over. The LDP is no longer synonymous with the Japanese government, for the party is unable to stay in power without a coalition partner because it is no longer able to win a majority of seats in either the Lower House or the House of Councilors, and it most likely never will. Nor is the largest opposition party, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), a footnote in Japanese politics as the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) was under the old system, providing token opposition in what was technically a democracy. The DPJ's impressive showings in the 2003 elections—the best ever by an opposition party in post-war Japan—show that the party is emerging as a legitimate alternative to the LDP.

Very closely interrelated with the new alignment of Japanese party system is the change in the Japanese electoral system that took place in 1994. When Prime Minister

Hosokawa Moruhiko led a seven-party non-LDP coalition government to power in 1993, it had promised in implement a full set of reforms, the core of which was electoral reform. The government, which was in power for only eight months, could not accomplish much but it did completely overhaul the Japanese electoral system, an event that has undoubtedly impacted the way politics operate.

Political scientists are keenly aware of the relationship between the electoral system and the party system, and of the consequences that the dramatic changes in the former have on the latter.[3] Part of the goal of this thesis is to explore such relationships in light of an opportunity that is extremely unique not only because very few countries ever completely overhaul the electoral system as Japan has, but because the Japanese reformers adopted a very unusual system. To be sure, the consequences of the changes to the electoral system may not have been fully manifested as of yet, since it takes a while for the relationship to reach a new equilibrium[4]. Yet what Japan has gone through, and continues to go through, is an important study in of itself as it is an example of a process through which a new system finds an equilibrium.

More specifically, the purpose of this thesis is to try to draw some conclusions about electoral and party politics in Japan by studying the new electoral system and the election results from 2003. Undoubtedly, the electoral and party politics of Japan is still in great fluctuation, but after three elections under the new system, in 1996, 2000, and 2003, the hope is that one can come to certain conclusions about what the future may hold for Japan. Particularly of interest is whether the new system will lead to a two-party system, an important concern in light of why the new system was adopted in the first place, and whether the DPJ, or any other party, could ever replace the LDP in power in the near future.

To understand the politics of electoral reform and party realignment, one must make sense of the changes and chaos that has occurred since 1993. This is no easy task because the Japanese political landscape has changed so much and so quickly. There are only two parties that have maintained independence under the same name since the dramatic moment in 1993, the LDP and the Japan Communist Party (JCP). The largest opposition party has changed from the JSP—which changed its name to the Social Democratic Party (SDP)—and the New Frontier Party (NFP)—which splintered—to the current DPJ. It has been difficult even to consistently vote against the LDP, because all parties except the JCP have been part of government since 1993, and three, including, to the disillusionment of many, the long-time opposition JSP, have joined in the coalition with the LDP.

In Part II, the thesis begins with a quick overview of both the events that led up to, and followed in the aftermath of, the 1993 revolution, to provide at least a context in which massive party realignments and three elections took place. Particular emphasis will be placed on party realignments, changing coalitions, and one specific personality, Ichiro Ozawa, who shaped Japanese politics immediately before and following the 1993 events. The importance of Ozawa is not only in his active participation in almost all of the major happenings in the last ten years, but also in his political vision—a very unusual thing to have for a Japanese politician—which greatly affected the type of electoral system that was implemented. The vision of this "reformer" is critical in understanding why seven anti-LDP parties created, ironically, an electoral system that favored large parties like the LDP.

The background information is followed in Part III by a discussion of both the old and new electoral systems. It addresses why most were convinced that the old system, which was unusual in and of itself, had to be replaced. The new electoral system, a compromise

between the seven parties of different size and interests, is discussed in great length. In particular, this thesis focuses substantially on the so-called "dual candidacy" feature of the new electoral system. Japan implemented a mixed system, creating 300 single member districts (SMD) and delegating 200 seats to proportional representation (PR). Although this kind of dual system is not unusual—both New Zealand and Italy have recently adopted it[5]—the Japanese system is unique in the way the SMD tier interacts with the PR tier. That candidates could run in both tiers, and that the losers in the SMDs could be "resurrected" in the PR, raises interesting questions and is likely to have a significant impact on the eventual party system in Japan.

Part IV offers a brief summary and analysis of what occurred in the 1996 and 2000 elections in preparation for the main discussion of the 2003 elections. Between 1994 and 1996, voters had no opportunities to express their approval or disapproval, despite numerous momentous political events. When they finally did in 1996, the voters went to the polls to make a decision between the unimaginable coalition consisting of the LDP and the JSP in power, and Ozawa's brainchild, the New Frontier Party (NFP), in the opposition. In 2000, the voters were faced with a far different set of choices, reflecting the fluctuating nature of the times. By then, the LDP had formed a coalition with two different parties, while another party was the main opposition. Because the conditions between the 1996 and 2000 elections are so different, the election results themselves are not nearly as important as identifying early trends that emerged under the new electoral system.

Part V, the central part of the thesis, discusses the 2003 elections. It begins with Chapter 13, a discussion of the results and attempts to make sense of them. Because the party and coalition alignments remained stable for the most part between 2000 and 2003,

direct comparisons are drawn between the two elections, the similarities being much more substantial here than between 1996 and 2000 elections. In particular, the LDP had fought the 2000 elections under an extremely unpopular leader in Yoshiro Mori, while the LDP was led by the popular Koizumi in 2003; comparing the two elections, which is possible because of the stability between the two systems, is one way to measure the true electoral strength of the LDP. The comparison is enhanced by looking at exit polls that examine how the DPJ made impressive gains.

Chapter 12 is a summary of my pre-election expectations and the actual results. Before the elections took place, I looked at each of the 300 single member districts and rated each on a scale of one to five, one being a sure victory for the DPJ, or the candidate that the party endorsed, and five being a sure loss of a seat for the party, either to the LDP, its coalition parties, or unaffiliated independents. I will explain how I determined these ratings, while providing a summary of my expectations and results in a chart. An explanation of how and why my expectations and results differed will be provided.

In Chapter 13, I look at results from several districts to get a better idea of the electoral trends. For the most part, I categorized the districts according to geography to get a better sense of where the DPJ continues to be strong, remains weak, made improvements, and where it has the opportunities to pick up more seats. This analysis will provide a better picture of the prospects of the DPJ.

Finally, in Part VI, I draw some conclusions. One of the most important questions concerns whether Japan is headed toward a two-party system, which was the vision of at least one of the reformers. Based on the electoral results and the political activities of the last year, it seems, on the surface at least, that Japan is indeed headed towards at least a *fewer*

party system: the disappearance of two small parties, the Liberal Party several months before the election, and the Conservative Party only days after the election, and the decimation that most of the small parties endured in the last election, are clear indications of the direction in which the new electoral system will push Japanese politics. On the other hand, proportional representation inherently fosters small and medium sized parties, and PR is built into the electoral system. Furthermore, there is an important third party, the Komeito, which is becoming increasingly important not only because it is unlikely to disappear or become irrelevant in the future, but because the party's presence is ever more becoming the key to holding—or gaining—power in Japanese politics.

Of course, the question of whether the LDP is likely to lose power any time soon is tackled.

[1] Yomiuri Shinbun. May 14th, 2003. 「細川内閣の初心に戻って」

[2] Ronald J. Hrebenar, Japan's New Party System (Colorado: Westview Press, 2000), 9.

[3] Hrebenar, 37.

[4] Steven R. Reed, Japanese Electoral Politics: Creating a new party system (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 178.

[5] Reed, 23; Hrebenar 37

Part II

Revolution, Reform, Realignment, and the Man Named Ozawa

Chapter 2: Money and Machine Politics

To call what happened in 1993 remarkable is an understatement. Since 1955, for a period of 38 years, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) ruled Japan. When a party is in power for such a long time, its dominance is accepted, even expected. The attitude that people had with the LDP in power was somewhat similar to that toward the Democratic Party in the United States House of Representatives, which the party controlled for fifty years. Hence, when the LDP was left out of power with the formation of the Hosokawa cabinet in 1993, it was truly an earth-shattering event in Japanese politics.

Many events led up to the "revolution," but none is more important than the money scandals that plagued Japanese politics continuously from the 1970s onward. Political corruption has a deep history in Japan[1], but no one mastered it like former Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka, who was the first "commoner," i.e. non-college graduate, nonelite, to reach the highest office in post-war Japan. From humble beginnings in construction, he rose through the ranks of the LDP despite the party's reservations about his background because he mastered the art of money politics. Initially he used his political office as a way to funnel money into his home prefecture of Niigata, which was an undeveloped backwater of Japan. He personally benefited because his construction company received contracts and kickbacks from other contractors[2]. That money, in turn, was used either to gain allegiance of his colleagues by funding their campaigns—which gave rise to the highly loyal Tanaka faction—or to buy them off to support his rise through the LDP leadership[3]. It was inevitable that such corruption would explode into a scandal and that is precisely what happened with

the "Lockheed scandal" in 1976, in which Tanaka was accused of taking kickbacks from the Lockheed Corporation.

Even with the arrest of Tanaka, money politics in Japan did not end. In fact, Tanaka himself continued to play a major role as a "shadow shogun" after his downfall, and until his stroke, manipulating Japanese politics from the background. As an arrested criminal, he could no longer openly be in a position of power so he left other people in control, both within the faction and the party. In reality, Tanaka controlled the faction, and he didn't allow anyone from his own faction to become party president or prime minister so he could remain in charge. Although those who followed Tanaka as prime minister were not from the Tanaka faction, they were nonetheless at the mercy of Tanaka because it was impossible to become party president without the support of his faction, which became the largest through Tanaka's continuing use of money.[4]

In 1985, Tanaka's reign as a shadow shogun ended through a coup by his lieutenants and a subsequent stroke, but his method of politics lived on. In 1988, and again in 1992, Japan was rocked by money scandals that shocked the senses of the Japanese public. The "Recruit scandal" of 1988, in which the founder and president of Recruit Cosmos corporation sold unlisted stocks of his new subsidiary company to politicians before they was offered to the public, was so wide-spread that it affected both the LDP and opposition parties' leaderships alike[5]. In 1992, the "Sagawa Kyuubin scandal" revealed that Kanemaru Shin—a machine boss who was the leader of the Takeshita faction, the Tanaka faction's successor—accepted 500 million yen from Sagawa Kyuubin, a large delivery company. Further investigations revealed Shin's glamorous lifestyle was funded through kickbacks, creating uproar within the Japanese public, suffering as it was through a bad recession.[6]

The uproar was a common response after every major political corruption scandal and all had its share of political impact, but none of the changes lasted. The Lockheed scandal in 1976 led to the New Liberal Club boom, in which several young members of the LDP defected from the party to start their own; unable to grow, the party folded back into the LDP 10 years later. Following the Recruit scandal, there was much talk of reform but LDP's intraparty squabble prevented anything from occurring. Only with the Sagawa Kyuubin scandal did any permanent change occur; what differed in that case from previous incidents was an unusual character in Japanese politics: a young charismatic, LDP operative by the name of Ozawa Ichiro.

Chapter 3: Ozawa Ichiro's Reform, Revolt, and Revolution

Politically, Ozawa Ichiro was unique in how quickly he rose through the ranks of the LDP. He was elected to the Diet in 1969, like many others, through the support of Tanaka, who was an extremely popular political figure at the time; Ozawa became one of Tanaka's most important protégés[7]. In 1985, however, he joined Takeshita and Kanemaru in a coup that dumped Tanaka, and the three became the new "shadow shoguns"[8]. By 1992, he was the vice-chairman of the Takeshita faction led by Kanemaru[9].

Personally, Ozawa was unlike any other politician in Japan. Although the position of leader of a political machine required him to cater or flatter, Ozawa did no such thing[10]. Instead, Ozawa was proud and taunting, and loved to exercise and boast the power given to him by the machine. In choosing the formation of the post-Kaifu cabinet, for example, he demanded that he interview politicians who wished to succeed Kaifu at his office, even

though they were much older than he was.[11] Furthermore, for a Japanese, he was uniquely opinionated and openly espoused controversial public policy positions. Ozawa supported numerous programs that was not particularly popular with the public or within the LDP, including government deregulation, raising the consumption tax, and above all, making Japan a "normal" state that actively participated in foreign and defense matters to become a respected member of the world[12].

Evidently, it was this last matter that transformed Ozawa from a boss of a political machine—who naturally prefers the status quo—to an ardent reformer. During the Persian Gulf War in 1991, Ozawa was a proponent of active participation in Iraqi. Such a concept, however, went against Japan's policy of nearly half a century, which adhered strictly to its peace constitution by refusing to send any armed forces abroad. LDP's machine politics, which Ozawa himself led, prevented the government from taking controversial issues. Believing that the future of Japan was in danger under the status quo, Ozawa became convinced of the need for reform[13].

In becoming a reformer, what Ozawa sought in the new Japanese political system was to give leaders "both the responsibility and the power to make the necessary political decisions"[14]. Political accountability required exchanges in power. Hence, Ozawa became a champion of electoral reform that would have voters choose between two candidates with clear policy differences[15]. How this was not accomplished under the old medium sized-district system, and how the reform attempted to reflect Ozawa's interest, is explained in part III.

Ozawa's talk of reform naturally made him an unpopular personality within the LDP. The antagonism surfaced when the Takeshita faction—left without a chairman after the

scandal-ridden Kanemaru was forced to resign from the Diet—had to choose a new leader. Although Ozawa was vice-chairman, other leaders within the faction opposed his succession. Ozawa—typical of his style of preferring to maintain control from the background—threw his support behind Hata Tsutomu for faction chairmanship. His candidacy had no chance; the Ozawa group was badly outnumbered within the faction. When Hata lost, Ozawa, with thirty-five other members, left the Takeshita faction to form the Hata faction, and made electoral reform its priority.[16]

While intra-faction fighting was occurring within the Takeshita faction, the LDP was facing its share of problems following Kanemaru's arrest for tax evasion and the ridiculously lax punishment he received. Unable to stave off pressure for reform, Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi promised to pass reform legislation during that session of the Diet. The Takeshita faction refused to give into the reform issue, which, if passed, would have provided victory for Ozawa. With the Diet session nearing a close but with no reform legislation in sight, the opposition party submitted a vote of no confidence—often merely a formality. Ozawa threatened to agree to the vote, and the last-minute attempt to avoid the face-off failed. The vote passed, with all members of the Hata faction, except one who abstained, in support. The day after, Ozawa led the Hata faction and other supporters out of the LDP to form the Japan Renewal Party, or Shinseito (新生党), while ten other, younger members of the party left to form the Shinto Sakigake (新党さきがけ). With these defections causing a shortage of more than 30 seats in the Lower House of the Diet, Miyazawa called for elections.[17]

The 1993 elections left the LDP without a majority for the first time since 1955, leaving everybody scrambling to form a coalition. There were, in total, nine parties after the

1993 elections, three of which were created within the past year. Hata's Shinseito—Ozawa, once again, preferred to stay in the background by occupying the party's second most important position of secretary-general—and the Sakigake joined the Japan New Party (JNP), created by a former LDP member Hosokawa Morihiro before 1992's Upper House elections in which they won an impressive four seats. More impressively, the party elected 35 new members into the Lower House, most of whom were political novices. The success of the JNP—which went from 0 to 35 seats in one election—made it inevitable that it would play a significant role in the formation of the new cabinet.[18]

These three parties joined the seven parties that had existed for decades. Of the seven, the Japan Communist Party (JCP) was never seriously considered by any party as a coalition partner, as it is often excluded, and excludes, itself from such affairs. In addition to the LDP and the Japan Socialist Party (JSP), the two biggest rivals, there were the Democratic Socialist Party, an offspring of the JSP, the Social Democratic League, another small JSP splinter group, and the Komeito. The Komeito is a special party. It was founded in 1964 by a religious organization called the Soka Gakkai, a lay organization of a Buddhist sect. Despite its phenomenal growth in the 60s and attempts to make itself independent from the religious organization, the party continues to receive most of its support from the Soka Gakkai members.[19] The party has an exceptional organization, particularly in urban areas, but because of the religious connection, the public views the Komeito negatively second only to the Japan Communist Party (JCP)[20].

Of these parties, the LDP and the JSP were the most important players in the cabinet formation process because the former continued to be the largest party despite losing a majority and the latter was still the second largest party despite its dismal performance in the

election. LDP's continuing dominant size meant that there was no guarantee that the coalition to be formed would exclude the LDP; it was a testament to Ozawa's political abilities that Japan had its first non-LDP government in 40 years. Immediately following the election, Hosokawa of the JNP and Takemura of Sakigake, which was planning a merger with the JNP, announced a set of reforms, the center of which was an electoral reform that would have to be accepted by any party that wanted to join with the JNP and the Sakigake to form a coalition. The LDP attempted to negotiate with them on the reform proposal, but they resisted. Ozawa, afraid that the LDP and Hosokawa might come to an agreement, made an ingenious political decision. He dumped Hata—Shinseito's party leader—and threw his support behind the candidacy of Hosokawa for prime minister. Hosokawa had little reason to reject the offer—only a year before, he was leading a new party—and all other parties had little choice but to accept him as prime minister. The non-LDP, non-JCP, seven party coalition was formed on August 6, 1993.[21]

Ozawa's role in LDP's fall from power, from the passage of Miyazawa's no-confidence vote to the formation of the non-LDP cabinet, is undeniable. His opinionated, aggressive style of politics was, and remains, extremely unusual in Japan. Without it, what happened in 1993 would probably not have occurred, at least not at that moment and not in that manner. Specifically, 1993 was unusual not in the fact that Ozawa made the threat and carried it out, but that so many followed his lead out of the LDP. In later years, Ozawa continues to engage in similar hardball politics with disastrous results, as fewer and fewer members follow his lead. Furthermore, much of what occurred immediately before and after the 1993 revolution was based on Ozawa's vision of what Japanese politics should look like;

thus Japan continues to live in Ozawa's shadows to an extent, even as his influence has waned over the years.

In noting the importance of Ozawa's role, it is equally important not to overemphasize it. It wasn't just Ozawa who caused the event. As Curtis notes, the "change [in 1993] was caused by individuals… operating within particular structures of opportunities and constraints, intent on retaining or gaining political power, and acting and reacting to events as they unfolded"[22]. Yamaguchi makes a similar observation, that it was the talk of reform that allowed Ozawa to catapult into the political forefront[23].

More important is realizing what truly occurred in 1993. The LDP's removal from power was not a result of a great shift in voting patterns. Leaders of all three new parties were former LDP members. During the 1993 elections, the LDP retained its seats at a rate of 85 percent, while 34 of the 35 members of Ozawa's Shinseito, all former members of the LDP, were reelected.[24] Staggeringly, former LDP incumbents continuing to run on the LDP ticket or newly running on the Sakigake or Shinseito tickets made up 271 members of the Diet after the election, only four less than the 275 members the LDP won during the previous election[25]. The great gains made by the JNP were essentially at the expense of the Socialists, meaning that the voters did not abandon their traditional LDP politicians. The revolution of 1993 was caused from above, the LDP leadership, not from below, the voters.

Chapter 4: Hosokawa's Fall, LDP's Return, and Ozawa Again.

The Hosokawa cabinet had one great hurrah—the electoral reform—that turned out to be its first, last, and only. By passing its most important legislation, the seven-party coalition could overcome neither personal clashes nor maintain unity on any other issues.

The biggest problem was Ichiro Ozawa, who as merely the secretary general of Shinseito with no cabinet position, nonetheless held substantial sway within the government. Even though a coalition of seven parties required reaching a consensus through a compromise, Ozawa continued to engage in aggressive politics in pursuing his own political agenda. Every vision he had—the raise in the consumption tax, a more active foreign policy, and above all, a creation of a large anti-LDP party that would lead to a two-party system—was against what the Socialist Party, the largest party of the coalition, stood for. Nor did Sakigake's Takemura share Ozawa's interest in completely reshaping the Japanese political landscape, which increasingly created a wedge between Takemura and Ozawa. Caught in the middle was Hosokawa, who was growing frustrated with Socialist opposition to any policies he tried to implement. When a relatively minor scandal erupted, brought forth by the LDP and the JCP over Hosokawa's receipt of money from Sagawa Kyuubin, Hosokawa abruptly and unexpectedly resigned, only eight months after he came into office.[26]

Ozawa, once again playing a main role in the formation of the new cabinet, made the problem he created even worse. Alongside the pursuit of a new coalition, Ozawa tried to create his vision of a major anti-LDP party by forcing defections from the LDP and splitting the more moderate members of the JSP. When no member of the LDP defected, Hata Tsutomu—who was bypassed because of Ozawa's maneuvering only a year earlier—was put

forth as an acceptable candidate to replace Hosokawa for all the parties involved. In forming the new coalition's policy, Ozawa openly antagonized the Socialists by demanding that the party accept, as is, a raise in the consumption tax, deregulation, and Japanese Self Defense Force's participation in UN peacekeeping operations; the JSP swallowed its pride and agreed, voting for Hata as prime minister to stay in the coalition.[27]

Ozawa, however, had not abandoned his vision of creating a large second party, which resulted in the disastrous Kaishin debacle. The day after Hata was elected prime minister, but before the cabinet was formed, Ozawa created a single kaiha (会派), or a parliamentary caucus in which political parties are organized in the Japanese parliament, called Kaishin between the JNP, Shinseito, DSP, and the SDP. The exclusion of the LDP, the Sakigake, which had left the coalition because of Takemura's animosity with Ozawa but nonetheless supported Hata's prime ministership, and the Komeito, which had a complex party organization, were all understandable, but JSP's was not. Ozawa's Kaishin maneuver was not only a blatant first step in forming a non-JSP unified party, which was Ozawa's goal, but it also meant that the Socialist's share of cabinet positions was decreased by two. DSP chairman Ouchi, who actively encouraged Ozawa to create the single kaiha, hoped members of his own party would pick up the positions JSP would lose. Faced with this betrayal, the Socialists bolted from the coalition, leaving the Hata cabinet as a minority government.[28] Left without a majority, the Hata cabinet couldn't survive for long because it could not defeat a vote of non-confidence. Within two months, the LDP submitted a vote of no confidence and Hata resigned.

