Explaining One-Party Dominance

The Case of the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan

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Abstract

With the puzzle of one-party dominance still looming large, I seek to shed some light on which factors might be considered as explanatory to the long period of hegemony of the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan. Using existing theories on one-party dominance I examine and argue for Japan's historical and cultural heritage, the pragmatic flexibility of the LDP, the failure of opposition parties, the 1955 electoral system and the Japanese press clubs as possible explanatory factors for one-party dominance in Japan. In conclusion I argue that there are no general factors applicable on any country experiencing extended rule by a single party. Instead I show that the unique characteristics and conditions that permeate every country present a shifting array of possible explanations for dominance. I contend that it is the combination of such constituents that in the end serve to create one-party dominance in some countries while not in others and that to find the correct constituents you have to scrutinise many aspects of the country of choice. With that in mind I emphasize that the factors mentioned above that I choose to examine in this paper should be seen as a selection for the case of Japan.

Keywords: One-party Dominance, Japan, LDP, Hegemony, Uncommon Democracies
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1   Introduction and Research Question

> *Though several […] instances of long-term rule by a single political party can be cited, the phenomenon remains rather rare in the industrialized democracies. Unusual, however, does not automatically equal interesting. What makes long-term rule by a single political party […] an enticing puzzle is not just that it is rare but that it is not supposed to happen. And the puzzle becomes more tantalizing the longer the period of uninterrupted single-party rule lasts (Pempel 1990 p. 5).*

For me, the puzzle of one-party dominance has been an extremely fascinating one for a long time. A criterion for democracy habitually cited by political scientists and laymen alike is free elections with periodical alternations of power. With this in mind, what is it that creates an at times seemingly perpetual dominance by a single party in an otherwise democratised country? What are the underlying mechanisms of one-party dominance? These are the kind of questions that dominated my thoughts when I chose to examine one-party dominance through the case of the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan (LDP).

Japan became democratized through the creation of a democratic constitution introduced by the American occupational forces after the Second World War. Following several years of political turmoil, the LDP was formed and assumed power 1955 and would come to hold on to it until 2009, save for 9 months out of office in 1993. The aim of this essay will be to find and examine an array of explanatory factors for the creation and maintenance of this one-party dominance in Japan. For that purpose, the research question guiding this paper is as follows:

What explanatory factors can be found for LDP's long period of hegemony in Japan?

This will be done through careful examination of an as large as possible part of the relevant literature after which I will present the factors I consider as possible explanatory factors for one-party dominance in Japan. I also feel it might be prudent to add that I do not claim the factors I have chosen as set in stone nor do I claim any one factor as solely deciding. Instead I argue that there in any country that have experienced or are currently experiencing one-party dominance, exists an array of factors that each do their share in creating and maintaining dominance. To this end I do my best to argue for and sufficiently show that the factors I chose should be considered part of this group as possible explanatory factors in the case of the LDP of Japan.

1.1 Methods and Theories

This is an essay with explanatory ambitions that will by necessity be solely based upon already existing literature and research. Therefore the emphasis will lean more towards the use of theories leaving a methodological discussion of slightly less importance.

I will conduct a qualitative case study of Japan where I intend to find plausible causes for the rise and continuance of the one-party dominance of the LDP. Thus it is the causative; what causes one-party dominance that is the object of interest in this study and not the effects *of* one-party dominance (although it might be argued that the two are intertwined). One important aspect to be wary of is a spurious cause-effect relationship. This, I feel, is largely avoided as I am merely suggesting and arguing for possible explanatory factors, not claiming them as an absolute truth.

When conducting a case study the choice of case is very important. I argue that my choice of Japan, depending on your theoretical viewpoint, is either a case of deviation or a critical case. If the choice of Japan is examined from a democratic theory viewpoint it would be labelled a deviating case. However, if it instead is examined from a one-party dominance theory viewpoint it would be labelled a critical case. I will primarily use theories on one-party dominance in this study, thus making it a critical case. Literature as T. J. Pempel's Anthology *Uncommon Democracies – The One-Party Dominant Regimes* and Kenneth F. Greene's *Why Dominant Parties Lose – Mexico's Democratization in Comparative Perspective* will be my main theoretical foundation for this essay.

2 Defining One-Party Dominance

In this chapter I will attempt to operationalise the concept of one-party dominance by discussing the definitions of the term and briefly examine research made in that area. I will then discuss relevant theories and existing literature concerning one-party dominance. Finally I will discuss some of the explanatory factors I decided to not examine closer in this paper.

What do we mean when we speak of one-party dominance? Pempel identifies 4 dimensions he deems as crucial when discussing one-party dominance. First, the party in question has to have the largest share of seats, consistently winning a plurality at elections. Second, it must be in such a position as to make it close to impossible for opposition parties to form government without it. Third, it has to fulfil the first and second criteria for a sustained time period and last it has to embark on, what Pempel calls, a "historical project", where it shapes the political agenda for a long period of time. Japan is, according to Pempel, a clear-cut case (Pempel 1990 p. 3-4). To this I add a short version of Greene's definition of one-party dominance:

> *I define party dominant party systems as hybrids that combine meaningful electoral competition with continuous executive and legislative rule by a single party (Greene 2007 p. 12).*

It is of course the "meaningful electoral competition" part that is important. This is mainly to differentiate one-party dominant regimes from what Greene calls "closed authoritarian regimes" that often are without both meaningful elections and opposition parties (Greene 2007 p. 12ff). Greene, as well as Pempel, also considers Japan a clear-cut case of one-party dominance, even dedicating a short chapter in his book to the case of Japan (Greene 2007 p. 277ff).

Needless to say, definitions of one-party dominance are by no means uncontested. For instance, there's conflicting views concerning where to set thresholds for the required share of votes or the necessary number of years a party has to be in power for it to be considered a dominant party. Both Greene and Pempel discuss this in some length in their books. I do, however, not feel I have to set these thresholds to any specific number. For this I have two reasons. First, Japan seems to be a case that would be considered a dominant party-regime by most definitions presented by Greene and Pempel. Second, seeing as I am conducting a case study with Japan as a critical case, I feel it is sufficient to show that Japan is, by most standards, considered a one-party dominant regime. Had I instead conducted a comparative study with a number of cases I would most likely have been required to more accurately define my chosen thresholds so as to motivate my choice of cases.

2.1 How to Study One-Party Dominance

What strikes me while going through the literature that attempts to explain one-party dominance is the diversity of factors arrived at by different authors. There are a variety of books discussing numerous country-specific factors that can help explain one-party dominance. I shall here first present two paths to the study of one-party dominance, exemplified by two books both hugely interesting. One of them delves extremely deep into Japanese politics going as far as to scrutinise individual political actors during the post-war period of Japan and the other goes the opposite way creating a generalised theory applicable on all one-party dominant regimes. These I call the "extreme" paths. In this essay I shall however mainly concern myself with what I like to call the "middle" path, meaning books that search for reasonably generalised country specific factors for one-party dominance. Let's start with a short description of the two "extreme" paths so as to gain an understanding of the kind of discourse that exists within the field of one-party dominance theory.

