One Party to Rule Them All?
The Return of LDP Dominance to Japan

By

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Abstract

In 2009, the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan (LDP) lost in a landslide to the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), only the second time the LDP had lost since its formation in 1955. The culmination of dramatic changes to Japan's institutions, party system, and demographics, this election seemed to portent a different future for Japan—one in which the LDP's longtime dominance of Japanese politics was at an end. However, in 2012, the very next election, the DPJ splintered and the LDP managed to regain power. Between then and 2021, Japan's opposition parties have grown weaker and the country's party system has become lopsided again, with the LDP the lone large party running against several small parties.

This project is concerned with understanding what has allowed LDP dominance to return to Japanese politics. The literature on Japanese politics has convincing theories on how the LDP won so consistently in the past, but the conditions that previously produced dominance have met with substantial changes over the past few decades. Scholars have yet to present a comprehensive case for why the LDP should dominate again under drastically different circumstances. Not only does my work speak to a central issue in Japanese politics, it provides insight into broader aspects of political science like party switching, the relative importance of candidate and party appeal to voters, and the relationship between party policy and valence on voter choice.

I tackle the question of the return LDP dominance with a three-pronged approach. First, I study what contributed to the DPJ's collapse. LDP dominance would arguably be far less likely if the DPJ had managed to avoid splitting apart in 2012, making this election a natural starting point for analyzing the LDP's return. I find that party switching among DPJ

members was driven by a combination of how well candidates did under the DPJ in the previous election and the candidates' policy preferences. Candidates that had lower vote shares or policy preferences further from the median DPJ preference were more likely to switch parties, and the parties to which they switched had preferences closer to their own. In other words, the DPJ was split apart by candidates looking for a better fit to boost their chances in the upcoming election, implying that party affiliation was a crucial part of candidates' calculus of political competition.

Second, building off the implications from the first analysis, I examine how important party competition is in Japan since the DPJ's debacle in 2012. In years past, the LDP's strength has come from a combination of cash, clientelistic networks, and strong candidates, but recent research has found that Japanese politics has become more programmatic and party-focused. Here I find that while LDP dominance since its return to power in 2012 can be attributed in part to its candidates, the appeal of the party label has played a substantial role in securing the LDP's large majorities. Party affiliation continues to define electoral competition in Japan despite the loss of the DPJ as a clear alternative to the LDP.

Third, given that parties remain important in Japanese elections, I examine what exactly about the LDP appeals to voters. Drawing from the literature valence, which highlights the significance of things like competence and capability on voter choice, I provide evidence that the LDP lost in 2009 due to poor policy positioning while facing the DPJ, a party with comparable valence. However, after the DPJ split apart, the LDP was able to dominate the fragmented parties with their much lower valence. I conclude that opposition parties in Japan are either poorly positioned on policy relative to voter

preferences or do not have the necessary valence to compete with the LDP even when better positioned on policy.

My research tells the story of a party that now dominates through its party brand in a political system that emphasizes party competition, a sharp contrast from the candidate-centered politics that cemented the LDP's dominant legacy in the past. The larger implications from this work are that, despite the LDP's return to power, Japan has responded to underlying changes in its politics. Furthermore, while the LDP dominates today, its position as a dominant party is likely far weaker than it was under the previous era of dominance. Japanese politics have become nationalized, policy-based, and party-focused and these conditions are much more susceptible to party system change than the robust, candidate-controlled clientelism that kept the LDP in power for decades.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1—Collapse of the DPJ

Policy Preferences and Party Switching: Lessons from the 2012 Japanese Election……………………………………………………………………………………….1

Chapter 2—Candidates or Parties?

Old Party, New Tricks: Candidates, Parties, and LDP Dominance in Japan……………29

Chapter 3—Policy or Valence?

Unveiling Valence: Explaining LDP Dominance in Japan…………………………………….44

Appendix…………………………………………………………………………………………72

References………………………………………………………………………………………84

Chapter 1: Collapse of the DPJ

Policy Preferences and Party Switching: Lessons from the 2012 Japanese Election

In 2012 the ruling Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) splintered with 92 of 308 sitting lower house legislators deserting it to join new parties. The split led to the downfall of the DPJ, created a chaotic election that divided voters, and returned the highly unpopular Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to power. The election was so disastrous that Japan's steadily developing two party system utterly collapsed, and party competition in Japan has now reverted to a single large party (the LDP) against several small and ineffectual opposition parties. Between its initial success against the LDP and its now defunct status, the DPJ's fall from grace is among the most significant events in Japanese political history and an intriguing case for electoral politics. A ruling party with a supermajority was gutted from the inside by its own politicians, costing almost everyone involved their seats and handing government over to the party's largest rival on a silver platter. Japan now faces a new era of LDP dominance and its starting point can be traced directly to rampant party switching from the DPJ in the 2012 election.

The simplest explanation for the DPJ's demise is that it became wildly unpopular, but such an explanation does not help us understand *which* party members chose to leave and what specific factors drove them toward that decision. There is ample research on party switching across numerous countries (Japan included) and much of this research would give us reason to focus on politicians' electoral incentives in driving switching behavior (Desposato 2009, Heller and Mershon 2009, O'Brien and Schomer 2013, Mershon 2014). Indeed, the most common explanation for party switching in the literature is that politicians choose to switch parties as part of their reelection calculus. That said, part of the

difficulty of analyzing this calculus empirically is the fact that politicians may consider several factors when weighing their electoral chances (Radean 2019). Research shows that electoral competition in Japan has become more policy-based and party-focused (Rosenbluth and Thies 2010, Catalinac 2016) and the DPJ's demise specifically has been discussed in aggregate based on policy (Kushida and Lipscy 2013). If politicians are switching parties in an electoral environment that prizes policy, it follows that policy should motivate that switching.

In this paper I argue that in Japan's 2012 election, once the DPJ label was viewed as a liability, politicians' policy preferences helped determine whether they left their party. Following the trend of increasing policy salience in Japanese politics identified by other scholars, I provide evidence that policy predicts the party switching that occurred in 2012.[1] The relationship between policy salience and policy-based switching is well-documented (O'Brien and Schomer 2013, Mershon 2014, Hix and Noury 2018), and the party switching literature has consistently demonstrated that unpopular parties in electoral systems that emphasize policy are particularly vulnerable to party switching (Klein 2019, Volpi 2019). However, the fall of the DPJ has had tremendous consequences for Japanese politics, and the party's status as the only party to ever truly compete with the previously undefeated LDP in an electoral history primarily colored by distributive politics warrants a closer look.

In my analysis I use the Asahi-Todai Elite Survey (ATES), a dataset of individual candidate policy preferences, to test the role of policy preferences in shaping party switching patterns among DPJ incumbents in 2012. Consistent with my argument, I find

[1] Noble (2010) and Rosenbluth and Thies (2010) observe a steady decline in the use of particularistic spending in Japanese politics, accelerated by electoral reform.

that DPJ politicians who hold preferences distinct from the rest of their copartisans in 2009 are more likely to switch parties in 2012 and that they switch to parties that better align with their preferences. These give insight into the most significant political shift in years in Japanese politics, the destruction of its emerging two-party system, as well as offer substantive empirical support for what is currently a smaller portion of the literature on party switching.

Speaking to the larger issue of LDP dominance, there is no question that its return begins with the loss of its rival. That the DPJ was undone by candidates concerned about their party affiliation has significant implications regarding how the LDP has succeeded since the DPJ's collapse. If DPJ politicians were willing to risk joining a new party just to try and avoid association with the DPJ, it follows that party affiliation in general is a key explanatory variable to party competition, and by extension LDP dominance, in Japan.

To Switch or Not to Switch

Scholars have found that party switching is more likely to occur when one or more conditions are present: a lack of intraparty policy cohesion, tight electoral margins, ineffectual party leadership, and a severely unpopular party (Heller and Mershon 2009, 2014, O'Brien and Schomer 2013). These conditions force politicians to reconsider their party affiliation. They must either stay with a vulnerable party that may not be around much longer or test their fortune in a different party and hope for the best. The more the future of the party is in doubt, the greater the incentive to switch. That said, even when switching incentives are present, not every party member leaves so the question now becomes what differentiates those that switch from those that stay?

Researchers have continually pointed to electoral gains as the primary motivation behind party switching (Aldrich and Bianco 1992, Heller and Mershon 2005, 2008, Thames 2007). Of course, what bolsters politicians' chances come election time is dependent on the electoral system they compete in. Most research on party switching involves electoral systems that emphasize access to distributive benefits, or pork (Shepsle and Weinghast 1981, Lancaster 1986, Scheiner 2005, Desposato 2006, 2009, Desposato and Scheiner 2008, Shin 2013). Unsurprisingly, these works find that when party switching takes place in an electoral system that rewards pork, politicians join parties that give them access to that pork.

There is ample evidence that party switching will revolve around distributive politics in systems that reward distributive spending, but what about policy? If an electoral system emphasizes policy, it follows that policy should motivate switching. There has been a recent increase in the work that discusses the role of policy in motivating policy switching (Reed and Scheiner 2003, O'Brien and Schomer 2013, Mershon 2014, Hix and Noury 2018, Klein 2019, Volpi 2019) where policy, or more frequently ideology, are usually measured at the party rather than the individual level. While party-level measures of policy allow for easier cross-country comparisons, it is individual politicians that switch parties. Ideally, we would also assess individual policy preferences when testing individual switching behavior.

Data on individual preferences among political elites is admittedly hard to come by, though there are a few instances where they have been incorporated into a party switching framework. Reed and Scheiner, in their own analysis of party switching in Japan, include a politician's views on political reforms as an individual level measure of policy, finding that

politicians who were in favor of reforms were more likely to switch parties (2003). Desposato uses a W-NOMINATE measure in his analysis of party switching in Brazil and establishes that politicians prefer parties that are more ideologically proximate (2006). These studies lend credence to the notion that policy can motivate party switching but, compared with pork-based switching, the evidence is far from robust.

Though more party switching research now incorporates policy, to my knowledge none has assessed individual policy preferences in a policy-based electoral system. Following the logic of the party switching literature, when a party is unstable with its future in doubt, politicians should switch parties based on their policy preferences if policy is emphasized in the electoral system. Note that switching based on policy may be the result of politicians following their sincere policy preferences or they might be simply following electoral incentives. Regardless, we should expect that, when faced with a sinking ship, policy preferences will determine which politicians choose to switch in electoral systems that reward policy.

I add to the thus far limited empirical analysis of policy and party switching to test this hypothesis in Japan's 2012 House of Representatives election. I use this case for four reasons: First, in 2012, the sitting government was wildly unpopular and its long-term stability was in question, conditions that the literature indicates would lead many politicians to consider switching parties. Second, by 2012, Japanese politics had become more programmatic and party-oriented than it had in the past, making policy an important part of electoral competition. Third, Japan has a wealth of data on politicians' individual policy preferences making it an ideal case for directly examining policy preferences and party switching behavior. Finally, the consequences of party switching in the 2012 election

has destroyed the widely anticipated growth of a two-party system in Japan, making this case critical to understand substantively.

Using factor analysis on these policy preferences and both logit and multinomial logit models, I find that policy was a significant predictor of the switching behavior observed in the 2012 election. Politicians that held policy preferences at odds with their copartisans were more likely to switch parties and switched to parties with platforms more closely aligned with their preferences.

Party Switching in 2012 Japan

As previously mentioned, the 2012 House of Representatives election in Japan presents conditions that should motivate policy-based party switching. Japan has been a classic example of pork-motivated party switching in the past, but most party switching analyses that have included Japan did so under its single non-transferable vote (SNTV) electoral system. This system, a textbook example of high intraparty competition with an emphasis on pork over policy, should (and does) have politicians switching to parties based on pork access (Lancaster 1986, Cox and Thies 1998, Scheiner 2005). However, with the passage of electoral reform in 1994, Japanese politicians faced a new mixed-member majoritarian (MMM) system. Also known as a parallel system, MMM splits the allocation of seats into two independent sections in one election. Voters cast one vote for a candidate in a single member district and a second vote for their preferred party under closed list proportional representation. The reform to MMM had a two-pronged effect: politicians now face off solely against members of *other* parties, encouraging interparty rather than intraparty competition, while voters now cast a vote for their preferred candidate *and* their preferred

party. These two factors made policy more prominent than before compared to the pork-heavy SNTV system (Noble 2010, McElwain 2012, Reed et al. 2012).

As a partial consequence of the reform to MMM, politicians established the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), a rival party to the long dominant Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Initially formed out of several left-leaning and centrist parties, the DPJ established itself as the viable alternative to the LDP, fully cementing its position after it merged with Ichiro Ozawa's Liberal Party in 2003. However, the DPJ was far from an ideologically cohesive party. Party members disagreed on a host of prominent polices, including tax policy, the role of the Japanese military, and social reforms such as greater protections for working women (Kushida and Lipscy 2013). Unable to sort out these policy differences, by 2009 the DPJ ran on a platform that essentially promised all things to all people (Reed et al. 2013). Once seated in government, infighting among DPJ politicians resulted in a weak bundle of legislation over the course of the party's tenure, disappointing supporters with how far it fell short of what was promised at the outset of 2009 (Reed et al. 2013).

In addition to the legislative paralysis that plagued the DPJ, the party also suffered in the aftermath of the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami and the subsequent Fukushima nuclear disaster. The DPJ was blamed for a sluggish and insufficiently effective response, damaging its already sagging reputation. With a freefall in popularity acting as the trigger, the stage was set for the DPJ's collapse. The DPJ in 2012 fulfilled many of the party switching conditions outlined in the literature: a policy diffuse party full of infighting and its future in doubt. The first wave of defections came from a group of politicians lead by Ozawa in response to the final passage of a controversial tax hike with many more

defections not far behind. The fall of 2012 was riddled with splits from the DPJ as members left to join an ever-growing list of splinter parties.

While the DPJ was likely to lose, the LDP's victory was far from guaranteed, creating a vacuum for each of these parties to contend over who would be *the* alternative to the LDP (Nyblade 2013). Party membership was continually in flux right until the general election in December as parties merged, split, and remerged. Throughout the turmoil, not one of the newly formed parties sought to rejoin the DPJ, leaving the party hemorrhaging membership at a critical time. The proliferation of rival parties provided options for DPJ members tempted to switch, creating a vicious cycle that fed the collapse of the party.

While politicians had abundant opportunities to change allegiance, their motivations for doing so need to be understood. Given the DPJ's lack of stability and Japan's transition to a more policy-centered system , I propose that policy predicts a DPJ deserter. Simply put, with low DPJ support in the electorate and an uncertain future for the party, DPJ politicians that held policy preferences at odds with the rest of the party had especially strong incentives to abandon ship. Presumably, as party affiliation had become increasingly central to political competition, these politicians had reasons to stay with the party despite underlying policy differences when that affiliation had clear advantages. With these advantages all but gone in 2012, the reasons for them to remain with a party that has such different views went with it.

Measuring Policy Preferences

With Japan providing an excellent setting to test policy preferences on party switching behavior, the next step is to develop proper measures of these preferences. I rely primarily on the Asahi-Todai Elite Survey (ATES) which provides rare empirical leverage

for politicians' individual policy preferences. Conducted since 1998, the ATES asks a battery of questions to all candidates prior to each general election, with many of these questions directly asking candidates about their policy views. For this analysis, I will use DPJ candidates' 2009 survey responses. While party switching took place in the 2012 election, the 2012 survey was conducted after DPJ members had deserted and joined other parties, potentially biasing the candidates' responses. As part of joining a new party to run against the DPJ, deserters might respond with more extreme preferences in the 2012 survey to better fit with their new party. On the other hand, it is unlikely that DPJ members were considering switching parties just prior to the DPJ's landslide, making the 2009 survey a better representation of candidate preferences *before* making the decision to switch.

The ATES questions used in this analysis provide a policy statement to which a candidate responds with their amount of agreement on a five-point scale. For example, one question states: "The consumption tax should be raised'' with "Agree", "Somewhat Agree", "Can't Say Either Way", "Somewhat Disagree", and "Disagree" as possible responses. In total, there were 25 policy questions structured in this manner, and each one is included in the appendix.

94% of candidates in 2009 respond to the survey with most of the non-responses coming from pure PR candidates. Since these PR candidates do not provide any information on their policy preferences, I dropped them from the analysis, leaving 265 DPJ candidates that ran in a single-member district. Equipped with these individual-level responses, I constructed measures of policy preferences for DPJ politicians leading up to 2012.

With 25 policy questions in the 2009 ATES and hundreds of DPJ candidates, the issue now becomes how to systematically evaluate policy preferences between candidates. Under MMM, we expect candidates to switch parties based, at least in part, on their policy preferences. However, including 25 separate questions into a statistical analysis on 265 candidates is too unwieldy. I use factor analysis to create a more parsimonious measure of policy preferences. Factor analysis aggregates multiple related variables into a few streamlined measures to reduce the number of dimensions for a set of variables (Jolliffe 2011).

I conducted a factor analysis on 2009 DPJ candidate responses to the 25 ATES policy questions to create five latent policy variables from them: national security, institutional reform, financial reform, welfare policy, and public goods.[2] The factors scores indicate where each candidate stands relative to one another on these latent policy dimensions on a liberal/conservative scale. The five policy factors, depicted in Figure 1, show the distribution of DPJ deserter policy preferences against loyalist preferences. Deserters are shown by the dotted line while loyalists are represented by the solid line.

The factor scores are standardized with the mean set at zero. Thus, a candidate's score is an indication of how many standard deviations he or she is away from the mean for the entire party. Positive values indicate more conservative policy preferences while negative scores reflect more liberal policy preferences. The most immediate value that these scores provide is a quantified measure of distance for each candidate from the party's

[2] These five variables are based on the minimized BIC value tested between one and twenty potential latent variables Results are similar using other criteria that call for between three to six policy variables. I used a varimax rotation to create policy factors that are more distinct from one another. The factor analysis loadings can be found in the Appendix.

