

Previous Researches on Japanese Politics

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1. Previous Research on Parties and Bureaucrats

(1) Political History

This paper assesses previous research on the modern – that is, post-World War II – Japanese political process. Works on the modern Japanese political process have been appearing particularly frequently over the last twenty years, and can be roughly divided into three types. The first analyzes postwar Japanese politics from the stand point of parties or bureaucrats, the second from the stand point of the voters. The third places more weight on prescriptive proposals concerning Japan's political system. There are a great number of important studies on the modern Japanese political process, but limitations of space force

this review to deal mainly with works published in book form.

First a look at the first type, analyses of the 1955 System from the party and bureaucrat side. The first to catch the eye are political historical studies covering the entire 1955 System. For example, Kitaoka (1995), which looks at the motivations of contemporary politicians and delineates various changes across the cabinets of the 1955 System. Its vivid writing gives readers the illusion that they themselves have gone back in time to witness the politicians at work. Ishikawa (1995), meanwhile, focuses on various signal political events under the 1955 System, and provides a compact postwar political history. Tomita (1992) sheds light on the conditions of the immediate postwar, and Fujimoto (1996) uses a focus on Lower House dissolutions to assess the flow of postwar politics.

Matsushita (1988) and Ootake (1996), on the other hand, place more weight on contemporary issues and ideological conflict. Matsushita's study is a collection of pieces written over time during the 1955 System era, and its spotlight on the most important issues of the various stages of that era identifies the progression of problems at the core of Japanese politics. It also consistently addresses the issue of how best to advance "citizen participation in politics." Ootake, on the other hand, takes up issues like defense, tax reduction, and lifestyle issues in a systematic explanation of ideological conflict in postwar Japan. These are the best of the political historical works treating the whole of the 1955 System. There is also Ootake (1994), which brings postwar Japanese politics to the fore within a commentary on postwar Japanese political science.

(2) The Liberal Democratic Party

Next as a comprehensive study of the 1955 System is Inoguchi (1993). Inoguchi assesses the role government took in a society of high-speed industrial growth, and the "hollowing out" of politics under a one-party dominant regime, through a comparison with other East Asian nations. It is a fundamental and valuable work for understanding modern Japanese politics. Watanabe (1988), focusing on the negative aspects of

economic growth, analyzes the evolution of Japan's control structure as the reason behind the trend toward conservatism of the 1980s. Curtis (1987) uses a wealth of materials to illuminate how Japanese politics changed under Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) rule. Yamaguchi (1989), within an analysis of Japanese politics in the 1980s, points to the problems of a system of single-party control.

There are several studies addressing the question of why the 1955 System — that is, the long-term rule of the LDP — endured. First, Hirose (1989) covers how the LDP used subsidies to gather votes, and uses data in an attempt to substantiate his account. The discussion proves particularly striking in elections in the former nationwide constituency of the Upper House. Ishikawa and Hirose (1989) analyze the LDP's strength with a focus on the relations between businesses and politicians' personal support organizations, or *kouenkai*. The book becomes even more interesting when one recalls that it was published in February of 1989, just before the LDP's one-party dominant system began to falter. Calder (1988) develops the argument that the Liberal Democratic Party under the 1955 System, when faced with the threat of being ousted from power, would manipulate subsidies to avoid the crisis. The study explores the roots of the staying power of LDP rule through an examination of policy areas including agriculture, local autonomy, small- and medium-size business, social welfare, land use, and defense. Tanaka (1981) analyzes the reasons behind long-term LDP rule from the perspective of political leadership as found in the Ikeda, Satou, Tanaka, and Miki cabinets.

There are also analyses that take LDP politicians as their subject. Ichikawa (1990) looks at the LDP's recruitment of politicians, particularly second-generation politicians, and describes individual cases in great detail. He also uses a survey of 149 Diet members in an attempt to gauge the politicians' own attitudes. Satou and Matsuzaki (1986) use a vast amount of data to elucidate the LDP's personnel system and factional and organizational management in great detail. More than half the pages are devoted to data, making the book particularly valuable for

subsequent LDP studies. Nonaka (1995) analyzes the LDP's elite structure through a comparison of political elites in Japan and France. It is an illuminating comparative approach to the reasons behind the continuation of the LDP system.