For the LDP, the Socialist revolt provided an unexpected opening. Eight months in the opposition was tough for a party that had been in power for nearly two generations, as its

younger members defected to the coalition and elder members, who were used to politics from being in power, were lost as to what to do.[29] With Ozawa still engaging in his tactics of trying to split the moderate Socialists into joining the coalition, the LDP moved quickly to entice the Socialists. The party brought in Sakigake as a coalition partner to act as a buffer—which was not difficult because of Takemura's bad relationship with Ozawa—and threw its support behind JSP Chairman Murayama in the vote for prime minister. The JSP, which was deeply divided during its stay in the coalition under Ozawa, could not resist the offer of having its first socialist prime minister in 47 years. Ozawa, suddenly defensive, tried another political ingenuity, throwing his support behind former prime minister Kaifu Toshiki, who had announced that he was opposed to the LDP making Murayama prime minister. In an extremely vote that required a run-off and saw defections on both sides, Murayama was voted prime minister. So on June 29th, 1994, the most unthinkable event in Japanese politics—the formation of an LDP-JSP coalition—occurred.[30]

Just as Ozawa was critical in forcing the LDP from power, he was critical in returning them to power. His aggressive politicking had alienated both Takemura and the Socialists, and forced the latter to do the unthinkable; evidently, in a gross miscalculation, Ozawa believed that the Socialists would not leave the coalition, and then would never go together with the LDP[31]. As Curtis notes, the issue with the fall of Hosokawa's government is not whether it could have been prevented, for the internal friction would have inevitably boiled over. It was, he says:

> a matter of timing. If the goal of those with power in the coalition was to weaken the LDP and strengthen their own ranks before calling an election, they should have been willing to pay almost any price to keep peace with the Socialists and hold the coalition together. If they had done so, it is entirely conceivable that the split within the coalition, when it did occur, would have been along a conservative-liberal divide.

> But Ozawa was determined to bend the Socialists to his will or drive the party out of the coalition, even if doing so entailed the risk of losing power.[32]

Indeed, it is indeed, a remarkable fact that the LDP was forced from power, the electoral system was completely overhauled, and the LDP subsequently returned to power with its nemesis alongside it all in the matter of ten months without the public ever having a say through an election. The Japanese political landscape, which had been so constant for so long, changed multiple times literally overnight.

Chapter 5: Realignment

The New Frontier Party

Now in the opposition without the Socialists, Ozawa pursued his policy of creating a united opposition party. All the parties that were part of the "Kaishin," the Democratic Socialist Party, the Japan New Party, and the Shinseito, dissolved themselves in order to create the New Frontier Party (NFP), or Shinshinto (新進党). The Komeito, which took part in neither the Kaishin nor the initial movement to unify under the NFP, would join the new party in gradual steps, because its party organization was much more complicated than others. Kaifu became the first party leader, and Ozawa, once again, took the position of secretary general.[33]

In its first electoral challenge, the 1995 Upper House elections, the NFP was a big winner while the Socialists were punished severely; the NFP rode on the wave of the popularity of its leaders, including Ozawa, Hata, and Hosokawa, as well as the organizational

strength of Komeito.[34] Prime Minister Murayama resigned soon after the elections over health and age concerns and was replaced by the new LDP president Hashimoto Ryutaro.

Despite tremendous success in its first elections, the NFP was unable to ride the momentum into the important Lower Diet elections in 1996, the first to be held under the new electoral system. The biggest reason was the formation of a new party that was led by the brothers Hatoyama Yukio, who had won from the Sakigake in 1993, and Kunio, who won as an independent and joined the NFP, aided by Funada Hajime, a former LDP politician who had joined the NFP. The party, called the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), was formed only several months before the election by bringing together almost all members of the Sakigake, though its leader Takemura was excluded, the anti-Ozawa forces of the NFP, and the Socialists who were unhappy with the coalition with the LDP[35]. The Japan Socialist Party had renamed itself earlier in the year to reform its image after entering into the coalition with the LDP.

Hence, going into the 1996 elections, the main parties were the LDP, the NFP, the DPJ, and the Japan Communist Party, along with the two other parties of the coalition, the SDP and the Sakigake, both of which suffered devastating defections. The electoral result left almost all parties except the JCP and the LDP losers. Sakigake and the SDP performed so poorly in the elections that they decided to continue to cooperate with the LDP but stay out of the coalition. The NFP, whose goal was to gain a majority, actually lost four seats, a disastrous result coming on the heels of the successful House of Councilors elections the year before. Nor was it a success for the DPJ, which lost one seat, although it did become the third largest party following SDP's collapse. The "new party boom" that occurred in 1993 did not repeat itself.[36]

The NFP could not survive the electoral defeat, especially with Ozawa continuing his autocratic style of leadership. In 1995, before the elections, Tsutomu Hata ran for party presidency after Kaifu's term ran out on the promise that he would not appoint Ozawa as secretary general, and Ozawa had no choice but to challenge him. Ozawa won, but shortly after the 1996 elections, Hata, who had been with Ozawa from the days when they split the Takeshita faction, left the NFP with 13 followers and founded his own party.[37] Soon after, Hosokawa followed with an unceremonious defection. Meanwhile, other conservative members of the NFP slowly returned to the LDP—which actively courted them because the SDP and the Sakigake were out of the coalition and the party needed a new strategy for creating a majority. The LDP, therefore, managed to achieve a majority in the lower Diet by September of 1997.[38]

The NFP collapsed within several months, the final blow being Ozawa's suicidal political maneuvering in a governor's race to support an LDP-recommended candidate rather than an anti-LDP one. With the party dissolved, Ozawa formed the Jiyuuto (**自由党**), or the Liberal Party. Ozawa, meanwhile, still had a vision of a *ho-ho rengo* (**保—保連合**), or conservative-conservative alliance to oppose the LDP, but it was difficult to seek unity with LDP defectors when the trend was precisely the opposite—members were returning back to the LDP. He therefore switched course and decided to consider an alliance with the LDP.[39] Meanwhile, in the aftermath of the NFP, several parties appeared along the lines of the parties that previously formed the NFP, most of which eventually converged, along with Hata's Sun Party, into the Democratic Party of Japan. The only exception was the Komeito, which once again became an independent party. A party that was once vigorous in insisting

that the new electoral system favor a large unified party was now just as adamant in pursuing a path of independence, a gamble that eventually pays off handsomely.[40]

LDP's coalition-forming and again, Ozawa

The LDP suffered substantial defeats in the Upper House elections in 1998, apparently because voters were dissatisfied with the economic policies of the Hashimoto government; on the same day, Prime Minister Hashimoto announced his resignation and was replaced with Obuchi Keizo, an LDP old guard and an insider. In the elections, the DPJ, fresh from acquiring new members from the NFP, and Ozawa's Liberal Party both did well, while the Social Democratic Party once again lost votes and the Sakigake was forced into extinction.

The electoral defeat created major problems for the LDP. Because the Upper House members are elected alternatively every three years for a six year term, two consecutive losses meant that the party would not have a chance at regaining the majority it lost in 1989 for six more years. In addition, the SDP and the Sakigake offered little help both because they did not have enough seats and because they had left the coalition.[41] The LDP, increasingly aware of the problems the lack of majority would have in the upper house, decided to solve the problem by forging a new coalition, which they slowly began by courting and cooperating with the Liberals and the Komeito.

In January 1999, six months after the election, the LDP formed a coalition with Ozawa's Liberal Party despite reservations among some LDP members over the personality of Ozawa. Among the coalition policy agreements struck between Ozawa and Obuchi, the

most important was electoral cooperation between the LDP and the Liberal Party, which required the LDP to forego its own candidate and instead support a Liberal candidate where there was an incumbent. For Liberal Party members, who were greatly aided by the organizational support of the Komeito while both were together in the NFP, their reelection prospects depended on cooperation with the LDP now that that support was gone.[42] The other major part of the policy agreement was reduction in the number of seats in the proportional representation tier of the lower house by fifty, a mystifying demand for a small party that generally relies on the PR tier, but one nonetheless consistent with Ozawa's political philosophy.[43]

The LDP-Liberal coalition was somewhat puzzling. The merger did not actually solve the problem the LDP had in the upper house because the Liberals did not have enough members to create a majority with the LDP. Apparently, the move to unite with the Liberals was an initial step by Obuchi to form an alliance with the Komeito, with whom there was even greater hesitation among the LDP members because of the party's religious nature; the Liberals, in essence, would act as a "buffer" between the LDP and the Komeito. Four months after the LDP formed a coalition with the Liberals, the Komeito joined as well.

This left the Liberals in a conundrum. The LDP formed a coalition with the Komeito, in direct opposition to the promise of reducing the PR seats by 50, since the Komeito wanted to return to the old electoral system, which in essence was a quasi-PR system, as discussed in Part III. Furthermore, Liberal Party's influence within the coalition was dramatically reduced because it was far more expandable than the Komeito. The Komeito had far more seats than the Liberals—in fact, Komeito alone was enough for the LDP to secure a majority in the upper house—and it also had a stronger local organization than the Liberals, whose

members were elected essentially based on personal popularity. Hence, the LDP dragged its feet in implementing the promises it made with the Liberals, electoral cooperation and a reduction of PR seats.[44]

Ozawa finally made good on his threat to leave the coalition in May of 2000, after Obuchi rebuffed his call for the LDP to dissolve and the two parties to merge. Once again, however, his political tactics alienated members of his own party and not everybody followed him out of the coalition. Those who wanted to stay formed the Hoshuto (保守党), or the Conservative Party, creating the LDP-Conservative-Komeito coalition (自保公連立) , which lasted through the 2003 lower house elections.

Several hours after Prime Minister Obuchi announced the dissolution of the LDP-Liberal coalition, however, he suffered a stroke that left him in a coma.

Mori's unpopularity is Koizumi's rise

In the wake of this shocking event, the LDP moved quickly to replace Obuchi by choosing Yoshiro Mori, another LDP insider who was the party's secretary-general and therefore second in command. In choosing him, the LDP leadership was above all concerned with continuity. When he suffered a stroke, Obuchi was dealing not only with the Liberals, but was also organizing a summit in Okinawa and preparing for impending elections since the terms of the lower house members would have expired in six months. Both the public and the opposition parties, however, criticized the way in which the LDP leadership handled the whole procedure, from failing to disclose the true health conditions of Obuchi, to choosing Mori in a covert manner.

Mori's rough start was not helped by his frequent gaffes. For example, he once suggested that Japan is a country of God—a reminder of the World War II era—and that undecided voters should stay home during the elections. Hence, the LDP set low expectations for the elections—maintaining a majority by the three coalition parties—that was easy to achieve. Mori survived the June elections despite his low approval ratings, but his handling of the Ehimemaru (えひめ丸) incident the following February doomed him. When Prime Minister Mori was informed that the Ehimemaru, a Japanese boat filled with Japanese high school students, was sunk off the coast of Hawaii after an American submarine Greenville submerged right under it, he continued to play golf, apparently because he felt it important that he not move so that government officials would know where they could contact him[45]. The public furor over Mori's evident indifference to a tragedy sunk his already low approval ratings to single digits.[46] With Upper House elections approaching in June, the party pressured Mori to resign, which he did in April of 2001.

Because of the criticism following Mori's selection as Obuchi's replacement, the LDP opened up the process of choosing Mori's successor by allowing the party members to have a bigger say in the process. As a result, the populace candidate Koizumi Junichiro, a maverick who had failed in several previous attempts, overwhelmed former prime minister Hashimoto Ryutaro, the insider trying to make a comeback, in a landslide. In no small irony, although Koizumi was from the same faction as Mori—indeed, he was Mori faction's chairman while Mori was prime minister—he started his administration with record-high approval ratings of 85% and record-low disapproval ratings of 5%[47]. Riding on the wave of Koizumi's popularity, the LDP blew away the opposition in that year's upper house elections.

Koizumi's politics and the opposition unification

In many ways, Koizumi is an unorthodox politician. First, Koizumi has had an extremely unusual rise to the top. Although in the last fifteen years the LDP has become more concerned with the public popularity of its party leader, no leader has risen to the top strictly based on public popularity. Koizumi, on the other hand, lives and dies by his approval ratings. All former LDP party presidents since 1964 had served as either secretary general, general affairs chairman (**総務会長**), or policy research council chief (**政調会長**)—the three highest positions of the party under party president—with the exception of Uno, Kaifu, and Kono, all of whom benefited from either a "clean" or "maverick" image during the time of party crises.[48] Koizumi has served as none of these, nor has he held any crucial cabinet positions, such as Foreign Minister or Finance Minister; he was a Health Minister under two cabinets and Postal Minister once. Koizumi ran for party president three times before—and lost by substantial margins each time—because he had no basis of support within the party. It is only with several unusual happenings that he has arrived on top, including Prime Minister Obuchi's sudden death, the method in which his successor Mori was chosen, Mori's ineptitude, and finally, the changes made in the party presidency selection process, which allowed more input by the party members. In the "primary round" where the registered party members voted, Koizumi won in a landslide because of the maverick image he created through his support of unusual reforms such as the privatization of the postal system.

Because Koizumi is not a party insider, his nearly three years in office has been marked by as much intra-party fighting as inter-party fighting. He has cleverly leveraged his maverick image and the public's distrust of LDP insiders to his advantage. He has termed the LDP members, mostly from the Hashimoto faction (the descendent of the Tanaka / Takeshita faction), who oppose his reform programs, as the "teikoseiryoku: (抵抗勢力), or oppositional force. Whenever his approval ratings seem to sink, he creates cleavage within the party between himself and his opponents, in order to boost his maverick image and thus his popularity, which is his only source of power.

The intra-party conflict boiled over during the mid-months of 2003 as expiration of Koizumi's term as party president approached. Several members of the "teikoseiryoku" openly declared that he would not be reelected as party president. Koizumi overcame some staunch opposition within his party by once again labeling those who oppose him within the party as opposed to reform.

More importantly, however, he used his popularity. It was a common perception that Koizumi was going to dissolve the Lower House after the party presidential elections—going so far as to imply that even if he lost, he would not resign as prime minister and would subsequently dissolve the house. Half of the 100 members in the largest Hashimoto faction, which Koizumi has criticized throughout his term, were composed of Upper Diet members. With the Upper House elections approaching, LDP's Upper House secretary general Aoki, desperate to regain the majority that has eluded the party for a decade, threw his support behind Koizumi, not because he agreed with his policies—he did not—but because he was the only LDP politician that had the popularity that had a chance to deliver the LDP a victory. With the Hashimoto badly fractured and many young LDP members believing that

only Koizumi could deliver an electoral victory, Koizumi's staunch opposition had no chance of unseating him.

Koizumi's remarkable rise in the LDP was matched only by the remarkable fall of Hatoyama Yukio, who led the DPJ during the 2000 elections. In what can only be described as extraordinary political incompetence, Hatoyama resigned as party president in early 2003 only two months after an extremely tough fight for party presidency that he had actually won. His first mistake was appointing Nakano Kansei, the de-facto leader of those who came from the old Democratic Socialist Party (and whose votes he delivered to Hatoyama), secretary general in a move that many in the party believed was a John Quincy Adams-Henry Clay type of a "corrupt bargain." A far bigger disaster, however, was his pursuit of a merger with Ozawa's Liberal Party in anticipation of the upcoming lower house elections. He engaged in high-level talks with Ozawa without consulting the members of his own party, many of whom were NFP members or Socialists with very bad memories of Ozawa.

After inviting chaos into the party, Hatoyama was replaced by former party co-president Kan Naoto, the man who gave legitimacy to the party upon its launch and who narrowly lost to Hatoyama only two months before. Upon his election, Kan promised to follow through on the talks Hatoyama initiated with Ozawa, but party members' reluctance with Ozawa, as well as Ozawa's aggressive pursuit, seemed to doom the merger. In May, five months after Kan became party president, he shocked the political world by announcing the merger of the two parties, apparently after Ozawa agreed completely to accept the policies of the DPJ.

Hence, both Kan of the DPJ and Koizumi of the LDP went into the November 2003 elections with much press coverage and political momentum, the former from the merger and

the latter from his overwhelming reelection as party president. In fact, following his presidential reelection, Koizumi had attempted to augment his popularity even further by dumping his old political ally, Yamasaki Taku, in favor of Abe Shinzo for secretary general. Yamasaki was mired in a sexual scandal and was known to be facing a tough reelection in his home district following a difficult contest in 2000. Yamasaki's replacement was hardly shocking, although not quite expected, but the pick of Abe was certainly a surprise. Abe, at 49, had been elected only three times, and had never held either a major party or a cabinet position. He has served as Deputy Cabinet Secretary—a relatively minor position—under Koizumi, but his greatest fame comes from his aggressive pursuit with North Korea regarding the several missing persons alleged to have been kidnapped by that regime. With North Korea's admission to that extent, Abe's popularity soared. Koizumi's shocking appointment of Abe was a clear attempt to boost his popularity in preparation for the upcoming election.

Indeed, the 2003 election was much more of a mandate on Koizumi's popularity rather than on his reform policies, as Koizumi claimed it was. More specifically, it was a contest between the duo of Koizumi-Abe and Kan-Ozawa. For the LDP, the contrast between the 2000 elections and the 2003 elections are stark, since the party went into the first election under an extremely unpopular leader, while during the latter, the party was led by a leader whose sole source of power was his popularity. For the Democratic Party, the issue was change in power. The merger of the Liberal Party happened despite reservations of the participants because both Kan and Ozawa shared a common goal: a change in power.

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[3] Schlesinger, 110-111.

[4] Schlesinger, 120-125.

[5] Curtis, 74.

[6] Curtis, 86.

[7] Schlesinger, 178-179.

[8] Schlesinger, 185-192.

[9] Curtis 88.

[10] Schlesinger, 252-253.

[11] Curtis 88.

[12] Ibd.

[13] Schlesinger, 255-260.

[14] Schlesinger, 264.

[15] Curtis, 89.

[16] Curtis, 90-91.

[17] Curtis, 92-96.

[18] Curtis, 106.

[19] Curtis, 102-103.

[20] Steven R. Reed, Japanese Electoral Politics: Creating a new party system (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 9.

[21] Curtis, 111-114.

[22] Curtis, 97.

[23] Yamaguchi Jiro. "Coalition government as a contemporary experience" Coalition Government: A Contemporary Inspection Ed. Yamaguchi Jiro. (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbun Publishing, 1997), 10-11. [山口二郎「同時代体験としての連立政治」連立政治　同時代の検証 朝日新聞社　編者　山口二郎]

[24] Curtis, 101.

[25] Curtis, 109.

[26] Curtis, 121-133.

[27] Curtis, 179-186.

[28] Ibd.

[29] Curtis, 191.

[30] Reed, 31.

[31] Curtis, 181.

[32] Curtis, 187.

[33] Reed, 32-33.

[34] Reed, 35.

[35] Reed, 37.

[36] Reed, 38.

[37] Curtis, 192-193.

[38] Reed, 40-41.

[39] Curtis, 193-194.

[40] Curtis, 195.

[41] Curtis, 216.

[42] Reed, 47.

[43] Curtis, 219; Reed, 49.

[44] Reed, 50-51.

[45] Mainichi Shinbun, February 16, 2001, 「森首相の発言要旨」(No longer available online)

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[47] Mainichi Shinbun, April 30, 2001, 「小泉内閣　支持率８５％で歴代最高に　不支持は最低の５％」(No longer available online)

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Part III

The Electoral System:

Before and After

Chapter 6: The Medium Size Election District System

In 1925, with the introduction of universal manhood suffrage, Japan adopted what is called *chusenkyokusei* (**中選挙区制**), or "medium-size-election-district-system."[1]. The "magnitude" of the district, which refers to the number of candidates that are elected from each district, is medium because it is smaller than the prefecture-wide, large districts that Japan had used from 1900 to 1920 and larger than the "small-sized districts" that Japan had used for two elections in the early 1920s[2].

Following the revisions to the districts prior to the Lower Diet elections in 1986, each district elected anywhere from one to six seats. As of 1986, 512 seats were divided among 130 districts, for an average of 3.94 seats per district. There were four 2- seat districts, 42 3-seat districts, 39 4-seats, and 43 5-seats. Hokkaido's first district was the only 6-member district, and Kagoshima's Anami Islands was the only district with a single member[3], although it was abolished prior to the 1993 election[4].

An electoral system with district magnitude mostly between three and five is rare; only Ireland has such a system[5]. What makes the Japanese system particularly unique, however, is the nontransferable nature of the vote. Often referred to as the SNTV, the single, non-transferable-vote system is different from the more common single transferable vote system. Under the STV, when voters go to the polls, they make a list of candidates in order of preference. A mathematical process is applied to count the votes so that first, all candidates with a sufficient number of votes are elected, and second, there are fewer wasted votes, i.e. votes cast for losing candidates. The goal, Reed says, is "to produce a proportional result while allowing voters to vote for candidates, not parties" [6].

The SNTV, on the other hand, does not allow the transfer of votes, i.e. votes for the losing candidates are "wasted," and the system actually creates a "semi-proportional" representation of political parties. With districts averaging four seats, and most falling between three and five, this means that candidates could be elected with as little as 10 to 15 percent of the vote, allowing candidates from small parties to survive election after election:[7] in the first elections held after the LDP merger in 1958, there was a clear two-party system, with the LDP and the Socialists winning all but two of the 453 seats; yet by 1960, the splinter within the Japan Socialist Party led to the formation of the Democratic Socialist Party, the Komeito was founded in 1964, and the Communists gradually gained seats. All three parties were able to survive so that by 1972, Japan was truly in a multi-party system, with the LDP and JSP combined winning 81.5 percent of the seats, down from 99.5 percent in 1958[8].

In effect, therefore, the SNTV created a multi-party system, with the number of parties between five or six, but truly effective ones between three to four.[9] For the most part, the system divided the number of seats proportionally relative to the number of votes received, although the smaller parties performed better in the larger sized districts.[10] The larger parties benefited from the rural malapportionment and from the big-party bias inherent in a medium electoral system such as the one in Japan.[11]

When combined with the SNTV, Japan's medium sized district system created a well-documented problem of excessive intraparty fighting, which led to the factionalisation of the LDP. This occurred because there were only 129 districts but 511 seats, and it was necessary for a party that was aiming to secure a majority of the seats in the Diet to field several candidates in almost every district[12]. For the LDP candidates in a particular district, their real opponents were other LDP members, not opposition party candidates, because they were

going after the same conservative vote. The existence of factions within the LDP and the electoral system was closely intertwined, since LDP candidates relied on factions for political and financial support; factions, in turn, were always eager to attract more members in order to gain more influence to run the party.[13]

For the LDP and the opposition, the multimember districts in the electoral system created the problem of running too many—or even too few—candidates. If the LDP overestimated its share of votes in the district, then both of its candidates may have lost by splitting the votes that a single candidate would have been able to win on his or her own; if the party underestimated, it lost a seat it could have won had it run two candidates. Since opposition parties rarely ran more than one candidate in each district, the problem for the opposition was more a matter of cooperation. If the opposition ran too many candidates and split the anti-LDP votes, then the LDP would be able to win seats that it otherwise would have lost.