The first one is *Japan's Postwar Party Politics* written by Masaru Kohno. He utilises a micro-analytical rationalistic approach wherein he analyses the actions of individual political actors in both the LDP and the opposition parties. He understands these actions by individual politicians from a rationalistic behaviourist viewpoint; that each political individual acts on the basis of one concern: maximising his vote share. It should be noted that Kohno does admit that most politicians' actions are not as rational as that, but he presumes as such for the sake of generalisation (Kohno 1997 p. 1ff).

Kohno presents a very interesting alternate view on the explanation of one-party dominance. Certainly individual political actors at times play part in maintaining one-party dominance and, although I hesitate to ascribe the maintenance of one-party dominance during the, for the LDP, critical period of 2001-2006 to him solely, I present the case of Prime Minister Junichirou Koizumu as a possible explanatory reason for the maintenance of one-party dominance during this period[1].

The other "extreme" path is represented by Kenneth F. Greene, mentioned in the previous chapter, who constructs a theory of one-party dominance he considers applicable on all one-party dominant regimes. This theory, in short, stipulates that there are two major factors that make a party dominant: A considerable resource advantage for the incumbent and varying kinds of sanctions toward the opposition. This, Greene argues, creates a situation where the more resources the incumbent have and the harder it is for opposition parties to form and act, the higher the perceived "cost" of forming or joining an opposition party becomes. Naturally, a rational political careerist would want to join the dominant party. By this argument, the "cost" for not doing so is on one side a foregoing of a

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[1] See chapter 4.1.2 – Junichiro Koizumi Maintaining Dominace?

successful career with all the benefits that would have entailed and on the other side the possibility of threats, violence and other forms of intimidation the opposition might have to endure. Despite all this opposition parties do form. In accordance to this, Greene argues that the higher the cost the more ideologically motivated the politicians would have to be in order to form or join an opposition party. As a result, seeing as the dominant party often is a somewhat centrist catch-all party, opposition parties form as niche parties on either side, both too ideologically extreme to attract a sufficiently large share of the public vote and ideologically too far separated from other opposition parties to successfully form and maintain a coalition (Greene 2007 p. 5ff).

I find Greene's arguments compelling and ambitious but, for me, I feel it falls somewhat short. For example, the factor of intimidation and violence towards the opposition can hardly be considered applicable to Japan. Undoubtedly, Greene admits as much in his chapter on Japan. However this leaves him with only the resource advantage as explanatory factor. Without a doubt, money (in this case resource) makes the world go around and Greene certainly argues for his case well. Yet I have trouble accepting that this would be the *only* explanatory factor for one-party dominance in Japan (or anywhere). Perhaps this is naught but emotionalism; perhaps I just don't want to accept this as simply being a matter of who controls the most resources controls the country. Nonetheless, in this essay I *do* argue that there are other factors aside from resource advantage worth contemplating as well, and I hope you will agree with me by the time I am done.

2.2   Finding the Factors

Upon deciding that explaining one-party dominance in Japan would be the topic for this essay the first order of business was to identify which variables I would argue to be possible explanatory factors for one-party dominance in Japan. Because of the constraints on both time and space in this thesis I had to limit my range somewhat, thus not being able to pursue each and every factor I deemed as relevant but instead having to prioritise. Here I will give a brief résumé on some of the factors I decided not to examine further in this paper. It might seem somewhat curious that I do not in this chapter argue for the factors I *have* chosen. The reason for this is that I feel each factor argues for itself in its designated chapter, hence I will not waste precious space tautologising those arguments here.

Corruption – Corruption was one of the first factors I contemplated, seeing as Japan had been rocked by numerous corruption scandals during the last 50 years. However, I felt there were several problems with the arguments for corruption as an explanatory factor. First, electoral fraud is the corruption that can be considered to play the biggest part in deciding what party will lead the country. What I found was however a study that showed little to no evidence at all of electoral fraud in Japan (Christensen and Colvin 2009 p. 199ff). Other forms of corruption, such as the illicit acquirement of party funds, might be considered an explanatory factor, but I feel this simply adds to the argument of the incumbent´s

resource advantage. On the contrary, such forms of corruption could be considered a double-edged sword in that it, if detected, might instead lead to the downfall of the dominant party (as seemed to happen in 1993).

The Powerful Bureaucracy – During the American occupation the US purged and replaced most of the Japanese politicians. The bureaucracy, however, were left mostly untouched and was able to not only maintain but strengthen its power. A strong bureaucracy in and of itself might not be a factor for one-party dominance but the way it interacts with the incumbent might be of interest. Still, when I examined the literature there seemed to be disagreement as to how much actual power the Japanese bureaucracy wield and whether this power hinder or aid the LDP (probably a little of both). Due to this uncertainty I decided to prioritise other factors I perceived as more decisive.

Voter base and social cleavages – This is probably the factor of those I chose not to pursue I would have most liked to include.

For example, findings show that normal social cleavages present in most western countries, such as class, religion, language and ethnicity seems to be less relevant in the case of Japan. Japan is for the most part a secularist country where religion plays little to no part in the daily life of most of its citizens. Moreover, ethnical minorities count for less than 1 percent of the population, many of whom also speaks Japanese. Japan is thus a country largely homogeneous concerning ethnicity, language and religion. In addition to this, Japan is the country where the largest part of the population perceives itself as middle class and also boasts one of the highest, if not the highest, reading ability rates in the world. All this goes to show that traditional social cleavage theory seems to be incompatible with the case of Japan. Instead, different categories such what types of organisations, industries and cooperation's one adheres to seem to matter more (Richardson 1997 p. 16ff). In the end, having already written much about other factors I chose to forego this one as it simply would take up too much space.

3 History and Culture as Explanations for Dominance

In this chapter I will try to show how the Japanese cultural and historical heritage can be used as an explanatory factor for the emergence and maintenance of one-party dominance. It may not stand as an explanation in and of itself, but I feel it is well worth delving in to as a contributory factor. I shall for the most part abstain from conducting a history lesson, instead focusing more on the mentality and civic culture cultivated by the historic events of this fascinating country.

3.1 The Emperor as Father of the Nation

Let us start in the *Tokugawa* era (1603-1850), which was a time of relative peace and isolation.

Towards the end of the era, in an incident which came to be known as "the arrival of the black ships", Commodore Matthew C. Perry of the United States came unannounced to Japan and demanded trade routes to be opened. Fearing possible annexation, the *Tokugawa shogunate* (government) eventually signed the trading papers. This deal proved rather disadvantageous to Japan, and the *shogunate's* inability to stand up to Perry sparked a revolutionary movement with the intention of reinstating the emperor and ridding Japan of all foreigners under the slogan "expelling the barbarians" (*joui).* The revolution succeeded and the Japanese *Meiji*-state, often considered the beginning of the modern Japanese state, was born (Iokibe 1999 p. 60-63).