Compared to the LDP, the Socialist Party hasn't inspired very much research, but Uesumi's (1992) is noteworthy as a study that could only have been written by someone with long experience working for the party.

(3) Bureaucrats and Pressure Groups

Alongside these studies of the LDP, there are a number of works analyzing the 1955 System from the side of bureaucrats and pressure groups. Matsumura, Itou, and Tsujinaka (1986) examine the structure and functions of Japan's pressure groups, particularly their lobbying and influence-brokering activities, through interviews with 252 interest group leaders. And Muramatsu (1981) applies role theory, the idea that "role cognition determines behavior," to Japan's bureaucracy, basing his study on interviews with bureaucrats themselves. The book finds that "the concerns of bureaucrats and politicians differ," and concludes that pluralism can be found even in Japan, and it attracted a great deal of interest as a full-on empirical study of the bureaucracy. Yamaguchi (1987) focuses on the Ministry of Finance, the core of bureaucratic politics, illustrating the shift since 1965 to a "politician's high, bureaucrats low" style of policymaking amid the gradual shift from a philosophy of fiscal balance to the issuing of deficit bonds. Campbell (1977) also undertakes an analysis of Japan's budgeting process, particularly the role of the LDP in budget compilation, based on interviews with participants in the process. Muramatsu (1994) also provides a brief treatment of the distinguishing characteristics of Japanese administration.

Ramseyer and Rosenbluth (1993) offer a wide-ranging analysis from the standpoint of rational choice theory, looking at institutions from Japan's parties and bureaucrats to its judicial system. Opinions on whether their application of rational choice theory is successful or not is

divided, but the research is praiseworthy for vigorously charting a new approach toward understanding Japanese politics. Nakano (1986) illustrates the distinguishing characteristics of several political actors in the 1955 System, including the LDP, the Socialists, businesses, pressure groups, and agricultural groups.

Next are a group of studies that attempt a more comprehensive analysis of Japanese politics under the 1955 System. First, Hiwatari (1991) uses a comparison with several western countries to illuminate the relationship between politics and economics under the 1955 System. His explanation of the evolution of Japan's conservative regime is rooted particularly in an analysis of the trend toward cooperation between labor and capital, and of the institutionalization of the benefits accruing to farmers. Calder (1993) analyzes the relationship between government and the private sector during the period of high-speed economic growth from the 1950s to the 1970s. He holds that although there were cooperative relations between government and the private sector, Japan's economy succeeded because the private sector maintained an independent strategic orientation. This conclusion differs sharply from the previous findings of Chalmers Johnson and others. The "strategy" in "strategic orientation" here implies first considering one's counterpart's strategy before deciding on one's own behavior, and then taking decisive action based on a set plan.

Nakano (1992) uses the public pension reform of 1985 as a case study to examine the policymaking process, and also analyzes the connection between policymaking and the electoral process. Iio (1993), looking specifically at why the national telephone company and Japan National Railways underwent privatization, examines what kinds of changes in the authority structure arose from the privatization process after the Second Provisional Administrative Reform Commission (*Rinchou*). Ooyama (1996) takes up the cases like the Oil Shock and the automobile industry's capital coordination problem to analyze administrative guidance. Orr (1990), using a bureaucratic politics model of budget share maximization and an inter-governmental relations model, analyzes the formation of

Japan's foreign aid policy, and reveals Japanese bureaucrats' attempts to manipulate foreign pressure (*gaiatsu*) to their advantage. Campbell (1993) uses interviews to provide a detailed description of Japan's aging policies from 1952 to 1990, and then offers a theoretical approach to Japanese-style policymaking.

(4) Economic Policy

Research on policymaking under the 1955 System has been done not only by political scientists, but also by economists. First, Kasai and Teranishi (1993) analyze financial policy reform, agricultural land reform, and other economic reforms of the immediate postwar that led toward industrial rationalization and capital liberalization, and attempt to explain relations between government and the market in postwar Japan. Ishikawa (1994) looks at income and wealth distribution in Japan. Kaizuka and Kanamoto (1994) examine the problems of Japan's financial system in terms of efficiency and fairness, and go so far as to make proposals on how best to conduct public policy.