The combination of multimember districts and the SNTV also had the effect of punishing a party that ran an overly popular candidate. For example, take a five-member district in which the LDP hypothetically run three candidates. Suppose that the LDP receives 50% of the vote, but a single candidate, being extremely popular, wins 30% of the vote while the two other LDP candidates finish with 10 percent each; meanwhile, candidates from four other parties evenly split the 50%. That would leave the LDP and four parties with one seat each, although the LDP won 50% of the vote while four other parties each barely had 10%. Hence, it was particularly important for the LDP to not run too many candidates, taking into account the individual popularity of each. Steven Reed comments that he "[knows] of no other electoral system that can punish a party for fielding a very popular candidate."[14]

Money politics was a constant problem in Japan, and many blamed the midsize electoral system that fostered intraparty fighting. Because LDP candidates could not expect financial support from the party or rely on the party loyalty of voters, which was divided among several candidates, each candidate had to organize his personal vote by building a personal political machine, which meant "helping prefectural and local assemblymen with their election campaigns, employing one large staff in the district to look after one's support organization, and another large staff in Tokyo to handle constituent requests and to raise money to make all other activities possible"—a highly expensive operation[15]. In addition, because candidates from the same party fought against each other, bases of competition naturally became monetary issues such as public works and financial support flowing from the government, rather than ideology or policy.[16]

By the time the LDP lost power in 1994, there was a consensus that the electoral system was the source of Japan's political problems—including factionalism, money politics, the power of special interests, candidate rather than party oriented campaigns, and an emphasis on personality rather than policy in voting behavior, all of which led to the LDP's one party dominance[17]. For example, Hrebenar argues that "the proliferation of political parties under the medium-sized system has resulted in the fragmentation of the opposition into small parties seemingly incapable of forming an alternative government[18]. Reed notes that even as the benefits of electoral cooperation became obvious for opposition parties, they were unable to maintain it because the multimember districts gave opportunities for candidates from even the smallest parties to get elected —thereby contributing to the LDP's continuing victories[19]. Furthermore, the personal nature of Japanese politics meant that voter anger toward the ruling party did not translate into anger with his representative; if a voter

became dissatisfied with his representative, he could vote for another LDP candidate, thereby expressing anger without forcing the LDP out of power[20]; indeed, the surprisingly low reelection rate for incumbents, hovering around 85 percent, suggests that this was precisely the case[21]. In addition, the personal nature of campaigns led to pork-barrel politics, which inevitably favored the ruling party.

Curtis, however, points out that there is some peculiarity in arguing that the electoral system was the source of Japan's political problems. According to the argument against the medium sized electoral systems, intrapary fighting created by the system led to factionalism, money politics, personalization of politics, and LDP dominance. Curtis notes, however, that a system of single-entry ballots and multimember districts lead to intraparty competition only under two related sets of conditions: "when the party is unable to structure the vote among multiple candidates and when voter support for a particular party is high enough that the party can reasonably expect to elect more than one candidate in a district"[22]. Hence, the LDP did not suffer from intraparty conflict in urban areas, where it did not have sufficient support to run multiple candidates.

Chapter 7: The Mixed System

The universal condemnation of the old electoral system made reform inevitable when Hosokawa's government took over, particularly since the central piece of Hosokawa's reform proposal, on which the coalition was formed, was electoral reform.

The multimember district electoral system was replaced with a new system on March 4, 1994[23]. The Japanese call the new system *heiritsu sei*, or the parallel system, because it

mixes the single member district (SMD) system and the proportional representation (PR) system, which has become a popular electoral system in recent years[24]. There are 300 single member districts in which the candidate with the greatest number of votes is chosen. In the proportional representation tier, the new electoral law had initially designated 200 seats, but new legislation passed between the 1996 and 2000 elections reduced that number to 180. Although the Japanese upper diet electoral system also includes a PR system, the lower diet's system is partially different in that the votes are counted on a regional basis separated into eleven blocks, rather than votes counted nationally.

In most countries that have adopted the mixed system, like Germany, the single member district tier affects the distribution of the seats among the parties in only the most unusual circumstances; the SMDs are designed mainly to give voters a specific representative that they can identify as their own[25]. The Japanese system is called "parallel" because, unlike the German system, there is almost no connection between the single member district tier and the PR tier in how the seats are distributed; the party's sum is determined by the number of seats it wins in the SMDs plus the number of seats won in the PR. Voters are given two votes, one for the SMDs to vote for their preferred candidate, and the other for the PR tier to vote for their preferred party. The candidates on the PR tier are elected based on the number of PR votes—not SMD votes—that the party receives. Indeed, it is quite a bit of irony that when it was normal to give voters multiple votes, as in a multimember district, Japan only gave one, and now when it is normal only to give one vote, as in the mixed system, Japan gives voters two. There are two exceptions, however, to the rule that the SMD and PR tiers have no connection: candidates are allowed to run both in an SMD and on the party's PR

list—a phenomenon referred to as dual candidacy—and the results in the SMDs are used to break any ties on the PR list.

The dual candidacy clause was quite controversial when the electoral reform was first enacted because it allowed the candidates who lost in the single member district—basically a candidate whom the voters rejected—to be "resurrected" in the PR if the candidate was ranked sufficiently high on the party's list. Over time, this criticism has disappeared to the point that the DPJ, today's largest opposition party, has enacted a party policy in which a candidate who runs on the PR list must also be a candidate in some SMD. During the 2003 elections, the DPJ was surprisingly effective in pushing through this policy, except for few cases in which the party placed several PR-only candidates who were ranked so low that they had no chance of being elected.[26]

The only other interaction between the electoral districts and the PR lists occurs to break any "ties" on the party's ranking of the PR lists. In the Japanese PR system, as in all others, members are elected based on a list of candidates provided by each party, ranked in order of preference. If a party receives enough PR votes for three seats, for example, the three highest ranked members on the party's list are elected. The party does not, however, have to give every candidate a different rank so long as those candidates are running in an SMD. The candidates could all be ranked 1, be clustered together in 3 rankings, or all be ranked differently. Ties are broken based on the performance of the tied candidates in their respective SMDs. First, any dual candidate—those running in the PR and an SMD—must receive at least 10 percent of the total vote cast in his single member district to be eligible for a "resurrection" through the PR. If that requirement is satisfied, *sekihairitsu* (惜敗率), or roughly translated the ratio of margin of loss, is used to re-rank the commonly-ranked

candidates; sekihairitsu is in essence the percent of the vote the candidate won with respect to the winning candidate—and not the votes cast. For example, if a candidate received 40,000 votes while the district winner received 50,000, his *sekihairitsu* is 80 percent. In essence, the system rewards losing candidates who come closest to beating the winners. One important feature of the *sekihairitsu* is that a dual candidate from a small party is more likely to be resurrected if he is running in a district with many candidates, because his *sekihairitsu* is likely to be higher; in a crowded field, the eventual winner is likely to win with fewer votes than in a 2-man field, meaning his *sekihairitsu* would be bigger.

An example can better illustrate how the dual candidacy-*sekihairitsu* system works. Assume that in one regional bloc, a party has submitted a list of ten candidates as follows: Candidate A ran on the PR only and was ranked 1. Candidate B ran in an SMD but was independently given the rank 2. Candidate C ran only on the PR with rank 3. Candidate D ran on both in an SMD and on the PR with rank 4. Four others, candidates E through H, were also dual candidates and were all given the common rank 5. Candidate I, also a dual candidate, was given the rank of 9 on the PR list, and finally Candidate J ran only in the PR and was given the rank 10. The PR list of the candidate and the result from the SMDs are summarized in the following table:

Rank	Candidate	Sekihairitsu
1	A	---
2	B	35%
3	C	---
4	D	15%*
5	E	98.7%
"	F	District Winner
"	G	50.30%
"	H	85%
9	I	99.1%
10	J	---

*The candidate did not receive 10 percent of the votes cast in the district.

Now, based on the amount of votes the party received in the region, assume that the party is allocated five seats. The five winners on the PR list are determined as follows: First, the winners in the district are crossed off the list. In this hypothetical election, only candidate F won in his district. Furthermore, candidate D is ineligible regardless of his *sekihairitsu* because he did not receive 10 percent of the total votes cast in his district; this signifies the subtle difference between how the *sekihairitsu* and the 10% minimum vote requirement are calculated. The first three of the five seats go to the three highest ranked candidates, A, B, and C; B's poor performance in his district does not matter because of his high rank. To determine who receives the two remaining seats, the party must re-rank candidates E, G, and H, who were all ranked 5th. Sekihairitsu places the candidates in the new ranks of F, H, then G, meaning G is the odd candidate out. Of course, I and J are losers as well—even if candidate I lost in his district by receiving 99.1 percent of the winner's votes—because there are more than five eligible candidates who are ranked higher than they are. The result of the PR list, re-ranked, looks as follows:

	Rank	Candidate	Sekihairitsu
Winner	1	A	---
Winner	2	B	35%
Winner	3	C	---
Winner	5	F	98.7%
Winner	"	H	85%
	"	G	50.30%
District Winner	"	E	District Winner
	4	D	15%*
	9	I	99.1%
	10	J	---

- The candidate did not receive 10 percent of the votes cast in the district.

Several changes were made to the electoral system a few months before the 2000 elections by an electoral reform bill passed in the Diet, part of which addressed concerns following the 1996 elections. The most significant change was the reduction of the number of seats in the PR tier by 20 to 180, a compromise by the Obuchi cabinet when the LDP was still in the coalition with Ozawa's Liberal Party. The ruling coalition of the LDP, Komeito, and the Liberal Party rammed the bill through the Diet, which they justified by claiming that the government needed to restructure just as the private sector was restructuring. Yet, as was described earlier, there was a political reason for this part of the reform.

Second, the legislation forbade the PR incumbents to change parties without losing their seats. This legislation came about after several NFP PR incumbents defected back to the LDP, leading to the criticism of voter betrayal. The new law, however, does not prevent PR incumbents from becoming independents, a sore issue particularly for the Social Democratic Party, which continues to suffer defections and argue, reasonably, that the PR seats are the party's seat, not the candidate's. If PR incumbents want to join another party, the party that they are joining must dissolve itself and reestablish as a new party. Ozawa left

the LDP-Liberal coalition when Obuchi refused to do this with the LDP; a successful case was when the Conservative Party dissolved itself to allow disgruntled members of the DPJ to join, following Kan Naoto's election as the DPJ's president, and reemerged as the New Conservative Party[27].

Finally, the reform legislation addressed the "resurrection" concern by establishing a 10% minimum, explained above. Although this did not abolish of what was perceived as the "resurrection problem," those candidates who were overwhelmingly rejected by the voters in their respective SMDs could not be elected. Of course, this rule does not apply to those candidates who are solely running in the PR.[28]

Chapter 8: Analyzing the New Electoral System

The Role of the LDP

One of the most important facts about the new electoral system is that, although it passed during an anti-LDP administration, the reform bill passed only because the LDP supported it. The Hosokawa government, which staked its survival on passing electoral reform, suffered from numerous defections related to the matter. Such political realities forced Hosokawa to negotiate with the LDP, which meant that the bill was finally passed in a form much more favored by the LDP than the original version.

As early as 1955, immediately after it came into power, the LDP floated the idea of reforming the electoral system into single member districts; the idea was shelved when the opposition threatened to halt other, more important pieces of legislation[29]. That legislation

proposed a single member system, such as that used to elect members of the House of Commons in England and the House of Representatives in the United States, because the LDP believed that the system would eliminate minor parties. In 1956—when the main parties were the LDP and the JSP—this plan was rejected by the JSP not because they did not like the system (which would have likely resulted in a stable two-party system), but because of the way the plan gerrymandered the districts in favor of the LDP[30]. As LDP domination grew, smaller parties, such as the JCP and the JSP, rejected the continuing SMD proposals because they would have ultimately led to their extinction.[31] They called the SMD system a "complete crushing of the minor constituency system" and an "LDP plan aimed at one-party despotism"[32]. Instead, the minor parties demanded that the middle-sized districts be replaced with a PR system.[33]

The fight over electoral reform continued between 1958 and 1993, but an important debate took place during Tanaka's term. In 1972, he tried to pass through a mixed system that is very similar to the one Japan has now, except with only one ballot per voter. Tanaka reasoned that if there were two ballots, there would be an incentive for the opposition parties to cooperate in the SMDs because the voters could still vote for them separately in the PR tier; a single vote would have encouraged competition within the SMDs and therefore would have helped the LDP.[34] This "vote-splitting," which became part of the new electoral system, is an important phenomenon since indeed it does promote electoral cooperation; ironically, in the last two elections, it has been the LDP, in coalition with the Komeito, that has greatly benefited from the two-ballot system.

The standoff between those favoring the SMDs and those favoring the PR continued into the Hosokawa government, which consisted of seven parties with very different sizes.

Even before his government fell, Hosokawa's predecessor Miyazawa felt pressured to introduce an electoral reform bill amidst the unraveling from the Sagawa Kyuubin scandal. The LDP proposed the creation of 500 single member districts, knowing full well that the legislation had little chance of passage. For the first time, however, instead of demanding a reform to the medium-sized SNTV system, the Socialists and the Komeito countered with a mixed system—which was suggested by the Diet's Electoral System Advisory Council over the years—that was in the German spirit[35] and tilted in favor of the PR: 200 SMDs and 300 PR members, elected in 12 PR districts. As Curtis notes (and Reed and Thies agree[36]), this small political maneuver by the opposition during Miyazawa's tenure was crucial to what would occur in the Hosokawa government. By introducing such a counter-proposal, these parties in essence signaled that they favored a mixed system; there could be debate over what the distribution of seats would be between the two, but neither party could now claim to oppose the mixed, parallel system.[37]

As described in Chapter 3, immediately following the 1993 elections, Hosokawa and Sakigake's Takemura had outlined a reform proposal that any parties joining them to form a government would have to accept. A major part of the proposal was electoral reform that called for 250 seats in districts and 250 seats in the PR, but the seven parties that joined the coalition had different views on what they wanted in the new system. Shinseito's Ozawa favored a simple SMD system, which was consistent with his vision for the Japanese political landscape. The Socialists, as they have historically, favored the PR system. The reform bill eventually settled on the mixed system, because it was either that or no legislation at all.[38]

The LDP, fearing a political fallout from not supporting the wave of reform, countered Hosokawa's reform bill with one of its own that called for 300 SMDs and 171 PR

seats, backtracking from Miyazawa's proposal of 500 SMDs. Hosokawa tried to offer a compromise of 274 SMDs and 226 PR seats, separated into 47 prefectural blocs in a two-ballot system. The negotiations between Hosokawa and the LDP subsequently collapsed and the Lower Diet passed the Hosokawa version. In the Upper Diet, however, 17 Socialists joined most of the LDP and several independents to defeat the bill, and the coalition government could not muster a two-thirds majority in the Lower Diet to override the Upper Diet's veto. A joint-committee conference was called by Hosokawa to resolve the differences between the two houses of the Diet—a practice that is common in the United States but is extremely rare in Japan—and Hosokawa used the committee to negotiate with the LDP for a new deal. The agreement they struck tilted more in favor of the LDP by creating 300 seats in the single member districts and 200 PR seats in 11 regional blocs, but nonetheless retained the two-ballot system. With the support of the LDP, continuing Socialist defections could not defeat the revised bill and it easily passed.[39]

The LDP's role is important, because the bill that passed was in essence the one recommended by the Advisory Council in 1972, during Tanaka's era.[40] For the LDP, the largest party, the greater the number of SMDs, the better. Throughout the process, from the initial bill submitted by the JSP and the Komeito, to the final bill agreed upon with the LDP, the legislation slowly tilted in favor of the latter in this regard. Former Japan Socialist Party policy research chief Ito Shigeru writes that he vividly remembers, during the conference which finally dissolved the LDP-Socialist-Sakigake coalition in 1998, three party presidents agreed that the SMD system is awful, but then-LDP secretary general Kato Koiichi uttered that, "But the system is advantageous to the LDP."[41]

Dual Candidacy and Incumbency[42]

One feature of the new electoral system is its tendency to encourage dual candidacy, even though the public initially frowned upon the practice. Dual candidacy also creates an interesting phenomenon by which it is possible to have as many as five incumbents in one district: one would enter the Parliament by winning in the district, and the others would be "resurrected" either because of high ranking in the party's PR list or by his performance, relative to other members of his own party, against the winner in their respective SMDs.

There are several reasons why parties are naturally inclined to encourage dual candidacy. The first is related to why, during the 2003 elections, the Social Democratic Party ran so many candidates in the SMDs in which there was little chance of their candidates winning. Although the SDP and the DPJ tried to coordinate candidacies to prevent splitting the anti-coalition vote, the SDP believed that it would be better able to gain votes in the PR if it had a candidate running in the SMDs; hence, it did not hesitate to run candidates in many districts where a DPJ candidate was already running. In an analysis by Erik Herron and Misa Nishikawa based on the electoral results from 1996, they concluded that indeed SDP suspicions were correct: having a candidate in the SMD does improve that party's performance in the PR in that district.[43]

Furthermore, as Margaret McKean and Ethan Scheiner note, parties would inevitably drift towards dual candidacy because it is a convenient option for both the candidates and the parties. For the candidate, dual candidacy provides security in case he loses in the SMD, builds up stronger local organization for future elections, and allows him to control his own destiny. The party can use dual candidacy to avoid making tough decisions about which

candidates to place how high on the PR list by simply having all of them run in the SMDs and have the voters decide the rankings. Or, parties can place well-known names on the PR list to attract votes but have them run in the SMD where they are likely to win, so that lesser-known candidates ranked further down could gain a seat. Parties can also use dual candidacy as a way to encourage PR seat-holders to build future strength in an SMD that they might be able to win for the party in the next election. More importantly, because dual candidacy provides insurance against a loss, the party can experiment to find the right district for each candidate. Finally, it provides the incentive for each candidate to run an energetic campaign in the SMD, improving the party's presence there, and its future prospects.[44] Because the system provides mutual benefits, McKean and Scheiner conclude that the use of the dual candidacy will persist. This is precisely what happened in the three elections. The practice has progressed to the point where a major party has required that all highly-ranked candidates in the PR also run in an SMD.

McKean and Scheiner also point out that the dual candidacy feature has the potential to retain the worst features of the old system. The SMD was intended to create a campaign between two candidates with clear differences in policy, while the PR was supposed to eliminate personalistic campaigns. The dual candidacy, however, essentially does away with those benefits of the PR by giving PR candidates a local base of support. Worse, dual candidacy fosters a low ratio of "candidates running" to "seats available", another bad feature of the old medium sized district system. Theoretically, Duverger's law expects an all-SMD system to have a candidates to seats ratio of 2, so 480 seats should eventually produce 960 candidates. Under Japan's new system, however, the application of Duverger's law produces 600 candidates, 480 incumbents and 120 challengers. That is, there would be 2 candidates

for each of the 300 districts, with everybody running in the PR as well. In 180 districts, there would be two incumbents, one the winner and the other resurrected, and in the 120 remaining districts, only one would be elected. This 1.2 ratio is oddly similar to the 1.25 ratio that Duverger's law anticipates under the old system.[45] While a 1.2 ratio is an extreme case, it's clear that the trend has been toward fewer candidates. In 1996, there were 1503 candidates for 500 seats, a ratio of 3, followed in 2000 by 1404 candidates for 480 seats, ratio of a 2.93, and in November 2003, there were 1159 candidates for the same number of seats, yielding a ratio of 2.41.

Of course, there are reasons to believe that this extreme would never be reached because parties, for strategic reasons, would withhold dual candidacies. During the 1996 elections, Ozawa of the New Frontier Party avoided aggressively utilizing dual candidacy because he was afraid it would create a sense of security for candidates and they would not run a whole-hearted campaign.[46] The LDP tries desperately, sometimes by begging, only to run its candidates in the PR for two reasons. The first is a result of the Costa-Rica method, which is implemented when there are too many incumbents from a district. In some prefectures, such as Gunma, this became necessary when electoral reform was enacted—which was accompanied to an extent by reapportionment[47]—and several LDP incumbents were left in the same district with none other to, because reapportionment reduced the number of seats in the prefecture. More commonly, as politicians kept on switching parties, several district winners or those resurrected in the district returned to the LDP; naturally, the LDP already had its own candidate, often an incumbent, in those districts. In such cases, the LDP ran one incumbent in the district and the other in the PR with a high

ranking that almost guaranteed a seat; during the next elections, the candidates switched. The election analysis will show that the LDP has mixed success with this strategy.

The LDP also places many candidates on the PR to engage in electoral cooperation with the coalition partners. The most popular case in the 2003 elections was with the Komeito, which wanted to run select candidates in the SMDs. Because the district side victories are seen as more prestigious, the LDP candidates frequently balk at the party leadership's request to run on the PR only, but often, high rankings in the PR list are enough to convince them. On numerous occasions, however, the coordination failed and a pro-LDP candidate ran against the Komeito candidate who was officially backed by the LDP. Komeito was particularly burned in the 2000 elections by many pro-LDP candidates defying the LDP leadership and running against their candidates, which led to a splitting of votes. Hence, the Komeito significantly cut back on the number of candidates it ran in SMDs in 2003.

Two Party System or Multi-Party System?

Although SMDs naturally favor a two-party system, most expected that the PR tier of the new electoral system would allow up to four parties, effectively destroying the main goal of electoral reform, namely, to replace the personal, patronage style campaigning of the old system with a more party-centered, policy-oriented electoral system. McKean and Scheiner expect the emergence of three significant parties, in addition to the Japan Communist Party. The possibility of a third or fourth party is provided by the PR system, which "guarantees survival for small parties, even those that cannot win many SMDs at all." The need for more

than two parties, they argue, arises from the ideological spectrum in Japan, which is unlikely to be encompassed solely by two political parties; the JCP will continue to exist because it has established itself as the clean party of Japan and will always attract protest votes.[48] Ray Christensen also concludes that the electoral system will create a multiple-party system, but specifically notes that the contrasting incentives of the SMD, which encourages mergers, and the PR, which encourages small parties, would create a "tendency toward merger and alliance before elections followed by a post-election period of disunity and dissolution"[49]. This analysis was true of the 1996 elections, but not particularly for the 2000 or 2003 elections, DPJ-Liberal merger notwithstanding. In fact, 2000 to 2003 marked the first interval between elections that was not marked by significant party realignment. Whether such stability will continue is a topic discussed in the conclusion.

Herron and Nishikawa also come to similar conclusions about the impact of dual candidacy on the SMDs by extensively studying not only the Japanese system, but Russia's similar system as well. What they call the "contamination effect" refers to the argument that because placing candidates in the SMDs improve their performance in the PR tier, smaller parties would continue to participate in the SMDs. This means that even within the SMD tier, there would not be a two-party system, as Duverger's law predicts. This "contamination" occurs not only because the new electoral system is mixed, but also because there is significant interaction between the PR and the SMD components, which "changes the incentive structure for voters and parties typically associated with independent PR and SMD systems."[50] Reed and Thies come to a similar conclusion: since voters have the incentive to vote even for sure losers because of the *sekihairitsu*, they will vote strategically—not sincerely—if they support a hopeless candidate, thereby violating Duverger's law.[51]

The conclusion that Japan would end up with a multi-party system is not necessarily incompatible with McKean and Scheiner's conclusion about the ratio of candidates to seats falling to 1.2. As Reed and Thies note, Duverger's law must be understood at the district level, not the national[52]. SMDs tend to promote two candidates, the district winner and one challenger, 180 of 300 of whom would also be a PR incumbents. Because the PR allows for the existence of smaller parties, however, there need not be those candidates belonging to only one of two parties; if coalition and opposition parties can fully engage in electoral cooperation, there would be a coalition v. opposition, one-on-one face-off in each district. In other words, the two-candidate competition at the district level does not necessarily translate into two party competition at the national level, although such relationships certainly feed off of each other.[53] Indeed, at the district level, the number of effective parties have consolidated, dropping from 4.1 in 1993, the last election under the SNTV, to 2.95 in 1996; even at the national level, including the PR tier in 1996, the parties dropped from 4.14 in 1993 to 2.94 in 1996[54]. One reason Herron and Nishikawa believe there would be more than two parties competing in the districts is because the incentives of smaller parties to place candidates in SMDs would be too great for electoral cooperation to occur.