Of course, "expelling the barbarians" proved impossible to a Japan that had enjoyed over 200 years of relative peace during the *Tokugawa* era. Thus *Meiji* Japan had a daunting task ahead of it; In order to avoid becoming a puppet state, or worse, to the west they had to adopt western military technology while cultivating and maintaining a sense of nationalism in the highly feudal and village/family-oriented Japanese people. Before the *Meiji*-state was formed, the Japanese people had little notion of themselves as part of a larger whole; the Japanese state. Instead, their focal point was on which village and family one belonged to. In order to cultivate nationalism, the *Meiji*-state used this to its advantage by reinstating the emperor as a figurehead and presenting him as the father of the nation. In a *normal* Japanese family unit, children had to be loyal and obedient to their father. In the same way the people of Japan had to be loyal and obedient to the father of the nation; the Emperor. And as in a normal family, where loyalty and obedience to the father is the ruling principle, harmony reigns

and conflict does not exist (Abe et al 1994 p. 204-205, 225-229). The implications of this are well summed up in the following quote:

> *In Japan [...] the state was originally conceived of as a surrogate family (in the idea of the "family state"), the state was inevitably thought of as a social collectivity in which conflict and opposition simply would not occur. In the absence of conflict, there is no place for politics; in a word, the Japanese state was ideally an apolitical state. [...] The proper state of affairs was an absence of conflict and confrontation; if they should by chance occur, this was treated as an exceptional and deviant event. Consequently, the Japanese have never excelled at dealing with conflicts and disputes as routine occurrences. What the Japanese are experts at is strategies designed to avoid conflict and confrontation [...] In accord with this distinctive feature of Japanese politics, democracy, too, is seen less as a means for resolving conflict and disagreement and more as a technique for avoiding it. The result is that in Japan a "democratic" decision is defined in principle not simply as majoritarian but as unanimous (Abe et al 1994 p. 204).*

Without a doubt, to have an emperor, king or queen as figurehead and legitimising body of the government is not now, and was not then, a new occurrence. Similar things had been going on for centuries in Europe and elsewhere. However, where the kings and queens of Europe were kings and queens by divine right, the Emperor of Japan was himself divine. The *Meiji*-constitution described him as a "divine and inviolable being", and all political powers were centred on the throne. In practice he was but a figurehead; a legitimising façade for the government. Nonetheless, in this aspect the emperor proved exceedingly useful. Any political blunder or corruption was easily dealt with by dismissing the individual who had committed the "error", thus ensuring that no ill will fell towards the Meiji-government. After all, it was the employee of the emperor that had erred and not the emperor himself. This cultivated a sense of hierarchical thinking in the people in the sense that the emperor was the highest being, divine, and criticism against him was a serious crime. Subsequently, the bureaucrats and officials who worked for the government became of higher standing simply by the virtue of working for a divine being (Abe et al 1994 p. 4-11).

The perception of bureaucrats and officials as beings of higher standing permeates even to this day, as exemplified by the practice of *amakudari* (literally; descent from heaven). This is a practice where a bureaucrat retires in his early fifties and acquires a top position in the very industry he once regulated. (Colignon and Usui 2003 p. 1ff)

3.2   Liberalism and *Public* in Japan

Moreover, the concept of liberalism never really took hold in pre-WWII Japan, or even, some argue, in post-WWII Japan. To be sure, there have been the occasional eruptions of civil rights movements throughout Japanese history, but they have made little impact on society as a whole.

For instance, the Japanese word used for "freedom" and "liberty" is the word *jiyuu,* which has undertones of selfishness and superiority. To this day many

understand the word *jiyuu,* and by extension *jiyuushugi* (liberalism), by its more negative traditional meaning (Abe et al 1994 p. 207-209).

Another telling example of a semantic nature is the meaning of the word *kou*, used to describe the concept of "public". In the book *Deciding the Public Good – Governance and Civil Society in Japan,* Yoshida Shinichi depicts in his chapter *Rethinking the Public Interest in Japan: Civil Society in the Making* a Japan where the concept of "public", as used in the western world, is still highly unfamiliar. The word *kou* is used in many aspects, for example *kouen* (commonly translated as Public Park). However, the word *kou* historically has a meaning of "official" as illustrated by words such as *kouyousha* (vehicles used by officials) or *koubunsho* (official documents), a connotation that prevails to this day (Yoshida 1999 p. 24-29). Yoshida describes this as a public-equals-official system:

> *Under Japan's centralized system of government, the ministry officials at the top of the bureaucratic hierarchy not only made decisions on matters of the national interest but dictated the public interest for prefectural and municipal administrations, in descending order. It was thus no wonder that the whole structure of decision making on matters of the public interest was one and the same with the bureaucratic hierarchy (Yoshida 1999 p. 25).*

This deeply embedded system of hierarchy, loyalty to the state and general obedience has, suffice to say, far-reaching implications. The fact that the state is compounded, not of individuals, but of families bound to the father figure; the emperor, and that government officials receives a status of near-divinity by being legitimized by the divine emperor might be considered as the origin of the silent obedience to authority which is sometimes said to characterize Japanese society. This, I argue, leads to a political climate in which serious challenge to the incumbent on behalf of the public might not be as frequent as in other countries, thus making the maintenance of one-party dominance easier once established.

> *In Japanese democracy, opportunities for individual citizens to become autonomous bearers of political order have always been few and far between. Most people are satisfied with the political benefits they receive; in return they support the long-term rule of the conservative party. In this way, single-party dominance by the conservatives is maintained, and, as a result, the soil is prepared in which political corruption grows (Abe et al 1994 p. 206).*

4 In the Fabrics of Japanese Party Politics

In this chapter I will discuss three factors of political nature: the LDP, opposition failure and the so called 1955 electoral system.

4.1 The LDP

Here I will very briefly describe the history of LDP as a party and highlight some of its defining moments. In doing so I will argue that the pragmatic flexible catch-all properties of the LDP has served it well through good times and bad. I do this because I judge the LDP's ability to adapt to changes as a possible explanatory factor for its long period of dominance.

The LDP was formed in 1955 through the joining of two conservative parties, the Liberals and the Democrats. It is usually described as a highly factional party with its main support stemming from agriculture and big business cooperation's. At first the LDP´s main political goals were to amend the constitution, rebuild the Japanese army and fight the Communists (i.e. the JCP). These goals were all vehemently resisted by the Japanese Socialist Party (JSP) that voiced vituperative criticism aimed towards the LDP. In turn the LDP, by its rightist somewhat militaristic political stance, ironically gave the JSP its *raison d'tre* by giving them a distinct enemy to fight, namely the, according to the JSP, fascist LDP (Abe et al 1994 p. 115-117) (Otake 1990 p. 142-149).