(5) Local Autonomy

There have also been studies focusing on Japan's cities and towns. Nishio (1990) is a valuable systematic approach to concepts not only in local administration, but in administration in Japan in general. Sasaki (1990) offers a framework of analysis for urban administration. Reed (1986) conducts interviews with officials in Saga, Chiba, and Saitama Prefectures on pollution, housing, and education policy to illuminate the prefectural policymaking process. Kobayashi (1987) examines authority structures in local government and the state of central-local government relations, based on a survey in 341 localities. This study represents one part of the Fiscal Austerity and Urban Innovation Project (FAUI) led by the University of Chicago's Terry Clark.

Muramatsu and Itou (1986) analyze the recruitment process and actual abilities of local legislators, based on a mail survey of legislators in Kyoto prefecture. Kamo (1993) analyzes the influence on Japan's cen-

tral-local relations of the subsidies that evolved under the 1955 System, and Miyamoto (1990) adds analysis on the subsidy framework from a number of angles. Sasaki (1991) provides a lucid introduction to the state of things at the Tokyo Prefectural Government, and Mikuriya (1994 and 1995) gives a detailed explanation of the functions and history of Tokyo Prefecture.

(6) Other Subjects

Finally, Ramseyer (1990) writes on Japanese legal phenomena, particularly the issues of ongoing relationships and settlement and litigation. The book was written in Japanese by Ramseyer himself.

2. Previous Research on Voters

(1) Electoral History

This section covers research that looks at the 1955 System from the standpoint of the voters. Kamijou (1991) takes national election results under the 1955 System as the dependent variable in time series analysis. Kamijou looks at the ups and downs of the LDP and other parties, and at the same time discusses distinguishing characteristics of the results over different constituencies and candidates' patterns of victory. Tsujida (1988) looks at the events surrounding all elections since the 22nd Lower House election in 1946. These works provide a valuable overall picture of modern Japanese elections.

(2) Macroanalysis

Various independent variables have been forwarded to explain the dependent variable of elections. First we'll look at aggregate data measures like economic factors and regional characteristics. Inoguchi (1983) analyzes correlations between economic trends, cabinet support rates, and government party support rates at a given time, and finds that the state of the economy influences government and ruling party support. The author's 1985 work provides a quantitative derivation of the regional

characteristics of Lower House electoral districts, and analyzes these characteristics' correlation with voting behavior. The strong correlation found between the two illustrates the great influence of changes in socioeconomic structure on voting behavior. Mizusaki (1992) offers an explanation based on the concept of regional vote variation to explain the LDP's massive losses in single-member electoral districts in the 1989 Upper House election.

(3) Microanalysis 1: Voting Behavior Analysis

The most commonly used method in analyzing Japanese voting behavior, though, has been microanalysis – in other words, analysis based on gauging voters' traits and political consciousness through opinion surveys. A theoretical grounding for this type of analysis, encompassing a number of key concepts in voting behavior, is provided by Miyake (1989). The author and others (1984) review theoretical research on political distrust, anomie, and alienation in political consciousness. Theoretical works on social psychological approaches include Ikeda and Murata (1991), Kojima (1993), Akuto (1994), and Andou, Oobou, and Ikeda (1995).

As for studies that actually analyze public opinion survey data, Miyake *et al.* (1967) is a classic of voting behavior studies in Japan. Miyake and his co-authors conducted a survey in Uji City, Kyoto Prefecture, based on which they analyze the structure of respondents' party support, issue attitudes, attitudes on candidates, and the various factors that determine voting behavior. They also investigate correlations between voting direction in national and various local elections. The high level of research at such an early stage of voting behavior studies is truly admirable.

Kobayashi (1985) is a quantitative analysis based on survey research, including variables on voting behavior, party support, social characteristics, and anomie, alienation, and authoritarianism. It also investigates the effects of mass media reporting on voting behavior. The University of Tokyo's Institute of Newspaper Studies has undertaken survey-based

empirical research on similar issues. The research of Watanuki and Miyake et al. (1986), based on a series of three nationwide panel surveys at the time of the Upper and Lower House elections of 1983, looks at a number of variables thought to determine voting behavior, including social characteristics, cynicism, electoral mobilization efforts, economic trends, and issue attitudes. Miyake (1995) uses the same national survey data to discuss candidate evaluation-based voting and non-party identifiers. Kouhei (1979), basing his work on Inglehart's, employs the concept of the value vote to analyze voting behavior.