If the new electoral system continues to foster the existence of smaller parties that are unable effectively to engage in electoral cooperation, then the reform will have failed to solve the problem of candidates being elected with only a small percentages of the votes cast—a common phenomenon under the multimember district system. In the 1990 elections, in Fukushima's first district, a JSP candidate captured the last of five seats by winning 10.2% of the vote. Although it is unimaginable that a candidate could win with an SMD with such a small share of the votes cast, in the worst case of Shizuoka's 1st district in 2000, four strong

candidates split the votes almost evenly among them and the winner received only 24%. The PR resurrection feature makes this phenomenon even worse. In 2000, when small parties performed respectively, the Liberal Party elected a candidate in Kanagawa's 6th district with only 10.82% of the vote—barely over the 10% minimum—because a competitive three-man race lowered the winner's share of the votes cast, and hence raised the Liberal candidate's *sekihairitsu*. In 2003, the SDP was so badly devastated that its candidates failed to even garner the 10% minimum in many cases, and hence were ineligible for resurrection; the JCP, however, continued to elect candidates with far smaller than a 10% share of the votes in the district, even though it similarly saw its number of votes decline.

One of the questions concerning the number of parties and the new electoral system is whether smaller parties would continue to field candidates in as many districts as possible, given the inventive in the PR tier, even with the tremendous pressures to cooperate that naturally exist within the SMDs. Indeed, reports that even the JCP—the party which has always fielded candidates in every district even under the old system—is being pressured to cooperate may be signs that incentives may not be sufficient to overcome the pressures.[55]

If not, then the related, relevant question becomes whether smaller parties would be able to continue to exist by simply electing members through the PR and none from the SMDs. After all, more than 3/5 of the seats in the lower diet are elected through the SMDs, and those who had a credible showing in the SMD fill many of the PR seats. Both the JCP, which has failed to elect a candidate in the SMD for the second straight election after 2003, and the SDP, which has only one SMD seat, would be test cases that would eventually answer this question. If the JCP and SDP's current status of electing members only in the PR proves unsustainable, and there is increasing pressure to withdraw from the SMDs, then it is

feasible to expect the number of parties in Japan to drop all the way to three: the LDP, the DPJ, and the Komeito. The story with the Komeito will always remain complicated. On the one hand, it will have trouble electing members to the SMD without electoral cooperation[56]. On the other, the party has undeniably strong organizational support, as evidenced by the number of PR votes it continuously receives. That will undoubtedly keep the Komeito around, more so than the JCP, which has a strong organization, but which is clearly not as powerful in delivering votes as the Komeito.

Finally, Curtis believes that the electoral system itself is unlikely to create a two-party system. A two-party system envisioned by the reformers is only possible, he argues, if a great schism emerges within Japan's relatively homogenous society over some issue, whether it be economic or international relations, that clearly pits one party against another. If not, it's quite possible that

> the new electoral system will reinforce the unity and the electoral strength of the LDP while leaving its opposition weak and divided. The LDP is far better positioned to win elections than a newly formed party that has fewer incumbents, little if any organization among locally elected officials, and no constituency in the habit of voting for it.[57]

[1] Gerald L. Curtis, The Logic of Japanese Politics (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 137.

[2] Curtis, 140.

[3] Ronald J. Hrebenar, Japan's New Party System (Colorado: Westview Press, 2000), 39.

[4] Steven R. Reed, Japanese Electoral Politics: Creating a new party system (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 124.

[5] Reed, 18.

[6] Reed, 19.

[7] Steven Reed and Michael Thies. "The Consequences of Electoral Reform in Japan" Mixed-Member Electoral Systems: The Best of Both Worlds? Eds. Matthew Soberg Shugart and Martin P. Wattenberg. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 382.

[8] Hrebenar, 6.

[9] Reed and Thies, 382.

[10] Hrebenar, 40.

[11] Reed and Thies, 382.

[12] Curtis, 140.

[13] Hrebenar, 43.

[14] Reed, 19.

[15] Reed, 20.

[16] Yamaguchi Jiro. "Coalition government as a contemporary experience" Coalition Government: A Contemporary Inspection Ed. Yamaguchi Jiro. (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbun Publishing, 1997), 17. [山口二郎「同時代体験としての連立政治」連立政治　同時代の検証 朝日新聞社　編者　山口二郎].

[17] Curtis, 142-143.

[18] Hrebenar, 43.

[19] Reed, 21.

[20] Reed, 20.

[21] Reed, 21.

[22] Curtis, 143.

[23] Curtis, 160.

[24] Reed, 22.

[25] Reed, 22.

[26] The DPJ leadership considered an exception in one case in which two incumbents shared a same district in the Chiba prefecture; it explored the possibility of having one candidate run solely on the PR list while the other ran in the district, the way the LDP solves the problem, but instead the party leadership moved one candidate into another district—a practice that is relatively common in the DPJ.

[27] Mainichi Shinbun.「政党間の移動　比例は厳しく制限」June 4, 2000. Tokyo Morning Edition. http://www.mainichi.co.jp/eye/sousenkyo/article/kawaru/0604.html. (No longer available online)

[28] Mainichi Shinbun.「復活当選の制限　得票率１０％が下限」June 6, 2000. Tokyo Morning Edition. http://www.mainichi.co.jp/eye/sousenkyo/article/kawaru/0606.html. (No longer available online)

[29] Hrebenar, 49.

[30] Reed and Thies, 158.

[31] Curtis, 145.

[32] Hrebenar, 50.

[33] Curtis, 145.

[34] Reed and Thies, 162.

[35] Reed and Thies, 166.

[36] Reed and Thies, 169.

[37] Curtis, 153-154.

[38] Curtis, 155.

[39] Curtis, 156-160; Reed and Thies, 168.

[40] Reed and Thies, 161.

[41] Ito Shigeru. Coalition Disturbance: Emerging from that Vortex. (Tokyo: Chuou Kouron Shinha, 2001), 64. [伊藤茂「動乱連立　その渦中から」中央公論新社]

[42] I rely extensively on two analysis in this section, one by Herron and Nishikawa, the other by McKean and Scheiner. Although both generalize their analysis to draw conclusions about the electoral system, they based their analysis solely on the 1996 elections data. As Reed warns, the first election under a new electoral system is never a good indicator of what

is going to occur. Hence, although I believe their analysis to be on target and subsequent electoral results suggest they are correct, it *may* be necessary to be careful with their analysis.

[43] Erik S. Herron and Misa Nishikawa, "Contamination effects and the number of parties in mixed-superposition electoral systems" Electoral Studies. V. 20 (2001) 63-86, 79.

[44] Margaret McKean and Ethan Scheiner, "Japan's new electoral system: la plus ça change…" Electoral Studies. V.19 (2000) 447-477, 460-461

[45] McKean and Scheiner, 466.

[46] McKean and Scheiner, 454.

[47] Curtis, 161.

[48] McKean and Scheiner, 469.

[49] Ray Christensen. "The Effect of Electoral Reforms on Campaign Practices in Japan: Putting New Wine into Old Bottles" Asian Survey, 38, 10 (Oct. 1998), 986-1004, 988.

[50] Herron and Nishikawa, 69-70.

[51] Reed and Thies, 400.

[52] Reed and Thies, 386.

[53] Ibd.

[54] Ibd.

[55] Reed and Thies, 387.

[56] Apparently, one reason why the NFP did not actively engage in dual candidacy in 1996, besides that Ozawa wanted to encourage heartful campaigning, was because the party had so many Komeito candidates who were unlikely to win in the SMDs and therefore had to

be placed on the PR. Komeito may have a strong organization, but it is also extremely unpopular with the general public.

[57] Curtis, 167.

Part IV

Previous Elections

Chapter 9: The Election of 1996

Six major parties competed in the 1996 elections, the first to be held under the new electoral system. The Hashimoto government was a coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party, the renamed Social Democratic Party (formerly the Japan Socialist Party), and the Sakigake. In the opposition were Ozawa's New Frontier Party, the newly created Democratic Party of Japan, and, of course, the Japan Communist Party. As stated in Chapter 4, the NFP went into the elections with high expectations following their impressive performance in the previous year's Upper House elections, while the SDP in particular limped into the elections, having suffered massive defections to the new DPJ.

In the end, only the LDP and the JCP gained seats, while the SDP and the Sakigake were devastated. The LDP gained 28 seats for a total of 239, the NFP lost four seats to 156, the DPJ held on to its 52 seats, the JCP gained 11 to 26 seats, the SDP was halved to 15, and the Sakigake down 7 to 2 seats.[1] In an election in which 251 seats were necessary for a majority and in which the NFP declared its goal as reaching the majority, its inability even to maintain the number of seats prior to the elections was seen as a defeat for the party[2].

In the PR, the LDP gained 70 seats, while the NFP gained a respectable 60 and the DPJ 35. In terms of the share of the total vote of the PR, the LDP received 32.7 percent of the vote, followed by 28 percent for the NFP and 16.1 percent for the DPJ. In fact, although the LDP won by far the greatest number of seats in the single member districts—a trend that continued into the 2003 elections—their share of the total vote in the SMD tier was not much higher. The LDP received 38.63 percent of the total votes cast in all 300 districts but gained 169, or 56.3 percent of the seats, far outpacing the NFP's 96 and the DPJ's 17. Both parties

received 27.96 percent and 10.62 percent of the votes, respectively, but their share of the seats amounted only to 32 percent and 5.7 percent, respectively[3]. Undoubtedly, the LDP benefited not only from the new system that partly employed SMDs, but also from the split in the opposition camp that included not only the NFP and the DPJ, but also the JCP.

In insisting on the SMD system, one of Ozawa's vision was to create a two-party system that would give voters two clear choices in policies. In analyzing the 1996 election results, Igarashi Hiroshi concludes that, at least in the first elections, policy-centered campaign did not pan out for three reasons. First, because all parties except the JCP had been part of one of the four coalition governments formed between 1993 and 1996, the policy differences between parties essentially disappeared. Second, there was a significant gap between the published policy of the party and the policy of the individual candidates. Third, despite changes in the electoral system, campaigns continued to be candidate-centered. This, he argues, is precisely on the account of the electoral system. Specifically, because three-fifths of the 500 seats are chosen through the SMDs, and the dual-candidacy candidates are elected in the PR based on their performance in their districts, the emphasis will naturally be placed on the SMDs, where campaigns are naturally more candidate-centered.[4]

Steven Reed, who has conducted a detailed analysis of the SMD results from 1996, disagrees with this final point, insisting that the most significant determinant of whether a candidate was elected in a district in 1996 was whether he was nominated by a major party in the district where his personal support was strongest. "It appears," he concludes, "that the nomination actually meant more in the first [election under the new system] than most observers noticed."[5]

Reed also raises another important point. His analysis indicates that although personal support and major party nominations were important, they were often insufficient for a candidate to get elected in 1996. Indeed, because of redistricting, the deciding factor in many districts in 1996 was electoral cooperation with candidates in other districts who used to be rivals under the old multimember district system. The effects of such cooperation were mixed, but the Komeito, which was part of the NFP during this election, unsurprisingly proved to be the party most effective in delivering promised votes.[6]

Chapter 10: The Election of 2000

The NFP's dismantling soon after the election of 1996 meant that more parties, eight, competed in the 2000 elections. The LDP, the Komeito, and the Conservative Party controlled the government. The opposition consisted of the DPJ—which became the biggest opposition party after absorbing most of the NFP members—the SDP—which left the coalition with the LDP in 1998—Ozawa's Liberal Party—which had split only months before with the Conservatives—and the JCP.

The opposition did well across the board at the expense of the coalition, with only the Communists losing seats—a complete reversal of the 1996 results. The LDP entered the election with 271 incumbents despite winning only 239 seats in the previous election, because the party actively courted lawmakers to return to the party. With Mori at the helm the party was devastated, losing 38 seats to 233—below the new majority of 241 seats; the necessary seats for a majority lowered from 250 in 1996 because the PR tier lost 20 seats. The LDP dragged down its coalition partners, with the Komeito losing11 seats to 31 and the

Conservatives losing 11 to 7, resulting in a net loss of 60 seats for the coalition. The biggest gainer in the opposition was the DPJ, which gained 32 seats to 127, followed by the Liberal Party, which gained 4 to 22. Even the SDP, nearing extinction, gained five seats to 19. The JCP was could not catch the anti-Mori wave, losing 6 seats to 20. Each party's performance in the PR tier indicates the unpopularity of the LDP. It once again came out as the top party in the PR with 56 seats—14 fewer than in 1996—and the DPJ garnered 47, higher than its 35 in the previous election but well below NFP's 60. The Komeito was third with 24, followed by the JCP at 20, the Liberals at 18 and the SDP at 15.[7]

One, although not the primary, reason why the coalition suffered so many defeats was because the three parties could not adequately engage in electoral cooperation. This was particularly problematic for the Komeito, whose bad image is prevalent within the LDP as well as with the public. The Komeito fielded candidates in 18 districts, and in 4 of them there was an LDP nominated candidate as well. Furthermore, of the 14 districts in which LDP officially withdrew its own candidate, in five, an LDP independent defied the party and ran against the Komeito candidate, often on the platform of Komeito criticism; only in two of those districts did the Komeito candidate win. In total, the Komeito managed to win in only 7 of the 18 districts in which it fielded a candidate[8].

The Conservative Party fared even worse. It fielded 15 candidates in the SMDs, and in 4 of these the LDP ran its own candidate while in 3 more an LDP independent defied the party. In the end, the Conservatives won seven seats, only in one of which the coalition vote was split.

In addition, even when the LDP withdrew its candidate in favor of the Komeito's or the Conservative's, the effectiveness of the cooperation was unclear. The Komeito is

remarkably effective in delivering votes for the party's candidate or the candidate whom the party supports, but its partners can rarely return the favor, a phenomenon that remained true for the 2003 elections. Of the 14 districts in which the Komeito ran its candidates with the backing of the LDP and the Conservative Party, they were elected in only half. In those districts, many voters who would have voted for the LDP candidate undoubtedly voted for an opposition candidate because of their distaste for the Komeito. In fact, the Komeito-LDP alliance may have hurt the LDP because voters who were turned off by the alliance voted for the DPJ candidate. The defeat of two prominent LDP incumbents in Tokyo, Yosano Kaoru and Fukaya Takashi, suggest this may have been the case. Exit polls indicated that Yosano received 90 percent of Komeito support and Fukaya 73 percent, but Yosano received only 72 percent of LDP support and Fukaya only 69 percent.[9]

The Komeito story, however, isn't as simple as that. Indeed, the common perception is that the Komeito support actually helped the LDP because the party—even if distrusted by the general public—had (and has) a dedicated core of supporters. For example, in the 2000 elections, the LDP received nearly 23 million votes in the SMDs, 3 million more than in the SMDs in 1996 despite running fewer candidates. Although the *heiritsusei* system no doubt means that there were voters who split their vote between the LDP in the SMD and another party in the PR, the LDP's difference in the SMD and the PR—8 million votes—corresponds closely with the number of votes Komeito itself received in the PR tier.[10]

In many cases, the effects of the Komeito support on the LDP cannot be generalized because it differs from district to district. In 1996, when the Komeito was part of the NFP, many LDP candidates railed against the NFP's involvement with the Komeito. Those who were particularly critical in 1996 obviously did not receive the support of the Komeito in

2000 even if the LDP was a coalition partner—thus about 40% of the LDP candidates did not receive the support of the Komeito in 2000[11] —and it is likely that many Komeito supporters willingly voted for the opposition.

Indeed, Reed's detailed analysis of the 2000 elections confirms this. As one would expect, the most important factor in determining the election for a candidate in 2000 was, as in 1996, the share of vote the candidate received in the previous election.[12] The second most important factor, however, was "whether the candidate was supported or opposed by the Komeito."[13] This was probably true in the Osaka prefecture, where the candidate whom the Komeito supported—whether from the LDP or DPJ—won in 13 of the 19 districts; the LDP, which is traditionally weak in Osaka, clearly benefited from the Komeito's help.[14] Reed concludes that the Komeito's move significantly affected whether the LDP candidate won or lost, although the amount of its vote was not sufficient to elect its own candidates[15].

Reed's analysis also reveals some interesting results. For example, the presence of a minor party candidate hurt the LDP, but surprisingly, the effect on the LDP vote was much greater had the minor candidate been from the SDP rather than the Liberal Party; one would have expected that the latter, which traces itself back to the LDP, would take more votes away from the LDP. The fact that it does not may suggest that the traditional left-right cleavage has been replaced by a new one between old and new parties. Indeed, the Liberal Party drew more votes from the DPJ than the LDP, further suggesting that such new-old party cleavage exists. These findings only enhance the belief that Japanese politics remains policy-free, although the fact that the SDP drew more votes from the DPJ than the LDP makes sense in terms of the traditional right-left cleavage.[16]

The second interesting result in Reed's findings suggest that the DPJ, despite the popular belief that it is an urban party, is not necessarily strong in urban areas. In fact, the DPJ's solid performance in urban districts was more a reflection of the LDP's weakness—the LDP is clearly a rural party in Reed's analysis—than the DPJ's strength.[17] It is important to note, however, that even if the DPJ did not perform particularly well in urban areas, the Komeito was unable to provide the winning margin for LDP.[18]

One of the unexpected results of the 2000 elections was the relative success of the smaller parties. After a disastrous election in 1996, the SDP left the coalition and reappointed Doi Takako—who led the party to the "Doi boom" of 1989 in the aftermath of the Recruit scandal—as party president. Although it won only 4 seats in the SMDs as it did in 1996, the 15 seats it won in the PR tier was an increase of 4 over 1996. The biggest surprise was Ozawa's Liberal Party, which was in bed with the LDP for several months, and which left the coalition only two months before the election. Despite a lack of preparations, the Liberals gained 4 seats in the SMD and 18 through the PR, for a total of 22 seats—4 more than before the election. Performance by these parties suggests that, as expected, it is difficult for smaller parties to compete in the SMDs, but also that the PR tier does allow, if not encourage, the existence of small parties. A cautionary note, however, is that both the JCP and the Conservatives lost a significant number of seats as a result of the elections, while both the SDP and the Liberals competed under relatively popular and well-known party leaders. In fact, the 2003 election results suggest that 2000 is probably more of an anomaly than the rule.

In the post-election coverage, newspapers essentially agreed that the LDP had lost the election while the DPJ made great strides, but Gerald Curtis warns that this is not necessarily

an accurate description of what happened. Part of the problem, he says, was that going into the elections, the national polls indicated a significant victory for the LDP; the Asahi Shinbun, a week before, had predicted that the LDP would win 257 seats, enough to secure a majority on its own. In addition to falling short of this expectation, the LDP sustained several key losses in urban districts, which, when combined, led to the election being categorized as a defeat.[19]

The problem with the assessment of a "victory" by the DPJ is that it makes sense only in the context of the LDP's unchallengeable control over government, which has not been the case since 1993. The mere fact that the LDP was able to remain in power signified that the Democrats lost—and they lost not because the LDP was popular, but because they were unable to gain any enthusiasm about their gaining power from within the public. Indeed, most evidence suggests that the DPJ made gains because the voters wanted to vote against the LDP. Furthermore, the party gained seats mostly as a result of the disappearance of the NFP, which actually performed far better in 1996 than the DPJ did in 2000, despite competing against the DPJ, as well as the LDP in that election.[20]

[1] Igarashi Hitoshi. "The 1996 Election results and their meaning: Inspection of coalition politics and *heiritsusei*" Shikin to Shakaihoshou. Early November 1996 edition (Number 1189). [available online at: http://sp.mt.tama.hosei.ac.jp/users/igajin/sousenk.htm] [五十嵐仁 「９６年総選挙の結果とその意味：連立政治と並立制の検証」資金と社会保障 ９６年１１月上旬号 （１１８９号）]

[2] Steven R. Reed, Japanese Electoral Politics: Creating a new party system (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 38.

[3] Mainichi Shinbun. 「前回データから」 総選挙２０００. http://www.mainichi.co.jp/eye/sousenkyo/1996/tohabetsu/01.html

[4] Igarashi.

[5] Reed, 149-150.

[6] Reed, 150.

[7] Mainichi Shinbun, 総選挙２０００. http://www.mainichi.co.jp/eye/sousenkyo/index.html

[8] Gerald L. Curtis, The Logic of Japanese Politics (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), xvi.

[9] Ibd.

[10] Ibd.

[11] Ibd.

[12] Reed, 167.

[13] Reed, 170

[14] 「選挙でGo!」 http://homepage3.nifty.com/makepeace/

[15] Reed, 170.

[16] Reed, 172-174.

[17] Reed, 173.

[18] Reed, 170.

[19] Curtis, xiii.

[20] Curtis, xviii-xix.

Part V

The Election of 2003

Chapter 11: Results and Analysis

Results

Following the merger of the DPJ and the Liberal Party, the number of parties that competed in the 2003 elections was the fewest since the electoral system was reformed. More importantly, for the first time, the party alignment was relative stable between elections. The same parties still made up the coalition, although the Conservative Party had technically dissolved itself in early 2000 and reemerged as the New Conservative Party in order to allow several PR defectors of the DPJ to join the party—a necessity under the electoral reform passed before the 2000 elections. The opposition was reduced to the DPJ, the SDP, and the JCP following the dissolution of the Liberal Party.

The election produced mixed results. The LDP won a total of 240 seats—which includes three technically independent candidates who were added to the LDP nomination list retroactively after they were elected—for a decrease of ten seats; there were also 6 LDP-leaning independents who are likely to enter the LDP between now and the next election. Meanwhile the DPJ gained 40 seats to 177. All small parties, except the Komeito, suffered significant losses. The JCP continued its slide, losing 11 seats to 9. The SDP, which had numerous problems going into the elections, had its seats cut by two-third, to 6; the party's performance was so poor that its party president, Doi Takako, had to rely on PR resurrection after losing her SMD seat, and soon after resigned as party leader. The NCP had a fatal election, losing reduced to 4 seats after losing 5 in the election, and the day after folded into the LDP. The Komeito was the only small party success story, gaining three seats to 34. In

total, the coalition—which became the LDP-Komeito coalition following NCP's dissolution—suffered a net loss of 12 seats.