4.1.1 Crisis and the Cycle of Dominance

Massive protests erupted during this period aimed towards the LDP, who looked fated to lose before domination had even set root. As in the case of the Foundation from the famous *Foundation* trilogy written by Isaac Asimov, The LDP's first crisis had arrived.

However, here the party shows its first signs of flexibility. By steering the political agenda away from constitutional amendment and rearmament and instead focusing on economic prosperity with the famous "income-doubling" plan, they created the Japanese "economic miracle" of the 60s (Muramatsu and Krauss 1990 p. 298ff). This policy was not only a great success, but also made the LDP the bringers of prosperity; they became identified with the epoch of great economic

prosperity much like the Swedish Social Democrats became identified with the modern welfare state.

This started what Pempel calls the "virtuous cycles of dominance". When a party gains electoral plurality and manages to stay in a policy-making position for a long time, the party is then able to implement its "historical agenda" and is consequently continually strengthening its own position while weakening the opposition, starting this cycle of dominance (Pempel 1990 p. 16).

> *Dominance thus involves an interrelated set of mutually reinforcing processes that have the potential to beget even more dominance. It is this interrelationship that I have called a virtuous cycle of dominance (Pempel 1990 p. 16).*

The continued dominance of LDP soon made its policies so inaugurated with the country as a whole that there were few other options left for groups opposed to the LDP (Pempel 1990 p. 26-29).

> *In [...] Japan, finally, conservatives could claim an element of ideological and policy hegemony that resulted from their continued control of government. Not only did they enjoy tactical bargaining positions that allowed them to control an entire component of the ideological spectrum, [...] but their association with their countries' economic growth and national traditions reinforced their support base. [...] in Japan groups once hostile to the conservatives had to deal with the LDP and the national bureaucracy as LDP rule continued or face the prospect of permanent marginality (Pempel 1990 p. 27).*

The LDP's next challenge came during the 1970s with increased public demands for better welfare and improvement of the environment. During this time both the Social Democrats of Sweden and the Labour Party of Israel had lost power despite long periods of dominance and the opposition in Japan looked poised to seize power as well (Pempel 1990 viii). However, once again the LDP managed to re-invent itself by drastically increasing welfare expenditure and adopting the, at the time, most rigorous anti-pollution laws in the world. LDP was once again able to take credit for and identify itself with a new epoch of increased welfare, thus effectively staving off being ousted from office (Muramatsu and Krauss 1990 p. 300-303) (Reed and Shimizu 2009 p. 29-31).

4.1.2 Junichiro Koizumi Maintaining Dominance?

Finally, the LDP's last challenge came after the electoral reform enacted during its 9 months out of office in 1993-1994. Although the LDP came back into power after the eight-party coalition that held power during this time had collapsed, it had still not gained enough electoral support to form a majority and had to form coalitions with unfamiliar partners such as the Koumeitou (who would become a semi-permanent partner in following years) and the JSP. On two occasions it even saw itself forced to ruling as a minority government (Reed and Shimizu 2009 p. 14-19).

Japan was, after electoral reform in 1993, heading for a two-party system and an alternation of power in accordance with Duverger's law, which states that single-member districts lead to a two-party system (Reed and Shimizu 2009 p.

29ff). Nevertheless, the LDP managed to stave off alternation of power until 2009. In this instance I will name one individual politician as an explanatory factor for dominance during this period; Junichiro Koizumi. Interesting as though it may be I will not venture too deep into this subject. I do however feel that a short recap of Koizumi's time as Prime Minister might be called for to illustrate why I chose him as a partial explanatory factor for continued LDP dominance in the face of electoral reform.

Koizumi came to power in 2001 after the previous prime minster had been forced to resign due to exceptionally low levels of popularity. Often described as a political maverick, openly critical towards his own party and very much unlike any Prime Minister Japan had ever seen, the fact that he even rose to power within his own party is a topic suited for a paper in and of itself. Koizumi was a passionate advocate of government reform and made postal privatisation reform his chief political goal in disaccord with his own party member's wishes (Kawabata 2006 p. 79ff) (Reed and Shimizu 2009 p. 17ff) (Gaunder 2007 p. 121ff).

Koizumi's strategy mirrored that of Tony Blair when he campaigned on "New Labour" in Britain in 1997, in that he symbolised change in the stagnating LDP. In a famous speech Koizumi promised to "change the LDP in order to change Japan" and if the LDP would not reform he would smash and break it (*buchikowasu*). In this way he managed, on two different occasions (2001 and 2005), to campaign as the head of the leading party while being the opposition at the same time. This made him immensely popular. To many voters he represented an alternative to LDP while still not being as risky as voting for the opposition. At the height of his popularity his ratings were over 80 percent, an incredible number for a Japanese Prime Minister. The LDP even found a new source of revenue in the sales of Koizumi merchandise (Reed and Shimizu 2009 p. 17-19, 41-43).

His ratings, although still mostly remarkably high, dropped in the subsequent period of 2001-2005. In 2005 he won a historical landslide victory due to his tactics in forcing the postal reform bill through. In doing this he also secured a majority in the legislative assembly (i.e. the diet). The postal reform bill had met with fierce opposition, mainly from his own party. When the time came to vote for the bill, victory was denied by his own LDP colleagues. To the surprise of many, Koizumi made good on his promise to "smash the LDP if opposed" by dissolving the diet and refusing to re-nominate the LDP politicians that had voted against the bill. Instead he ran new candidates he knew to be in support of reform, eventually passing the bill. This was a move that entailed a very high level of risk. However, his success in passing the bill and his skill at manipulating the media propelled his popularity to new heights and subsequently gave him the victory and clear majority in the 2005 election (Reed and Shimizu 2009 p. 41-43) (Gaunder 2007 p. 127ff).

Koizumi resigned, as he had previously promised, after two terms but his successors managed to, in different ways, squander the support Koizumi had

garnered. Three Prime ministers, Shinzou Abe, Yasuo Fukuda and Asou Tarou, were expended in as many years[2], the first two resigning abruptly and with great shock, and the last one finally losing an election to the leftist opposition for the first time in LDP history (Reed and Shimizu 2009 p. 43)

4.2   Failure of Opposition

> *To ask why a single party enjoys long-term dominance over a nation's government is to ask why no opposition party or coalition was able to defeat it (Otake 1990 p. 130).*

So let us do just that, let's ask ourselves why the opposition in Japan for a very long time were unable to wrestle control of the country out of the hands of the LDP. But let´s not do this by going through each and every opposition party and list their every moment of success and/or failure, but by conducting a more theoretical discussion on the reasons of opposition failure relevant to the case of LDP dominance in Japan[3].