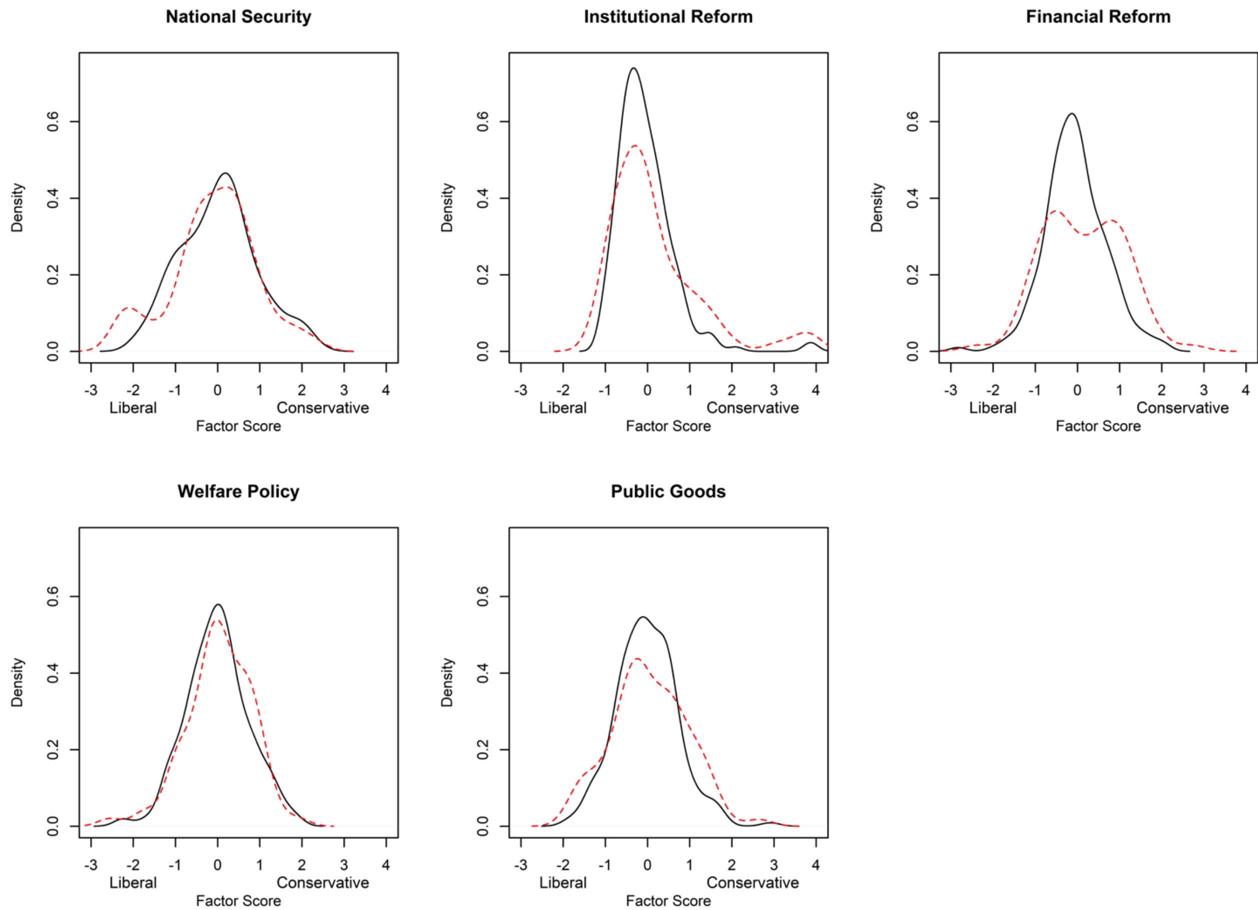
mean preference. This operationalization provides the first step in constructing a comparative measure of policy preferences across DPJ candidates.

As Figure 1 shows, deserter preferences tend to be more widely distributed from the party mean than loyalist preferences. Some policy areas, like welfare policy, are more similar between deserters and loyalist while others, like financial reform and public goods, are more divergent. However, even with five policy areas, each of these factors in isolation show only slight to moderate differences between deserters and loyalists. In order to get a better picture of how these preferences affect a candidate's decision to switch parties, we need a measure of overall policy divergence.

Consider a candidate that exhibits a factor score of 2 or more in every policy area as opposed to a candidate that has such a score for only one policy area. The former candidate is consistently two standard deviations away from the party mean preference while the latter may differ from the party in one area but not in any of the others. Intuitively, we might expect a candidate that has one or two policy preferences that diverge from their fellow partisans to stick with the party more often than one who is consistently at odds with it. At the same time, some preferences clearly carry more political weight than others, and a candidate that has fringe preferences on one key policy area may feel more inclined to switch parties even if he or she is in line with the party on others. Hence the need for a measure of policy differences that accounts for how much a candidate's policy preferences differ from the party overall while considering for how critical these preferences are.

Figure 1.

Factor Analysis of DPJ Policy Preferences in 2009



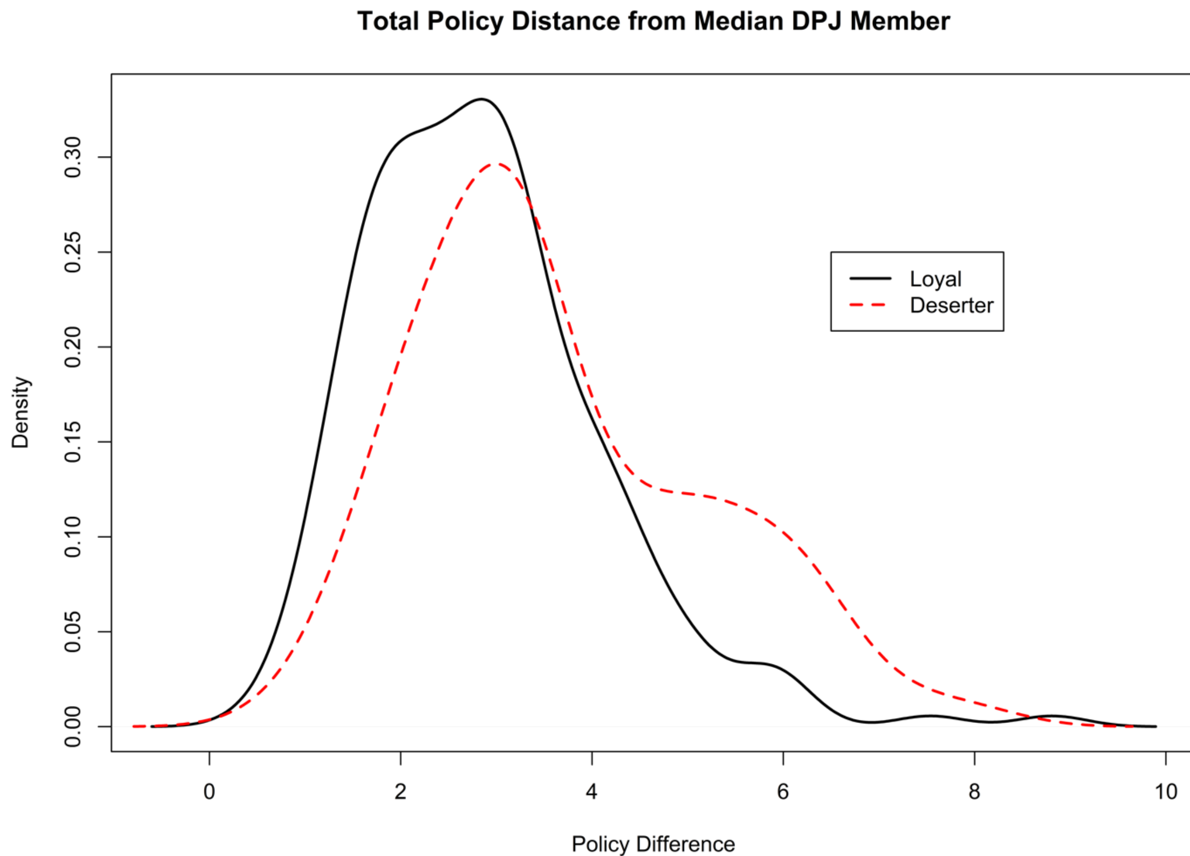
Factor scores are the results of factor analysis on candidate responses to the 2009 Asahi Todai Elite Survey. Factors scores for DPJ politicians that desert in 2012 are represented by the dotted lines while the factor scores of loyal members are represented by the solid lines. Density, the y-axis, refers to the proportion of candidates within these groups that share the underlying score.

With respect to the latter issue, though each policy area represents a distinct latent policy variable, they are all composed of the same 25 ATES questions. What separates them is how much each of the questions is weighted in each policy area. Questions that consistently sort candidates are given the highest overall weight, and these ultimately define the resulting policy areas. So long as candidates are diverging on the most politically relevant questions, factor analysis will naturally weight the factor scores by political

importance. This can be corroborated by looking at the survey responses themselves. On the prevalent policy issues of the day, like tax policy or military relations with the United States, DPJ candidates exhibit a large amount of variation compared with more mundane questions like the relative strength of the chambers within the Japanese legislature.

As for obtaining an overall measure of policy divergence, I calculate the absolute value of each DPJ politician's 2009 policy factor score subtracted from the median value for the party. The result from this process reflects the distance from the party median on each factor, approximating how different a candidate's preferences are in each policy area from his or her party. I then sum these differences across the five policy areas, yielding a measure of overall policy difference between each DPJ politician and the median DPJ preference, a variable I call *Policy Difference* (see Figure 2). To illustrate this process, consider a DPJ politician with a factor score of -2 on National Security, 1.43 on Institutional Reform, -1.7 on Financial Reform, -2.3 on Welfare Policy, and -1.1 on Public Goods. Each of these numbers reflects how many standard deviations the candidate is away from the party mean but with so many policy areas, it is hard to get a sense of how the candidate compares with the party overall. By taking the absolute difference between these factor scores and the median values for the DPJ on each of these policy areas at (-0.01, -0.17, 0.04, 0.1, and 0.03 respectively) and summing them together, we get the Policy Difference. In this hypothetical case, the Policy Difference score is 9.01. Since Policy Difference across DPJ candidates ranges from 0 to 10, a 9.01 indicates that this hypothetical candidate is quite the outlier on policy, something not immediately apparent by looking at the individual factor scores on their own. Again, this does not tell us anything about the candidate's specific policies, only the degree to which he or she holds preferences distinct from the party.

Figure 2.



Policy Difference refers to the sum of the differences between a candidate's factor score and the party median score for each of the five policy areas. The larger the number, the more divergent the candidate's overall preferences are from the party. Deserters are represented with a dotted line while loyalists are represented with a solid line.

The goal of this measure is to provide a quantifiable scale to compare how much DPJ politicians have preferences that diverge from the DPJ as a whole. Thus, Policy Difference uses absolute values in its calculation, treating departure from the party median positively or negatively as the same. From a theoretical perspective, this reflects the way in which we expect policy to influence an individual's propensity to switch parties. When a DPJ politician has strong preferences that do not align with the party across multiple policies in 2009, his or her probability of defecting in 2012 should be higher since the party is unlikely to provide a sufficiently appealing platform. Again, while the content of preferences

undoubtedly matters, the emphasis here is the degree to which a politician has divergent preferences.

We can use this overall Policy Difference measure to compare DPJ deserters and loyalists. As seen in the figure, the distribution of DPJ members who deserted in 2012 (the dotted line) contains a higher proportion of high Policy Difference values than those who stayed with the party, indicating that a larger proportion of party switchers than loyalists held policy views that diverged sharply from the party mean. A Kolmograv-Smirnoff test confirms that the distribution of Policy Differences is in fact statistically different between deserters and loyal members. While lacking substantive interpretation with respect to a specific policy or set of policies, Policy Difference reflects the intuition from the party switching literature that DPJ members with higher Difference scores agree less with their "loyal" colleagues on policy, decreasing their incentive to stay with the party when faced with the temptation to switch. This forms the central hypothesis of this paper:

> **H_1: As a candidate's Policy Difference in 2009 increases, his or her probability of switching from the DPJ in 2012 increases.**

Modeling Switching

Using logistic regression, I conduct a more systematic analysis. The dependent variable, *Party Switch*, is coded 1 for DPJ incumbents of the House of Representatives who left the party by the 2012 election and 0 for those who stayed. Policy Difference provides the crucial policy variable that has eluded empirical study in so much of the party switching literature. As has been theoretically established in the literature, I expect that more divergent policy preferences should correspond with a higher likelihood of party switching. DPJ candidates in 2012 faced the choice of trying their hand at a new party or hoping for

the best with the DPJ. Those with more distinct policy preferences had more reason to leave the DPJ once its demise seemed likely since policy-wise they never really belonged in the first place.

Building off of the party switching literature and Nyblade's characterization of which DPJ candidates would likely switch parties, I also include variables for voter support and status within the party. Of the two controls, voter support is perhaps the most important for this analysis. Even if a candidate prioritizes policy above all else, there is little he or she can do without winning a seat. The most common operationalization for this variable is a candidate's vote share, which I include in the model. Since the 2012 election occurs after candidates already defected, I use vote share from 2009. The intuition is straightforward: politicians that have higher vote shares in 2009 experienced greater success under the DPJ label and should therefore have less incentive to switch. However, there is the possibility that candidates who perform exceedingly well also have sufficient support to forge their own path, eschewing a party that has become a liability. To account for this shortcoming, I created a second model using the difference between a candidate's vote share and the DPJ popular vote in 2009 but ultimately found no substantial differences between the two models.

As for status within the party, I include *Previous Terms*, a dichotomous variable that indicates whether or not a candidate had served in the House of Representatives as a member of the DPJ prior to 2009.[3] From a party switching perspective, the more seniority a

[3] While the raw number of terms served would be a more direct measure, the distribution of candidates having won a seat as a DPJ member is bimodal, with almost every candidate having served either no previous terms or having served numerous terms. If the raw terms were implemented in the model as is, the data would be treated under the assumption of it being

politician has within a party, the more likely he or she will have access to position and advancement as well as a reputation connected with their party. Therefore, the longer a candidate has served in the party, the less incentive there is to switch.

These two control variables serve as measures of well-documented electoral incentives and contribute to the secondary hypothesis of the paper:

H_2: As a candidate's Previous Vote Share increases or he or she has served a Previous Term, his or her probability of switching decreases.

Combining these control variables with Policy Difference, the logistic regression model can be expressed as:

$$\textit{Probability of Switching} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \textit{Policy Difference} + \beta_2 \textit{Previous Vote} + \beta_3 \textit{Previous Terms} + \varepsilon$$

The results of the model are provided in Table 1, which displays the odds ratios from the model. Odds ratios are obtained by exponentiating the coefficients that a logistic regression outputs and are interpreted as the change in the likelihood of a DPJ candidate deserting in 2012 given a one unit increase in the covariate of interest.

The results show that DPJ politicians whose policy preferences diverged markedly from the party were especially likely to switch parties, supporting the paper's primary hypothesis. The 1.5 odds ratio for Policy Difference suggests that increasing a candidate's Policy Difference with the party by 1.0 increases the odds of that candidate deserting the DPJ by 50% all else equal. As can be seen in Figure 2, most candidates have a Policy

normally distributed when it is far from it. A dichotomous variable captures the concept of seniority and status within the party without compromising its practical use as a control.

Difference between 1.0 and 4.0, suggesting that an increase in Policy Difference of 1.0 falls well within the observed range of the data. In addition to policy, electoral factors captured by Previous Vote Share and Previous Terms are similarly statistically significant. A one percentage point increase in a candidate's vote share in 2009 corresponds with decrease in the odds of switching by about 5 percent. If a candidate had held a seat in the House of Representatives prior to 2009, their odds of switching decrease by around 50 percent. These values suggest that the more tenuous a candidate's electoral strength, the more likely they are to switch.

A more intuitive way to interpret the results of the model is to plot the predicted probability of desertion, depicted in Figure 3. Holding previous vote share and previous terms served in the DPJ at their median values (51% and 0 respectively), this figure represents the probability that a DPJ politician switches as Policy Difference increases. The most striking feature of this plot is that even with a Policy Difference of 1, the probability of desertion is around 0.1, indicating that even a candidate that won in 2009 had a 10% chance of switching parties in 2012. This probability only rises as a candidate's policy differences from the party increases, peaking at nearly 0.7 for those candidates that had the largest Policy Difference scores.

Table 1: *Logistic Regression and Odds Ratios for DPJ Desertion*

	Logistic Coefficient	Odds Ratio
(Intercept)	0.181 (1.056)	1.198 (2.87)
Policy Difference	0.422 (0.115)**	1.512 (0.22)**
Previous Vote Share	-0.043 (0.019)*	0.953 (0.01)*
Previous Term	-0.866 (0.341)*	0.485 (0.15)*
AIC	282.490	
BIC	296.839	
Log Likelihood	-137.245	
Num. obs.	267	

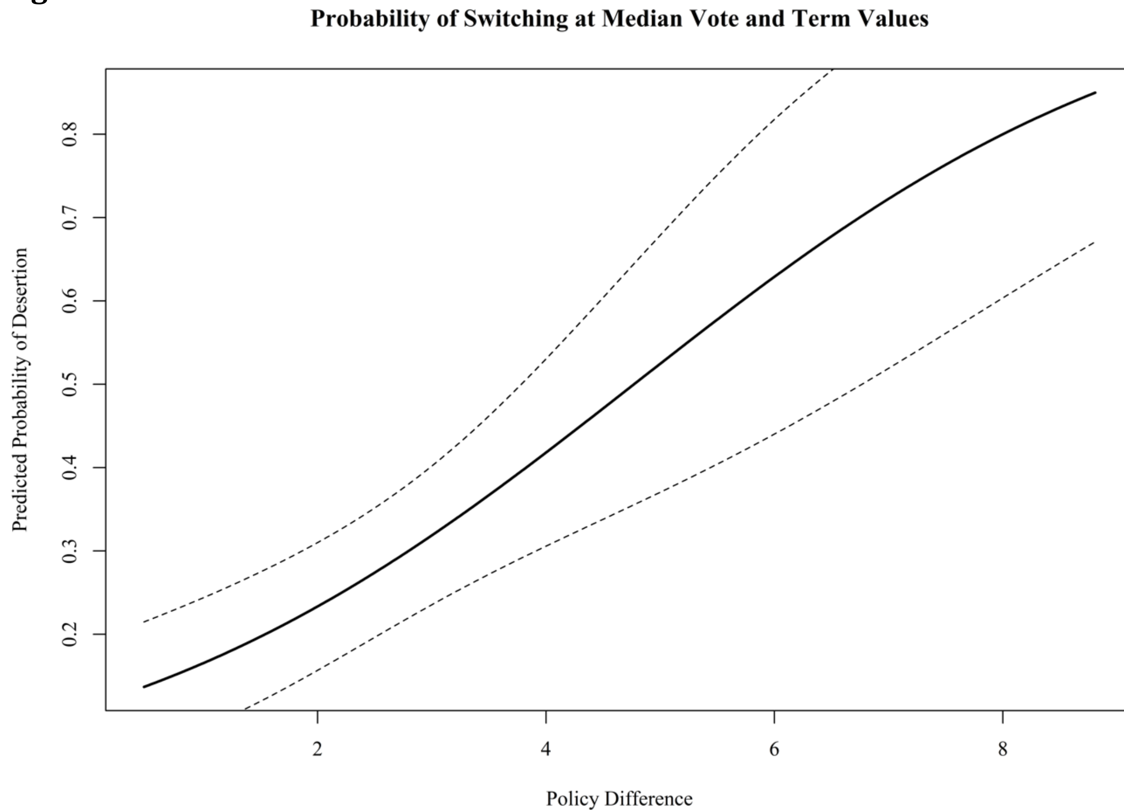
$^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{*}p < 0.05$.

Standard errors are in parentheses. Odds ratios estimates represent the odds of a candidate switching parties given a one unit increase in the respective covariate.