Although the LDP performed better than it had in 2000, the DPJ made an impressive showing. Its 177 seats rivaled the 178 seats the NFP had upon its founding[1], and for the first time ever, an opposition party topped the LDP in the PR tier; the LDP gained 69 seats in the PR, compared to 72 for the DPJ. The LDP's showing, however, was not unimpressive. The total was only one short of its highest total from 1996, when there were 20 more seats in the PR tier. It is also clear that much of the gains made by the DPJ were at the expense of the smaller parties, leading many to declare the emergence of a two-party system. On the other hand, despite a 13 seat improvement over 2000 elections in the PR tier, the LDP won only 4 more seats in total, signaling its continuing deterioration in the SMDs.

Despite significant gains by the DPJ, newspapers reported the obvious, that the coalition had won the election. In Japan, electoral victory is measured along three lines: a majority (過半数), a stable majority (安定多数), and an absolute stable majority (絶対安定多数). A majority is simply winning a mathematical majority of the 480 seats of the lower house. A stable majority, at 252 seats, is the number of seats necessary to not only gain the chairmanship of all of the 21 standing committees, but also to gain a majority of the members in the standing committees. Because a stable majority guarantees a stable operation of the government—with, for example, the management of submitted bill proposals—a stable majority is often the goal. An absolute stable majority guarantees chairmanships and majorities in all of the committees.[2] The LDP-NCP-Komeito coalition, with 278 seats, went over the 269 seats necessary for an absolute stable majority. If it were not for the long

history of the LDP's one party domination, newspapers would have been universal in declaring a landslide victory for Koizumi.

In politics, however, elections are more of a game of expectations and "victory" is often in response to those anticipations, as was the case in 1996 and 2000. To that extent, neither party could claim "victory." Before the elections, Koizumi had stated that his goal was for the LDP to gain a majority on its own—241 seats—and that he would resign if the coalition parties as a whole failed to reach that goal. DPJ president Kan Naoto had stated that the goal for his party was 200 seats, although this was considered to be very ambitious by some in his own party, since it held only 137 seats[3]. The LDP fell 4 seats short of Koizumi's goal, and Kan fell 23 short of his. Nevertheless, because his initial goal of 200 seats was aggressive, the party's 40 seats improvement might have led to a victory celebration, as it did in 2000 under Hatoyama. Yet the party's own statements during the election night prevented such a proclamation from taking place. Initial exit polls indicated that the DPJ might win in excess of 200 seats, prompting Kan to claim that the 233 seats the LDP won in the last election were one of the determining factors of whether Koizumi had received a vote of confidence. By the end of the election night, the LDP leadership was insisting that 237 seats indicated a vote of confidence, and the DPJ was forced to concede that it had.[4] In the end, neither side was able to claim a significant victory.

Source of DPJ Gains

The LDP went into the elections under a relatively popular prime minister who had won a landslide party presidency election and appointed an extremely popular figure as his

second in command. To that extent, an improvement of only 4 seats over the 2000 elections suggests either that Koizumi and Abe's popularity had minimal impact on electoral results, or that the LDP's base was deteriorating and the popularity of the two was able to stem the losses. The newspapers were split on this matter, with both the Yomiuri[5] and the Sankei[6] suggesting that the popularity of the duo was ineffective and the Nikkei[7] suggesting that it was.

The best indicator of whether the popularity of Koizumi had any impact is reflected in the PR tier, which is less reliant on—although, because of dual candidacy, not fully independent of—the personal popularity of candidates in the SMDs. According to data collected by Yomiuri Shinbun, Koizumi's popularity did have an impact on the party's PR vote. In the last elections, the LDP-Komeito-Conservative coalition's Mori cabinet entered the elections with a 27.9% approval rating, which translated into a 28% share of the vote in the PR tier, while in 1996, the Hashimoto government's LDP-SDP-Sakigake coalition entered the race with a 45.6% approval rating, which translated into 33% of the vote in the PR tier. Comparably, the Koizumi cabinet had a 51% approval rating at the time of the election[8], and received 35% of the PR votes; there was an increase in votes, though not in line with the higher popularity. Yomiuri speculated that part of the difference was as a result of the Komeito voters, who support the Koizumi cabinet but voted for the Komeito in the PR tier.[9] Furthermore, Yomiuri's exit polling indicated that while 61% of the cabinet supporters voted for the LDP, 23% also voted for the opposition in the PR, the bulk of which went to the DPJ.[10]

The DPJ's success in the PR tier was fueled by its performance with independents and non-supporters of the Koizumi cabinet. Yomiuri's exit poll indicates that of the 20% of

the voters who identified themselves as independents, 56% of them voted for the DPJ in the PR, up 18 percentage points from the previous election. The LDP, at 21%, also saw an 8 percentage point increase as well, but this was far short of the 28% it received from independents in the 2001 Upper House elections immediately following Koizumi's ascension to power.

Furthermore, the DPJ's 56% share of the PR independent vote was 7 points better than the combined 38% and 11% received by the DPJ and the Liberal Party in the previous election, respectively, suggesting that the merger benefited the DPJ at least in the PR.[11] In fact, based on Yomiuri's analysis, the merger had a far reaching impact in the PR tier. The newspaper concluded that, based on the 2000 election results, the DPJ-Liberal merger would add 5 additional seats to the number both parties won in the previous election, because fewer votes would be wasted; in actuality, the DPJ added 11 seats to the DPJ-Liberal total from 2000.[12] The DPJ's strength among independents in the PR actually spread into the more rural areas where the LDP is traditionally stronger. Asahi's exit poll indicates that 50% of independents in towns and villages voted for the DPJ and 21% for the LDP, a gap far greater than in 2000 when 32% and 21% voted for DPJ and LDP, respectively. Although a direct comparison cannot be drawn, this constituted a reversal of the 18% for the DPJ and 30% for the LDP during the 2001 Upper House Elections.[13]

The results also at least suggest, as highlighted by the Yomiuri and Sankei newspapers, that Japan may be moving toward a two party system, one of the goals of the 1994 electoral reform that was sidetracked in 2000. Of all the small parties, the NCP faired particularly poorly, with its party president failing to get elected. The party ran all of its nine candidates in the SMDs although only seven were SMD winners in the previous race,

because it knew it had very little chance of electing anybody through the PR. All but the three strongest candidates, including former Prime Minister Kaifu, faced an LDP-leaning independent, or worse, an LDP endorsed candidate. The party reelected only those three who faced no LDP opposition, and returned one former Diet member, who also faced no LDP challenge, by unseating a DPJ incumbent in a rematch. The problem for the party was clearly related to the failure of the LDP and the NCP to engage in effective cooperation, but it is clear why the LDP was reluctant to do so: while its other partner, the Komeito, could deliver votes through a party recommendation, the NCP's endorsement meant nothing. Furthermore, NCP candidates were weak in general, raising the issue of electability.

The NCP was literally pushed into extinction, but two small parties in the opposition, particularly the SDP, fared only marginally better. For whatever reason—possibly because of the unpopularity of Prime Minister Mori, and also the personal popularities of Doi Takako of the SDP and Ozawa Ichiro of the Liberal Party—some small parties made impressive gains in 2000. In 2003, however, the JCP failed, for the second straight election, to gain any seats in the SMD while the SDP won only 1, even though the DPJ forwent fielding a candidate in all four districts where the SDP had an incumbent.

The PR results and the exit polls indicate why the SDP and the JCP faced problems. The merged DPJ, the LDP, and the Komeito all gained 430,000, 3.7 million, and 970,000 votes from the previous election, respectively, while the JCP lost one-third and the SDP lost nearly one-half. The DPJ and the LDP accounted for about 73% of the PR vote, significantly higher than the 63% share the two largest parties received in the last elections[14], possibly signaling that a large-party bias inherent in the SMDs is affecting the PR. Furthermore, Asahi Shinbun's exit polls indicate that the DPJ was the primary recipient of the anti-

coalition vote, receiving 67% of such votes, while the JCP received 13% and the SDP 7%.[15] Although a direct comparison cannot be drawn, during the 2001 Upper House elections, at 27%, the JCP received the largest proportion of the votes of those not supporting the Koizumi cabinet, followed by the DPJ at 26%, the SDP 16%, and the Liberal Party 7%.[16] In addition, the DPJ was also the main beneficiary of the 36% of voters who engaged in split voting. Of those who voted for a different party between the SMD and the PR, the DPJ received 30% of those PR votes, second only to the Komeito's 31%, and far greater than the SDP's 10% and the JCP's 6%.[17] Most importantly, 73% of the voters who voted for the DPJ candidate in the SMD also voted for the DPJ in the PR, up from 67% in the previous elections[18] and higher than 67.4% rate for the LDP[19]. In effect, the DPJ held on to more of its SMD voters in the PR, and the party became the magnet for the anti-LDP vote.

The Komeito Story

One notable exception to the weak performance by smaller parties was the Komeito, which garnered success across the board. The Soka Gakkai's organization strength undoubtedly helped, but so did far more effective electoral cooperation between the LDP and the party. Learning from its painful defeats in the 2000 elections, the Komeito withheld fielding candidates except in districts where it already had an incumbent, who either won the district or was resurrected in the PR. In ten such districts, only in one did an LDP independent defy the party and run; notwithstanding, the Komeito candidate managed to win that seat. In fact, Komeito candidates in the districts won in all cases with the exception of one, who, though he lost in the SMD in 2000, was "resurrected" in the PR that same year; in

effect, the 2000 loser lost once again in 2003, but this time, he was not resurrected in the PR. The electoral cooperation was a far cry from the 2000 elections, but so were the LDP and its supporter's willingness to tolerate the Komeito. After more than three years in the coalition together, the antagonism between most of the LDP candidates and the Komeito had lessened substantially, to the point that when the NCP folded into the LDP, hardly anybody raised an eyebrow over the loss of the buffer that had existed between the LDP and the Komeito since the formation of the coalition.

Whether electoral cooperation translated into votes across party lines, on the other hand, is a different story. At the very least, electoral cooperation with the Komeito, which like the JCP is strong in the urban areas, must be part of the explanation of how the LDP performed surprisingly well in the most urban of areas, the Tokyo prefecture. There, the LDP won 12 seats, just as the DPJ did, while the Komeito held on to its sole seat, a reversal from 2000, when the DPJ won 13, the LDP only 8, the Komeito 1, and unaffiliated independents 3. The story in Tokyo's16th district is indicative of the Komeito effect. In 2000, the incumbent in that district was Shimamura Yoshinobu, a seven term LDP veteran with cabinet experience. When the Komeito was part of the NFP, he had railed against the religiously based party, so that in 2000, even as the Komeito joined the LDP in a coalition, the Komeito recommended a conservative independent candidate who eventually won. Before the 2003 election, Shimamura begged the Komeito for help, to which the party responded by not recommending any candidate in that district and declaring a free-vote. Shimamura was able to win with 10,000 votes over a DPJ candidate and the conservative independent running for reelection, with Asahi's exit polls indicating 17% of Komeito supporters voting for him.[20] In Tokyo generally, 70% of Komeito supporters voted for the

LDP candidate where the Komeito fielded no candidate , a ratio about equal to the number from the 2000 election. LDP veteran Yosano Kaoru of the 1st district, who lost in a shocker in 2000, failed to win his district, but by providing 83% of the Komeito vote, the party likely had a hand in a performance strong enough for his resurrection in the PR.[21]

A nation wide exit poll illustrates the remarkable discipline of Komeito voters, who are loyal not only to the party, but also to the party directive. Loyalty to the party is evident in the total number of the party's PR votes, which was the highest in any election, Upper or Lower House, since it splintered from the NFP.[22] The Komeito was the biggest beneficiary of the split voting because in most districts, the Komeito did not field a candidate. Loyalty to the party directive is apparent in the amazing statistic of 72% of the party supporters voting for an LDP candidate in SMDs where the Komeito did not field its own candidate, 11 points higher than the same poll from the 2000 elections. Showing that the electoral assistance is not mutual, in districts where the LDP did not field a candidate in favor of Komeito's, only 56% of LDP supporters voted for the Komeito candidate. In a sign that the "Komeito allergy" is alleviating, however, this was up a dramatic 18 points from the previous election.[23]

Comparing with past elections

Some of the observations that Igarashi and Reed made after the 1996 elections actually remained either true or relevant to the 2003 elections. Particularly for the coalition parties, it is clear that electoral cooperation—which Reed pointed out was essential during the 1996 elections—was once again crucial. Many LDP candidates in the SMDs were helped

by receiving 72% of the Komeito votes, while the Komeito, which has narrow support outside of its base, was undoubtedly rescued by the far greater willingness of the LDP supporters to vote for them. The failure of the NCP to elect a candidate in any district, except those where the LDP withheld its own candidate, is a script taken out of the 2000 elections.

On the other hand, there were some important changes between the 2003 and previous elections, although exactly how important is a matter of debate. The 2003 elections became the first true elections in Japan that involved manifestos by the two major parties, as they do in England, in an effort to center the campaign on party and policy. The DPJ was the first to do so, going so far as to publish the names of perspective cabinet members it and when it took power; the manifesto was so important to DPJ party leader Kan Naoto that when he was asked to coin a term for the dissolution of the Diet on October 10th, as is the tradition in Japan, he named it the "Manifesto Dissolution."[24] Koizumi was then forced to publish his own set of "election promises," based on his reform proposals. Whether these public declarations had an impact in changing the nature of traditional personalistic campaigns, however, is a difficult question to answer. A preelection poll by the Yomiuri newspaper showed that 58 percent of the respondents said they empathized with candidates who supported policies that were in contrast to the party manifesto[25]. Indeed, Asahi's exit poll indicated that among the voters who voted for the LDP candidate in the SMD and the DPJ in the PR (only about 10% of the voters), 50% said they did so because they placed importance on the candidate's personality and abilities. On the other hand, the same poll indicated that 64% of those who voted for the DPJ in both the SMD and the PR named manifestos as their most important consideration, suggesting that the DPJ's emphasis on manifestos paid off.[26]

An interesting comparison between the 2003 and 2000 elections is related to Reed's point that in 2000, the DPJ did not necessarily show strength in urban areas. Indeed, in Tokyo in 2003, the number of seats the LDP-Komeito-NCP coalition won exceeded the number of seats the DPJ won. This may indicate, not that the LDP is gaining strength or that the DPJ is losing strength in urban areas, but that LDP-Komeito cooperation is becoming stronger and more effective, as was suggested above. Of course, the DPJ continued to make significant gains in other urban areas. Nevertheless, Reed concluded that in 2000, the Komeito was unable to provide the winning margin for the LDP in urban areas—where the Komeito has its strength—but the 2003 elections suggest that going forward, the LDP may be able to hold its own against the DPJ with the support of the Komeito.

Chapter 12: Predictions and Results

Before the elections, I had ranked each of the 300 single member districts on a scale of 1 to 5 based on how likely the candidate who was either the official nominee (**公認**) or a recommendation (**推薦**) of the DPJ [27] would win the seat, with 1 being the most likely and 5 being the least likely. More specifically, the rank of 1 is a guarantee of a DPJ win, or for the candidate the party was recommending, 2 is a safe DPJ, 2.5 is leaning DPJ, 3 is a toss-up, 3.5 is leaning against the DPJ candidate , 4 is a safe anti-DPJ, and 5 is a guarantee for any non-DPJ candidate.

The ranking system centered on the DPJ and not the DPJ-LDP rivalry—i.e. 4 does not necessarily mean that the seat was leaning LDP—because in a multi-party system, the competition in some districts become extremely complex; it was sometimes possible for

neither the DPJ nor LDP-friendly candidate to win, even if both parties ran candidates. Okinawa's 1st district was the primary example, where I thought that the JCP candidate had a strong chance to win. To avoid such confusions, and because the DPJ's stated goal was to gain power, I looked at every district from the perspective of the DPJ.

I based my prediction on several factors. The first was incumbency. Naturally, I gave an advantage to the candidate who won the district during the last election. If he was challenged by another candidate who was "resurrected," I considered that challenge to be stronger than a challenge posed by a new candidate, or a candidate who ran during the last election but was not resurrected. This is somewhat of a tricky issue because there were two ways in which a candidate could have been resurrected: a high ranking on the party's PR list or a high *sekihairitsu*. I did not distinguish between the two. In other words, I did not lessen the incumbency advantage for a candidate who won merely as a result of his high ranking on the party's PR list rather than as a result of his high *sekihairitsu*. The benefit of incumbency is above all in name recognition, which exists if a candidate ran in the previous election and remained active in the Diet, regardless of how he gained his seat.

Furthermore, *sekihairitsu* is highly relative. Because it is the ratio of the candidate's vote with respect to the winner's, the number of votes the winner of the district received is as important as the number of votes the candidate received; this naturally means that candidates who are running in a district with many other candidates are more likely to have a higher *sekihairitsu* than those running against only one candidate. Hence, it is not necessarily wise simply to consider a candidate who won because of his high *sekihairitsu* to be a stronger candidate than the one who won because of a high PR rank, because the candidate's high *sekihairitsu* may have been the result of several strong candidates running in his district.

In addition, how high of a *sekihairitsu* was necessary for the candidate to gain a seat depended on which one of the 11 regional blocs the candidate's district was in, how the party ranked the candidates (i.e. whether they were all ranked 1, or grouped in several clusters), and how many votes the party received in the PR, which differed greatly in some cases between the regional blocs. Hence, *sekihairitsu* does not necessarily imply the strength of one candidate over another of the same party in a different district located in a different PR bloc. In short, *sekihairitsu* is too much of a variable to be considered in determining the viability of a candidate.

Second, I looked at the results from the 1996 and particularly the 2000 elections[28]. The 1996 results were difficult to use as a significant indicator for two reasons. First, it was the first election under the new electoral system, and second, so much realignment had occurred between 1996 and 2000; because of the NFP votes, it was impossible to keep track of which candidates performed how much better in 2000 as opposed to 1996. In that respect, the 2000 results were more relevant because of the stability between the 2000 and 2003 elections.

Above all, I used the previous results to observe whether the 2000 district winner was facing the same challenger, perhaps for the third time. If that was the case, I considered the challenger to be well known and formidable even if he was not resurrected in the PR, since the party felt his candidacy to be strong enough for a renomination. More particularly, if the candidate was a challenger for a third time, and the gap between the incumbent and the challenger shrank drastically between 1996 and 2000, I considered this to be a strong indication of a possible trend. In fact, I occasionally made such estimations even in districts

where the gap between the anti-LDP candidate and the LDP incumbent shrank dramatically between 1996 and 2000, but where the DPJ changed its 2003 nominee.

I was, however, careful about determining the existence of such trends for several reasons. First, it was difficult to say whether the results from two elections mark a trend. Second, it was nearly impossible to determine the effects of party realignment between 1996 and 2000, and again between 2000 and 2003, on the votes of both the coalition candidate and the anti-coalition candidates. For example, in 2000, the Liberal Party was an ideologically conservative party, in accordance with party leader Ozawa. It was not at all clear whether the merger of the DPJ and the Liberal Party prior to the 2003 elections meant that the Liberal vote from 2000 would have gone to the DPJ and not the LDP, since the LDP is the more conservative of the two. Indeed, it is possible that ideology did not matter at all, with the voters who wanted to vote against the coalition in 2000 choosing the Liberal Party primarily based on their preference of the candidate or Ozawa. Or, as Reed's analysis of the 2000 elections suggests, perhaps there is a new party-old party cleavage. Or, again, it may be that voting behavior is random. In many districts, the comparison between 1996 and 2000 results suggests that in 2000, the LDP and DPJ split the NFP vote from 1996, although such an observation is strictly a speculation and not based on any understanding of voting pattern in the district. In short, because there were too many uncertainties involved, I determined the relevancy of 1996 and 2000 electoral results strictly on a district-by-district basis.

Third, I considered the impact of "small party" and independent candidates. If an LDP incumbent was facing a DPJ challenger as well as a strong SDP candidate, I believed that the two opposition candidates would split the anti-LDP vote, which would benefit the incumbent. On the other hand, if the coalition vote was split because, for example, there

were both an NCP candidate and an LDP independent who defied the party leadership by running, then I considered the chances of a single opposition candidate running on the DPJ ticket to be relatively strong. For the most part, I observed that the coalition in particular became more effective in coordinating electoral cooperation compared to 1996 or 2000; for the opposition, of course, the merger between the DPJ and the Liberal Party helped to avoid a splitting of the anti-LDP vote. This partly explains the significant reduction in the number of candidates in the 2003 elections.

The results from 1996 and 2000 were very useful in determining the impact of small party and independent candidates. In general, the results indicated that the JCP received a fairly stable number of votes, so I ignored the impact the party's candidate would have on the election, except in districts where the party polls relatively strongly. As for the SDP, I believed that the party's candidate, even if he was running as either a district winner, resurrected incumbent, a third time challenger, or a new challenger, would be much weaker. This is owing to the endless political debacles the party experienced in the previous two years, relating to the arrest of the party's former Diet member and more importantly, its historical ties with North Korea[29].

Finally, I considered the more district-specific factors, such as the effects of redistricting, the time available for candidates to prepare, the backgrounds of the candidates, including the events, stories, and/or scandals surrounding the and/or the parties in the district, which might affect the results of the election. For this information, I relied very heavily on the website http://homepage3.nifty.com/makepeace, which provided (info no loner available) a detailed analysis of the candidates, the race, and the districts themselves, as well as its own predictions, in each of the 300 districts. In determining these district-specific factors, I

placed the most significant emphasis on the candidate's age. In Japan, the age of a candidate is increasingly becoming an election issue, with voters convinced that the old guards are much of the problem with LDP politics; Koizumi's pick of the young Abe as secretary general reflects his desire to invigorate the party with a more youthful image. If there was a significant gap between the ages of the two candidates, and particularly if the older candidate was an old guard LDP member facing a young DPJ newcomer, age became an important factor in my ranking.

On the other hand, whether the candidate was from a political family, i.e. whether the candidate inherited his father or grandfather's seat, was not considered to be particularly important. Although there are a lot of criticisms about seat inheritance, the fact remains that most of Japan's lawmakers, including those in the DPJ, are in the family business. It's not at all clear, at least in my eyes, that voters consider inheritance to be a particular problem, when campaigns in the SMDs continue to be rather personal.

One important factor that I did not explore in detail was the impact of the Komeito vote. The problem with the Komeito vote is that it is very complex, as explained in the previous chapter. Because of past animosity arising from some LDP incumbents' criticisms of the Komeito's connection with the NFP in 1996, it was fairly clear that many Komeito voters voted against the LDP candidate in 2000; what was unclear was whether they would continue to do so in 2003, having been in the coalition together for three years. It was impossible to discern, so I assumed that what happened in 2000 would happen again in 2003: if the Komeito helped the LDP in the district in 2000, it would help the LDP again, and if it voted against the LDP then, it would do so again.