4.2.1   Failure to Cooperate

To begin with, Greene would most likely argue that opposition failure is due to a centrist catch-all party surrounded by ideologically extreme niche-parties unable to either cooperate or attract a large enough share of the electorate to pose a serious threat (Greene 2007 p. 5ff).

That most Japanese opposition parties are niche-parties is admittedly true, as is the fact that they have for a long time been unable to cooperate with each other despite several attempts. LDP, however, is usually considered a rightist party and most opposition parties throughout this period of dominance have been situated on its left. Considering this, the opposition parties, especially The Japanese Socialist Party JSP/SDP[4] and the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) should theoretically have, like the leftist party (V) and Social Democrats (S) of Sweden, been able to cooperate with each other, at least at some point. Nonetheless, such cooperation failed to come about and a consistent let-down at the ballot might be one reason for this failure.

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[2] For readers wishing additional information on the fate of these three and these years of turmoil I heartily recommend some of the works of Bert Edström who has a Ph.D. in Japanese Studies at Stockholm University. You will find some of them under the chapter *Recommended Reading* towards the end.

[3] For an overview of the major parties in Japan and their electoral shares in the period of 1960-2006 see Appendix 1.

[4] The JSP became the SDP in 1996. In this chapter it will henceforth be referred to as simply the JSP

4.2.2 Opposition Lacking Legitimacy

Another theory evident from the literature, which in part ties in with Greene's, is that the voters does not see the opposition as a legitimate alternative to the incumbent. In other words, the opposition does not appear capable of governing (Greene argues that this is so precisely *because* the opposition is too niche oriented, which might very well be the case).

In a 1980 survey, 52.6 percent of the respondents perceived the LDP as the party most able to govern Japan. In contrast, the JSP, long thought of as the main challenger to the LDP, only scored 3.7 percent. Furthermore, 32.7 percent answered "do not know" or considered no party able to govern. Hence over 85% of the respondents chose no party at all or named the LDP as the most able to govern, clearly showing the virtual monopoly of legitimacy the LDP enjoys (Inoguchi 1990 p. 199-200). It would seem that Duverger´s quote: "A dominant party is that which public opinion *believes* to be dominant" (Duverger in Greene 2007 p. 16) is still very much viable even after 50 years.

Another revealing example of how LDP was long considered as the only viable option for rule is ironically from the one time the LDP was out of office, the election of 1993. The public confidence in the LDP had been shaken by several devastating scandals leading up to the 1993 election. In spite of the scandals, the LDP would most likely have, during normal circumstances, continued its uninterrupted rule. However, two large factions, dissatisfied with the corruption and lack of reform, defected from LDP and formed two new conservative parties; the New Party Harbinger (*Shinto Sakigake)* and the Japan Renewal Party (*Shinsei)*. Additionally a third new conservative party not formed of defectors from the LDP was formed; the Japan New Party (*Nihon Shinto*) (Reed and Shimizu 2009 p. 12-13) (Gaunder 2007 p. 84-86).

Voters flocked to these conservative alternatives to LDP and, even though LDP remained the largest party, these new conservative parties managed an eight-party coalition ousting the LDP from office for the first in the parties' history (although the time would be short, only 9 months). However, the total conservative vote share was in fact larger than in the previous election. Had these defections from the LDP not occurred it would most likely have been able to retain office, despite it being widely unpopular at the time. This illustrates perfectly that dissatisfaction with the LDP was widespread but until this point viable alternatives had been considered scarce by the major part of the electorate (Gaunder 2007 p. 84-86).

4.3 The 1955 Electoral System

In this chapter I will, without delving too deep into the specifics of the Japanese electoral system, discuss the peculiarities of the so called 1955-system that permeated Japanese politics during the period 1955-1993.

4.3.1 The Medium-Sized-District System

The 1955 electoral system is described as a Medium-Sized-District Electoral System (MSD).

The MSD system worked as such: the 511 members of the House of Representatives were elected from 129 constituencies. Each constituency had between 2 to 6 seats to be won. Each voter put his vote to one candidate and the ones with the most votes won. Thus, in a 3-seat district, the top three, regardless of the percentage or number of votes received, won the election and got the seats. This stood in stark contrast to the American "single-member-district" (SMD) system or the "large district proportional representation" (PR) system found in many European countries. With the SMD system, only the politician who receives the most votes, making the cut-off point 50%, wins. This usually has the effect of marginalising smaller parties thus creating a two-party system. On the other hand, the PR systems have several seats which are, as the name implies, distributed proportionally according to party vote share. For example a party with 60% vote share in a 20 seat district would receive 12 seats (Abe et al 1994 p. 140ff).

The Japanese SMD system, however, works quite differently. Firstly, as I mentioned above, in a three-seat district, the top three candidates automatically win regardless of vote share. This theoretically created a situation where a popular candidate might have won 90% of the votes, enabling the second and third candidate to gain seats even though they received but a minuscule share of the vote. Secondly, another interesting property of the SMD system was that, seeing as it took 256 seats to gain a majority in the 511 seat House of Representatives, several candidates of the same party would have to run in each district in order to gain a majority. This resulted in a rather peculiar practice where candidates from the same party campaigned against, not only the opposition, but also each other in trying to win seats in the same district (Abe et al 1994 p. 140ff).

The last remarkable effect the SMD system had was due to the fact that not all parties had the same opportunities to run as many candidates. As mentioned before, to gain a majority of the 511 seats you would have to gain 256 or more seats. This of course stipulates that you would also have to actually *run* more than 256 candidates in order to even have a fighting chance at gaining majority. However for example, in the 1990 election the LDP ran 338 candidates while the two major opposition parties, the JSP and the JCP, ran only 149 and 131 respectively. As a result, the LDP was the only party showing any clear intent on actually grasping majority for itself (Abe et al 1994 p. 140ff). With that in mind perhaps long-lasting LDP dominance is somewhat less surprising.

Then in 1993, the first coalition not including the LDP since 1955 enacted electoral reform transforming Japan's MSD system to a mixed system with 300 SM seats according to the old system and 200 PR seats (later changed to 180) that would be elected in 11 regional blocs. Even though this new system sparked some peculiarities of its own, it would effectively offset the unfair advantage previously gained by the LDP (Abe et al 1994 p. 140ff)

5   Press Clubs and the Media in Japan

In this chapter I intend to show how the Japanese media can be considered a contributing factor to the upholding of one-party dominance in Japan. I will for the most part be focusing on printed media and the utilization of what is known as the press clubs (*kisha kurabu*).

5.1   History of the Japanese Press

The Japanese press has a, by comparison, short history. When the first newspapers written in Japanese were published, the press in Britain and the United States had already established themselves as the 'fourth estate', having been in circulation for over 100 years. Additionally, when introduced, newspapers where considered a tool for education and pleasure while its role as watchdog of the government where little known. In this way, the press came to be seen as a tool for the Meiji Government to gain support and control opinion (Freeman 2000 p. 23ff).