Given the few politicians that exhibit large Policy Difference values in an already small dataset, the confidence interval, as indicated by the dotted lines, becomes quite large as Policy Difference increases. Still, even the lower bounds of the confidence interval have probabilities in the 0.4 to 0.5 range. At Policy Difference levels between 1 and 4, the chance that a candidate deserts the DPJ in 2012 goes from around 10% to above 40%, and this probability increases substantially as Policy Difference increases. This relationship

between individual policy divergence and the probability of switching speaks to both an environment conducive to party switching in 2012 and the influence of policy to incentivize switching.

Figure 3.



This plot reflects the predicted probability of a candidate switching parties as their Policy Difference increases. Here, vote share and terms served as a DPJ candidate are held at their median values, 51% and no previous terms respectively. The 95% confidence interval is denoted by the dotted lines.

An example helps illustrate more clearly how candidates' policy preferences help predict their propensity to switch parties. Tetsuhisa Matsuzaki first ran for the DPJ in 1996, winning his first seat in 2009 with roughly 55% of the vote. With no prior experience in the legislature and a vote margin above the median of other DPJ candidates, Matsuzaki's probability of defection would be around 21% according to our party switching model so

long as his policy preferences were aligned with the DPJ. However, many of Matsuzaki's responses to the ATES indicate that his policy preferences were not in line with the DPJ at all. On the high-profile policies like raising the consumption tax, Matsuzaki was strongly opposed while many DPJ loyalists expressed support or were undecided. He similarly expressed strong opposition to constitutional reform and a stronger military where his copartisans were moderately in favor. All told, his Policy Difference is 5.53 which increases the predicted probability of desertion for Matsuzaki from 21% to around 55%. In the absence of policy differences, Matsuzaki is more likely to stay than desert. After taking his policy preferences into account, the reverse is true. Upon leaving the DPJ, Matsuzaki joined the Tomorrow Party of Japan, which had a platform that promised policies much more in line with Matsuzaki's ATES responses.

Policy Preferences Help Determine Which Party Politicians Chose in 2012

The results of this model provide evidence that how divergent a politician's policy preferences are from their party can be a powerful predictor of their likelihood to switch. However, the model only predicts how likely a candidate will be to switch and does not indicate which party a defecting politician will ultimately choose. After all, if differences in policy preferences prompt a candidate to switch, then we should expect that candidate to select a party that is closer to their underlying preferences. This requires a look at the electoral landscape of the 2012 election for soon-to-be ex-DPJ members.

As previously mentioned, 2012 witnessed substantial party fragmentation, with parties splintering and merging up until election day. As a result, former DPJ members can be found in ten different parties in 2012. The greatest concentration of these deserters ended up in the Tomorrow Party of Japan (TPJ). As a party, the TPJ had opposition to a tax

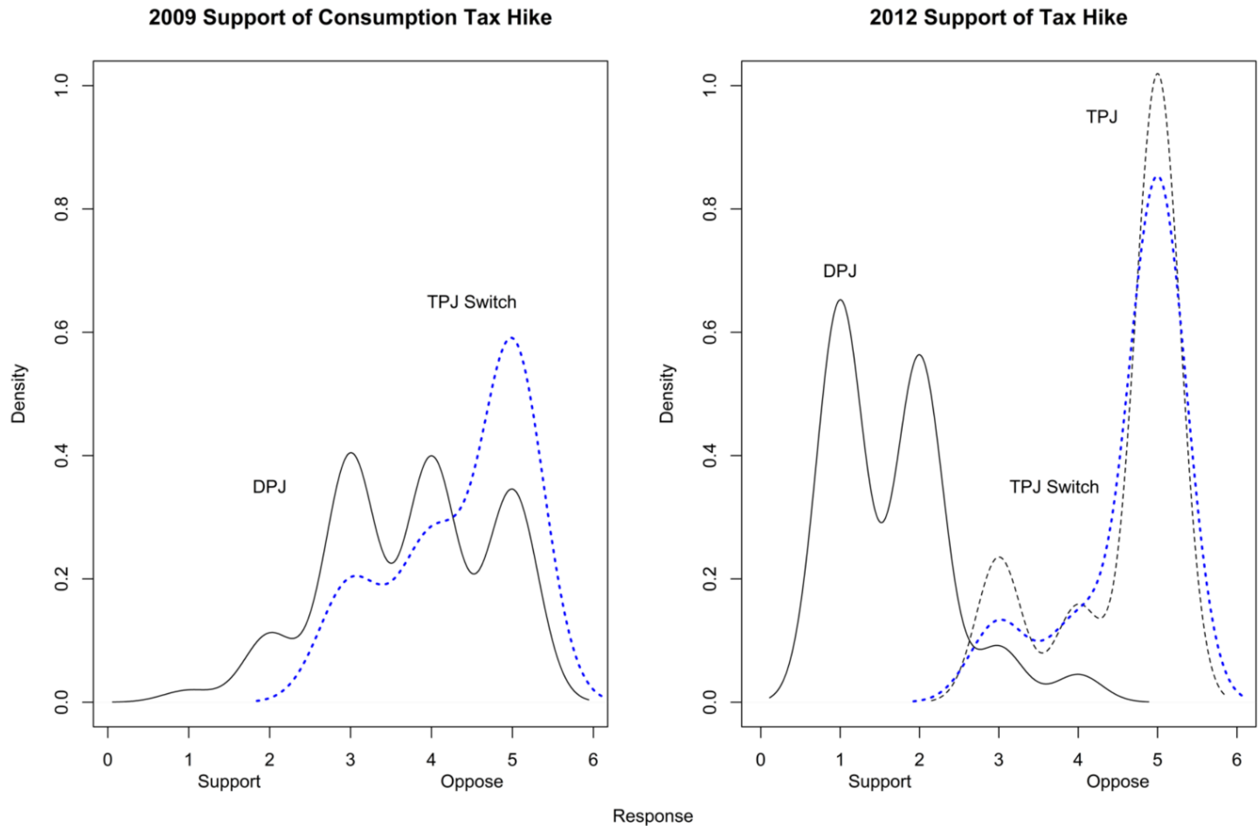
increases, denuclearization, and other popular policies in its platform, but it came into being so late in the election and suffered from such little name recognition that it met with electoral disaster (Pekkanen et al. 2013). Given the near majority of DPJ deserters ultimately joining the TPJ, I examine the preferences of this large subset of deserters to determine whether policy preferences indicate not only who will switch, but to which party they switch as well.

While the TPJ did not exist in 2009, the ATES asked some similar policy questions in 2012. Specifically, questions on tax policy are worded similarly enough between the two surveys to provide a good comparison. If the predictions of this paper hold, we should see the distribution of deserters to the TPJ roughly matching other TPJ candidates. This comparison is provided in Figure 4.

The left graph in Figure 4 shows the differences in 2009 responses to the consumption tax increase between those that stayed with the DPJ and those that eventually switched to the TPJ. As denoted by the dotted line, there is a higher proportion of switching candidates expressing opposition to the tax increase than those that remained with the DPJ. If the theory of this paper is correct, the preferences that these switchers expressed in 2009 should guide their party choice in 2012. This is corroborated by the plot on the right.

As the rightmost plot demonstrates, candidates that deserted the DPJ in 2012 to join the TPJ have preferences on tax policy that cleanly fit the rest of the party. While there remains some overlap between deserter preferences and DPJ loyalist preferences, a large proportion of deserters to the TPJ hold extremely distinct preferences from DPJ loyalists, which suggests that these switching candidates' preferences did not mesh as well with those that stayed.

Figure 4. Candidate Choice of Party and Attitude Toward Tax Policy



These plots show candidate responses in 2009 and 2012 as to how much they support a hike in the consumption tax. The left plot shows 2009 responses by loyal DPJ members and those DPJ members that eventually switched to the TPJ. The right plot shows 2012 responses for the same groups, adding the remaining TPJ members for comparison.

To provide a more systematic analysis, I use a multinomial logit model to predict the party each DPJ incumbent chose to affiliate with in the 2012 election. I use the party a candidate chooses in 2012 (DPJ, TPJ, or Other) as the dependent variable with a candidate's 2009 preferences across the five latent policy areas serving as the independent variables. Here, the actual preferences are important as this theoretically determines which party a candidate will choose so the model includes each policy factor variable individually as independent variables rather than the aggregated Policy Difference variable. The dispersion of party choices among DPJ deserters

poses some statistical issues since most ended up in the TPJ with the rest scattered among numerous other parties. As a result, I have grouped the non-TPJ parties into an "Other" group[4], giving the outcome variable, Party Choice, three values: DPJ, TPJ, and Other. This leaves us with 193 candidates that remained with the DPJ, 50 candidates that joined the TPJ, and 24 candidates that joined some other third party. The model can be represented as:

Party Choice = National Security + Institutional Reform + Financial Reform + Public Goods + Welfare Policy

The results of this model are presented in Table 2. Coefficients here represent changes in the likelihood of choosing either the TPJ or some other third party relative to staying in the DPJ. Of the five policy areas included in the model, institutional reform, public goods, and welfare policy exhibited statistical significance for at least one of the party choices. Specifically, a more conservative public goods preference corresponds with a higher likelihood of a candidate choosing the TPJ while more liberal institutional reform and welfare policy preferences indicate a higher likelihood of a candidate choosing some other third party. As with the logit model, multinomial logit models are most easily interpreted by plotting predicted probabilities which are provided in Figure 5.

[4] The parties in the "Other" group are primarily right-leaning, contrasting with the TPJ's more centrist positions. Results are robust to the exclusion of these other parties.

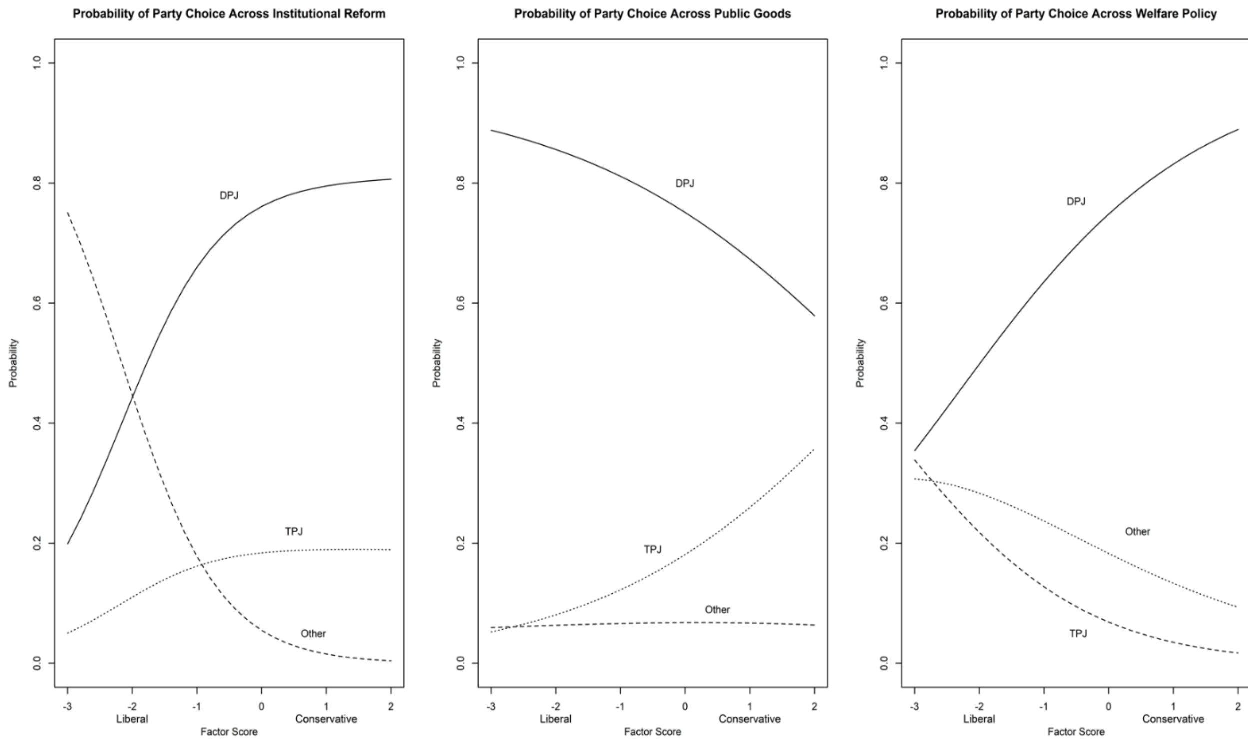
Table 2. Multinomial Regression of Party Choice for DPJ candidates in 2012

	TPJ		Other Minor Parties	
Variable	*B*	*Std. Error*	*B*	*Std. Error*
Intercept	-1.40**	0.16	-2.59**	0.32
National Security	0.09	0.17	0.35	0.24
Institutional Reform	-0.01	0.18	-1.31**	0.49
Financial Reform	-0.16	0.21	-0.42	0.35
Public Goods	0.46**	0.22	0.09	0.30
Welfare Policy	-0.42	0.22	-0.78**	0.33
McFadden Pseudo R^2				.07
N				265

The reference category is the DPJ. $*p < .05$. $**p < .01$.

The following plots visually represent how a candidate's policy preference in a particular policy area in 2009 influences their party choice in 2012, holding preferences in other policy areas constant at their median value.

Figure 5. Candidate Party Choice Based on Policy Preferences



These plots show the predicted probability of observing a candidate selecting one of the three party options (DPJ, TPJ, and Other) for the relevant policy preference with other preferences held at their median values.

For example, the far-left plot in Figure 5 depicts the relationship between institutional reform preferences, which includes revising the electoral system and altering how politicians interact with the private sector, and the probability of observing a candidate choosing one of the available parties. This plot indicates that as candidates hold more conservative policy views with respect to these reforms, they are more likely to choose to stay in the DPJ rather than switch to the TPJ or another third party.

Public goods, which includes public project spending policies as well as the divisive tax policy question, indicates that as a politician holds more conservative policies, their probability of choosing the TPJ over the DPJ increases. This conforms with the real-world

observation that DPJ politicians opposed to the consumption tax were more likely to break from the party by 2012.

Conclusion

This paper provides empirical evidence that party switching is attributable to candidate policy preferences in an electoral setting that is conducive to programmatic appeals. While the relationship between party switching and policy has been theoretically explored in previous works, this is one of the first pieces of research to confirm this relationship at the individual level. In the case of Japan in 2012, many DPJ politicians faced the prospect of appealing to their constituents while affiliated with an unpopular, policy diffuse party that would be nothing short of a liability. For those politicians that held policy preferences far afield of the DPJ, deserting the party to join one that fit more closely with their views provided better electoral prospects than holding fast to a sinking ship. Policy was certainly not all that mattered, as a candidate's vote share and previous time in the assembly attest, but policy clearly played a role in the switching calculus. My focus may have been on the DPJ in Japan in 2012, but the factors that led to this Japanese party's demise are far from exclusive to Japan.

A separate yet interesting implication of this research is that we cannot always foresee the consequences of electoral reform. Part of the reason for the move from SNTV to MMM in Japan was to encourage the rise of a rival party to the long dominant LDP, reasoning the literature on electoral politics supports. With the formation of the DPJ and its increasing electoral success in the wake of reform, political science seemed fully vindicated. However, it now seems that the very reforms that incentivized the DPJ's rise also contributed directly to its fall. The increased focus on policy under MMM created a

potential policy-based switching environment. When the DPJ's popularity plummeted and party switching became more enticing to politicians, the party collapsed in on itself, destroyed the expected two-party system, and returned the LDP to power. Party switching may have undone the DPJ, but this was only possible with the right electoral incentives in place.

Finally, the sheer number of DPJ candidates willing to jump ship in 2012 suggests something more fundamental about party competition in Japan. If voters cared more about individual candidates than the parties they ran under, perhaps fewer DPJ candidates would have felt the need to switch parties. In the past, Japanese elections were known for being intensely candidate-driven, but the rampant party switching experienced by the DPJ in 2012 hints at a greater emphasis on party affiliation.

Chapter 2: Candidate or Party?

Old Party, New Tricks
Candidates, Parties and LDP Dominance in Japan

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has controlled the House of Representatives, and by extension controlled the Japanese government, almost continually since its formation in 1955—21 of the last 23 elections (91% of the time) to be more precise. The dominance of one party, where one party consistently outperforms its rivals in elections and is almost constantly at the head of government, has become synonymous with Japanese politics, and the LDP is its poster boy. When the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) managed to beat the LDP in 2009, for a moment it seemed that the era of LDP dominance was over. However, by the following election in 2012, the LDP returned to power against a now weak and divided DPJ. To top it off, the DPJ splintered to the point that Japan's party system now has a jumble of small, ineffectual opposition parties, cementing the LDP's dominant position post 2012. While LDP dominance is nothing new to Japanese politics, its resurgence following the DPJ's victory is puzzling. Previous work on LDP dominance points to the LDP's candidates and clientelsitc networks as the primary source of its strength (Cox et al. 2000, Scheiner 2005, 2006, Reed 2009, Bouissou 2018), but it is well-documented that Japanese politics has shifted to nationalized, party-based and policy-focused competition (McElwain 2012, Rosenbluth and Thies 2010, Catalinac 2016). Reed, Scheiner, and Thies specifically studied electoral competition in Japan in the wake of the DPJ's victory, finding that from 2005 onward, party competition had taken center stage, circumstances that would at the very least, make the resurgence of candidate-based LDP

dominance extremely unusual (2012). As they put it, "one thing we should not expect is a return to single party dominance, either by the LDP or the DPJ" (p. 375).

If LDP dominance has returned, as it appears to have, it seems highly unlikely that it would be through the old ways of candidate-based clientelism. What, then, is driving electoral competition in Japan such that the LDP is dominant once more? I argue that while the loss of the DPJ as a competitive rival may have restored some of the importance of candidates, this new period of LDP dominance is in large part the result the party's appeal. Similar to Reed, Scheiner, and Thies, I analyze candidate performance in single member district races, covering all House of Representatives elections between 2000 and 2017. I examine candidates' vote share and probability of winning an election and, like them, find that from 2005 onward, party affiliation exceeds candidate quality as the more substantial predictor of candidate performance. I find that candidate appeal makes a return in influencing a candidate's chances at the ballot box, but crucially, I find that party also continues to play a substantial role in this new era of LDP dominance. In 2012, 2014, and 2017, simply being affiliated with the LDP boosts a candidate's probability of winning his or her seat by 54, 34, and 31 percentage points respectively. Even with the lack of competitiveness in the latter two elections, party affiliation still exhibits a substantively significant relationship with candidates' electoral fortunes.