I have summarized my predictions in the chart below. Because I was interested in the possible takeover of seats by another party, I summarized the data based on the parties to which the incumbents belonged. I differentiated independents into two kinds: those who cooperated with the coalition and those who did not. A redistricting measure passed before the election, the so-called "Five Gains Five Losses" （五増五減） bill, also created open seats in five prefectures.

		Guaranteed DPJ					Guaranteed non-DPJ		
	Party	**1**	**2**	**2.5**	**3**	**3.5**	**4**	**5**	**Sum**
Coalition	**LDP**	0	0	9	20	27	75	56	187
	Komeito[1]	0	0	0	0	2	6	0	8
	NCP	0	0	0	1	2	1	3	7
	Independents	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	3
Opp.	**DPJ**	11	37	18	10	1	0	1	78
	SDP	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	3
	Independents[2]	0	1	3	3	1	1	0	9
	New District	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	5
	Sum	12	39	34	35	36	84	60	300

1) Includes one seat in which the LDP incumbent moved to the PR because of electoral cooperation with the Komeito
2) Includes one Liberal League incumbent and five Party of Independent incumbents

In general, the chart shows the obvious, that I had ranked the incumbents as likely to be reelected. For example, the LDP controlled 187 districts, 144 of which I had ranked as a 4 or a 5, that is, a safe or a guarantee for the candidate likely to be cooperating with the coalition (e.g. LDP, NCP, Komeito, or LDP-leaning independent candidates). The story is

similar for the DPJ, which went into the elections with only 78 SMD seats, 48 of which were safe or guaranteed for the party. The chart also indicates that the NCP's problems were predictable, with 3 of its 7 seats as either a toss-ups or merely leaning NCP. The problem was that the party mostly faced opposition not only from the DPJ, but also from LDP-affiliated independents, which raised the rankings in favor of the DPJ.

One anomaly in the chart is the ranking of 5, an unwinnable seat for the DPJ, for a seat that the DPJ held. This occurred because between 2000 and 2003, a money scandal erupted surrounding former LDP secretary general Kato Koichi and he immediately resigned. A DPJ candidate was then elected in a by-election, but because Kato, who is very popular in his district, was running again, the DPJ incumbent had no chance.

An interesting aspect of the chart is that the LDP held 9 seats that I believed were leaning DPJ. Part of this reflects the expected impact of the Liberal-DPJ merger, but there were also many districts in which, despite a strong DPJ candidacy, an LDP affiliated independent ran, which increased the likelihood of a split in the LDP vote. Conversely, the DPJ for the most part entered the elections with what I saw as an excellent chance of holding onto most of their seats. Aside from the Kato anomaly, the DPJ had only 1 seat that I expected the party would lose.

The chart, however, also indicates that the DPJ is likely to face continuing problems in future elections. In total, 60 of the 300 seats were ranked 5, meaning that the DPJ had little chance in winning a fifth of the 300 seats. As the election results and analysis would show, the DPJ pulled off an upset in none of these seats, and made significant strides in certain specific cases, such as Aichi's 9th district.

After the election, I created another chart that compared my predictions with the actual result. Again, I was particularly interested in the takeover of new seats, so I separated the districts into two categories. The easiest way to view the chart is to go from left to right. The left-most column indicates the party that won the seat. The second column distinguishes those seats based on the party that had held the seat prior to the elections. Independents were again separated based on whether they were cooperating with the LDP or not; this way, one can get a better picture of how power was transferred. In essence, the data from the chart above, which separated the seats according to the parties that held them before the election, is now dispersed in the chart below, based on the results of the election:

				Guaranteed DPJ						Guaranteed non-DPJ	
	After Election	**Before Election**		**1**	**2**	**2.5**	**3**	**3.5**	**4**	**5**	**Sum**
Coalition	**LDP (171)**	**LDP[1]**		0	0	2	8	20	64	54	148
		DPJ[2]		0	5	3	2	0	0	1	11
		SDP		1	0	1	0	1	0	0	3
		Other	**Coalition[3]**	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	3
			Opposition[4]	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
			New District	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
	NCP (4)	**NCP**		0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
		DPJ		0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Komeito (9)	**Komeito[5]**		0	0	0	0	2	6	0	8
		DPJ		0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	LDP-Ind. (6)	**LDP+NCP[6]**		0	0	0	2	0	3	1	6
Opposition	**DPJ (105)**	**LDP**		0	0	7	10	6	8	0	31
		DPJ		11	32	14	8	0	0	0	65
		Other	**Coalition[3]**	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	3
			Opposition[7]	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	4
			New District	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
	Other (5)	**LDP[8]**		0	0	0	1	1	0	1	3
		Opposition[9]		0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
				12	39	34	35	36	84	60	300

1) Includes two candidates from Miyazaki who joined the LDP after the election
2) Includes Kato Koichi of Yamagata who joined the LDP after the election
3) Includes NCP incumbents, independents who left the LDP because of a scandal, or an LDP-leaning independent
4) Includes one Party of Independent candidate who was supported by the DPJ (2.5); two Party of Independent incumbents facing a DPJ as well as an LDP candidate
5) One seat was held by an LDP incumbent who went to the PR in electoral cooperation (3.5); all Komeito candidates faced no opposition from the LDP, except one (3.5) in which an LDP independent ran
6) LDP independents are LDP members who challenged an LDP-nominated or endorsed candidate. In one case, the LDP-recommended candidate was from the NCP (3).
7) Independents who were not affiliated with the DPJ, and whom the DPJ challenged
8) Pro-DPJ independent (3.5), Makiko Tanaka (5), and one SDP candidate (3), all of whom the DPJ did not oppose
9) One Party of Independent (2) and one Liberal League (2.5) incumbent, both of whom were reelected with the backing of the DPJ

Here is one way to look at the chart. If one chooses the LDP in the first column, then the LDP again in the second column, the number under each rankings in that row indicates the number of seats with the respective rankings that the LDP defended successfully. There were 148 seats that the LDP defended successfully, and most of them were unsurprisingly ranked 3.5, 4, or 5, that is, leaning, safe, or guaranteed LDP. Or, if one were interested in how many seats the DPJ picked up from the LDP, look at the DPJ in the first column and then the LDP in the second. The party picked up a solid 31 seats from the LDP and 3 more from either the NCP or independents who were cooperating with the coalition. As one will recall from the first chart, the LDP held several seats that were very vulnerable, and the DPJ mostly capitalized on that vulnerability: of such 9 seats, the DPJ won 7. The DPJ lost nits one vulnerable seat to an NCP challenger. The LDP, on the other hand, picked up only 11 seats from the DPJ, and 17 seats total from the opposition.

The chart, however, also indicates that the DPJ did not overwhelm the LDP. If one looks down the row with the number 3, one can see the pre-election and post-election

distribution of seats I had rated toss-ups. Out of 35 toss-up seats, the DPJ won 18 and the LDP won 12, although 10 such seats for the DPJ were take-overs, while the LDP won only 2 from the opposition. This again suggests that far greater number of seats were vulnerable for the LDP than for the DPJ. Furthermore, the amounts of "upsets" on both sides were about the same. By following the LDP in the first column and DPJ in the second, one can see that the LDP captured 5 seats from the DPJ that were ranked safe DPJ (1 or 2); following first the DPJ column then the LDP column, one sees that the DPJ won 8 seats that were designated safe LDP. Considering the far fewer seats that the DPJ was defending (although the DPJ was not necessarily running the incumbent in these seats), this actually suggests a problem for the DPJ.

The chart also shows serious problems for the SDP. Once the main opposition party, it held three seats going into the election and lost all of them to the LDP. All of these losses were very unimpressive because the SDP did not have the problem of having the anti-LDP vote being split after the DPJ pulled its candidates to support the SDP. In Okinawa's 3rd district, the incumbent lost even though the LDP camp was split badly between two candidates. Hyogo's 7th district was even worse, where SDP president Doi Takako ran and lost convincingly to an LDP newcomer. It was a shocking defeat, for I had ranked the seat as a guaranteed Doi win. Her loss is indicative of the overall deterioration of the SDP's strength throughout the country, although the party did manage to capture one seat in Okinawa. Such electoral weakness raises the question of whether the DPJ should continue to withdraw its candidates in those districts where the SDP has candidates who are, by its standards, strong. This issue is discussed in more detail in Chapter 13.

Predictably, the DPJ failed to capture all 60 seats that I had designated as unwinnable for the party, and in none did the party even come close. The DPJ held all 11 of their guaranteed seats with ease, but the problem is the difference in number of such "lock" seats between the two parties. This difference is partly the result of the age and experience of the parties' lawmakers. While some of the 60 seats were rated as impossible for the DPJ to win because they are simply in prefectures where the LDP dominates, the LDP or the NCP won significant number of such seats based on the popularity of the incumbent. Notable examples of are in the Kanagawa Prefecture, where the DPJ generally does very well, but cannot compete with many LDP heavy-weights, including Prime Minister Koizumi, former Foreign Minister Kono Yohei, and his son Kono Taro; in the Aichi prefecture, which is a DPJ haven, former prime minister Kaifu of the NCP won by a comfortable margin, although nowhere near a landslide.

The DPJ is naturally disadvantaged in such "popularity contests" because the party's Diet members, who have generally been elected two to four times, are noticeably younger, less experienced, with fewer sources of support than the LDP's candidates. On the other hand, in the districts where the LDP continues to win because of the popularity of incumbents despite being in a DPJ stronghold, it is not at all certain that should any of these Diet members retire, a new LDP candidate would retain the open seat. If the DPJ can continue to challenge these lawmakers, upon their retirement, the party may have very good opportunities to capture their seats.

In analyzing my own predictions, I found that I have made several mistakes. The most significant is that I considered a difference of 10,000 votes in the previous election to be a fairly comfortable margin for the LDP winner, even if the difference had narrowed

significantly between 1996 and 2000. Many districts I had ranked 4 (safe non-Democrat) were partly, although not completely, based on this assumption.

This became particularly important because the JCP and the SDP performed very poorly during the election. I expected that the SDP candidates would perform far worse in the 2003 elections than in 2000. With the JCP candidates, however, I believed their performance would remain relatively constant, since their vote totals hardly changed between 1996 and 2000 notwithstanding notable exceptions such as the Kyoto prefecture, where the JCP used to perform very well. In addition, I greatly overestimated the performance of both parties. The JCP lost, on average, nearly 10,000 votes in each district, which was, in most cases, nearly a third of their votes. The SDP candidates ran so weakly that they were reduced to irrelevance, failing to capture 10,000 votes in many cases, while the party's dual candidates failed to meet the 10 percent criterion to be eligible for resurrection. Ideologically, it is unfathomable that those voters who voted for the SDP and the JCP in the past would vote for the LDP, so it's likely that the DPJ greatly benefited from the demise of both parties.

Part of the problem was also that predictions were in general difficult to make. Looking at the results from some districts, I could not help but think that voter behavior was unpredictable, with nothing in the past to indicate what actually happened.

Second, I believed that unpopularity of Mori contributed greatly to the DPJ's gains in 2000, but I expected the Koizumi-Abe effect to prevent similar significant gains by the DPJ. The declines the LDP experienced in rural areas suggest that this was not necessarily the case and that the 2000 elections actually represent a trend of LDP deterioration.

Furthermore, I had given an incumbency a great deal of weight in analyzing the viability of each candidate, but the nature of the electoral system, which allow for more than one—sometimes even three—incumbents in one single-member district meant that the actual power of the incumbency may have been greatly overemphasized. Indeed, Reed raises the possibility that the new electoral system gives no incumbency advantage to those who were elected in the previous election. Observing that incumbency advantages were insignificant factors in electing candidates in 2000, he suggests that "the confusing nature of incumbency under [the new system], most notably in the case of rematches between SMD and PR incumbents, may weaken or destroy the advantages normally enjoyed by incumbents under pure SMD."[30]

Of course, some predictions turned out to be correct. Above all, I believed that the DPJ-Liberal merger would not necessarily produce an "additive" effect. That is, even if the sum of the DPJ and the Liberal vote in the previous election topped the LDP vote, if the LDP candidate won with a "comfortable" margin in the previous election, I believed that this would not necessarily mean that the voters who voted for the DPJ and the Liberal Party in 2000 would rally around the DPJ candidate in 2003, whether that candidate was from the DPJ or the Liberal Party. And it certainly did not mean that there would be a "multiplication" effect, as Yamasaki Taku called it when he was still LDP's secretary general. This effect referred to the possibility that as a result of the DPJ-Liberal merger, the amount of DPJ votes in 2003 will far surpass the sum of DPJ and Liberal Party votes in 2000. The specific effects of the DPJ-Liberal merger is discussed in Chapter 13, where a more specific analysis of districts is undertaken.

Moreover, the issue of age was relevant in determining the prospects of the candidates. As was with the election of 2000, many LDP veterans lost to younger challengers, some of whom were from the LDP. In some of the cases I discuss below, the impressive gains made by the DPJ candidate can be explained by the fact that the DPJ challenger was younger than the LDP incumbent. Conversely, in some districts where the DPJ would be expected to do, the party did not because the LDP candidate was relatively young, which, in Japanese politics, generally mean in the 40s or younger.

Chapter 13: District Analysis

I will provide a broad overview and analysis, using my predictions in some cases, of individual districts blocked together in certain categories. First, I discuss the districts in which the sum of the DPJ and Liberal vote in 2000 surpassed the LDP winner's; this analysis indicates how effective the merger was at the SMD level, since we have already seen its relative success in the PR tier. Second is the analysis of the districts where the LDP employs the Costa-Rica method, which I argue provide the DPJ with a unique opportunity to win seats, and hold on to them. Third, I briefly look at the so-called "1st District Phenomenon."

I also look at districts categorized geographically based on five categories: 1) Where the LDP dominates 2) Where the DPJ is strong and increasing its strength, 3) Where the DPJ made inroads into traditionally LDP regions, 4) Where the DPJ made strong gains, but not necessarily where the LDP was strong and 5) Where the DPJ could and should be doing better. In these, particular emphasis is placed on examining the DPJ's prospects for the future.

Districts reflecting the impact of the DPJ-Liberal merger

The merger of the DPJ and the Liberal Party in May of 2003 occurred to avoid splitting the vote in anticipation of an election. Hatoyama Yukio thought the issue so important that he lost his party presidency over it. Was the merger effective in the SMDs, as it was in the PR?

First, a note on how, after the merger, the DPJ solved the problem of DPJ and former Liberal Party candidates running in the same district. In all, the Liberal Party had nominated over 30 candidates in the SMDs where the DPJ already had a candidate. Because it was DPJ's policy not to allow a PR-only candidacy, the DPJ could not solve the problem by simply moving the Liberal Party candidates to the PR, which is how the LDP itself often solves this problem. The merger agreement stipulated how the official DPJ nominee would be determined. If either one of the candidates was an incumbent SMD winner from the previous elections, then that candidate has priority. If there were two incumbents in the PR who were resurrected, the candidate with the better *sekihairitsu* from the previous election would become the nominee; there was some resentment among former Liberal Party members over this decision because the DPJ incumbent almost always had the better ratio. Finally, in districts where neither the DPJ nor the Liberal Party candidate was an incumbent, the candidate who performed better in a poll conducted in that district became the official nominee. Such polls were conducted in 12 districts.[31]

In the 2000 elections, there were 11 districts in which neither the DPJ nor the Liberal Party candidate won, though the sum of their votes surpassed the LDP winner's total. Of

those 11, there was an LDP-DPJ face-off in 10 districts in the previous election.[32] In half of the ten districts, the DPJ was able to secure victories. Looking at how I had ranked the districts, those in which the DPJ candidate won had two 2.5 rankings and three 3 rankings; in three of them I noted that the merger of the two parties had raised the prospects of the DPJ candidates (which also means that in the other two, the race would have been close either way). In the districts where the DPJ candidate lost, I had given a rating of 3 to three of them and 4 to two. In four of them, I had raised the issue of the Liberal-DPJ merger, but cast doubt as to whether the Liberal vote would necessarily go to the merged DPJ.

There was one district in which the DPJ and Liberal votes in 2000 did not surpass the LDP winner's vote, but in a DPJ-LDP face-off in 2003, the DPJ candidate defeated the LDP incumbent. I had ranked this Tokyo's 13th district as a 4 despite believing that the Liberal-DPJ merger would help the DPJ because the DPJ-Liberal sum from 2000 was 20,000 votes shy of the LDP winner. In the case of this district, the catalyst for the DPJ's 2,000-vote victory seems to result as much from the Liberal-DPJ merger as the JCP's candidate losing an astonishing 20,000 votes from the 2000 elections. Since the number of votes cast only declined by 7,000, and the LDP candidate lost only 2,000 votes from 2000, it seems likely that the much of the 20,000 votes the JCP lost went to the DPJ winner.

Districts where the LDP employs the Costa-Rica method

As explained in Chapter 8, the LDP employs the Costa Rica method to solve the problem of having two incumbents who share the same district. In essence, the method works by having each incumbent take turns running in the SMD; the one who is not running

in the district receives a high ranking on the party's PR list so that he is guaranteed a seat, and he instructs his personal support group, the *koenkai*, to support the other candidate. This is not easy to pull off, because under the Costa-Rica method, the voters write down the name of each candidate only once every two election cycles, which could last as long as eight years.

For the DPJ, districts where the LDP employs the Costa Rica method should be particularly attractive targets. Consider what happens if the DPJ candidate defeats an LDP PR incumbent whose turn to run in the SMD arrived. Even if the LDP candidate was resurrected in the PR, there is no "incumbency advantage" to speak of for the LDP challenger in the next election. This is because the DPJ winner will defend his seat against a different candidate, the LDP incumbent who ran only in the PR the previous time, and whom the voters have not seen as a candidate for two elections. Should the LDP continue to employ the Costa-Rica method even if the DPJ candidate wins the seat, then in effect, the DPJ incumbent would face a different challenger every year. And because the LDP does not necessarily employ the Costa-Rica method where the party runs strongly, or with candidates who have a strong basis of support, the DPJ has opportunities to defeat the LDP incumbent and throw off the entire LDP arrangement.

Such DPJ opportunities are evident from the analysis of the districts where the LDP utilized the Costa-Rica method. There were 18 districts overall in which the LDP ran a different candidate in 2003 from 2000 as a result of the Costa Rica arrangement. In Kumamoto's 2nd district, Hyogo's 6th district, and Kanagawa's 12th, the start of a new Costa-Rica arrangement became necessary in 2003 when NCP incumbents felt they had little chance of being elected on the NCP ticket and subsequently returned to the LDP. In

Kumamoto, the arrangement was successful, although the DPJ challenger made significant enough gains for a PR resurrection. In the other two districts, the arrangement failed, although the LDP candidate in Kanagawa was resurrected in the PR.

In 6 districts—Chiba's 12th, Saitama's 12th, Gifu's 4th, Tochigi's 2nd, Fukushima's 5th, and Gunma's 8th—the Costa Rica arrangement succeeded, with an LDP PR incumbent from the previous election running in 2003 and able to hold on to the seat. In Chiba, the margin of victory shrank significantly compared to the other incumbent's performance in 2000 and his own performance in 1996 to the point that the DPJ challenger was able to gain a PR seat. There may be an opportunity for a DPJ pick-up in the next election when he once again faces a different incumbent. In Fukushima, the LDP candidate won by a margin far smaller than the other candidate's in 2000, but it is difficult to determine whether this was a result of the other candidate's greater popularity or the LDP's deterioration in the district. In four others, the DPJ made no inroads.

There was only one district, Nara's 1st, in which the DPJ was able to beat the LDP candidate. Because the DPJ winner in 2003 will face a different challenger from the LDP in the next election, his chance of defending his seat is very good.

There were 8 districts in which LDP candidates lost in 2000 (none of whom were resurrected in the PR) but per the Costa-Rica agreement, another candidate challenged the 2000 DPJ winner in 2003. In none of these did the LDP win back the SMD. These districts can be separated depending on the relative success of the LDP candidate in 2003. First are districts in which the Costa-Rica arrangement totally collapsed. In this case, the Costa-Rica arrangement was abandoned, i.e. the 2000 LDP loser was either not placed in the PR or given a ranking too low for a comeback in 2003; because the candidate who took his SMD turn in

2003 failed to be resurrected in the PR, the LDP lost all incumbents in these districts. Aichi's 3rd, Niigata's 6th, Fukushima's 3rd, and Kanagawa's 5th districts all fall into this category. The second are districts in which the Costa-Rica arrangement was abandoned, with the 2000 loser not placed on the PR list or placed very low in 2003, but with the 2003 challenger scoring some success by being resurrected in the PR. Chiba's 6th district, Tokushima's 1st district, and Tokyo's 22nd district are such examples[33].

Having lost the seat in 2000, there was only one district in which the LDP continued to maintain the Costa-Rica arrangement by placing the 2000 loser back on the PR. The exception is Aichi's 7th district, where in 2000, both the LDP and the DPJ put up newcomers, and the LDP candidate lost by only 3,000 votes—and garnered no PR resurrection. Apparently, the LDP felt that his narrow loss was sufficient to give him a PR seat in 2003 even though he was not an incumbent, thereby continuing the Costa-Rica arrangement. The 2003 challenger, who won in 1996 with the NFP, also lost narrowly and was resurrected in the PR; this means that the LDP now has two incumbents in this district, thus requiring the party to employ the Costa-Rica arrangement in the next election.

This analysis reveals that two things occur once the Costa-Rica arrangement fails for the LDP. First, the party generally abandons the arrangement in the next election, allowing the previous election's PR-only incumbent to take his turn in the SMD, but not guaranteeing a PR-only comeback for the SMD loser from the previous election. Second, the LDP has a difficult time winning back the seat it loses, because it is always challenging the DPJ incumbent with different candidate from the previous election; the LDP was able to win back none of the eight Costa-Rica districts it lost in 2000, and only in three were they able to at least salvage a PR resurrection.

For the DPJ, this means that Costa-Rica districts are great targets. The LDP does not set up the Costa-Rica arrangement based on party strength, but only on electoral necessity. Hence, in all districts except those in the Gunma and Tochigi prefectures where the LDP dominates, the DPJ has an opportunity to eventually pick up a seat by running the same challenger every election, and to hold on to it after victory. The newly created Costa-Rica arrangement in Hyogo and Kanagawa could not survive the first election, and history indicates that the DPJ is likely to hold on to those seats in the next election.