I will not delve further into the history of the Japanese press, interesting as though it may be. Suffice to say, this can be seen as the point of origin to the subsequent development of the Japanese press into its present-day form.

5.2   Why Focus on the Press and Press Clubs?

It might be argued that today's media climate is diverse and versatile and that my sole focus on the press might be ill-conceived. What will follow are my arguments on why I believe this is not so and I will motivate why my main focus is on the printed media and on the press clubs.

First off, the five largest national newspapers in Japan (*Yomiuri, Asahi, Mainichi, Nikkei* and *Sankei)* are all immensely popular, each ranking among the ten largest daily newspapers (measured in readership) in the world. *Yomiuri* is the largest with more than 14,000,000 copies daily. Combined these five newspapers have an approximate circulation of 40,000,000 newspapers per day, holding a share well over 50 percent of the total newspaper market in Japan (Freeman 2000 p. 17).

For sake of reference, as a survey from 2005 conducted by the World Association of Newspapers shows, the largest non-Japanese newspaper is the German newspaper *Bild* with almost 4,000,000 copies daily, and the largest newspaper in the United States (a country with more than double the population

of Japan) is the *USA Today* with some 2,500,000 copies (Newspapers24.com). Newspapers in Japan are also notoriously well trusted by the population as shown by a, somewhat dated, Newspaper Association Survey from 1993 where 70% of the people over 18 said that they trusted their newspapers and 74% stated that they read newspapers every day. These numbers are unusually high for any publication (Freeman 2000 p. 18-19).

Moreover, television was introduced in Japan in the years following the end of World War II, but not until 1986 did any channel, aside from the national public service channel NHK, produce a news program. Also, the NHK's news programs were considered to be notoriously bland and lacking in investigative quality. Even though there are numerous different news programs on Japanese TV today, many of the biggest ones have strong cooperate ties to the top 5 newspapers (Freeman 2000 p. 16ff).

> *If News Stations injects a somewhat healthy attitude of cynicism toward bots bureaucrats and politicians ... it does not, however, provide either a marked alternative viewpoint or true investigative journalism (Krauss in Freeman 2000 p. 18).*

5.3   General Characteristics of the Japanese press

Newspapers in Japan (particularly the "big five") are often described as largely homogeneous and too similar in style and content. A sociologist and historian of the Japanese Press, Yamamoto Taketoshi, describe the situation as follows:

> *Rare indeed is the capitalist nation that has print and broadcast media that carry such uniform news as Japan. If you were to hide the masthead, it would be virtually impossible to tell from the contents which newspaper you were reading (Yamamoto in Freeman 2000 p. 20).*

Journalists often come from the top universities (incidentally thus having the same scholastic background as most politicians and bureaucrats) and can be considered simultaneously both highly competitive and unusually cooperative with each other. This unusual level of cooperation among journalists of rivalling publications seem to adhere to the large level of uniformity in Japanese society of large, and also to the way in which government ministries handle journalists. For instance, information booklets with titles such as *How to Brief Journalists* (*Kisha happyou no houhou*) and *Notebook on Public Relations* (*Kouhou zakkichou*) have been published by the Public Relations division for distribution in the government agencies. One of the booklets describes proper conduct as disclosing identical information to all journalists at the same time. Giving any one journalist a scoop is considered as interfering with fair reporting (Freeman 2000 p. 19-21, 77-78).

5.4   About the Press Clubs

There are numerous press clubs in Japan, the exact number being seemingly unknown, and they are present in most major state, business and political organizations in the country. Together they form an information cartel by making sure that membership is restricted to a select group of news organizations, that there are a strict set of rules and regulations in place governing conduct within the clubs and that there are strong sanctions available to be used against violators.

The organization Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association (*Nihon Shinbun Kyoukai)* governs the press clubs. The Newspaper Association monitor and legitimize the press clubs by acting as arbiter of disputes and enforcer of rules. Membership in this association is a requirement to be granted access to the press clubs, effectively excluding all weekly magazines, industry newspapers, partisan publications and religious organs (Freeman 2000 p. 13-16, 67-69).

5.4.1   Blackboard Agreements

The epithet of blackboard agreements (*kokuban kyoutei*) refers to the praxis where upcoming press conferences, briefings or other news related announcements are posted on a blackboard in the press clubs.

The postings will in most cases include time and date of announcement, and once posted the journalists may no longer gather news independently or try to make a better scoop for their newspaper on anything posted. Also there will often be lectures held by the ministries on upcoming announcements to ensure that the journalists understand the issue as the ministry would have them understand it. Then, at the aforementioned time, identical information will be given to all journalists so as to not make any one journalist or newspaper the subject of preferential treatment. Not only can this be said to be detrimental to investigative journalism, it also in a way becomes paradoxical towards the way that, what is usually called "news", is no longer new but very much deliberate (Freeman 2000 p. 102-106). Freeman explains:

> *These practices give new meaning to the word "news": it is not really new; it is quite planned. Blackboard agreements are also important for the chilling effect they have on independent newsgathering and investigative reporting, and [...] also fosters a newsgathering environment based on a high degree of cooperation between ostensible competitors and sources, and environment that often works to limit, rather than increase, the flow of information to the public (Freeman 2000 p. 104).*

This regulated system is a highly effective way of controlling the Japanese press, and increased effort is put on the maintenance of, and having close ties to, the political press clubs. To illustrate, the Public Relations cost of the Prime Minister's Office went from 100 million yen (approx. 8, 5 million SEK) in 1959 to over 2000 million yen (approx. 170 million SEK) in 1972. surely these numbers have long since been surpassed. Furthermore, government PR sections

have become quite adept at writing press releases in the form of newspaper articles, sometimes even going as far as to make suggestions for headlines, leads and graphics. A "well-known chief cabinet secretary" is quoted as having said that "we are quite happy when club members [i.e. journalists] spend their time sitting in the club. We give them all the information they need." (Freeman 2000 p. 77). This does well to show that the government and ministries are more than happy at this system of soft information control.

5.4.2 *Ban* Journalism

Ban journalists (*ban kisha*) are journalists that are appointed exclusively to one top politician (or bureaucrat) for a period of 1-3 years. The most important position is to be the ban journalist for the prime minister.