LDP Dominance Then

As I have mentioned, LDP dominance has been the norm in Japan for some time and as such, many scholars have tried to figure out why. The primary explanation for the LDP's success in the past has revolved around candidates. Some scholars offer that LDP candidates were better positioned to navigate the single nontransferable vote (SNTV)

system that Japan used from 1947 to 1993 (Hickman and Kim 1992, Cox and Niou 1994, McElwain 2018). LDP politicians, using the LDP's monopoly of government to its advantage, erected *koenkai*, personal networks with clientelistic linkages between candidates and specific groups of voters. These candidates, housed in a decentralized party focused on building and maintaining *koenkai*, had massive advantages over candidates from opposition parties (Richardson and Richardson 1997, Shinoda 2013). The heart of *koenkai* was pork barrel politics, the fuel that kept the LDP dominance engine running, reaching from national to local government and ensuring that opposition candidates would find it incredibly difficult to work their way in from outside the pipeline (Scheiner 2005, 2006). The personal networks candidates built and funneled pork into were as expensive as they were extensive, and the LDP's first mover advantage in securing government control allowed it to monopolize government resources to greatly benefit its own candidates (Krauss and Pekkanen 2011, Bouissou 2018); essentially, SNTV and the clientelism that flourished within it, created a toxic environment for non-LDP candidates that may not have guaranteed the LDP would dominate politics but certainly fostered it.

Taken together, this literature makes a compelling case for why LDP dominance existed in the first place. Japanese politics valued pork which candidates delivered to specific groups of voters through their personal networks. The LDP was the party with the pork and as such, its candidates held all the advantages.

However, in 1994, Japan replaced SNTV with a mixed-member majoritarian (MMM) electoral system, its advocates hoping to break up the stranglehold of clientelism and candidates. With the old SNTV institutions out of the way, many scholars mused about how Japanese politics would change and whether LDP dominance would dissipate in response

(Kohno 1997, McKean and Scheiner 2000, Wada 2003). Their expectations rested on the premise that Japan now had a system that incentivized party-based, policy-focused competition (Christensen 1994, Jain 1995), Japan's economy and demographics were creating more independent voters (Noble 2010), and, since MMM uses single member districts, several scholars invoked Durverger's Law to predict Japan would transition specifically toward a predominately two-party system (Thies 2002, Reed 2005, 2007, Jou 2009, Kaihara 2010).

In other words, scholars were looking for two things: elections becoming more party-based and the weakening of LDP dominance. Evidence of these changes came slowly. Candidates still carried substantial influence in the immediate aftermath of electoral reform as LDP politicians sought to maintain as much of the "old ways" as possible (Uekami and Tsutsumi 2003). A new opposition party, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), formed and started gaining some momentum, but the LDP held onto power largely through the strength of its candidates as it had before (Reed, Scheiner, and Thies 2012). By the mid 2000s, however, several developments in Japanese politics showed signs of the expected shifts in electoral competition.

The first of these developments was the surprise election of Junichiro Koizumi as LDP leader. Once he became prime minister, Koizumi pushed for a series of reforms that would weaken the pipeline of pork fueling the LDP's candidate-centric politics. He was met with considerable opposition from members of his own party which ultimately killed his legislation. Aggravated by these entrenched LDP politicians, Koizumi, called a snap election in 2005, and ran a party-based campaign against LDP candidates. He kicked out several LDP politicians from the party and brought in "assassins," Koizumi-backed candidates

running specifically to oust those who opposed his reforms, in a fight to change the LDP from the inside (Kabashima and Steel 2007). The gambit largely succeeded and the LDP won a substantial number of seats, many of them Koizumi supporters.

Koizumi's fight with LDP politicians was evidence of a movement toward a more centralized LDP, guided by policy and party interests over factional conflict and pork (Christensen 2006, Noble 2010, Mishima 2018). The LDP was still the dominant party under Koizumi, but scholars now had substantial evidence that candidates were beginning to take a back seat to party.

As for the evidence of the erosion of LDP dominance, the DPJ's slow and steady rise became the focal point for party system change in Japan. This was punctuated even further by the DPJ's victory over the LDP in 2009, with the largest seat share for one party in Japan's history. So how did the DPJ do it? The DPJ's formation and eventual success was due in large part to the increased emphasis on parties brought about by electoral reform (Reed 2005, 2007). The DPJ rallied voters to it by defining itself as an anti-LDP party, without the need to build up a following for each of its candidates individually (Kushida and Lipscy 2013). In other words, the LDP was bested because the appeal of the DPJ *as a party* was greater than the LDP's appeal.

At this point, scholars' expectations had been fully met. Electoral competition in Japan was becoming more party-focused and it seemed that Japan had transitioned to a predominately two-party system. Reed, Scheiner, and Thies found that the 2005 election with Koizumi's assassins marked a change in electoral competition that moved attention from candidates to parties, something that held true for the 2009 election as well (Reed, Schiener, and Thies 2012).

LDP Dominance Now

While it has a thorough explanation for LDP dominance in the past, the literature is far less clear about the fall of the DPJ and return of LDP dominance from 2012 onward. Did Japanese politics revert to candidate-based competition or did the LDP manage to boost its party appeal? Scholars have discussed the DPJ's collapse primarily through party-based explanations. The DPJ attracted candidates and voters primarily with its "not the LDP" messaging, but this resulted in competing policy priorities and a sprawling platform that proved exceedingly difficult to enact (Kushida and Lipscy 2013). When it had difficulty enacting its agenda, the LDP hounded the new governing party, pointing to its failures as evidence of an incompetent party in way over its head (Nihon Saiken Inishiatibu 2013, Kamikawa 2016). Ultimately, the DPJ party relied heavily on its national image, and when that image faltered, so did the party (Iga 2014).

There is reason to believe that, just as the DPJ's failures were rooted in its (lack of) party appeal, the LDP's return to dominance is based on party as well. While the LDP still has some internal, candidate-based conflict as it did in its early years, its organization has largely adapted to the more party-focused MMM system (Krauss and Pekkanen 2018). Elections have become more nationalized, prime ministers like Koizumi and Abe acted as party leaders with comprehensive agendas, and campaigns continue to a focus on policy even after the DPJ's collapse (McElwain 2012, Catalinac 2016, Yokoyama and Kobayashi 2019).

Of course, Japanese elections still involve candidates to a great degree and their influence on recent electoral results has is well known (Endo and Pekkanen 2018, Fiva and Smith 2018, Smith 2020, Hijino and Ishima 2021). It could be argued that in the absence of

a strong party rivalry, elections would naturally focus back on candidates since the contest between parties is so uncompetitive. However, even if individual candidate appeal has become more important, this does not erase all the larger changes that have taken place in Japanese politics over the last two decades. Even in the absence of a real competitor to the LDP, party should remain a significant determinant of electoral performance over individual candidate appeal even in this new period of LDP dominance.

Candidate Quality, Party Affiliation, and Electoral Performance

To see the extent to which party and candidate appeal are contributing to LDP success since its return to dominance, I analyze candidate performance in single member districts for every House of Representatives election between 2000 and 2017. I perform a similar analysis to Reed, Scheiner, and Thies's examination of newcomer candidate performance between 2000 and 2009. I expand the analysis to include every candidate from a major party in single member districts for all Japanese House of Representatives elections and add the results from the 2012, 2014, and 2017 elections. [5]

The most intuitive ways to assess candidate performance in a single member district are the percentage of the vote a candidate gains and whether the candidate won his or her seat. The former provides more nuance as it distinguishes between close contests and massive blowouts, but the latter is arguably more important as it ultimately decides the composition of the legislature. The two dependent variables should not differ drastically so I will focus on whether a candidate wins his or her seat as data on candidate vote share is

[5] I exclude niche parties like the Japanese Communist Party (JCP), Komeito, the Social Democratic Party (SDP). These parties perform similarly from year to year, appealing to very specific groups of voters. However, the model is robust to their inclusion.

only available through 2014.[6] . Data for this analysis comes from the Reed-Smith Japanese House of Representatives Elections Dataset (JHRED), which contains data at the candidate-level for all elections between 1955 and 2014 and from the 2017 Asahi Todai Elite Survey (ATES), a collaborative survey of all candidates running in the 2017 election conducted by the *Asahi Shimbun*, a widely circulated newspaper, and Tokyo University.

For candidate appeal, I use a dichotomous measure of candidate quality based on whether the candidate previously held office as a governor, mayor, representative in the House of Councillors (Japan's upper house), or prefectural assembly member. My measure is analogous to Reed, Scheiner, and Thies's measure of candidate quality. As previously mentioned, they found that candidate quality was a significant predictor of a newcomer candidate winning an election in the early 2000s, but that this relationship was replaced by party affiliation from 2005 onward (2012). Their conclusion was that candidate appeal gave way to party as Japanese politics to shifted toward more party-based competition, but they expected party competition to continue rather than LDP dominance to return. I expect that candidate quality will make a resurgence in the absence of strong party competition after the 2012 election, but that it will continue to be less influential than party affiliation.

My measure of party affiliation is also dichotomous as LDP or not LDP affiliated. I include candidates from the LDP and DPJ for the 2000 through 2009 elections. For 2012, I add candidates from the Japan Renewal Party (JRP) and Tomorrow Party of Japan (TPJ), DPJ splinter parties. For the 2014 election, I include candidates from the LDP, DPJ, the Japan Innovation Party (JIP), the JRP's more conservative rebrand. The TPJ dissolved by 2014 so it did not contest the election. Finally, in 2017 I analyze candidates from the LDP,

[6] The results from a model using vote share are included in the Appendix

JRP, Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP), and the Party of Hope, the DPJ having fully splintered by then. LDP affiliation should not significantly correlate with a candidate's probability of winning a seat until 2005, replicating Reed, Scheiner, and Thies's results. Once it becomes a significant predictor of winning a seat, it should continue to be a significant predictor all the way through the 2017 election. The coefficient should be positive in all years but 2009 when the LDP was the losing party. Furthermore, if party appeal is the main contributor to LDP dominance, the coefficient should exceed candidate quality's coefficient in 2012, 2014, and 2017.

Apart from candidate quality, Japan, like many democracies, has a substantial incumbency advantage. As a result, incumbents should, on average, perform better than non-incumbents. I include a dummy variable to account for this, considering any candidate that holds office in the House of Representatives going into the election an incumbent. The coefficient for this variable should be positive and significant in every election.

In addition to these key variables on candidate and party appeal, I include other variables that should also significantly influence how much of the vote a candidate wins. In all the elections that I am studying, either the LDP or the DPJ holds the lion's share of the seats. Candidates that are facing these incumbents in particular are likely to have a harder time winning, so I include a dummy variable to distinguish candidates running in an open race from those facing a strong incumbent. The variable's coefficient should be negative in all years.

Finally, there is the issue of coordination failure. Japan's single member districts are decided by plurality, making vote splitting potentially costly to a candidate's chances of winning. I measure coordination failure by taking the number of candidates running on the

same side as a candidate (the ruling coalition for the LDP and opposition parties for the DPJ) and subtracting it from the number running on the opponents' side.[7] A negative number indicates that coordination failure is lowering candidates' chances of winning a seat.

Taking these variables together, the model I analyze can be expressed:

Pr(Winning a Seat) = Candidate Quality + LDP Affiliation + Incumbency + Opponent is LDP/DPJ Incumbent + Coordination Failure

With the primary hypotheses:

H_1: LDP Affiliation will significantly predict a higher probability of winning a seat in 2012, 2014, and 2017

H_2: Candidate quality will become a significant predictor of a candidate winning a Seat once more after the DPJ collapses in 2012

H_3: LDP Affiliation will have a larger estimate than Candidate Quality in 2012, 2014, and 2017

Results and Analysis

I used probit regression to analyze candidate performance and put the marginal effects derived from the regression in Table 1 (the full probit model output can be found in the Appendix). Marginal effects indicate the change in probability of a candidate winning a seat in response to a change in the corresponding explanatory variable, with the other variables held at their median values. As can be seen in the table, LDP affiliation is statistically significant beginning in 2005 as expected and *stays* significant from 2012 onwards, supporting my first hypothesis. This finding suggests that electoral competition in Japan has continued to be, at least in part, party-based even after the DPJ collapsed. In 2012, a

[7] This measure is the same as the one used by Reed, Scheiner, and Thies 2012.

candidate being affiliated with the LDP boosts their probability of winning a seat by 57 percentage points and though this probability drops in 2014 and 2017, it is still substantively large at 34 and 31 percentage points respectively.

Candidate quality starts as a significant predictor of a candidate's probability of winning a seat in 2000 and 2003, but this fades in the 2005 and 2009 elections just as Reed, Scheiner, and Thies found. Interestingly, candidate quality becomes a significant predictor once more starting in 2012, supporting my second hypothesis. While I cannot say for certain, I suspect this is the result of a lack of competitiveness between parties, making more room for candidate appeal to factor into voters' decisions. Substantively, being a quality candidate has a roughly equal increase in the probability of winning a seat for 2012, 2014, and 2017, with a 15, 16, and 18 percentage point increase in the probability of winning respectively.

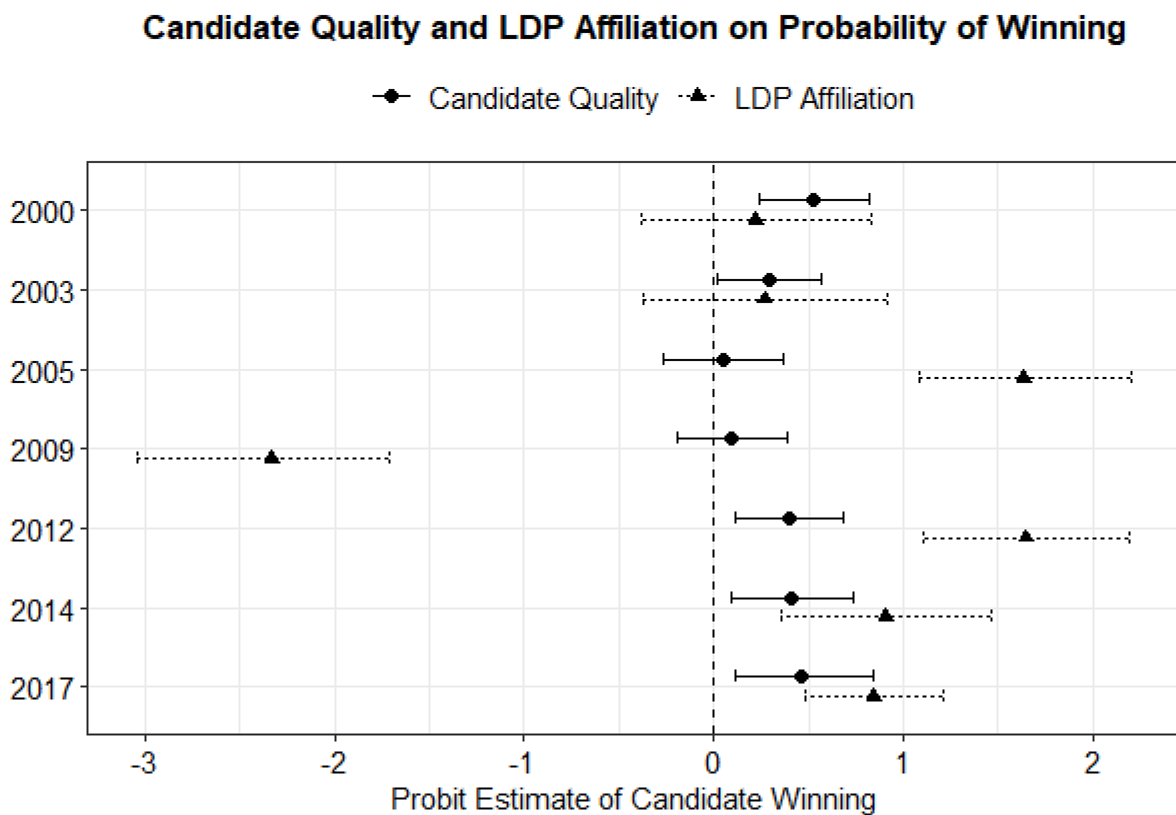
Table 1. Marginal Effect of Quality and Party Affiliation on Winning a Seat

	Dependent Variable: Candidate Winning a Seat						
Year	2000	2003	2005	2009	2012	2014	2017
Candidate Quality	0.21**	0.17**	0.02	0.04	0.15**	0.16*	0.18*
LDP Affiliation	0.09	0.10	0.58**	-0.75**	0.57**	0.34**	0.31**
Incumbency	0.46**	0.48**	0.51**	0.34**	0.34**	0.56**	0.50**
Opponent is LDP/DPJ Incumbent	-0.07	-0.18**	-0.18**	-0.15**	-0.08*	-0.05**	-0.31**
Coordination Failure	-0.05	-0.08	-0.01	-0.14**	-0.10**	-0.04	-0.15**
N	498	518	564	535	691	524	588

Note: *p<0.05 **p<0.01

Given the larger marginal effect estimates for party affiliation over candidate quality, it may seem that these findings also strongly support my third hypothesis. However, the results are not definitive. The point estimates of party affiliation are indeed larger than candidate quality in the 2012, 2104, and 2017 elections, but the confidence intervals overlap in 2014 and 2017. I have plotted the probit estimates with their corresponding confidence intervals for candidate quality and party affiliation to better compare the two in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Plot Comparing Candidate Quality and Party Affiliation



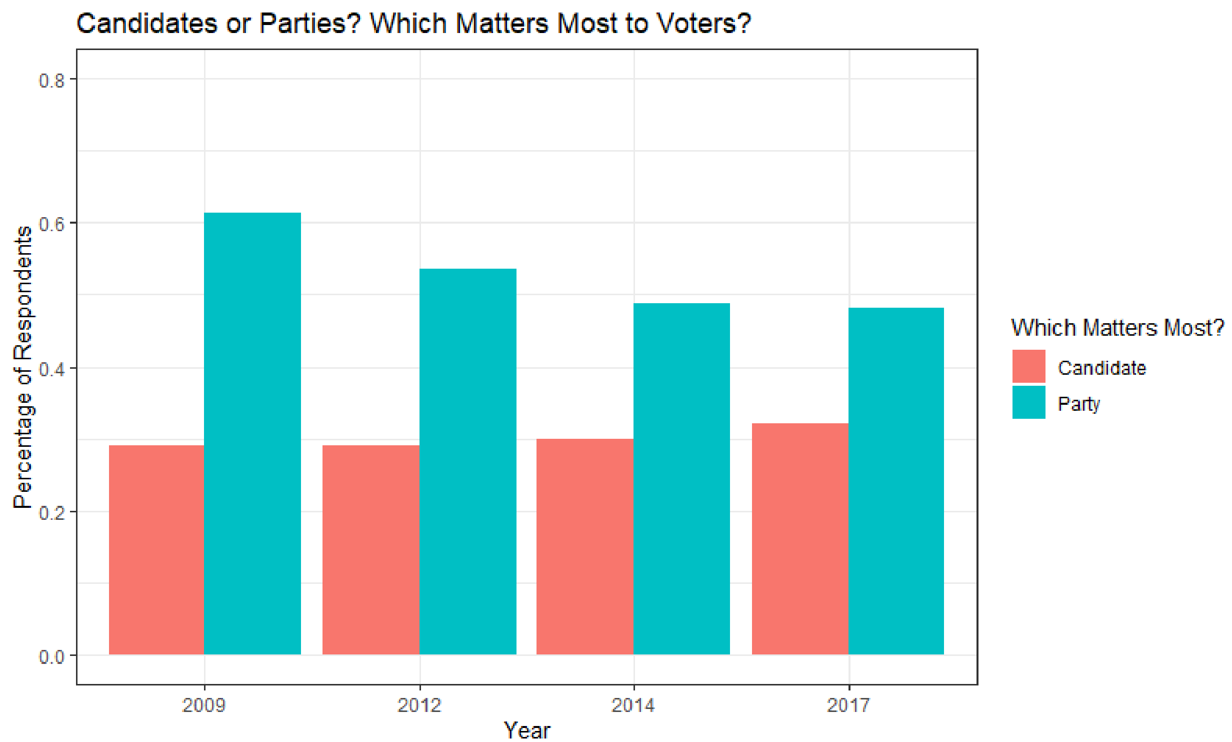
This plot shows two important takeaways from my analysis. First, candidate quality starts off as significant, diminishes in the wake of big shifts toward party-based competition in 2005 and 2009, and then returns after the DPJ's fumble in 2012. Second, unlike candidate quality, once party affiliation becomes significant, it stays significant all the way through

2017. Its diminished role in more recent elections relative to candidate quality is, again, likely the result of an unexciting field of parties for voters to choose from. Yet its persistent influence on elections even in the presence of LDP dominance reflects just how enduring Japan's shift toward party-focused elections is.