The 1st Districts

In the 2000 elections, the LDP's performance in the so-called "1st districts," where prefectural government is located, received a lot of attention. In general, although the population densities in three-quarters of the 1st districts do not warrant the government label of a "Big City" (大都市), they nonetheless tend to be urban even in remote areas of Japan, and hence there is a significant amount of independent voters. Former LDP Secretary General Kato Koichi warned about the "1st District Phenomenon" even prior to the 2000 elections.[34]

In 2000, signifying its weakness in urban areas and among independents, the LDP was devastated in the 1st Districts, winning only 26, while the DPJ won 16, the Komeito and Liberals 1 each, and LDP-leaning independents, 3. More problematically, many of the candidates who lost were veteran lawmakers with cabinet experience, as was the case in Tochigi, Tokyo, Kagawa, Saitama, and Yamanashi—where a ten-term incumbent lost.[35]

In 2003, the DPJ continued to make gains in the 1st districts. In total, the LDP won only 26—actually 3 fewer than in 2000 because the 3 independents joined the LDP—while the DPJ won 19, Komeito 1, and an LDP independent, 1.[36] The DPJ lost the seats it gained in 2000 in Tochigi, Kanagawa, and Hyogo, but Tochigi is an LDP stronghold and in Hyogo, the race is a toss-up every election. On the other hand, the DPJ withstood a rematch in Tokyo against Yosano Kaoru, and held off against new, younger challengers in Saitama and Yamanashi. It also picked up seats in Akita, Chiba, Niigata, Shizuoka, Ishikawa, Nara, and Saga. Chiba in particular indicated the extent of the DPJ strength in the 1st Districts, with the party's challenger defeating a former Justice Minister by 11,000 votes, reversing the 24,000-vote loss in 2000. The victories in Tokyo, Ishikawa, and Shizuoka remained very close, and victory in Saga, a conservative bastion, could be attributed to the scandal involving the 2000 winner. Hence, whether these gains are sustainable is questionable. Considering, however, that the DPJ was mostly able to hold on to gains from 2000 in 2003, the future prospects look good for the party in all 1st Districts with the exception of about 10 prefectures where the LDP is either dominant or the incumbent is extremely popular.

Where DPJ is hopeless: Kita Kanto (北関東), Chugoku (中国), and Shikoku (四国) blocs

If you don't field a candidate, you can't win. And because of dual candidacy, the party should always nominate someone in order to build up the party's presence in the district, even if the party has no chance of winning. This is a very simple rule that the DPJ needs to learn.

In 2003, excluding districts in which the DPJ pulled candidates to support anti-coalition candidates who had a legitimate opportunity to win, the DPJ suffered 23 losses without a fight. In 17 of those seats, the DPJ "yielded" a seat to the SDP in "electoral cooperation," because it could not field a legitimate candidate of its own; it is worth noting that not a single one of these 17 SDP candidates were resurrected in the PR. Even worse, in 6 districts, the party was unable to nominate or recommend any candidate, leaving the LDP and even an NCP incumbent to face token opposition from the JCP. In comparison, although the LDP faced several DPJ incumbents that they had no chance of defeating, only in two seats did the LDP fail to field a candidate. The DPJ needs to take a cue from the LDP, which fielded candidates against the most powerful of the DPJ's lawmakers, including former Liberal Party president Ozawa Ichiro, DPJ president Kan Naoto, and former Prime Minister Hata Tsutomu. LDP challengers facing all three were resurrected through the PR because the LDP placed them high on the list. As party policy, the DPJ generally does not rank its PR list because everybody is a dual candidate and the party wants their performances in the SMDs to determine who is elected from the list. Its weakness in significant parts of the country, however, may require the party to take a chapter from the LDP's book and court candidates by guaranteeing them election through a high PR rank. This is in fact what McKean and Schneiner note (Chapter 8) as the benefit of dual candidacies, in which parties can gradually establish presence in the districts where they are weak.

Geographically, the DPJ is uncompetitive in three areas, as categorized by the PR blocs. The first is the Kita Kanto bloc, which includes the prefectures of Ibaragi, Tochigi, Gunma, and Saitama. Of the four, the Saitama prefecture is a former conservative bastion in which the DPJ is making strong inroads, partly because the prefecture borders Tokyo and is

increasingly becoming more urban. Prior to the 2000 elections, the LDP held 9 out of the 14 seats and DPJ only 1, but 4 incumbents lost in 2000 and the LDP was reduced to 6 (plus one LDP leaning independent), while the DPJ catapulted to 6 seats from 1, with an independent holding a seat[37]. In 2003, the DPJ extended its gains by winning 8 of the 15 seats—there was a new seat created—and failing to defend only 1. While the LDP reelected its incumbent in all 6 districts, the DPJ performed significantly better in most. The DPJ has an excellent future chance of unseating the LDP incumbents in up to 4 districts.

Ibaragi, Tochigi, and Gunma are different stories, however. There are 17 seats in these prefectures, and in only one did the DPJ hold its seat while failing to defend another. The six seats in the Gunma prefecture, which has created three LDP prime ministers in Fukuda, Nakasone, and Obuchi, are hopeless goals for the DPJ, except perhaps one in which the party made no gains from 2000. The story with the Ibaragi and Tochigi prefectures are similar, although in two districts the DPJ is very competitive and in two more it made impressive gains, buoyed in the case of Tochigi's 4th district by the Liberal-DPJ merger. Whether the DPJ can sustain these gains is questionable, however. In 2000, the DPJ's Mizushima Hiroko won Tochigi's 1st district over the LDP incumbent Funada Hajime by 16,000 votes; Funada was mired in a scandal involving an affair, a divorce, and remarriage to his wife, in addition to his past act of leaving the LDP to try to form a new party, only to come scrambling back. I had ranked this seat a 2, but despite all such baggage Funada was able to pull off a convincing victory, winning by 21,000 votes, or 8.9 percentage points. The DPJ was able to win its sole seat, Ibaragi's 5th district, because it faced a weak opponent in a 71 year old, 1st term Lower House newcomer in 2000. In 2003, he easily defended his seat

against the 71 year old's son, but if the LDP fields a decent candidate, the viability of the DPJ's candidate in this district seems questionable.

The DPJ's performances in the Chugoku and Shikoku blocs are even worse. The Chugoku bloc includes the prefectures of Tottori, Shimane, Okayama, Hiroshima, and Yamaguchi for a total of 20 seats. The Shikoku bloc includes the Tokushima, Kagawa, Ehime, and Kouchi prefectures for a total of 13 seats. Out of these 33 seats, the DPJ won only 2 in 2000 and 3 in 2003; the DPJ picked up a seat in the Hiroshima's 2nd district not from the LDP but from an independent, and only because the LDP vote was heavily splintered among three candidates. In fact, in Tottori's 2nd district and Hiroshima's 5th district, the LDP votes were split as well, with the incumbent challenged by a younger, LDP-leaning independent, but the DPJ could pick up a seat in neither one. In all, in only 3 of the 30 districts did the DPJ make gains significant enough to have a chance at a takeover, one of which is, interestingly, Hiroshima's 6th district which Shizuka Kamei, the chairman of the Kamei faction, calls his home. In 2 others the DPJ was competitive as they were in 2000. Perhaps showing that once it wins, it can hold on to them, the DPJ defended its two seats with relative ease. Particularly impressive was Yamaguchi's 2nd district in which Hiraoka Hideo shockingly defeated Sato Shinji, son of former prime minister Sato Eisaku, by 7000 votes in 2000 and defended his seat by 18,000 votes in the 2003 election. In all, 25 of the 33 seats in the Chugoku and Shikoku regions are out of reach for the DPJ.

Looking at the PR list of both parties in these two blocs illustrates the extent of the DPJ's problems. In the Kita Kanto, Chugoku, and Shikoku PR blocs, the DPJ won 8, 4, and 2 seats, respectively, while the LDP won 8, 5 and 3 seats respectively. Although the DPJ's performance is respectable compared to that of the LDP, because the latter can elect most of

its candidates in the SMDs in these blocs, the DPJ has far more unelected candidates in its list than the LDP. Excluding the additional candidates parties place at the bottom of their lists to avoid missing out on seats to which they were entitled, the LDP elected all but 3 of the 31 candidates listed in the Kita Kanto bloc, which includes the Saitama prefecture where the party performs poorly. In Chugoku, the LDP elected all but 1 out of 20 candidates and in Shikoku, all 15 were elected. The DPJ, on the other hand, had 12 out of 29 candidates unelected in the Kita Kanto bloc, 11 out of 17 in the Chugoku bloc, and 10 out of 13 in the Shikoku bloc. In essence, because the DPJ cannot elect enough members in the SMDs and hence is forced to elect them mostly through the PR, the party faces a significant incumbency disadvantage against the LDP, which can elect almost every candidate in these regions through the combination of the SMDs and the PR resurrections.

To summarize, the DPJ faces major obstacles in the Kita Kanto, Chugoku, and Shikoku regions of Japan. Excluding the Saitama prefecture, where the DPJ should continue to do well in the future, there are 47 seats in these three regions, only 4 of which the DPJ holds. Of those four, two are hardly secure if the LDP fields a decent candidate or rallies around one, and in only 10 out of 43 seats does the DPJ even have a chance of winning. To their credit, however, the DPJ was more successful at fielding its own candidates in these districts in 2000 than in 2003. And although the DPJ performs respectively in these districts, its inability to elect members through the SMDs means that most of the party's candidates will be entering the election as non-incumbent challengers.

DPJ Strongholds: Aichi (愛知) , Hokkaido (北海道), and Minami Kanto (南関東)

The Aichi prefecture is a DPJ stronghold that became even stronger after the election. Going in, the DPJ held 9 out of 15 seats in the district, and came out of the election with 10. Of the 15, only in the 9th district of former Prime Minister Kaifu does the DPJ have little chance of winning, and even there the party made dramatic gains. In the 10th district, the DPJ suffered its only incumbent loss, to an NCP challenger, in a close rematch of the 2000 elections. In most districts, the DPJ easily held their seats. In the 4th and 6th districts, where DPJ takeovers occurred in 2000, incumbents held their seats by far greater margins than when they were first elected, while the 14th district saw a DPJ takeover by a comfortable margin. In the 12th district, the DPJ-Liberal merger brought the DPJ within 18,000 votes of victory, improving on the 36,000-vote difference in 2000. District 13, which went to the LDP by 340 votes in 2000, once again went to the LDP, this time by 4,400 votes, though it clearly remains a takeover target. In the 15th district, the DPJ made no progress, but in all 5 districts that the DPJ failed to win, the challenger was resurrected in the PR, giving the party a great opportunity for future takeovers. Based on its dominance in Aichi, the DPJ should look to expand its presence in three other prefectures in the Tokai (東海) bloc where the party doesn't perform nearly as well.

In Hokkaido, where the JSP did historically well, the DPJ made impressive gains in addition to solidifying its strength. Before the election, the DPJ and the LDP both held 6 seats, but the DPJ won 7 seats and LDP 5. Buoyed by a significant fall-off by the JCP coming on the heels of the retirement of a popular incumbent, the DPJ won convincingly over the LDP incumbent in the 2nd district, and comfortably over another LDP incumbent in

the 4th. In districts 8 and 9, the DPJ incumbents won by a far bigger margin than previously, particularly in the 9th, where previous party president Hatoyama almost lost in 2000. In districts 5 and 7, where there were strong LDP incumbents, the DPJ shrank the previous gap of more than 30,000 votes to 9,000 and 13,000 respectively, resurrecting both challengers in the PR. In the 6th district, a DPJ incumbent lost by 600 votes in a rematch of 2000, and was resurrected in the PR. Districts 11 and 12 were unwinnable for the DPJ going in, but in District 11, the challenger managed a PR resurrection. In all, the DPJ will have a great chance at capturing upwards of 11 of 12 seats in Hokkaido—all but the 11th district held by Nakagawa Shouichi.

The Minami Kanto bloc includes the prefectures of Chiba, Kanagawa, and Yamanashi for a total of 34 seats. In 2000, the DPJ won 13 seats and the LDP 19 seats. In 2003, 2 new districts were added, one each to Chiba and Kanagawa, and the DPJ captured 17, the LDP 16, and the Komeito 1. In eight districts, the DPJ had no chance of victory, mostly because the incumbents were popular: Prime Minister Koizumi is in Kanagawa's 11th district, former Foreign Minister Kono Yohei is in the 17th, his son Taro is in the 15th, Agricultural Minister Kamei Yoshiyuki is in the 16th, and faction chairman Horiuchi Mitsuo is in Yamanashi's 2nd , which the DPJ did not even contest. Everywhere else, the DPJ made very impressive showings, particularly in Chiba, where they picked up three. It picked up seats in Chiba's 1st, 3rd, and 7th districts, where the LDP had won comfortably in 2000, and held onto the 2nd district—where the DPJ incumbent faced unified opposition after capitalizing on an LDP-Komeito split in 2000—and the 5th district—where the DPJ vote was split with an independent. The DPJ also made significant gains in Chiba's 9th district, and although it narrowly lost Kanagawa's 6th district to a Komeito challenger in a rematch of

2000, the margin was slim. In all but one district where the DPJ failed to win, the party's candidate was resurrected in the PR. In the future, the DPJ has the opportunity to capture upwards of 25 seats in the Minami Kanto bloc, particularly in the Chiba prefecture, although the opportunities for a pick-up do not seem to be as easy as in Aichi or Hokkaido.

Improving prospects: The Hokuriku Shinetsu (**北陸信越**) Bloc

The Hokuriku Shinetsu bloc consists of the prefectures of Fukuyama, Ishikawa, Fukui, and Nagano, for a combined total of 20 seats. It is basically an LDP stronghold where in 2000, the LDP won 16 seats and the DPJ 3; in addition, 1 LDP-leaning independent later joined the LDP. In 2003, however, the DPJ made impressive gains, with the LDP capturing 13 seats and the DPJ 6, with 1 unaffiliated independent. What does this signal for the future?

The Fukuyama and Fukui prefectures are solidly LDP, and the DPJ made no inroads in either in 2003.

Ishikawa and Niigata in particular, however, were DPJ highlights. In Ishikawa, the DPJ picked up the 1st district by 2,000 votes after losing in the previous election by 7,000. In both the 2nd and 3rd districts, the LDP incumbents won by a landslide of over 30,000 votes, but in both cases, the DPJ shrank the gap by more than one-half; in the 2nd district, against former Prime Minister Mori, the DPJ candidate managed a *sekihairitsu* high enough for a resurrection. Undoubtedly, the 1st district would remain competitive, and it is difficult to tell whether DPJ strides in the 2nd and 3rd districts suggest that the party will become competitive in these districts in the future. I believe it does not.

In Niigata, on the other hand, the trend seems clear. The LDP won 4 seats and the DPJ 1 in 2000, but in 2003, the DPJ captured 2, the LDP 2, and Tanaka Makiko, who defected the LDP, won her seat back. In the 1st and 4th districts, the DPJ took over seats won by the LDP in 2000 by very comfortable margins, in the latter case strongly aided by the Liberal-DPJ merger. In the 6th district, the DPJ was aided by factionalism within the LDP. In all districts except the 2nd and the 5th, which is Tanaka Makiko's district, the DPJ has an opportunity to either retain or take over the seats. The DPJ simply needs to field a strong candidate, which it did not do in the 3rd district, where it supported a SDP candidate who lost by only 30,000 votes in a rematch; a candidate with an SDP affiliation is unlikely to capture the seat, but the same is not true about the DPJ.

In Nagano—where the LDP won 3 out of 5 seats in 2000, the party fought the 2003 elections with 4 incumbents and lost one seat—is an interesting story. The prefecture's 3rd district is the home of former Prime Minister Hata Tsutomu, who holds the title of Supreme Advisor to the DPJ. Although his influence within the prefecture is significant and his support is sufficient to have the candidates elected, he keeps on suffering defections. Prior to the 2000 elections, Murai Jin in the neighboring 2nd district defected back to the LDP, citing ideological differences with the DPJ, despite following Hata everywhere from their Takeshita faction days in the LDP. Murai was reelected in 2000 by a much smaller margin than in 1996, and lost in 2003 by 10,000 votes. In Hata's other neighboring district, the candidate whom Hata personally recruited, Goto Shigeru, won in 2000 by 6,000 votes, only to defect a few months before the 2003 elections and won by 20,000 votes against an unprepared DPJ challenger. In the 1st district, the DPJ challenger shrank the 46,000-vote gap of 2000 to 7,000, and managed a PR resurrection, while in the 5th, a 65,000 gap was narrowed to 38,000.

Whether the 5th district can fall into the DPJ is dubious—the LDP candidate was a newcomer, the incumbent having retired—but it seems Hata's influence could be enough to capture 4 out of 5 seats in Nagano, 2 seats better than now, so long as Hata can prevent defections.

Hence, in the Hokuriku Shinetsu bloc, the 6 districts in the Fukuyama and Fukui prefectures must be written off for the DPJ, but in Niigata, Nagano, and possibly Ishikawa, the party will remain competitive. Going forward, one important question is whether the dramatic gains made in the Niigata prefecture, both in terms of votes and seats, will be sustainable in the future, or whether the LDP will win them back. To that extent, Nagano seems more promising because of the presence of Hata. Optimistically, the DPJ could win up to 9 out of 20 seats in the Hokuriku Sinetsu region, with one independent, who has so far been willing to cooperate with the DPJ, unlikely to leave any time soon.

A new stronghold?: The Kinki (**近畿**) bloc

The largest Kinki bloc—consisting of the Shiga, Kyoto, Osaka, Hyogo, Nara, and Wakayama prefectures, which have 48 SMDs combined—saw the DPJ take over 11 seats from the LDP or NCP, which consisted of a third of all DPJ takeovers. In the 2000 elections, the LDP captured 25 seats, the DPJ 9, the Komeito 6, the Conservative Party 3, the SDP 2, and independents 2, one of whom was an LDP affiliate and later joined the party. In 2003, with reapportionment adding one seat, the DPJ won 20 seats, while the LDP won 19, the Komeito 6, the NCP 2, and an LDP-leaning independent 1. What is most impressive is the DPJ's range of pickups, taking over 2 seats in Shiga, Kyoto, and Nara each, while gaining 4

in Osaka and 1 more in Hyogo. Does 2003 indicate new strength for the DPJ in the whole region?

The Shiga prefecture is the home of former Sakigake founder Takemura, who lost his bid for reelection in 2000 to an LDP challenger. In both the 2nd and 3rd districts the DPJ picked up seats, and was also able to hold its seat in the 1st district comfortably, although it lost the race in the new 4th district by a narrow margin. The party's 2 pickups, however, do not necessarily indicate electoral strength. In both cases, margins were small, but more importantly, the LDP put up relatively weak candidates—one was a by-election winner in 2001 and the other was a newcomer—so holding on to these seats would be a test for the DPJ.

Kyoto is an interesting story because it is the stronghold of both the JCP and the Komeito, whose arch nemesis is the JCP. Riding on the strength of the Komeito, the LDP scored victories in 5 of Koyoto's 6 districts in 2000. In 2003, however, the DPJ captured two of the seats it narrowly lost in 2000 by 10,000 and 20,000 vote margins, and comfortably held on to its sole seat. The DPJ probably has little chance of capturing the 4th and 5th district seats, as the LDP incumbents are formidable; the 1st district, however, is a possible target if the JCP, which lost 18,000 votes from 2000 but still received 50,000 votes, continues to decline.

In Osaka, the DPJ won 9 seats, compared to 6 for the LDP, and 4 for the Komeito. Even though the DPJ picked up four seats, that does not necessarily signal further strength for the party in the future. The LDP has been traditionally very weak in Osaka, but the Komeito has a very strong presence. All Komeito incumbents are always caught in close races—except in the 6th district—by the nature of the party. On the other hand, the

remaining 6 LDP incumbents are unlikely to be unseated; only in 1st did the DPJ challenger perform well enough for a PR resurrection, and only because the strong JCP performance lowered the winner's share of the vote. The DPJ will have trouble defending its 4 pickups in 2003, all coming up against either weak incumbents, splintered opposition, or in a district that is a toss-up every election. Going forward, the DPJ should target three seats held by the Komeito with strong challengers—the party astonishingly failed even to field a candidate in 2000—but the true measure of DPJ strength will be in whether it can hold on to its 9 seats.

In Hyogo, where the LDP won 9 seats and the DPJ 3, the biggest surprise was SDP president Doi Takako's loss in the 7th district by more than 15,000 votes after winning the previous election in a landslide victory, 100,000 vote margin. In addition, both the LDP and the DPJ incumbents held their seats comfortably except in the 1st district, which was determined by less than 1,000 votes for the second straight time, the 5th district, where the Liberal-DPJ merger pulled the DPJ challenger within 4,000 votes, the 6th district where LDP's Costa-Rica arrangement collapsed on its first test, and the 12th, where the LDP challenger defeated an independent in a rematch. Of the 9 seats currently held by the coalition, the DPJ should target the 1st, 5th, and 12th districts, where they should ask the independent who lost to join the DPJ, all districts where the LDP barely won.

In the Nara prefecture, where all 4 seats were won by the LDP in 2000, the DPJ picked up 2 in 2003. In the 1st district, which is increasingly urbanized, the DPJ challenger avenged his 20,000-vote loss and picked up the seat by 14,000 votes. The victory was so thorough that the LDP incumbent could not manage a resurrection. The 2nd district was also a DPJ pickup in a second consecutive close race, with the LDP incumbent resurrected in the

PR. In the 3rd and 4th districts, the DPJ regressed, so there is little potential for further gains, but its takeover in the 1st district is probably defendable.

In Wakayama, where the LDP controls all three seats, the DPJ has the opportunity to pick up perhaps one, but failed to make an impressive showing in that district this election.

Because the DPJ's success in the Kinki bloc, as in the Hokuriku Shinetsu bloc, is not a continuation of what occurred in 2000, it is difficult to tell whether the gains are a sign the DPJ is gaining strength. Undoubtedly, the party's strength in these prefectures does not compare to the strength where the DPJ dominates, namely the Aichi prefecture and Hokkaido and Minami Kanto blocs. Going forward, the DPJ's test in the Kinki bloc will be in how well the party can hold on to the gains made in 2003. If the DPJ can defend its major gains in the next election, as the party did with notable 2000 pickups in 2003 (particularly in Tokyo), then the Kinki bloc may prove to be the party's next Hokkaido, or even better, the next Aichi.

Mixed Prospects: the Kyushu (九州) bloc

The Kyushu bloc is a region where the DPJ should be performing very strongly, though it is not. It includes the prefectures of Fukuoka, Saga, Nagasaki, Kumamoto, Ooita, Miyazaki, Kagoshima, and Okinawa for a total of 38 seats. Okinawa and Ooita, where former Prime Minister Murayama is from, are SDP strongholds dating to the days of the JSP; the SDP captured an SMD seat in each prefecture in 2000. Kumamoto is the prefecture where the Japan New Party founder and former Prime Minister Hosokawa was governor. Despite the history of strong anti-LDP presence, the DPJ has failed to make any inroads in

the region. In all, the DPJ won 5 seats in the Kyushu bloc in 2000, while the LDP won 27 seats, the SDP 2, the Komeito 1, an LDP-leaning independent 1, and the Liberal League, a small local party, 1. In 2003, an additional seat was added to Okinawa and the DPJ did only marginally better, winning 8 seats, while the LDP won 24, the Komeito 1, the SDP 1, the LL 1, with 2 LDP-leaning independents and 1 DPJ leaning independent.