Kobayashi (1991) is a quantitative analysis based on surveys from the 1986 same-day Lower and Upper House elections, the 1987 unified local elections, the 1989 Upper House election (in which the Socialists made great gains and erased the LDP's majority), and the 1990 Lower House election. Okino (1995) also analyzes the 1989 Upper House, 1990 Lower House, and 1992 Upper House elections. Soma (1985) is a comprehensive analysis, from several angles, of the 1983 Lower House election. Soma (1987) and Katou (1987), meanwhile, treat the 1986 same-day Lower and Upper House elections, whose results symbolized Japan's growing conservatism. Soma approaches the results through case studies of distinctive electoral districts, while Katou bases his analysis on a series of nationwide measures. Yomiuri Shinbunsha (1990), like Katou, uses national-level indicators to discuss the distinguishing features of the 1989 Upper House and 1990 Lower House elections.

Miyake and Muramatsu (1981) and Miyake (1990), basing their work on long-term surveys of Kyoto City voters, analyze not only voting behavior, but also how the citizens of Kyoto participate in politics in general. Kawato, Araki, Aiuchi and Hasuike (1983) offer an analysis of voting behavior and the roles of politicians' policy statements during publicly allocated television appearances, party leader images, and issue attitudes, based on a case study in the city of Sapporo. Araki (1994) also looks at surveys conducted in Sapporo in the 1970s, analyzing the trend toward conservatism and the attendant shrinking of the progressive-party vote, along with the movements of floating voters. Though these

studies are limited to one region, their scope is comprehensive, and includes party organization and electoral information.

In contrast to these studies of national-level elections, Nakamura (1996) focuses on Japan's local elections, comparing those in Japan with those of England and other nations.

(4) Microanalysis 2: Political Consciousness Analysis

Alongside studies with analysis of voting behavior as their chief end, we find studies that take party support and other aspects of political consciousness as their dependent variable. First, Kyougoku (1968) is an early attempt to assess Japan's political consciousness in the period just following the close of the war. Nagai (1971) is an overview of political science concepts dealing with political consciousness. Nihonjin Kenkyukai (1976) looks at how Japanese voters decide which party to support. Kamijou (1978) also explores the distinguishing characteristics of Japanese political consciousness.

Following on these early studies, Miyake (1985) takes party support as his dependent variable, and offers an all-encompassing analysis of its connection with elements including social structure, issue attitudes, social characteristics. It is an outstanding piece of research, and lays out original theory on the process of socialization into party support, and on types and breadth of party support. Matsumoto (1991) shows quantitatively how the structure of party support has changed over time, using data from a variety of surveys. NHK Housou Yoron Chousajou (1982 and 1991) also uses abundant data to plot the shifts in Japanese citizens' political consciousness in the postwar. Hashimoto (1975 and 1995), meanwhile, focuses on non-party identifiers.

Yakushiji and Kobayashi *et al.* (1987) take the more narrow meanings of voting behavior and party support and interpret them as broader concepts, analyzing the influence of changes in voters' lifestyle consciousness on party support. Kobayashi (1991) uses long-term analysis of the mass media to find that reporting on the U.S. and on the Soviet Union influences Japanese voters' feelings toward foreign countries, and in turn

their party support. Serizawa (1980) focuses on such elements of Japanese citizens' political consciousness as lifestyle consciousness and views of the state. Toukei Suri Kenkyuujou Kokuminsei Chousa Iinkai (1992) is a study of Japanese national characteristics based on vast quantities of data.

(5) Mathematical Models

Last are studies of voting behavior and political consciousness using mathematical models. Kobayashi (1988) is a systematic review of mathematical models of voting behavior. To apply these to Japanese elections, his 1994 (b) work constructs new mathematical models based on data from the 1993 Lower House election. Nagahisa (1995) and Wada (1996) use mathematical modelling to analyze the electoral system.