Another way to assess whether parties or candidates are more important in Japanese elections is to ask voters directly. I have plotted in Figure 2 responses to a series of surveys asking voters to indicate which they found more important—parties or candidates—in casting their vote in a single member district.[8] The plot tells a consistent and compelling story that supports my analysis on candidate performance: on average, voters care more about parties than candidates even when they are casting a vote specifically for a candidate. This difference between the prioritization of party and candidate was noticeably higher in 2009, the most competitive election with two major parties Japan has ever experienced, and then diminishes in 2012 and again for the 2014 and 2017 elections. Party continues to be important in these later elections but has become slightly less so compared with the height of the DPJ-LDP rivalry in 2009.

[8] These responses are from the House of Representatives Post-Election Surveys conducted by the Association for the Promotion of Fair Elections since 2009. The question presented each election is, "Did you cast your vote in the single member district based on parties or candidates?"

Figure 2. Voter Response to What Matters Most in Casting Their Vote



Conclusion

The LDP dominates once more through a combination of the return of candidate appeal and, more importantly, through its party appeal. It was far from certain that Japanese politics had fully adapted to party-based elections, especially after its burgeoning two-party system evaporated. Yet the evidence I present here is clear. Candidates' ability to win a seat continues to be dependent on the party even when a competitive opposition is nowhere in sight.

Admittedly, I covered only seven elections and focused primarily on just three (2012, 2014, and 2017). It may be premature to extrapolate from these findings and proclaim that party-focused elections are here to stay, especially when the most recent elections show the relationship between party affiliation and candidate success weakening.

However, it is hard to imagine Japanese politics becoming any less competitive than it already is. If party affiliation exhibits statistical significance in 2014 or 2017, there is every reason to expect that it will continue to do so.

This paper answers the question of what is contributing to electoral success after Japan's party system shifted in 2012, and while it establishes party affiliation as a contributor to LDP dominance, it does not explore what it is about the LDP that grants LDP candidates such a consistent advantage. Further study is needed to better understand what about the LDP as a party brings voters to it election after election in Japan's party-based electoral environment.

Chapter 3: Policy or Valence?

Unveiling Valence: Explaining LDP Dominance in Japan

After a tumultuous election in 2012, Japan's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) found itself back in power. The collapse of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and the subsequent fragmentation of opposition parties has seen Japan return to a state all too familiar: LDP dominance of Japanese politics. The LDP has faced an ineffectual opposition and held singular control of government for decades in times past, but the return of this dynamic is strange. Party competition in Japan used to be crippled by the centrality of candidates and pork barrel politics (Scheiner 2005, 2006). However, after a series of reforms and demographic changes, Japanese politics shifted toward more policy-based, party-focused electoral competition (Noble 2010, Reed, Scheiner, and Thies 2012), something I confirm in Chapter 2 has continued even after the LDP began to dominate again in 2012. Given that party remains an important factor in Japanese elections, why was there a reversion to party competition failure whereby, as of summer 2021, the LDP (and its coalition partner Komeito) tower over a fragmented and weak opposition?

In this paper, I provide insight into why the LDP as a party manages to dominate its rivals so consistently. The implications from Chapter 1 and analysis from Chapter 2 in conjunction with other scholars' findings suggests that there is something about party affiliation and the LDP *as a party* that holds it above its rivals. The party brand has helped LDP candidates win, but we need to know what about that brand persuades voters to choose the LDP and its candidates over the alternatives. The literature on voting behavior and party competition highlights the relationship between voter choice and voter

perceptions of party policy positions and valence, the latter a term used to refer to non-policy attributes like competence and charisma. When voters are considering their choices, they weigh the policies that parties offer and how competent or likeable the parties are, ideally finding a party that has high valence and offers policies they like. Which type of appeal—policy or valence—has the greater impact on electoral outcomes is hotly debated (Downs 1957, Stokes 1963, Adams et al. 2005, Clark 2013). However, there is abundant evidence that both policy and valence have substantial influence on candidate and party performance in elections (Mondak 1995, Bernhardt, Camara and Squintani 2010, Stone and Simas 2010, Green and Jennings 2012, Pardos-Prado 2012, Clark 2013, Abney, Clark and Leiter 2014, Johns and Kollin 2020). There is every reason to believe that policy and valence are shaping party competition in Japan and therefore contributing to the LDP's dominance in the aftermath of the DPJ's collapse.

I use a set of surveys conducted by the *Asahi Shimbun* and Tokyo University called the Asahi-Todai Voter Survey (ATVS) that asked a random sample of voters a series of questions before each national election about their choices, policy preferences, and feelings toward political parties and candidates. Using the information provided in these surveys, I model voters' choices as a function of their policy preferences, views on candidate appeal, and perceptions of party valence. For policy, I find that voters generally behave consistently with their policy preferences, preferring parties that are more closely positioned to them. However, I find that valence has a pronounced relationship with vote choice in Japan as well. Voters are far more likely to choose candidates and parties they perceive as having positive valence, even when alternative parties offer policies closer to their preferences. When it comes to the LDP specifically, it is only when voters have

positive valence perceptions of the LDP that LDP candidates become the clearly preferred choice for voters, meaning that the LDP only dominates when voters have positive valence views of the party. These results lend further credence to the growing body of research that emphasizes party valence as a key determinant of electoral performance. Furthermore, my findings provide a potential answer to the lack of competitiveness in Japanese politics after 2012 and the resurgence of LDP dominance from that time through 2021; essentially, the LDP has made its comeback primarily through its superior valence relative to its rivals.

Background: Changes to Japan's Party System (2000-2020)

LDP dominance is nothing new to Japan, but there was a time where it seemed to be at an end. As I discussed in the previous chapters, Japan adopted a mixed-member majoritarian (MMM) system in 1994, which introduced single member district elections in combination with closed list proportional representation. Many expected these changes to put more attention on party-based competition and maybe even push Japan toward a two-party system (Thies 2002, Reed 2005, 2007, Jou 2009, Kaihara 2010). In the wake of electoral reform, Japan saw a new party emerge in 1996, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). After merging with a few more parties, the DPJ contested its first House of Representatives election in earnest in 2000 though it did not meet with much initial success. The LDP remained the dominant party through 2005, and it seemed like no party could ever compete with it equally. However, with each election it faced, the DPJ gathered more candidates, built up a widely popular centrist platform in contrast with the LDP's conservative politics, and went on to defeat the LDP first in the 2007 House of Councillors (Japan's upper house) election and then in the 2009 House of Representatives election. The 2009 election was a dramatic landslide victory as the DPJ won the largest seat share in

Japan's history. The DPJ's victory was the culmination of a decade of effort, and to some it marked the end of LDP dominance (Hyde 2011, Lam 2011, Reed, Scheiner, and Thies 2012).

However, the "end" of LDP dominance was short-lived. In the very next election in 2012, the DPJ collapsed, something covered in more detail in Chapter 1, and Japan's party system exploded with new parties like the Tomorrow Party of Japan (TPJ), Japan Restoration Party (JRP), and Your Party to name a few. These "third force" parties challenged Japan's freshly minted two-party system, and in the aftermath of the chaotic election, the LDP was back in power. By the next election in 2014, the party system had changed even more. The JRP reorganized itself as the Japan Innovation Party (JIP), while the remaining third force parties split further, becoming even less significant than they were in 2012. While the DPJ was still the second largest party, its ability to compete with the LDP evenly had vanished completely. The LDP, facing an anemic and scattered opposition, went on to win even more seats in 2014 than it had in 2012.

By the 2017 election, LDP dominance was fully cemented. The DPJ merged with the JIP before it gasped its last breath, dissolving completely before the election. Two parties emerged in the aftermath, the Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP) and the Party of Hope. The CDP took in the left-wing members of the now defunct DPJ, while the Party of Hope filled in the centrist position the DPJ once held. More small parties popped up, though except for Komeito (the LDP's longtime coalition partner), none of Japan's remaining parties managed to win more than a few seats. The LDP once again convincingly won the election with 61% of the seats.

Japan's party system has drastically changed in the decades since electoral reform, but the nature of party competition underpinning the performance of these parties is not fully understood. The DPJ offered popular policies in 2009 and managed to handily win its election. In 2017, the Party of Hope tried to position itself similarly to the DPJ, offering a platform full of popular policies, but it performed pitifully in comparison. Policy may explain how LDP dominance was interrupted and restored to some extent, but clearly policy alone is not the answer. It may be that parties in 2012, 2014, and 2017 lacked sufficient valence to compete with the LDP while the DPJ in 2009 had both policy and valence on its side. The fact is, the influence of policy and valence on Japanese elections has not been adequately studied to know what has driven voters to choose the LDP over other parties since the DPJ's collapse in 2012.

Policy, Valence, and Vote Choice

Political science has long dwelled on the relationship between voters, parties, and the proximity between the two on policy preferences (Downs 1958, Russell 1998, Benoit and Laver 2006, Ezrow 2007, Adams et al. 2009). Through spatial and empirical models, scholars assess how voters respond to changes in party policy and how parties position themselves relative to one another. In oft-studied single member district elections, scholars find that vote-maximizing parties should appeal to the median voter (Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002, Ezrow 2005, Adams et al. 2006, Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009). While there are exceptions, larger parties in these majoritarian electoral systems generally perform better when they take moderate positions whereas smaller parties, to attract more attention, will take more extreme positions (Wagner 2012, Abou-Chadi and Orlowski 2016). However, in more proportional electoral systems, there is evidence that political

parties benefit from diversifying their policy platforms to carve out their own space (Dow 2001, 2010). Furthermore, how central the party is in an electoral system affects the degree to which parties diverge. When elections are nationalized and the party takes center stage, parties will move away from the center to form an identifiable brand in both majoritarian and proportional systems (Ansolabehere et al. 2012).

Scholars quickly realized that policy alone did not fully account for parties' electoral performance. Parties can also appeal to voters through valence, a term used to encapsulate a smattering of difficult to define concepts like likeability, charisma, competence, and knowhow. The literature typically separates the two by thinking of policy along a positional scale and valence as a common goal; a voter can have preferences closer or father from a party, but valence is universally desirable—all voters should prefer the more charismatic or competent candidates and parties (Stokes 1963).

Scholars have recently given substantial attention to how policy and valence work together, their research depicting parties and voters engaging with these two concepts in a sort of dance. Parties with high valence will generally try and position themselves closer to the median voter while low valence parties will take more extreme positions to try and capture specific slices of the electorate (Ansolabahere and Snyder 2000, Butler and Powell 2014, Clark 2014, Zur 2017). However, Schofield and Sened posit that when large parties have a sufficiently high level of valence, they can "afford" to move away from moderate positions to appease party elites and activists (2005). Essentially, longtime governing parties can have more extreme preferences so long as a rival cannot compete with them on valence.

On the voter side of things, there is evidence that while voters seek out parties with policies closer to their preferences, they can and will choose a party further from their ideal point if there is a large enough difference in valence (Adams and Merrill 2009, Franchino and Zucchini 2015, Evrenk et al. 2018). The significance of valence for voters is accentuated further when parties offer similar policies. Researchers have found that, intuitively, valence becomes the primary axis for voter decision making when parties are ideologically similar (Green and Hobolt 2008, Zur 2021) and even when voters have ideologically distinct choices, valence overshadows policy considerations for moderate voters (Clark and Leiter 2014, Adams et al. 2017). The literature broadly establishes that voters, while caring about policy to some degree, frequently rely on valence to guide their choices.

Expectations on Policy and Valence in Japan

While there is limited research on how Japanese parties and voters are engaging with policy and valence, scholars have uncovered a few things. On policy, scholars argue that, before the DPJ's collapse, the LDP and DPJ converged on policy in a race to appeal to the median voter (Rosenbluth and Thies 2010, Scheiner 2012). However, Horiuchi, Smith, and Yamamoto find in a conjoint analysis of voter preferences that the LDP's conservative policies in 2014 were not especially popular and that voters preferred many of the policies offered by the LDP's rivals (2018). At the same time, Liff and Maeda present evidence that the LDP is sometimes restrained from enacting its entire agenda due to its coalition partner Komeito and the unpopularity of parts of that agenda (2018). In other words, the LDP may have policy positions that are more conservative than most voters' policy preferences, but if it is not acting on the less popular parts of its platform, then less conservative voters may be willing to choose the LDP with the expectation that the party does not legislate as

conservatively as its outward preferences would suggest. The LDP could be a dominant party by virtue of its policy positions, but current research is unclear as to how much policy may be helping or hurting the LDP with voters.

As far as valence goes, party competition in Japan has occasionally been described explicitly in valence terms. Scholars have identified the rise of the LDP-DPJ rivalry as pushing Japan toward valence-based competition, at least in the 2009 and 2012 elections (Lipscy and Scheiner 2012, Kushida and Lipscy 2013). Mishima finds that Japanese media attention has increasingly centered around the prime minister, emphasizing his or her role as the party leader (2019), while Patterson and Maeda provide evidence that prime minister popularity contributes to the LDP's success with voters (Patterson and Maeda 2007). In fact, evidence suggests that Abe, who was prime minister at the time, emphasized valence issues to buoy the LDP's popularity in the aftermath of controversial legislation the LDP passed between 2014 and 2017 (Maeda 2018, Endo and Pekkanen 2018). The LDP's 2009 defeat is also often discussed in valence terms—that voters were looking for a "credible" alternative to the LDP (Kushida and Lipscy 2013) and that the DPJ seemed competent enough to be the anti-LDP party (Pempel 2018).

As with the policy and valence literature, the literature on party competition in Japan touches on both policy and valence factors when discussing Japanese electoral outcomes. While policy undoubtedly influences voter behavior, there is an abundance of evidence that valence should be about as important or even outweigh policy (Clarke et al. 2011, Clarke and Whitten 2013, Ho et al. 2013, McAllister 2015, Evrek et al. 2018), though to my knowledge, there is not any research on how policy and valence function specifically in a mixed-member majoritarian system like Japan's. Still, the policy and valence literature

has examples of valence mattering in both majoritarian and proportional systems so there is little reason to think that this would not be the case in a system that incorporates elements of both. At the same time, the literature offers little guidance on how much valence should matter in Japan, and there is only limited evidence that Japanese elections are valence-driven after the adoption of MMM. It is almost certain that party competition in Japan, and by extension LDP dominance, is driven by some combination of policy and valence, but it is not immediately apparent what that combination should look like. In an attempt to shed light onto what is currently theoretically muddled, my analysis takes an empirical look at the influence of policy and valence on Japanese elections, with three general expectations:

- If policy is shaping party competition in Japan, voters should be more likely to vote for parties that are more closely positioned to them on policy.
- If valence is shaping party competition, then voters should be more likely to vote for parties that have positive valence
- If valence is driving LDP dominance, then voters should choose the LDP when it has positive valence regardless of their policy preferences

Voters, Choose Your Party

I use data on voter preferences to create a series of models predicting the party of the candidate a voter chooses to see how voters and parties engage with policy and valence to produce electoral outcomes in Japan.

Data for this project comes from the 2009 and 2017 Asahi Todai Voter Survey (ATVS). This survey asked voters a series of questions on their vote choices, policy preferences, and feeling toward candidates and parties around the time of the 2009 and 2017 elections, providing a good starting point to assess how a voter's attitudes and

perceptions shape his or her choices. While data was only available for these two years, 2009 and 2017 are conveniently well-suited to studying how policy and valence have aided the LDP's return to dominance. The 2009 election provides a snapshot of when the LDP was defeated, and the 2017 election provides a contrasting snapshot of when the LDP was dominant once again. The comparison of the two can show how policy and valence contributed to two wildly different electoral outcomes.

I model a voter's party and candidate choice as a function of policy and valence using the ATVS data with the following measures:

***Candidate Party Choice*.** The dependent variable for the model of voter choice is the party of the candidate that ATVS respondents said they voted for in the single member district portion of Japan's electoral system. As discussed earlier, Japan uses a mixed member majoritarian (MMM) system that has voters cast two votes—one for a party under closed list proportional representation (PR) and one for a candidate under single member district plurality rules. Crucially, MMM keeps the results from these votes independent of one another; that is, the results from the PR portion do not directly affect results from the single member districts. This makes the single member district contests integral in contributing to LDP dominance (I also run a similar model for party choice in the proportional representation portion with similar results).[9] I drop voters that supported one of the minor parties from the analysis to focus on what separates the LDP brand from its most immediate alternatives. This leaves the LDP and the DPJ in 2009 and the LDP, CDP, and Party of Hope in 2017. The other parties that might have been included (the Japanese

[9] See the Appendix for more details.

Communist Party, the Socialist Democratic Party, and Komeito) are niche parties with devoted supporters from election to election. Reducing the sample to the major parties maximizes the potential variation among respondents in their preferences and choices. The model is robust to the inclusion of all parties and substantive implications remain the same. In addition, I drop all respondents who did not report voting in the election. This leaves 968 voters in the 2009 ATVS and 822 voters in the 2017 ATVS.

Since my hypotheses rely on where the parties are positioned on policy, I also create a measure of party policy preferences on a liberal-conservative scale through a factor analysis using data from the Asahi Todai Elite Suvey (ATES), a companion survey to the ATVS that asked candidates running in the 2009 and 2017 elections many of the same policy questions that voters were asked in the ATVS.[10] This measure serves as a point of comparison between voter preferences and party preferences, as well as an empirical check on how parties in Japan positioned themselves in the 2009 and 2017 elections.