The ban journalists first arrives at the politician´s home at around 7:30 in the morning, then accompany them to their workplace and remains close by for the most part of the day. Late in the evening the journalists travel with the politician to their home, and may then finally return back home. This arrangement gives the journalists insight into the work of the politician. In this way, the journalists also often find themselves privy to much information of sensitive nature with the presupposed understanding on both parts that they are not supposed to write about it. Not surprisingly, when this amount of time is spent together, a personal relationship often develops between the journalists and the politician, something that often seem to be encouraged, even desired, by both press clubs and politicians (Freeman 2000 p. 73-75, 113-115) (Feldman 1993 p. 82-84). Indeed, the practice of forming a strong bond to the politician seems to be profoundly institutionalised, as seen in this excerpt from a booklet containing instructions on ban journalism, published in 1988:

> *The most important thing you should do is to make sure that the police officers' families – their wives and daughters – do not dislike you. You must maintain friendly relations with the family. There are many ways to do this. While some journalists offer their services as home tutors, what will make family members really happy is a present that comes from the heart. During such occasions as wedding anniversaries, the wife's birthday, the daughter's celebration for entering a good school, a necktie, scarf or fountain pen make nice, thoughtful gifts. [...] You should try to be the kind of journalist the family will come to think of not as a "journalist who makes visits in terms of his own interests and benefits" but rather, as a "journalist who comes visiting as an intimate friend (Excerpt from booklet in Freeman 2000 p. 114).*

Some Japanese journalists appears to have taken great pride in the fact that they, in contrast to their American colleagues, are able to have intimate chats with, for example, the prime minister, and may even get invited to his private room on occasion. However, this intimacy comes at a price. With familiarity and a close friendship follows that it becomes increasingly difficult for the ban journalists to write unfavourably about the politician they are appointed to. In addition, the journalists that cover LDP- politicians (as most of them do) intermittently become even more LDP- oriented than the politicians themselves. A good example is the in Japan widely known Lockheed scandal of 1983,

incidentally uncovered by non-press club magazines (hardly any scandals have been uncovered by press club-media), which ultimately ousted Prime Minster Tanaka Kakuei from office. In the aftermath a number of political journalists close to the prime minister confessed to prior knowledge of these transgressions. They had kept their silence for fear of repercussions and from fear of losing their privileged positions as ban journalists of the prime minister (Freeman 2000 p. 94-97).

In this manner politicians can control the press simply because of the press´ desire to maintain their amiable relations with the politicians.

> *There is no need for sources to "buy" Japanese journalists in order to get them to cooperate. Cooperation with sources and competitors is a fundamental aspect of club membership (Freeman 2000 p. 116).*

A side note, but well worth taking into account, is that although ban journalism is common practise among most top politicians in the LDP, journalists in fact seldom seem to visit members of the opposition (Feldman 1993 p. 90).

6 Conclusion

In this last chapter I will do a step-by-step review of each previous empiric chapter briefly summarising its contents. After the summaries I will add my own thoughts, analyse and discuss the eventual impact my findings may have on the continuation of one-party dominance in Japan. Subsequent to that I will have a short final discussion on what conclusions I have arrived at in this paper, after which I will discuss the prospects for renewed dominance. Finally, for those interested, I will give some suggestions for further research in this area.

6.1 Summary

When I set out to examine the one-party dominance of the LDP in the post-war period, the first factor I chose to give a closer look was whether the culture and history of Japan could be said to contribute to the rise and maintenance of the long period of LDP hegemony. I described how the Meiji-government of Japan in the middle of the 19th century, in order to cultivate a sense of nationalism in the people, decided to reinstate the emperor as figurehead of government presenting him as a sort of father figure of the state, mirroring the way that Japanese society was family-oriented. I then proceeded to explain how notions of "liberalism" and "public" never really quite permeated Japanese society the way they did in many western countries, exemplifying it by looking at the undertones and original meanings of the words used for "freedom" (*jiyuu*) and "public" (*kou*).

In the next chapter I examined 3 factors of political nature; the LDP, opposition failure and the electoral system. I showed how the LDP had been very pragmatic, changing its policy with each large social upheaval, always remaining a catch-all party. I also pointed to the emergence of the immensely popular Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and his alacrity for reform as a major factor for continued LDP dominance in the face of electoral system reform. Next I described how the opposition parties had failed, being too niche and extremist to attract a large enough electoral share and also a continual lack of legitimacy, not becoming a viable option to the LDP. Concluding that chapter I showed how the 1955-system had worked well to give the LDP several advantages such as being the only party able to run as many candidates as needed for single majority, how the rural votes was worth more which was advantageous to the LDP, traditionally strong in the rural areas.

Lastly I depicted how the Japanese press clubs worked, arguing that their reliance on the ministries for information through so called blackboard agreements, the five large newspapers relative homogeneity and the lack of true

investigative journalism all might be considered contributory to continued LDP dominance. I also discussed how so called ban journalists, following top politicians all day, oft becomes so close to their appointed politician that they abstain from writing anything too negative about said politician.

6.2   Analyses

I am aware that claiming historical and cultural background as a factor for one-party dominance is not completely without controversy. Difficult to show as it may be, I do however think that the historical and/or cultural backgrounds of some countries makes them more likely to exhibit periods of longevity rule by a single party than other countries might.

For instance, Sweden has what is called the "jantelag" – inexplicit rules of conduct that states that no one is, nor should consider themselves to be, better, smarter or worth more than any other. This in turn might be considered the origin of the very Swedish word "lagom" (just enough, not too much not too little) that is often used to describe many aspects of Swedish society. That this could, in some fashion, make Sweden more inclined towards developing one-party dominance is for me as clear as that what I have discussed about Japanese history and culture could be considered doing the same for Japan.

In the same way, neither the relative uniqueness of the Japanese media nor the properties of the LDP, the opposition or the electoral system carries any implications unique to the case of Japan. Again in Sweden (I use Sweden as an example simply by virtue of being Swedish), one might argue that many newspapers and journalists lean ideologically towards the left. (and as a bonus become accused of exhibiting signs of persecution complex depending on who you talk to). Whether this is true or not I cannot say, but had I chosen to conduct a case study of one-party dominance in Sweden instead of Japan I might similarly have chosen the Media as an object of study, albeit with a different angle. Conversely, in some countries in which a single party has held power for an extended time the media might not be as relevant as an explanatory factor.

Likewise, as Pempel notes: "no specific electoral system can be said to cause one-party dominance" (Pempel 1990 p. 336), not even factors as electoral systems or the actions of individual politicians or parties can properly explain one-party dominance in every country with a single dominant party.

What Pempel means is that even though a multi-party system seems to encourage one-party dominance, as it generally requires less than 50 percent of the electoral vote, for every such country there might exist another country with more or less the same electoral system that does *not* have a single dominant party.

I argue that all of these facts do well to strengthen the argument I eventually arrive at: namely that there are no specific explanatory factors for one-party dominance that is applicable in every country where such a system exist, and if there were such all-encompassing factors, they would have to be so general and vague that they might very well lose, or at least suffer diminished explanatory

power. In other words, I argue that in order to understand one-party dominance in a country you would have to carefully scrutinise each and every aspect of that country in order to find what might be the explicit explanatory factors for that country. With that in mind I think I have sufficiently shown the factors examined in this paper to be possible explanatory factors for one-party dominance in the case of Japan.