3. Previous Proposals for Reforming the Political System

(1) Proposals for Overall System Reform

Now we turn to research proposing reform of the modern Japanese political system. First, Sasaki (1987) points out various problems created under the 1955 System, and charts a path for the revival of Japanese politics. His 1995 work also takes up the state of the post-1955 System and the new direction Japanese politics must take. Yamaguchi (1993), after discussing why political corruption fails to disappear in Japan, offers concrete reform proposals on administration, freedom of information, and legislatures, and points to the problems of using first-past-the-post electoral districts in an electoral system. The New Grand Design Study Group (1993) also offers concrete proposals on how to improve Japan's politics through reforms of its elections and legislatures, policymaking process, and central-local government relations, among other areas. Takahashi (1991) uses Western examples to think about how best to eliminate corruption, and after stating his opinion on the electoral systems of the Lower and Upper Houses, proposes public subsidy and Diet reform. Fujimoto (1992) introduces various nations' in-

situational reforms.

(2) Proposals for Electoral System Reform

Next are works focusing on elections. Oomiya (1988) outlines a proposal for righting malapportionment in Japan's electoral districts. Balinski and Young (1982) is a valuable source on seat apportionment methods. In addition to these are a number of studies on electoral systems themselves. Soma (1986) is a detailed description of how Japan's electoral system has changed over time. Kobayashi (1994a) introduces electoral systems from around the world, and proposes the "self-adjusting-magnitude proportional representation system" for Japan. Sakagami (1990) also comments on various countries' electoral systems and discusses the problems of the *heiritsusei*. The *heiritsusei* is the mixed-member electoral system currently used for Japan's Lower House: first-past-the-post and proportional representation districts coexist, but votes are cast separately for the two types of district, and the two types' results are calculated largely independent of each other.

Sakagami's is one of many works criticizing the *heiritsusei*. Ishikawa *et al.* (1990) and Ishikawa (1993) voice doubts about electoral reform in Japan and point out the problems likely to arise under the *heiritsusei*. Sakagami (1994) warns that the introduction of first-past-the-post districts will only make things worse. Igarashi (1993) deals with the problems of the *heiritsusei*, and moves on to those of other elements of political reform, including political fundraising and public subsidies for political parties. Ishikawa (1990) is a theoretical discussion of the problems involved in introducing the *heiritsusei*. Jiyuu Housoudan (1991) also discusses the problems that would accompany the introduction of first-past-the-post districts. Yanagisawa (1996) reveals the problems of first-past-the-post districts in England and the U.S., while Kamijou (1992) addresses problems both with these districts and with political party laws through a case study of Germany. Miyagawa (1996) is a fierce critique of the *heiritsusei*. Dodd (1976), meanwhile, doesn't deal with electoral systems directly, but looks at legislatures worldwide over

the past fifty years to offer an answer to the important institutional question of whether coalition or majority governments are the more stable.

(3) Other Proposals

There have also been proposals on elements of Japan's political system other than the electoral system. First, Satou (1993) deals with the Upper House. Discussions of political reform in Japan tend to look only at the Lower House, but Satou considers bicameralism in general, and then goes on to suggest how the Upper House's relationship with the Lower House should be reformed. Fujimoto (1990) provides an introduction to the functions of the Diet, and Yomiuri Shinbun Chousa Kenkyuu Honbu (1988) collects opinions on the Diet from specialists and participants to investigate options for Diet reform. Igarashi (1994) takes up the interesting theme of member legislation.

Maeda (1993) explains English laws for the prevention of corruption and shows how similar ends might be achieved in Japan. Maeda (1990) is also a detailed study of Britain's Parliament, and reading it with Japanese legislatures in mind naturally helps one to see what Japan needs to reform. Finally, Taguchi (1982) introduces administrative reform in both Japan and Western nations, and Tokyo Shisei Chousakai (1993) offers a similar comparison on the local level.

4. Summary

It's easy to see that the study of modern Japanese political processes has flourished in recent years. And while this research originally tried to outline the whole of Japanese politics either from the author's subjective viewpoint or from particular case studies, gradually a series of systematic empirical studies, based on various types of data, has been accumulated, and the standard of analysis has been improving.

But there are still problems. For example, at least at present, it can't be denied that along with the progress of individual scholars' research

has come a trend toward narrowing their field of research. In other words, those who study bureaucracy study only bureaucracy, those who study pressure groups study only pressure groups, those who study elections narrow their focus to particular elections. The result is that attention to how the various factors of the modern Japanese political process are mutually connected tends to fade. It is important to conduct a quantitative analysis with as much data as possible, and to address as comprehensively as possible the political processes of modern Japan.

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