Policy Preferences. Voter policy positions are a fundamentally studied element in vote choice, with the expectation that voters will generally prefer similarly positioned parties. To create a measure of voter policy preferences, I use the ATVS which asks voters questions regarding their opinions on policies relevant to the election at hand (25 questions in 2009 and 26 in 2017). The possible answers to these policy questions are arrayed on a five-point scale for respondents to indicate how much they agree with the policy statement provided. For example, here is one of the survey's policy questions:

[10] See the subsequent Policy Preferences section and the Appendix for more details on the survey questions and factor analysis process.

"From preschool through college, education should be provided free of charge."

(1) Agree
(2) Somewhat Agree
(3) Can't Really Say
(4) Somewhat Disagree
(5) Disagree

I conduct a factor analysis of these policy preferences that arranges voters on the same liberal-conservative scale as the one created for candidates using the ATES.[11] The resulting factor score indicates how conservative or liberal a voter is, with higher numbers corresponding with more conservative preferences. If policy is driving vote choice in Japan, voters should choose the candidate whose party has more conservative policies the higher their factor scores are. On the reverse, voters with lower factor scores, should choose candidates from more liberal parties. Since I set the LDP as the reference category for my subsequent analyses, the coefficient should be negative.

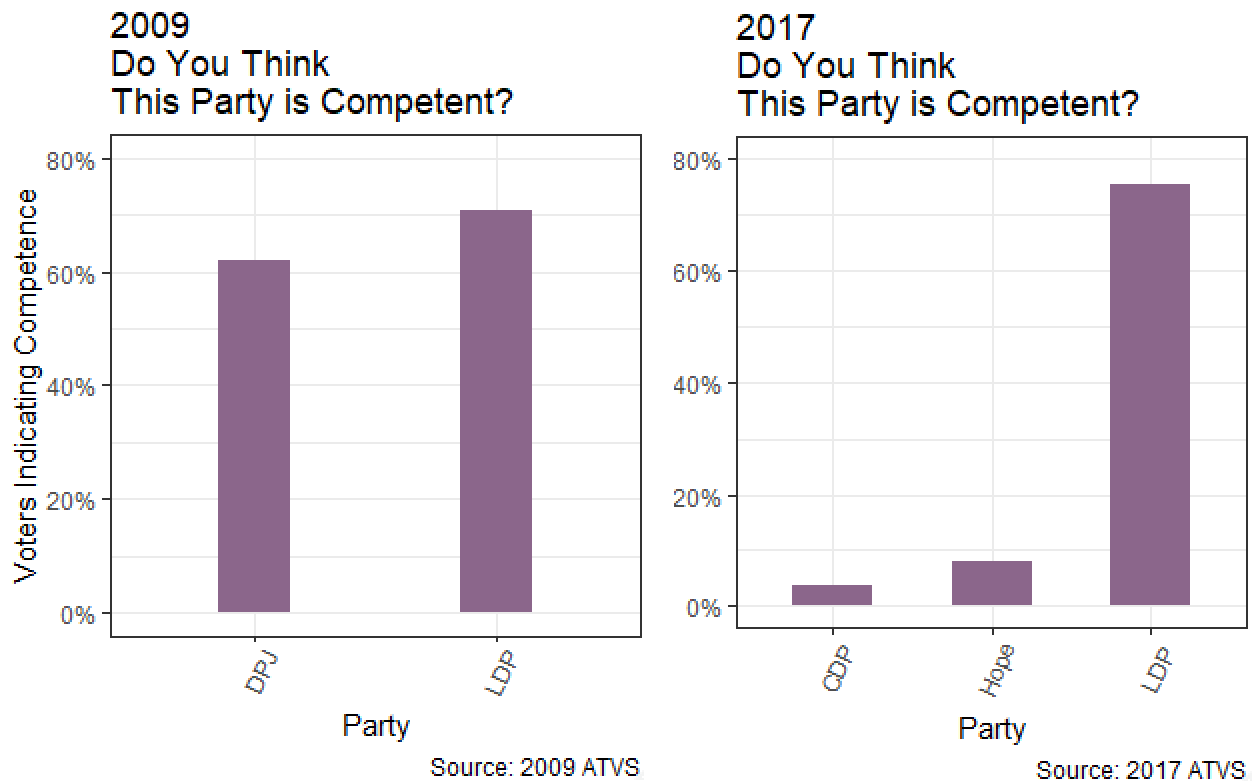
Candidate Capability. While the focus of my analysis is on party policy and valence, voters are still choosing a candidate. Candidate appeal is likely a contributor to voter choice distinct from party policy and party valence. On this front, the LDP undoubtedly has an advantage. The LDP has consistently held large majorities, and many of its candidates are experienced incumbents whereas the other parties have many more first-time candidates. The ATVS asks voters to indicate how important they think candidate capability is to them when considering their vote. Like the policy questions, this question is on a five-point scale ranging from Very Important to Not Important At All. I include this variable in the model to

[11] The analysis is robust to the inclusion of raw policy answers and numerous variations of factor analysis. The number of policy factors can range from 1 to 7, but the simple structure used in this analysis contains three factors--foreign policy, economic policy, and social issues. This is the same for both the ATES and ATVS.

account for how candidate appeal influences vote choice with the expectation that voters will be more likely to choose the LDP the more highly they value candidate capability, meaning that the coefficient should be negative here as well.

Valence. While the ATVS does not provide many specifically valence-related questions, it does have a direct question about voters' perception of party competence. For each party that ran in 2009 and 2017 respectively, voters were asked whether they found that party competent with "Yes" and "No" as possible answers. I create a dichotomous competence variable for each party, setting 0 as not competent (voter answered "No") and 1 as competent (voter answered "Yes"). I plot the proportion of voters who answered "Yes" to the competence question for the LDP and DPJ in 2009 and the LDP, CDP and Hope in 2017 in Figure 1. The plots are stark. In 2009, the LDP and DPJ are about evenly matched in competence, the DPJ sitting at 63% of voters thinking it was competent and 71% of voters thinking the LDP was competent. The situation is quite different in 2017. About the same percentage of voters (roughly 75%) find the LDP competent while the second highest rated party was Hope, with only 8% of voters thinking it was competent. The LDP is clearly the valence-advantaged party in 2017, while it had fair competition in 2009. Intuitively, I expect that if a voter finds a party competent, her or she is more likely to vote for that party. Since the LDP is the reference category, the LDP competence coefficient should be negative, meaning that voters are less likely to choose a non-LDP option when they think the LDP is competent. The competence coefficient for the other parties should be positive each respective party.

Figure 1. Voter Answers to the ATVS Question on Party Competence

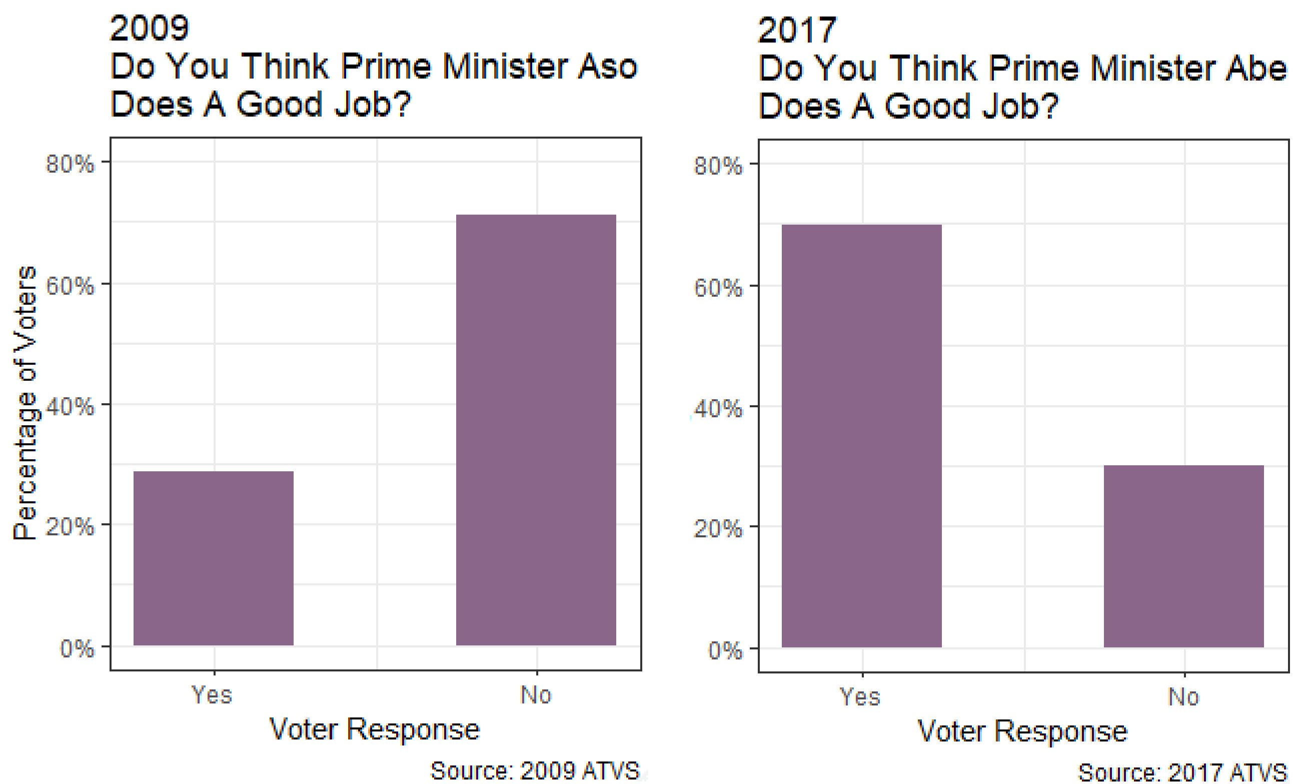


Of course, competence is only one aspect of valence, and a question on likeability or future potential might have seen the non-LDP parties fare relatively better. While the ATVS does not have any other questions about parties specifically, it does asks voters to evaluate prime minister performance. Party leader performance is frequently used as a valence measure (Green and Jennings 2012, Clarke et al. 2011, Evans and Chzhen 2016) and, since this question asks about the LDP party leader in both years, it can provide another angle on LDP valence in conjunction with the party competence measure. In both years, the question asked was "Do you think the prime minister is doing a good job," but in 2009 responses were limited to "Yes" and "No" while responses in 2017 were given on a five-point scale. I dichotomized the 2017 answers for the sake of comparison and plotted the results in Figure 2. As with competence, the coefficients for this valence measure should be negative

since voters who approve of the LDP prime minister should be less likely to choose a non-LDP party.

The plot shows a weaker valence position for the LDP in 2009 but a much better position in 2017. Less than 30% of voters thought that Aso was doing a good job as prime minister in 2009 whereas the reverse was true for Abe in 2017, where he had about 70% of voters rating his job performance favorably.[12]

Figure 2. Voter Answers to the ATVS Question on Prime Minister Performance



With either of these valence measures, there is always the possibility that voters decide which party they prefer first, *then* rate the party's competence or weigh in on prime minister performance; basically, voters might not be exogenously providing valence

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[12] This percentage is derived from voters who did not answer "Can't Really Say" on the five-point scale. When all voters are included, about 51% of voters thought Abe was doing a good job and 23% thought he did not. The five-point scale version of the measure is used in the 2017 regression.

evaluations. This is almost certainly true in many instances, but that should not be problem. If a voter has already decided on the party they like, part of that decision will still be based on valence. Regardless of whether respondents decided they thought the LDP was competent and then chose the LDP or they chose the LDP and then decided to say it was competent, valence should be a part of that process.

On this point, valence may be messy and frequently subjective, but there is evidence of some objectivity in the data. Of the voters that found at least one non-LDP party competent in 2017, 70% of them indicated that they also thought the LDP was competent. Of voters with policy preferences to the left of the median preference, 59% and 61% considered the LDP competent in 2009 and 2017 respectively. These subgroups of voters have ample reason to dislike the LDP and therefore call it incompetent, but most of them acknowledge that the LDP's experience governing the country is a feather in its cap.

Policy and Valence on Party Choice

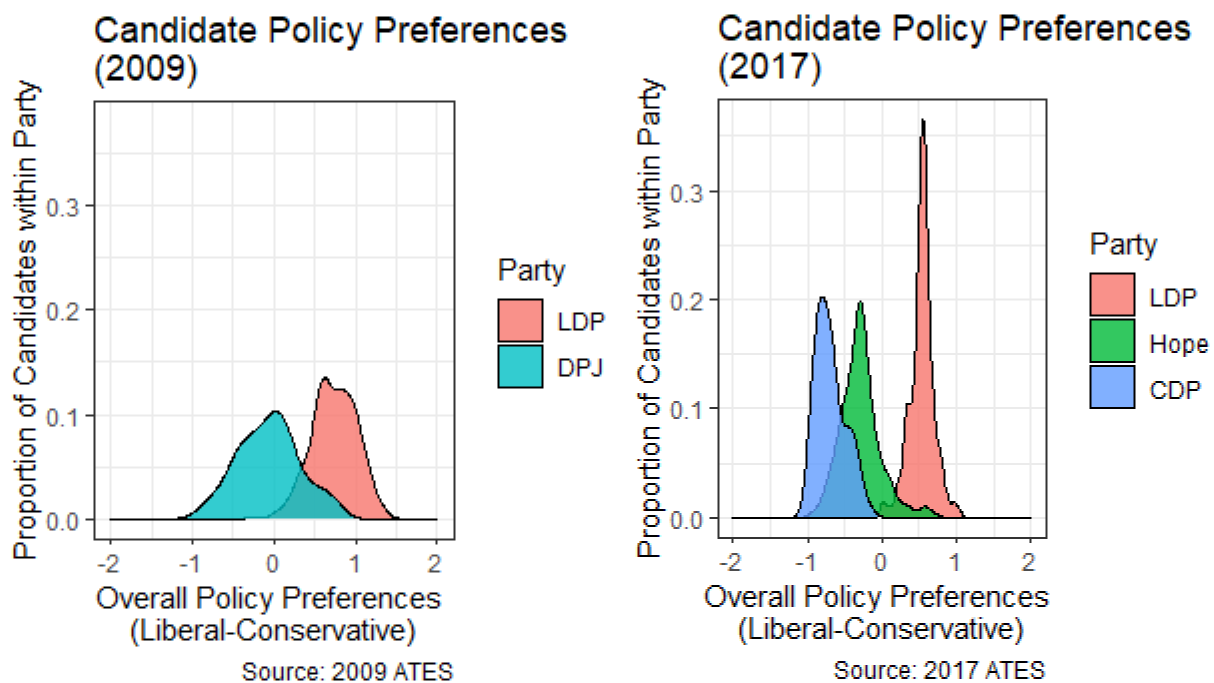
Using the variables I described above, I model the party of the candidate a voter chose in the single member district portion of MMM as:

Candidate Party Choice = *Policy Preferences* + *Party Competence* +
Candidate Capability + *PM Performance*

Beginning with policy, I expect that the more conservative a voter is, the more they will prefer the LDP. This expectation is based on the conventional wisdom that the LDP is the primary conservative party in 2009 and 2017, but that expectation requires empirical support. To better assess party and voter policy positions in Japan, I plot the results from the ATES factor analysis and the ATVS factor analysis in Figures 3 and 4 respectively.

Figure 3 acts as an empirical check on Japanese parties' policy positions, depicting the factor scores for candidates responding to the ATES. These scores range from -1.25 to 1.25 on a continuous scale. Higher negative numbers correspond with more liberal policies and higher positive number corresponding with more conservative policies. Intuitively, moving to the left on the x-axis means having stronger left-wing policy preferences and moving right means stronger right-wing preferences.

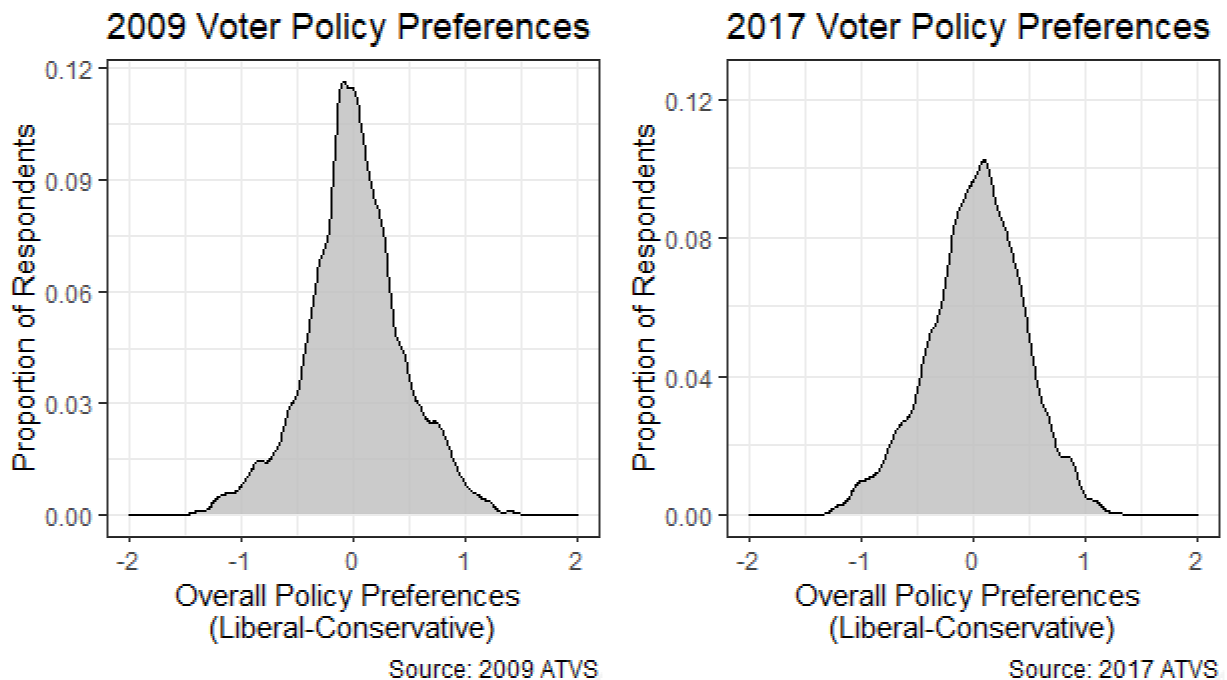
Figure 3. Distribution of Candidate Policy Preferences



As this plot shows, LDP candidates are more conservative than DPJ candidates in 2009. In 2017, LDP candidates are more conservative than Hope candidates, which are in turn more conservative than CDP candidates. Furthermore, Hope seems to have taken over the centrist space once occupied by the DPJ, with the CDP entering as a much more left-wing party as the conventional wisdom on Japanese party policies suggests.