6.3   Prospects for Renewed Dominance

What are the prospects for renewed dominance for the LDP in wake of its new record-low result of just over 100 seats of 480, losing almost two thirds of its vote share from the previous election? With the number of smaller parties gradually declining since electoral reform in 1993, is Japan moving towards a two-party system with regular, or at least sporadic, alternation in power? Perilous as it may be trying to predict the future, I shall hazard a guess.

Consider for a moment the case of Sweden. Even though Sweden has 7 major parties, at the time of writing, they are divided into two blocs, the left and the right; effectively making Sweden what I call a multi-party two-party system. Might Japan come to mirror this, or has it already?

In any event, I think it is highly premature to write off the LDP. If it can muster some of the pragmatic flexibility displayed in the past it may very well come to have a new period of dominance in the near future. Especially seeing as the popularity of the DPJ and Prime Minister Hatoyama have dwindled from a 70 % popularity rate following the 2009 election to a 20 % popularity rate after not even one year, mainly due to numerous scandals and a, by the public, perceived inability on the part of Hatoyama to govern. (Nishikawa et al 2010 in Reuters).

With that said, to give some food for thought on the future of the LDP and Japanese politics I shall leave you with a quote from a normal Japanese restaurant owner interviewed by Reuters following the landslide victory of the DPJ in:

> *It's going to be challenging for the DPJ to allocate money properly, but I think we should give them a shot. If it doesn't work out, we can re-elect the LDP again in four years. (Yasuhiro Kumazawa in Sieg and Fujioka 2009 Reuters)*

6.4   Suggestions for Further Research

During the course of this paper there were a considerable amount of topics I wish I could have either written about or examined closer but I did not have the time or space to do so. Here I will present a few so as to hopefully inspire others in doing further research.

Firstly I would have liked to study the Japanese electorate closer so as to see if things such as vote trends, social cleavages and low electoral participation might be attributed to the LDP´s dominance in Japan.

Secondly, some of the rules governing the political world might surely be considered a factor for dominance. As an example Japan has one of the world's most stringent campaigning laws making it very hard, especially for an disorganised niche party, to reach the public.

Lastly there are a few related topics that might be of interest. For example it would be interesting to read a paper or book that thoroughly examines the very nature of one-party dominance. Not so much the factors that constitute it but when a party can and cannot be considered dominant. For example, did the LDP´s period of dominance end automatically (and then start anew) with the loss in 1993, or were the mechanisms governing one-party dominance still intact. I am aware that there is some research on this; however I was unable to find a really comprehensive examination of questions such as these.

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8 Appendix: Parties in Japan 1960-2005

In this appendix I shall present a comprehensive list of the noteworthy parties and their electoral shares during the period 1960-2005 followed by a short description of each party[5].

Seats won by each party in the House of Representatives Elections, 1960-2005. (Political Change Japan 15 and Government and Politics Japan 118)

Party	60	63	67	69	72	76	79	80	83	86	90	93	96	00	03	05
LDP	296	283	277	288	271	249	248	284	250	300	275	223	239	233	237	296
JSP/SDP	145	144	140	90	118	123	107	107	112	85	136	70	15	19	6	7
DPJ	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	52	127	177	113
DSP	17	23	30	31	19	29	35	32	38	26	14	15	-	-	-	-
JCP	3	5	5	14	38	17	39	29	26	26	16	15	-	20	9	9
Shinsei	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	55	-	-	-	-
Koumeitou	-	-	25	47	29	55	57	33	58	56	45	51	-	31	34	31
Sakigake	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	2	-	-	-
JNP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35	-	-	-	-
NFP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	156	-	-	-
Total	467	467	468	468	491	511	511	511	511	512	512	511	500	480	480	480

Notes: LDP = Liberal Democratic Party; JSP = Democratic Socialist Party; DPJ = Democratic Party of Japan; DSP = Democratic Socialist Party; JCP = Japan Communist Party; JNP = Japan New Party; NFP = New Frontier Party. Seat totals given for sake of reference.

JSP/SDP – Established immediately after the Second World War it was a party of great inner ideological conflict, vying between a Marxist leftist extreme calling for socialist revolution and a more pragmatic right aiming for catch-all status. It was, as seen in the table above, the LDP's main challenger for power until 1993 but has since fallen into obscurity, mostly due to a decline in union membership from where it took its main support base (Abe et al 1994 p. 128-131).

DPJ – Formed in 1996, has become the "pragmatic alternative to the LDP [...] the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) never was" (Saito 2009 p. 67). It has steadily increased its share of seats to finally unseat the LDP from power for only the second time in 54 years in winning a landslide victory in 2009 taking some 320 of

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[5] As I have dedicated an entire chapter to the LDP I will not write about them in this appendix.

480 seats in the Lower House. The DPJ now holds office with its president, Yukishiro Hatoyama, as Prime Minister (Sieg and Fujioka 2009 in Reuters).

DSP – Formed from right-wing dissidents of the JSP in 1960, it failed to become a major player. It disbanded in 1993 after several years of internal struggle over policy issues (Abe et al 1994 p. 132-134).

JCP – Started out as an extremist communist party for the intellectuals in the 1960s but failed consistently at the ballot. In the 1970s they mellowed out their extremist image somewhat, removing soviet and Marxist terminology from its party program and instead vying for a more pragmatic socialist road, which also saw an increase of their electoral share. The party failed to capitalize on this and soon fell drastically in popularity (Abe et al 1994 p. 134-135).

Shinsei – Formed by former LDP top-politician Ozawa Ichirou and was, with its 55 seats in the 1993 election, instrumental in forming the 8-party coalition government that enacted electoral reform during the 8 months of non-LDP coalition rule. Before the 1996 election Ozawa created the NFP in its stead (Abe et al 1994 135).

Koumeitou – Formed in 1964 as a religious party connected to a fundamentalist buddhist sect of the *nichiren shou* order. Was, and is still to a certain extent, viewed by a majority of the public as a party of fanatics, although the *Koumeitou* did mellow out during the 1980's becoming a more pragmatic centrist party. (Abe et al 1994 p. 131-132). It has been a steady coalition partner of the LDP since the 2000 election (Reed and Shimizu 2009 p. 16-17).

Sakigake – Formed in 1993 from dissidents from the LDP. Joined but later left the 8-party coalition government in 1993 and eventually rejoined the LDP (Saito 2009 p. 67-69).

JNP – Formed by former governor of *Kumamoto* in 1992 but disbanded shortly thereafter (Saito 2009 p. 67-69).

NFP – Created of a mishmash consisting of former LDP members, the *Koumeitou* and new political actors. Won a large share of the vote in the 1996 election but collapsed in 1997 due to internal struggle (Saito 2009 p. 67-69).