Undoubtedly, the DPJ's best hopes in the region lie in the Fukuoka prefecture. The party defended the 1st district easily, although the 9th district tightened significantly with the former LDP incumbent trying to make a comeback; he was resurrected in the PR. Aided by scandals, in 2 districts, including that of former LDP Secretary General Yamasaki Taku, the DPJ picked up seats, while the 6th district, in another squeaker as in 2000, went to the DPJ this time around. In districts 4, 5, and 10, the DPJ ran a close race, with all challengers being resurrected; in the latter two in particular, the DPJ made tremendous strides. Two districts are held by LDP incumbents who are extremely popular so the DPJ has no prospects in those, but going forward, the party has a chance to capture upward of 8 of 11 seats in Fukuoka, up from 5 in 2003 and 2 in 2000.

The challenge for the DPJ remains the other prefectures. Part of the problem is the LDP's domination. In Saga, Miyazaki and Kagoshima, the DPJ made absolutely no improvements in all 9 districts held by the LDP, although one candidate was resurrected despite regressing from 2000. The DPJ did pick up Saga's 1st district from an LDP-leaning independent who was mired in scandal. Kagoshima's 2nd district is held by Tokuda Torao, president of the Liberal League, behind whom the DPJ always throws its support. It is dubious whether the DPJ will be able to hold on to the sole seat it captured in Saga, should

the LDP field a strong candidate in the future. In effect, the DPJ must write off 11 seats in these three prefectures.

Kumamoto is similarly a conservative prefecture but because of its ties to Hosokawa, there was a time when it elected a majority of non-LDP Diet members. In 1996, besides Hosokawa in the 1st district, the NFP captured two more seats, while the LDP and the Sakigake, which was in the coalition with the LDP then, captured one each. The non-LDP incumbents from 1996 all joined the LDP in 2000, however, and only the 1st district is currently held by the DPJ. The DPJ easily defended the seat in 2003, and made good progress in the 2nd district where the LDP began the Costa-Rica arrangement. The DPJ candidate was resurrected in that district, but the prospects for the other 3 seats remain very bleak. Nagasaki is a similar story, where the DPJ held on to its one seat comfortably, and in one made gains aided greatly by the DPJ-Liberal merger, but two other districts are solidly LDP. In all, therefore, 14 out of 18 seats in five prefectures in the Kyushu bloc are out of reach for the DPJ.

What makes the Kyushu bloc different from the Kita Kanto bloc—where all other prefectures except one was out of reach for the DPJ—is that this bloc, particularly in the prefectures of Ooita and Okinawa, has some significant remnants of the old JSP in the SDP. The strength, in fact, was sufficient for the SDP to elect 1 winner in the SMD, which is no small task considering the state of the party. Nevertheless, the SDP is clearly deteriorating in these areas as they are in other parts of the country, and this leaves the DPJ in a precarious situation. On the one hand, the SDP is increasingly unable to win in the SMDs and even through the PR in this area. On the other hand, the DPJ is reluctant to field their own candidate because the SDP is unwilling to yield their last pockets of strength; the DPJ prefers

running a unified, albeit weak, candidate over running its own and splitting the anti-coalition vote. The end result is that in Ooita and Okinawa, and to some extent Nagasaki and Kagoshima, the LDP keeps on winning because the SDP cannot put forth strong candidates, and the DPJ is reluctant to do so on its own.

Combined, Ooita and Okinawa have 7 seats. In 2000, the DPJ supported the SDP's candidate in three of these districts—Ooita's 2nd, where the designated successor of former Prime Minister Murayama was running, Ooita's 4th, where there was an SDP incumbent, and Okinawa's 3rd, where the former Lieutenant governor was running. Astonishingly, both parties failed to field a candidate in Okinawa's 1st district, letting the JCP take advantage of the LDP-Komeito intra-coalition fighting. In all of the three districts where the DPJ supported the SDP, the SDP candidate was elected, although in Ooita's 2nd it was through PR resurrection. In 2003, the DPJ added the new 2nd district of Okinawa to the list of districts in which it was supporting the SDP's candidate, but this was the only district the SDP won; of the three SDP's SMD winners in 2000, two lost the district but were resurrected in the PR. In essence, the SDP succeeded in running one additional candidate in 2003 with the help of the DPJ but came out electing one less, indicating how much the party has deteriorated.

It is not at all clear that in the districts where SDP lost, had the DPJ run its own candidate instead of—but not in addition to—an SDP candidate, the DPJ would have been able to capture the seats. After all, the SDP has ties to the region that date back decades. On the other hand, in Ooita's 2nd, Kagoshima's 4th, and Nagasaki's 2nd and 4th districts, the SDP candidates running with the support of the DPJ lost handily—anywhere from 30 to 70 thousand votes—but they also all captured more than 50,000 votes, far better than SDP candidates in other prefectures similarly running with DPJ support. In these districts, there is

already strong support for a non-LDP candidate whose potential in unlikely to be maximized by running a candidate on the ticket of a fading party. In the long run, the SDP will undoubtedly disappear, and DPJ's long-term success cannot be achieved if it continues to have ties with a sinking ship.

The DPJ cannot, of course, field a candidate of its own because that would simply splinter the anti-LDP vote. What it needs to do is actively court current and former SDP members who have support within the prefectures to run on the DPJ ticket, a more than viable pursuit because there are numerous former JSP/SDP members in the DPJ. Such candidates would receive not only the traditional JSP/SDP votes, but also the support of younger and more independent voters who prefer to vote for a non-LDP candidate who is a legitimate contender. Even if such maneuvers would not prevent the SDP from running even weaker candidates, the DPJ must gain some presence in Ooita and Okinawa where the party elects no one under its label. The best, most effective, and quickest way to accomplish this is to "capture" the traditional JSP support-base, as it did in Hokkaido where the JSP also traditionally did well.

Although I may be overly optimistic, I believe that DPJ prospects in the Kyushu area would dramatically improve should the DPJ take over the socialist stronghold in the region. In addition to the 8 possible seats in Fukuoka, the party could capture all three seats in Ooita and up to three in Okinawa for a total of 14, a dramatic improvement over the current 8. Although the DPJ would still be uncompetitive in most of the Saga, Miyazaki, and Kagoshima prefectures, the party may achieve a stronger presence in Nagasaki, where the SDP challengers performed respectively and two other DPJ candidates of the prefecture were elected, either in the PR or the SMD.

In summary, most of the Kyushu bloc represents mixed prospects for the DPJ. If it continues on its current track, the party would be unable to establish any presence in the region except in Fukuoka, sinking with the SDP ship. Because of the liberal tradition particularly in two prefectures, however, in the long term the DPJ does have the potential to capture nearly half of the 34 SMD seats in the region. Unlike around other parts of Japan, however, such gains cannot be made without actively engaging in efforts to make realignment a reality.

[1] Sankei Shinbun, November 10, 2004.「政権政党へ課題残す」

[2] Mainichi Shinbun Interactive, word definitions, http://www.mainichi.co.jp/news/kotoba/a/20031110_01.html

[3] Yomiuri Shinbun, October 28, 2004.「自民『過半数』目指す、民主『２００議席超』目標」http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/election/general2003/news/20031028ia04.htm

[4] Sankei Shinbun, November 10, 2004.「民主誤算　自民を"逆信任"」

[5] Yomiuri Shinbun, November 10, 2004.「自民、当初目標届かず」

[6] Sankei Shinbun, November 20, 2004.「構造改革推進を強調」

[7] Nippon Keizai Shinbun, November 30, 2004.「自民、地力衰え隠せず」

[8] The website indicates 59%, but 51% is the number listed in the November 10, 2003 election day edition of Yomiuri, page 3; it is also in line with Asahi's 50%.

[9] Yomiuri Online, November, 11, 2003.「小泉効果　比例は薄い？　支持率ほどには票伸びず」http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/election/general2003/feature/fe13/fe20031111_03.htm

[10] Yomiuri Shinbun, November 10, 2003.「無党派の５６％　民主に投票」Page 3.

[11] Ibd.

[12] Yomiuri Online, November 11, 2003.「２大政党化が鮮明に」

[13] Asahi Online, November 10, 2003.「無党派層の民主支持　比例は町村部も５割」http://www2.asahi.com/senkyo2003/news/TKY200311100240.html

[14] Based on data from Yomiuri Online, November 10, 2003.「自・民　比例で大幅増」http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/election/general2003/feature/fe13/fe20031110_r02.htm

[15] Asahi.com, November 10, 2003. 「内閣支持者６割、自民へ　支持率は５０％に減」 http://www2.asahi.com/senkyo2003/news/TKY200311100239.html

[16] One has to be wary of direct comparisons with the 2001 Upper House elections exit poll, because it also had only 48% of the Koizumi Cabinet supporters voting for the LDP, significantly lower than 62% during this election. The inordinarily high approval rating of the Koizumi cabinet at that time may have skewed voting behavior in unusual ways.

[17] Asahi Online, November 10, 2003.「票の使い分け、民主に流れ　比例の躍進支える」 http://www2.asahi.com/senkyo2003/news/TKY200311100238.html

[18] Ibd.

[19] Sankei Shinbun, November 10, 2003.「無党派五割超　民主へ」Page 3.

[20] Asahi Online, November 10, 2003.「首都では自・民拮抗　公明、１２区で議席確保」 http://www2.asahi.com/senkyo2003/localnews/tokyo/TKY200311100011.html

[21] Yomiuri Online, November 11, 2003.「首都決戦　自民に『公明』力」 http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/election/general2003/feature/fe13/fe20031111_02.htm

[22] Yomiuri Online, 「自・民　比例で大幅増」

[23] Yomiuri Shinbun, November 10, 2003.「公明票の７２％　自民へ」Page 3.

[24] Yomiuri Online, October 10, 2003.「首相「改革解散」、菅代表は「マニフェスト解散」 http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/election/general2003/news/20031010i113.htm

[25] Yomiuri Shinbun, October 30, 2003.「政権公約と違う候補者主張「理解」５８％…読売調査」http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/election/general2003/news/20031030ia23.htm

[26] Asahi online, 「票の使い分け、民主に流れ　比例の躍進支える」http://www2.asahi.co/senkyo2003

/news/TKY200311100238.html

[27] Party recommendation means that the DPJ withdrew its candidate and threw its support behind another; this does not mean, however, that a candidate from the DPJ did not run as an independent, in defiance of the party leadership. This rarely occurred for the DPJ.

[28] 1996 election results were taken from the website 「自民党vs.新進党」http://www.geocities.jp/tanaka_kunitaka/election962000 election results were pulled from the website 「選挙でGo!」 http://homepage3.nifty.com/makepeaceu. It is currently offline, but I archived whole site.

[29] To summarize briefly what occurred: In the financial scandal, a very popular SDP parliamentary member who actually came in first place in a district in Osaka in the 2000 elections, resigned and later arrested when it was revealed that the secretary who was supposed to be receiving the money provided by the government actually did little work on her behalf, and the Diet member was using the money for her office use. Further investigation revealed that such "borrowing of name" scheme was dictated by the party, and the former secretary of party president Doi was arrested.

Concerning the North Korean issue, from its days as the Japan Socialist Party, the SDP had friendly ties with the North Korean Worker's Party, the one and only party in North Korea. As a result, the SDP had always rejected the accusation that North Korea had kidnapped several Japanese citizens during the 60s and the 70s, believing the account of the NKWP. In the historic summit between Kim Jung Il and Prime Minister Koizumi, North Korea admitted to the kidnappings, which left the SDP in an impossible, and to many, indefensible position.

[30] Steven R. Reed, Japanese Electoral Politics: Creating a new party system (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 169.

[31] Yomiuri Shinbun, August 7, 2003.「１２選挙区で世論調査」Page 4.

[32] The Akita prefecture's first district is excluded because, although the LDP won the 2000 election by a mere 500 votes over the DPJ candidate Sato Keio and the Liberal Party's candidate garnered about 10,000vote, Sato, who was resurrected in the PR, defected from the DPJ at the end of 2002 and joined the New Conservative Party. In the 2003 elections, the LDP winner from 2000 accepted the high ranking of the PR and yielded the district to Sato, who faced a DPJ newcomer. Because Sato is technically not a district winner from the previous election, given its unusual nature, and combined with the fact that it did not have an LDP-DPJ face-off, the district was excluded from the analysis.

[33] Tokyo's 22nd district is a special case. The Costa-Rica arrangement was abandoned, so the 2000 loser was not placed on the PR. The 2003 challenger, however, was given a high ranking on the PR list, which guaranteed his election even if he lost in the PR. Interestingly, he performed very well despite the benefits the DPJ-Liberal merger probably provided for the DPJ incumbent. The 2003 LDP challenger lost very narrowly, although not close enough to be resurrected in the PR had he not been given a high PR rank.

[34] Mainichi Interactive.「県都で自民１９人落選」 June 26, 2000. http://www.mainichi.co.jp/eye/sousenkyo/article/kaisan/200006/26-8.html (No longer available online).

[35] Ibd.

[36] Yomiuri Shinbun, November 10, 2003.「一区対決　石川、新潟など民主勝利」Page 2.

[37] 「選挙でGo」 http://homepage3.nifty.com/makepeace/

Part VI

Conclusion

Chapter 14: Prospects for the Future

In an interview with the Yomiuri Shinbun, LDP lawmaker Nonaka Hiromu, who is now retired, categorized the "political reform debate" from 1993-1994 as nothing more than a power struggle.[1]

Undoubtedly, under the rhetoric of reform existed was the desire of major players to gain power. Indeed, part of the reason the Hosokawa government collapsed in only eight months was because of the power struggle between Ozawa and Takemura. Yet to dismiss the whole movement in 1993 as merely a power struggle clearly misses the point. Reform had been a popular theme in Japan since the Tanaka's money scandals in the 1970's, but never did such talk result a complete redefinition of the Japanese political landscape. What Nonaka had characterized as simply a power struggle led to an overhaul of the electoral system, a changing party system, and a likely permanent end to the LDP's one-party rule. It's unlikely that such dramatic changes could occur without a much more powerful force—like true demand for reform and a vision for the future—acting in concert with any kind of power struggle.

What exactly has changed? A lot. The most important change, of course, is the electoral system that voters, politicians, and analysts are all still trying to understand. Ten years and three elections after the change, one thing that everyone can probably say for certain is that the electoral system is unlikely to go through any radical transformation any time soon. I remember, still as a casual observer of Japanese politics at the time, that everybody was talking about the dual candidacy-resurrection feature of the new electoral system before and after the 1996 elections. Such outrage over the system is distinctly absent

in today's political dialogue. The voters, politicians, and parties seem to have all found comfort in the dual candidacy system, perhaps because, as I have outlined in Chapter 8, it is beneficial to all.

That means that the road to party system equilibrium that Japan is now embarking on is unlikely to be greatly shaken. Comparing the end of the 1955 system in 1993 with the current system over the last ten years, the new electoral system is undoubtedly encouraging, if not a two party, then at least a fewer party system. Hrebenar had described the old mid sized district system as a quasi-proportional electoral system, and his description is probably accurate. As with any PR system, the old system encouraged small parties; what started with two parties in 1955 had by 1993 six parties, some very small, which could consistently elect a diet member in the lower house. Comparing that with the new *heiritsusei,* which designates a large portion of its seats to the single member districts, one sees the opposite phenomenon. The number of parties exploded in 1993 to nine, but had decreased to six by the 1996 elections. That there are only five parties today—likely to be reduced to four in the near future with the disappearance of the SDP—importantly indicates that clear, relentless pressure to consolidate exists. Even after the New Frontier Party collapsed, there was not an explosion in the number of parties; all of them essentially merged with the DPJ by the 2000 elections except for the Komeito and Ozawa's Liberal Party, which eventually merged anyways. The story with the NFP suggests that even if the DPJ is unable to hold together, Japan will never return to a truly diverse multi-party system that it used to have.

The question then becomes whether the Democratic Party of Japan has any longevity. On the one hand, the party has survived the longest of all the parties that were created since 1993. Significantly, the party has now competed in five national elections and has managed

to survive them all, despite its inability to gain power. On the other hand, one has to wonder how much longer the party is able to unite under moral victories. In 1996, the party survived its launch. In the Upper House elections of 1998, the party's performance drove Hashimoto to resignation. In 2000, it claimed victory because the LDP lost so badly. In the 2001 Upper House elections, it made small gains in the face of adversity in the overwhelming popularity of Prime Minister Koizumi. In 2003, it claimed that it had built a stepping-stone to taking over power by making further gains. All of these self-congratulations, of course, ignore the obvious fact that the party is in control neither in the Upper nor the Lower Diet. In many ways, the Upper House elections coming up in the summer of 2004 will go a long way in establishing the durability of the DPJ. The seats that are up for elections are the same ones that were up for elections in 1998, when the DPJ did very well. If the DPJ is unable to at least hold on to those seats, if not make gains, some DPJ members will openly begin to question the party's ability to eventually gain power. Absent the conviction that the party is headed for glory, the question becomes whether personal conflicts within the party—namely between Ozawa and former JSP members—will eventually destroy party unity that essentially exists today because of the need to win elections.

If the DPJ fails to enter the year 2005 united, then the cycle that began with the splinter of the NFP would have to repeat itself once again. One important point, however, is that even if this were to occur, it is very unlikely to lead to the LDP's one party rule. As stated previously, like the NFP splinter, a DPJ splinter would probably lead to another quick consolidation, even if there were no party to "run to" as in 1996 when the remains of the NFP could merge with the already existing DPJ, because the electoral system simply does not favor the small parties. Of course, while the opposition is scrambling to come together, the

LDP's rule will continue. That the cycle would have to begin once again with consolidation, as after the 1996 elections, makes it disturbingly possible that the LDP would remain in power for at least another ten years. So long as they remain in power, it is impossible to imagine how the fundamental political problems in Japan would ever be tackled.

If, on the other hand, the DPJ survives the 2004 test, then I believe that the chances are very good that the DPJ will be around for a while, eventually to become a force to be reckoned with. The party would not be able to claim legitimacy until it does gain power, but the 2003 elections showed that the LDP is undoubtedly experiencing electoral deterioration. The party lost a significant number of seats in the SMDs and it lost to the DPJ in the PR tier. That the LDP was outperformed by the DPJ despite Koizumi and Abe's relative popularity suggest that the LDP is likely to perform even worse in the PR tier in the future. The story with the SMDs is different because there are still many regions that the LDP dominates, as we have seen in Chapter 13, and the party has many seasoned veterans who can get elected on their personal popularity. Nevertheless, if the party commits just one political debacle that leads to the wrath of the voters, it is possible that the DPJ would sweep into power.

Possible, but unfortunately not likely, because while the LDP is deteriorating, the party continues to win by default. The fact is that the DPJ is still very far away from gaining power. The LDP on its own has more than a majority of seats following its merger with the NCP. With the addition of the Komeito's 34 seats, the DPJ, with 177 seats, is 100 seats short of the coalition, and still a daunting 64 seats away from a majority. Because the DPJ in essence has become the sole opposition party, it must narrow that difference on its own in future elections; there are no longer any parties with which it can form a coalition.

This is, of course, where the Komeito story becomes very interesting. After its disastrous experience with the NFP, the party has dedicated itself to becoming the crucial third party that makes or breaks the government. The party's strategy has worked to perfection. The only other party that at one time had the potential to once again be a difference-maker, the SDP, committed political suicide by not adjusting to the times. Simple numbers tell the story. If the Komeito were to end its partnership with the LDP and openly declare the possibility of forming a coalition with the DPJ, then suddenly the gap between the LDP and the DPJ would narrow from 100 to a little over 30, a difference that can easily be made up in one election. Just as importantly, the LDP would lose the Komeito's electoral organization. Although it is very difficult to measure how much the LDP benefits from the Komeito's support, anecdotal evidence suggests that in 2003, the party was helped more than ever. The Komeito's defection would mean that the same power that got the LDP elected in 2003 would now be working against it.

The chances of Komeito's defection and a DPJ-Komeito coalition government, however, seem extremely remote. For one thing, the DPJ has far too few seats to gain power and can provide little incentive for the Komeito to defect, at least right now. In the near future, the DPJ's electoral strength may change, but its criticism of the Komeito makes it unlikely that the latter would be enthusiastic about the DPJ. While the LDP and the Komeito seem to be perfecting their partnership—the relationship between the two seems to be as close as ever following the 2003 elections—the DPJ is throwing several punches at the LDP for its relationship with the party, tactics reminiscent of the LDP when the Komeito was part of the NFP. The more the DPJ attacks, the easier it becomes for the Komeito to stick with the LDP. Finally, a DPJ-Komeito alliance would further complicate the dynamics within the

DPJ, because such a partnership in essence would be a recreation of the NFP. If Ozawa reestablishes the close relationship he had with Komeito from that period, the Socialists may revolt. This is a script that is eerily familiar.

In the near term, therefore, the DPJ must concentrate on taking power on its own. The party must, without question, perform very well in the 2004 Upper House elections, but it must also look to the next Lower House elections, which are still some time ahead. The fact is that the party has a long way to go, and is running out of seats that it can easily pick up. As I demonstrated in Chapter 13, the DPJ solidified its gains in the Aichi and Hokkaido prefectures and the Minami Kanto bloc, while making big gains in the Kinki and Hokuriku Shinetu blocs. The party needs to capitalize on its opportunities in the Kyushu bloc, and also identify other, currently LDP-dominated regions in which it can make gains. To do this, the dual candidacy feature of the electoral system should prove very beneficial to the party. If the DPJ continues to perform well in the PR tier—there is little reason to believe that it will not, assuming the party stays together—then the party can continue to resurrect challengers in the PR, providing LDP incumbents with stronger, more formidable opponents in every election. This requires, however, that the party at least make a decent showing in the PR blocs where the LDP dominates, which the party is unable to do to a disturbing degree in some regions. One way to cure such ills, although minor, is to pull the plug on its continuing electoral cooperation with the SDP, which provides nothing for the DPJ except token opposition in hopeless districts that does little to establish a firm anti-LDP presence.

As it stands now, it is very unlikely that the LDP's hold on power will change any time soon, although I do believe that the DPJ will once again survive another national election without scoring a relevant victory. I have made some educated guesses, based on

my findings for this thesis, as to what may happen from there, but the truth is that time can often bring about unexpected shock waves. Who knows? Perhaps another 1993 is just around the corner. Just the thought of such potential is enough to make any political scientist get excited.

[1] Yomiuri Shinbun. 「『改革』とは何だったのか」May 3, 2003. Page 4.

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きれいに終わらせなければならないのに、下手な短歌を詠んでしまいした。（それも字余り）

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笹沼穣