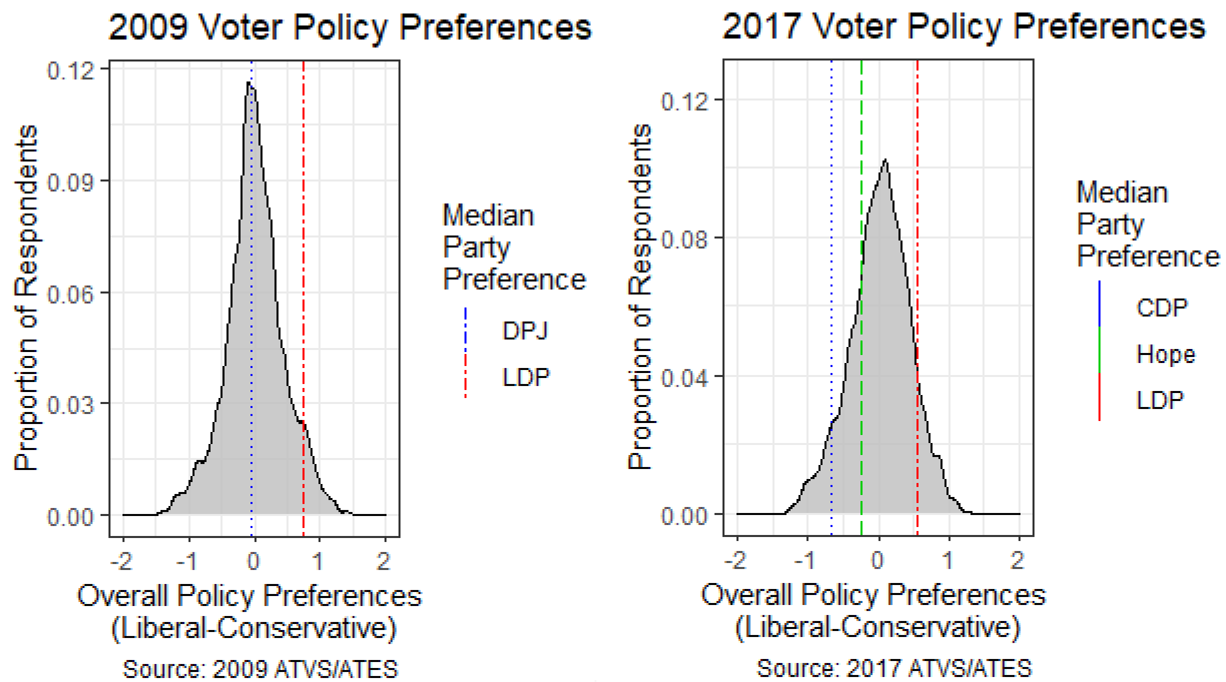
In a similar vein, I have plotted the policy factor score for voters from the ATVS in Figure 4. As with the factor scores for candidates, voter factor scores range from roughly -1.25 to 1.25, though voters have a tighter distribution of preferences around the center than candidates do. According to this data, Japanese voters are generally moderate to slightly conservative, with about 70% of the data between -0.5 and 0.5.

Figure 4. Distribution of Voter Policy Preferences



Knowing the distribution of voter preferences is helpful, but how do parties' policies match up with voters? I plot the median candidate factor score from the ATES factor analysis for each of the parties and add it to the distribution of voter policy preferences in Figure 5. Each of the dashed vertical lines in this figure represent the median candidate preference from one of the main parties (red for the LDP, green for Hope, and blue for the DPJ in 2009 and CDP in 2017).

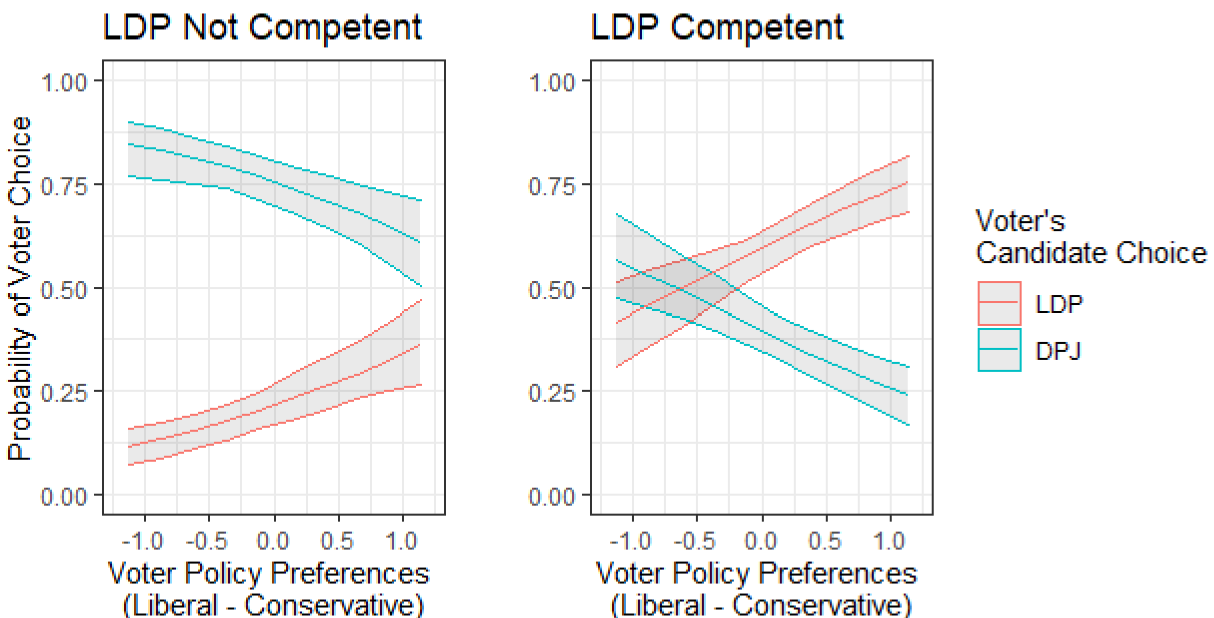
Figure 5. Voter Policy Preferences vs. Party Policy



The comparison of party policy and voter preferences on its own sheds light on why the LDP lost the 2009 election but performed well in the 2017 election. In 2009, the LDP's policies are too far to the right of the median voter compared to the much better positioned DPJ, which has policies almost exactly in line with the median voter. This changes in 2017 when the LDP's preferences are still right leaning but not *as* right leaning relative to the median voter, while the CDP is too far on the left. Interestingly, Hope took the centrist position that the DPJ held in 2009, yet the DPJ performed considerably better than Hope. The distributions of voter and candidate policy preferences implies that policy may be able to explain *some* of the LDP's success, but there must be other factors (like valence) at play. At the very least, Japanese voters are not overwhelmingly conservative to the point that the LDP is the "correct" choice positionally.

To make the relationship between policy and vote choice clearer and incorporate valence into the equation, I run a logistic regression for 2009 and a multinomial logistic regression for 2017 using the model I defined earlier. For ease of interpretability, I use several predicted probabilities plots to express the results from the model, focusing on how voter policy preferences predict vote choice under different valence conditions (the regression table can be found in the Appendix). I plot the results from 2009 in Figure 6 and the results from 2017 in Figure 7. All plots have voters' policy preferences along the x-axis. The plots on the left in each figure depicts the predicted probability of the party of the candidate chosen by voters who did not consider the LDP competent. The plots on the right depict this probability for voters who considered only the LDP competent. All other variables are fixed at their median values.

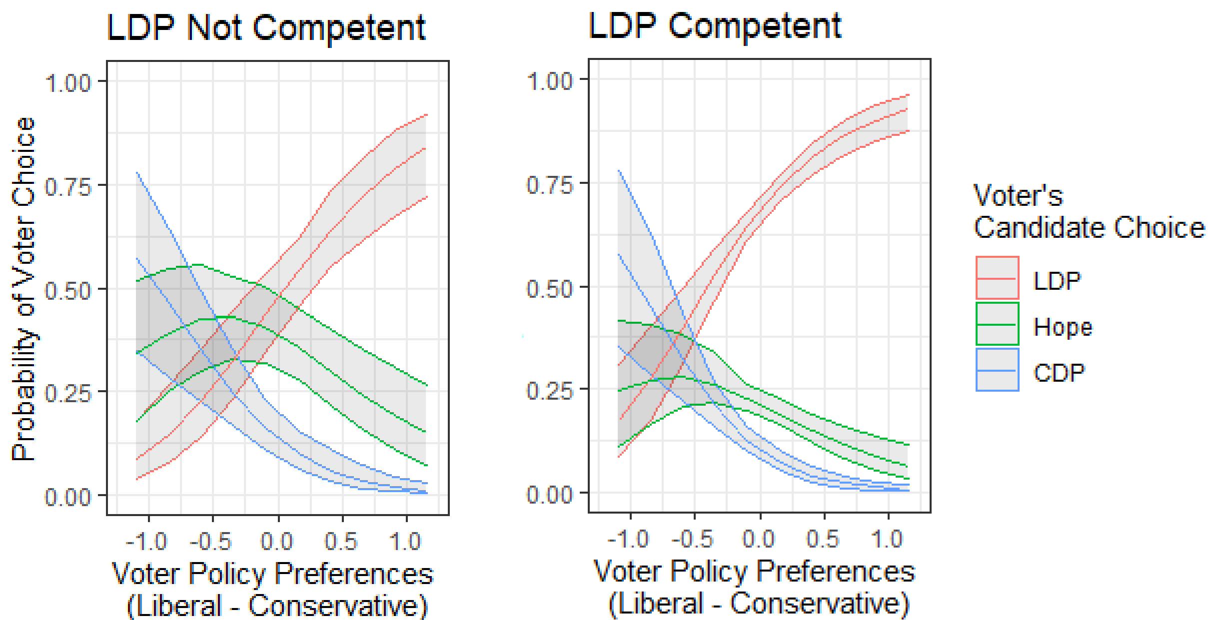
Figure 6. Predicted Probability of Party Choice Based on LDP Competence (2009)



The results for 2009 are incredibly straightforward. First, regardless of valence there is a persistent trend between how conservative a voter's policy preferences are and

how likely he or she is to choose the LDP candidate, evidence that voters are indeed following their policy preferences to some extent. However, valence has a tremendous influence on how likely it is that voters choose the LDP. When the LDP is not considered competent, DPJ candidates are preferred across all policy preferences. When the LDP *is* considered competent, moderate and even left-leaning voters are more likely to choose LDP candidates despite the presence of the moderate DPJ. The significance of the relationship depicted here is evidence that valence also shapes party competition in Japan.

Figure 7. Predicted Probability of Party Choice Based on LDP Competence (2017)



The results from 2017 are a bit more complicated. On policy, a voter having conservative policy preferences still correlates with choice of the LDP candidate. Looking at valence, when voters do not view the LDP as competent, they are just as likely to choose candidates from the CDP or the Party of Hope unless their policy preferences are right-leaning. In fact, left-leaning voters are extremely unlikely to choose LDP candidates when they do not view the party as competent. However, when voters do view the LDP as

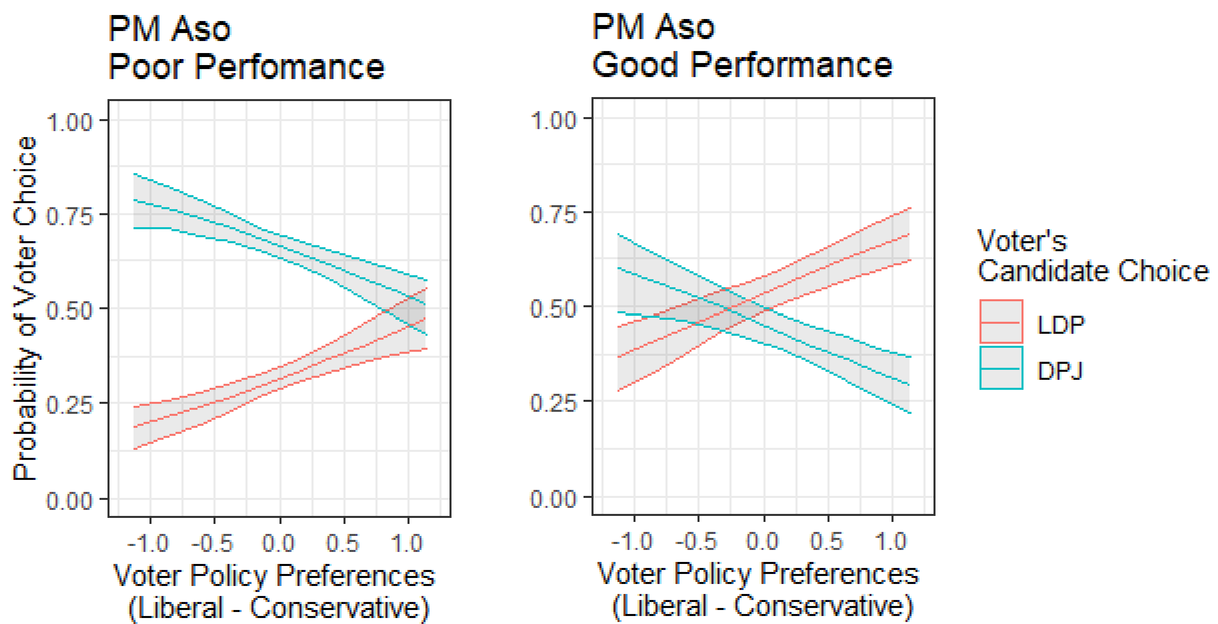
competent, the conversation changes dramatically. All voters with extremely conservative to slightly left leaning policy preferences are far more likely to choose LDP candidates. Only when voters are solidly left-wing does the LDP become the less likely option, again supporting my second hypothesis that valence perceptions would override policy proximity. The CDP and Hope are demonstrably better positioned to appeal to moderate and left-leaning voters yet when the LDP has positive valence, its candidates are the likelier choice.

On this point, recall that 70% of voters have policy scores between -0.5 and 0.5 and are, if anything, somewhat right-leaning. In order to win a majority of voters, candidates and parties have to win voters within this policy range, yet the CDP and Hope are positioned to primarily appeal to voters on the left side of the policy spectrum—outside this critical -0.5 to 0.5 range. There are just not as many voters to win in this policy space, putting Hope and the CDP at a disadvantage on policy even before valence is factored in. When valence is introduced and the LDP is not considered competent, all three parties are competitive among liberal voters and Hope and the LDP compete over moderate voters. This means that the LDP might still win the most seats simply because it is better positioned with conservative-leaning voters, setting up a competitive election that slightly favors the LDP. However, when the LDP *is* considered competent, voters across the policy spectrum are far more likely to choose the LDP. A positive valence image for the LDP predicts that the LDP will dominate.

The competence valence measure demonstrates that, in the absence of an LDP valence advantage, competition based on policy alone greatly favors the DPJ in 2009 and has all major parties in a slightly LDP-favored, competitive race in 2017. But what of the

second valence measure, voter evaluation of the LDP party leader? I produced predicted probabilities like those for competence, comparing the probability of the party of a voters' choice of candidate for those who thought that the prime minister was doing a poor job with those who thought he was doing a good job across voter policy preferences. The results are in Figures 8 and 9.

Figure 8. Predicted Probability of Party Choice Based on PM Performance (2009)

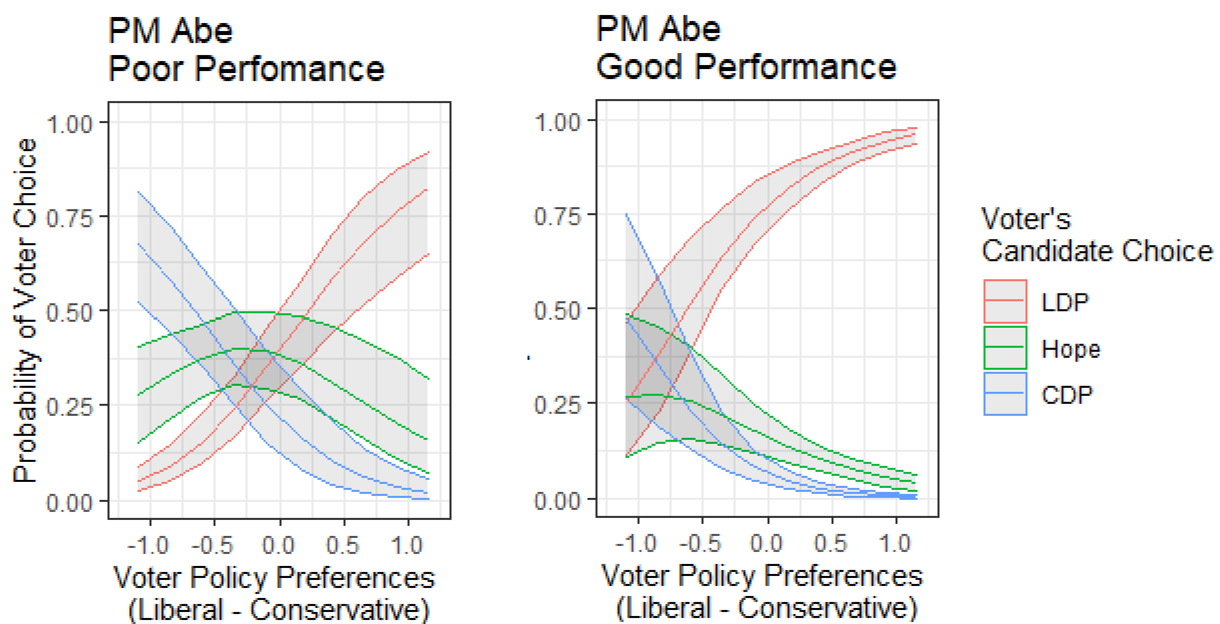


The story here is largely the same. Once more, conservative policy preferences are correlated with choosing the LDP candidate regardless of valence. Looking more closely at valence, when voters have positive perceptions of Aso's performance, LDP and DPJ candidates are competitive. Without positive valence, LDP candidates do not stand a chance against the DPJ, and unfortunately for the LDP in 2009, not many voters had positive views of the LDP party leader that year.

Similarly in 2017, when voters do not rate the LDP leader highly, they are just as likely to choose either the CDP or Hope candidates for even moderate to right-leaning

voters. In the absence of a positive valence image, only the most conservative voters favor LDP candidates above the alternatives. When voters do highly rate Abe's performance, LDP candidates become the runaway favorite once more, even for voters whose policy preferences are far removed from the LDP. Moderate voters have about a 75% probability of choosing the LDP candidate when the LDP has positive valence while this probability plummets to about 30% when it does not. Meanwhile, left-leaning voters have a roughly 20% probability of voting for the LDP candidate when they think Abe has performed poorly, but this doubles to about a 40% probability when they think that he has performed well. Despite the more closely positioned Party of Hope and CDP, positive LDP valence brings in voters whose policy preferences should have them choose a non-LDP party. Again, valence determines whether the LDP dominates or faces a competitive race. Fortunately for the LDP in 2017, many voters had positive valence perceptions of the LDP, and the results presented here align perfectly with the massive seat share the LDP won that year.

Figure 9. Predicted Probability of Party Choice Based on PM Performance (2017)



Party Valence and LDP Dominance

My analysis thus far has demonstrated that while voters tend to act in accordance with their policy preferences, voters' perceptions of party valence dramatically shift the range of policy preferences over which they are likely to choose one party over another. These results echo what others in the valence literature have found (Johns et al. 2009, Clark et al. 2011, McAllister et al. 2015), and explain party competition in Japan between the DPJ's 2009 historic win and the LDP's dominant position in 2017.

Admittedly, my measures of valence are far from perfect and do not include many other well-studied aspects of valence like likeability or unity. However, the consistency of the relationship between valence and party choice for both valence measures in both years, particularly in the presence of policy-based control variables, suggests that party valence is doing *something* to shape Japanese politics.

Speaking to Japan's case more specifically, the true value of this paper lies in the implications it has for LDP dominance in Japan. First, the LDP's only definitive loss came in 2009 at the hands of the DPJ. The evidence provided here suggests that defeat came in part from the LDP's poor policy positioning, but this was greatly exacerbated by the LDP running against a party with comparable valence. These conditions were ripe for the kind of landslide election for the DPJ that 2009 turned out to be.

Second, after recovering from its 2009 loss, the LDP has won consecutive large majorities, and there does not appear to be any party able to adequately challenge it. Why doesn't a party try to better position itself on policy to steal moderate votes from the LDP? The Party of Hope did exactly this and its seat share was only 10% in 2017 compared with the LDP's 61%. Hope had a decent policy position relative to voter preferences, but unlike

the DPJ, it did not have the valence needed to back up that position. It was crushed as a centrist party with low valence, an outcome observed for similar parties in other countries (Zur 2017, Zur 2021). What if a party tried to build itself up by monopolizing votes from the left? This is what the CDP did, and it only gained 11% of the seats in 2017. The problem here is twofold: there are not enough votes on the left (only 16% of the voters have a factor score below -0.5) to win and without sufficient valence, those votes are far from certain in the first place.

As for voters and their policy preferences, it is intuitive (and backed by the literature) that conservative voters will prefer conservative parties and liberal voters will prefer liberal parties. However, it is not as though conservative voters outnumber liberal ones to the point that policy alone would lead to dominance under the LDP. Furthermore, "better" positioned centrist parties have had wildly different experiences: the DPJ won the largest seat majority in Japan's history in 2009 while Hope won only a handful of seats in 2017. That leaves valence as the difference maker. If voter perception of party valence drives voting decisions as the evidence I have presented here indicates, then it follows that party valence has had a large hand fostering LDP dominance.

Despite its consistency, LDP dominance is far from inevitable nor is it an oddity of Japanese politics. The party with superior valence and decent policy positioning should perform well come election time, as seen by the contrast between the 2009 and 2017 elections. However, it is far from guaranteed that the LDP will always be the party with superior valence. Parties like Hope and the DPJ before it managed to position themselves well on policy, but, except for the DPJ in the 2009 election, none have managed to build up sufficiently positive valence to compete with the LPD. The difficulty here comes from the

catch-22 that opposition parties face. Moderating policy pushes the contest almost exclusively toward valence, where a new party has little hope of besting the LDP. Taking more extreme policy positions may bring in specific groups of voters and help build the party, but that might make it difficult to shift toward the center later (Greene 2002). The Party of Hope has moved further to the right after its poor showing in 2017, to the point that it is now more right-wing than the LDP. While this might win some conservative votes, the relative proximity to the LDP still leaves room for the LDP to outperform Hope through its valence. That leaves the CDP as the possible contender. It might take a Goldilocks approach on policy—not too left, not too moderate—and several elections to build up the party and its brand to contend more evenly with the LDP.

This last conjecture points to a potentially fruitful area the valence literature has not adequately explored. It is easy to say, "parties need better valence" but quite another thing to explain how. Future research is needed to understand how parties can close the valence gap, especially when confronted with a lopsided party system like Japan's.

For now, as of the summer of 2021, LDP dominance is back in Japan, but that does not mean it is here to stay. The LDP's position is not nearly as durable as it was in the past in the face of Japanese politics becoming nationalized, policy-based, and party-focused, giving a substantial amount of room for party policy and valence to influence electoral outcomes. While party valence helped the LDP in 2017 and may continue to do so in the future, it also greatly contributed to the LDP's defeat in 2009. The world is a chaotic place. It is only a matter of time until the LDP loses its edge on valence, perhaps through an unpopular party leader or by fumbling a crisis, opening the door for another party to try its luck with voters. Instead of having to take down two hundred individual candidates,

opposition parties can instead focus on one target—the LDP itself. The LDP may rule for the time being, but if valence halted its dominance before, perhaps it will do so again.

Appendix

Throughout this project I rely on the Asahi Todai surveys, for both candidates and voters. I have provided the questions from the 2009 candidate survey to demonstrate the kinds of questions asked.

Asahi Todai Elite Survey (2009)

For each of the following questions, respondents answer with Agree, Somewhat Agree, Can't Say Either Way, Somewhat Disagree, and Disagree.

1. The electoral system for the House of Representatives should return to SNTV

2. Setting this election aside, alternations in power would improve politics

3. The practice of *amakudari* should be completely outlawed

4. The House of Representatives should be strengthened with respect to the House of Councilors

5. Party realignment is necessary in the near future

6. The constitution should be amended

7. Japan's defense force should be strengthened

8. The three anti-nuclear principles should be adhered to

9. When an attack from a foreign nation is expected, there should be no hesitation on a preemptive strike

10. Japan should become a standing member of the U.N. Security Council and fulfill all associated international responsibilities

11. More pressure should be placed on North Korea rather than engage in talks

12. Japan should push forward on collective self-defense

13. In order to participate in U.N. activities, the S.D.F. should be actively sent abroad

14. Even if welfare and other government services deteriorate, a cheaper, smaller government is preferable

15. Japanese businesses should stick to the lifetime employment system

16. There needs to be employment security in the public sector

17. Rather than restrict spending, financial stimulus should be used to revitalize the economy

18. The highway infrastructure budget should be maintained

19. A consumption tax increase within the next five years is a necessity

20. All pension funds should be taxed

21. Foreigners with permanent residence should be granted local suffrage

22. The entry of foreign workers should be encouraged

23. Restricting privacy and individual rights is an obvious necessity to preserve public safety

24. Rather than encourage individuality, education should emphasize tradition

25. The death penalty should be abolished

Tables from Chapter 1: Collapse of the DPJ

Factor Analysis

	National Security	Institutional Reform	Financial Reform	Government Welfare	Public Goods
Electoral Reform	0.15	-0.43	-0.48	-0.09	-0.05
Rotation in Power	0.05	0.58	0.01	0.01	0.01
Amakudari	0.00	0.57	-0.18	0.10	0.18
Strength of Lower House	0.42	-0.02	-0.02	0.13	-0.04
Realignment	0.14	-0.04	0.44	0.36	-0.02

Constitutional Reform	0.62	-0.11	0.03	0.15	0.01
Strengthen Defense	0.72	-0.05	0.03	-0.00	0.02
Nuclear Power	0.52	0.32	0.01	-0.07	-0.25
Preemptive Strike	0.70	0.00	0.04	0.05	0.02
UN Peacekeeping	0.22	-0.35	0.19	0.15	0.06
Collective Defense	0.81	0.02	0.12	0.05	-0.08
Self Defense	0.56	-0.13	0.12	0.22	0.06
Government Welfare	0.43	0.20	0.02	0.21	0.03
Lifetime Employment	0.20	0.15	-0.08	0.35	-0.30
Public Spending	0.07	-0.09	-0.45	0.12	-0.48
Financial Reform	-0.03	-0.07	0.46	-0.17	0.11
Roads	0.11	0.28	0.20	-0.14	0.53
Tax Reform	0.26	0.11	-0.06	0.34	0.04
Pension	0.02	0.27	0.09	0.05	0.01
Foreign Residents	0.57	0.07	-0.06	-0.29	-0.05

Foreign Workers	0.04	-0.01	0.02	-0.48	0.10
Privacy	0.52	-0.03	-0.18	0.13	0.10
Education	0.51	0.01	-0.18	0.02	0.40
Death Penalty	0.48	0.01	-0.06	-0.06	0.02

	National Security	Institutional Reform	Financial Reform	Government Welfare	Public Goods
SS loadings	4.307	1.349	1.073	0.956	0.923
Proportion Var	0.179	0.056	0.045	0.040	0.038
Cumulative Var	0.179	0.236	0.280	0.320	0.359
Proportion Explained	0.500	0.157	0.125	0.111	0.107
Cumulative Proportion	0.500	0.657	0.782	0.893	1

Tables from Chapter 2: Candidates or Party?

Probit Model of Candidate Winning a Seat

	Dependent Variable: Candidate Winning a Seat						
Year	2000	2003	2005	2009	2012	2014	2017
Candidate Quality	0.64**	0.42*	-0.01	0.19	0.45**	0.44*	0.42*
	(0.21)	(0.20)	(0.24)	(0.23)	(0.19)	(0.35)	(0.18)
LDP Affiliation	-0.04	-0.01	1.84**	-2.29**	1.88**	.89**	0.85**
	(0.30)	(0.29)	(0.24)	(0.22)	(0.26)	(0.28)	(0.19)
Incumbency	1.02**	0.98**	1.25**	0.84**	1.02**	1.70**	1.48**
	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.19)	(0.22)	(0.18)	(0.28)	(0.21)
Opponent is LDP/DPJ Incumbent	-0.86**	-0.93**	-0.80**	-0.61**	-0.18	-1.11**	-0.82**
	(0.15)	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.18)	(0.17)	(0.12)	(0.18)
Coordination Failure	-0.11	-0.12	-0.17	-0.38**	-0.25**	0.14	-0.39**
	(0.15)	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.10)	(0.07)	(0.12)	(0.11)
Constant	-0.42*	-0.33**	-1.54**	0.92**	-1.68**	-1.67**	-1.19
	(0.18)	(0.17)	(1.90)	(0.18)	(0.15)	(0.26)	(0.24)
N	498	518	564	535	691	524	588
AIC	530.25	560.84	448.5	498.35	492.15	417.26	454.47

Note: *p<0.05 **p<0.01

OLS Model of Candidate Vote Share

	Dependent Variable: Candidate Vote Share					
Year	2000	2003	2005	2009	2012	2014
Candidate Quality	3.51*	3.01*	1.74	3.05	4.35**	3.36*
	(1.51)	(1.23)	(1.02)	(1.59)	(0.96)	(0.56)
LDP Affiliation	2.29	3.51	11.53**	-15.35**	20.12**	12.80**
	(2.11)	(1.81)	(1.04)	(0.86)	(1.30)	(1.92)
Incumbency	8.52**	6.95**	7.32**	4.99**	6.90**	7.23**
	(1.16)	(1.00)	(0.85)	(1.00)	(0.99)	(1.18)
Opponent is LDP/DPJ Incumbent	-5.85**	-5.22**	-2.22**	-4.85**	-6.43**	-4.29**
	(1.05)	(0.89)	(0.68)	(0.75)	(0.82)	(1.14)
Number of Candidates	-4.87**	-4.44**	-4.74**	-2.44**	-3.53**	-6.71**
	(0.46)	(0.54)	(0.45)	(0.41)	(0.35)	(0.57)
Constant	58.93**	55.49**	46.67**	61.24**	38.23**	54.56**
	(2.32)	(2.32)	(1.90)	(1.69)	(1.68)	(2.23)
N	499	519	565	536	692	525
Adjusted R^2	0.51	0.42	0.59	0.50	0.71	0.62

Note: *p<0.05 **p<0.01

I used number of candidates for this model instead of coordination failure as this is better suited for a continuous variable like vote share. Since any candidate will win *some* votes, more candidates is likely to reduce the average vote share for *all* candidates just by how the vote is more diffuse in more crowded districts.

Tables for Chapter 3: Policy or Valence?

Factor Analysis

	2009 ATVS (Voters)			2009 ATES (Candidates)		
	Foreign Policy	**Economic Policy**	**Social Issues**	**Foreign Policy**	**Economic Policy**	**Social Issues**
Constitution Reform	0.53	0.05	-0.02	0.71	0.27	0.21
Self Defense	0.65	0.22	0.00	0.73	0.26	0.09
Nuclear Armament	0.32	-0.12	0.12	0.44	0.01	-0.16
Preemptive Strike	0.63	0.16	0.03	0.71	0.12	0.09
UN Peacekeeping	0.25	0.24	-0.11	0.32	0.16	0.30
North Korea	0.54	0.07	0.05	0.60	0.14	0.30
Collective Defense	0.73	0.18	-0.07	0.80	0.26	0.15
International Participation	0.63	0.16	-0.15	0.32	0.21	0.32
Small Government	0.18	0.00	0.02	0.30	0.13	0.14
Lifetime Employment	-0.03	-0.29	-0.03	0.08	-0.07	0.17
Employment Practices	0.05	-0.69	0.12	0.09	0.74	-0.05
Pension	0.10	0.49	-0.03	0.18	0.58	0.01
Roads	0.05	0.47	-0.01	0.27	0.84	-0.03
Tax Increase	0.20	0.05	-0.13	0.40	0.35	0.15

Tax Policy	-0.04	-0.06	0.17	0.32	0.46	-0.05
Immigration	0.16	0.06	0.61	0.68	0.25	-0.21
Foreign Workers	-0.02	-0.04	-0.65	-0.16	-0.02	0.54
Privacy	0.22	0.20	-0.09	0.53	0.22	0.24
Traditional Education	0.21	0.20	0.12	0.43	0.19	-0.05
Death Penalty	0.32	0.00	0.15	0.54	0.11	-0.02

	2009 ATVS			2009 ATES		
	Foreign Policy	Economic Policy	Social Issues	Foreign Policy	Economic Policy	Social Issues
SS loadings	2.79	1.32	0.96	4.85	2.42	0.78
Proportion Var	0.14	0.07	0.05	0.24	0.12	0.04
Cumulative Var	0.14	0.21	0.25	0.24	0.36	0.40
Proportion Explained	0.55	0.26	0.19	0.60	0.30	0.10
Cumulative Proportion	0.55	0.81	1.00	0.60	0.90	1.00

2017 ATVS (Voters) 2017 ATES (Candidates)

	Foreign Policy	Economic Policy	Social Issues	Foreign Policy	Economic Policy	Social Issues
Abenomics	0.72	0.19	0.01	0.89	0.28	-0.08
TPP	0.64	0.10	0.01	0.87	0.03	-0.01
Tax Policy	0.24	0.13	-0.09	0.49	0.03	0.07
Privacy Laws	0.70	0.39	-0.09	0.90	0.11	0.23
Northern Territories	0.68	0.06	-0.06	0.71	0.12	0.09
North Korea	0.71	0.14	-0.07	0.77	0.22	0.10
Organized Crime	0.66	0.33	-0.05	0.92	0.21	0.09
School Procedures	0.61	0.26	-0.05	0.84	0.25	-0.25
Tax Increase	0.39	0.00	0.07	0.19	0.17	-0.27
Defense Spending	0.23	0.67	-0.01	0.71	0.17	0.30
Preemptive Strike	0.10	0.72	0.00	0.44	0.24	0.49
N. Korea Peace	0.19	0.55	-0.08	0.89	0.25	-0.11
Nuclear Armament	-0.14	0.40	0.12	0.05	0.18	0.71
Yasukuni	0.25	0.48	-0.13	0.63	0.34	0.27
Small Government	-0.18	0.17	-0.10	0.49	0.11	0.12
Lifetime Employment	0.10	0.25	0.10	0.41	0.55	-0.19
Government Spending	0.27	0.37	0.18	0.22	0.53	0.00

Free School	0.02	0.07	0.25	0.46	0.26	0.14
Tax the Rich	-0.13	-0.03	0.09	0.46	0.26	-0.18
Right to Privacy	0.18	0.38	0.03	0.60	0.31	0.38
Foreign Workers	0.02	-0.07	0.33	0.01	-0.37	0.15
Nuclear Power	0.47	0.33	0.01	0.68	0.33	0.03
Married Name	-0.14	-0.13	0.59	0.47	0.69	0.00
Gay Marriage	-0.09	-0.19	0.61	0.40	0.54	0.17
Retirement	0.00	0.09	0.29	-0.02	0.56	0.07
Unicameralism	-0.10	0.17	-0.03	0.04	-0.29	0.57

	2017 ATVS			2017 ATES		
	Foreign Policy	Economic Policy	Social Issues	Foreign Policy	Economic Policy	Social Issues
SS loadings	4.04	2.66	1.11	9.28	2.85	1.83
Proportion Var	0.16	0.10	0.04	0.36	0.11	0.07
Cumulative Var	0.16	0.26	0.30	0.36	0.47	0.54
Proportion Explained	0.52	0.34	0.14	0.66	0.20	0.13
Cumulative Proportion	0.52	0.86	1.00	0.66	0.87	1.00

2009 Logistic Regression of Party Choice/Candidate Choice

DV: Party Choice	DPJ
Policy Preference	-1.26**
	(0.22)
LDP Competence	-2.32**
	(0.32)
DPJ Competence	1.62**
	(0.12)
Candidate Capability	-0.25**
	(0.07)
PM Performance	-1.01**
	(0.17)
Constant	-0.63
	(0.49)
N	968
Akaike Inf. Crit.	890.89
Note:	*p<0.05

DV: Candidate Choice	DPJ
Policy Preference	-0.80**
	(0.17)
LDP Competence	-1.27**
	(0.19)
DPJ Competence	1.63**
	(0.76)
Candidate Capability	-0.25**
	(0.06)
PM Performance	-1.12**
	(0.15)
Constant	-2.07**
	(0.37)
N	968
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1363.37
Note:	*p<0.05

2017 Multinomial Logistic Regression of Party Choice/Candidate Choice

	DV: Candidate Party Choice (LDP Reference)	
Party	CDP	Hope
Policy Preference	-3.07**	-1.70**
	(0.43)	(0.34)
LDP Competence	-0.79**	-1.11**
	(0.27)	(0.27)
CDP Competence	1.94**	1.77**
	(0.62)	(0.56)
Hope Competence	1.06**	1.55**
	(0.41)	(0.32)
Candidate Capability	-0.21	-0.20**
	(0.12)	(0.09)
PM Performance	-0.51**	-0.44**
	(0.13)	(0.11)
Constant	1.07	1.76**
	(0.65)	(0.53)
N		822
Akaike Inf. Crit.		1103.67
Note:	*p<0.05	**p<0.01

	DV: Party Choice (LDP Reference)	
Party	CDP	Hope
Policy Preference	-3.88**	-2.15**
	(0.33)	(0.32)
LDP Competence	-1.48**	-1.63**
	(0.32)	(0.33)
CDP Competence	1.84**	0.83
	(0.61)	(0.68)
Hope Competence	-0.13	2.05**
	(0.44)	(0.34)
Candidate Capability	-0.16	-0.21*
	(0.09)	(0.10)
PM Performance	-0.73**	-0.73**
	(0.12)	(0.12)
Constant	3.83**	3.42**
	(0.57)	(0.56)
N		822
Akaike Inf. Crit.		1211.57
Note:	*p<0.05	**p<0.01

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