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Since the end of World War II, the conservative political parties have predominantly controlled the governing power in Japan. Especially since 1955, when the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was formed by the conversion of the Liberal Party and the Democratic Party, the LDP has stayed in power except a short period between August 6, 1993 and June 29, 1994, during which 7 parties in the Diet formed a coalition cabinet without the LDP.¹

Why has the LDP stayed in power so long? This is the biggest puzzle in Japanese politics, especially considering the fact that Japan has been constitutionally a liberal democracy in the postwar period. Three types of explanations have been tried to answer to this puzzle. First, analysts often say that the Japanese electoral system before 1996, namely SNTV (single non-transferable vote) with MMD (multi-member district) system, has fostered one-party dominance by the LDP. Second, the political culture explanation argues that the Japanese people are submissive to any political authority and therefore they are more likely to support the incumbent party that forms the government (Richardson and Flanagan, 1984; 1991). Third, the political economy explanation argues that clientelism with a centralized fiscal structure has been a major cause of the failure of opposition parties and consequently the LDP's dominance (Scheiner, 2006).

However, each explanation has shortcomings and cannot fully explain the puzzle. This paper tries to provide an alternative and complementary explanation to solve this puzzle of the LDP dominance in postwar Japanese political scene.² In addition, if those explanations do not fully explain the reason why alternations of power do not take place in postwar Japan, then another question would be raised: that is, "is the Japanese political system really a liberal democracy?"

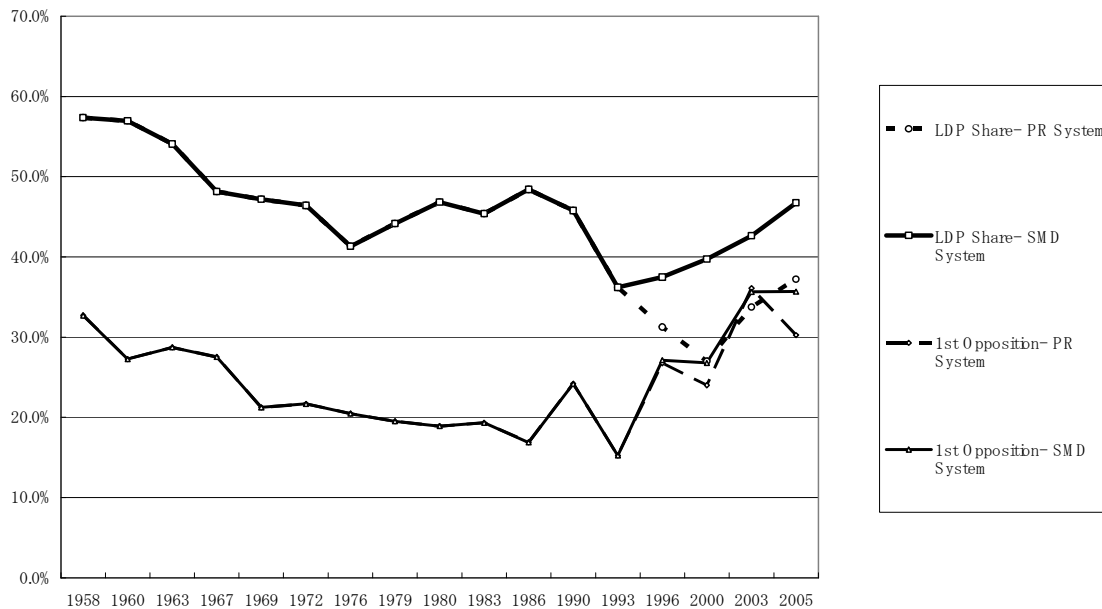
This paper tries to answer both questions. I will propose a new scenario to explain the puzzle of the persistence of the LDP reign in postwar Japan. The central concept in this scenario is the system support of the Japanese public. At the same time, this scenario should be able to answer the question, "is Japan really a liberal democracy?" The new scenario of this paper will be discussed in a later section after first discussing the validity and shortcomings of the existing explanations in the next section.

Validity and Limitation of Existing Explanations

Before we examine the validity and limitation of existing explanations of the LDP's dominance, let us see how dominant the LDP has been. As Figure 1 shows, when we look at the vote share of the LDP and the first opposition party,³ the LDP was winning just about twice as many votes as the first opposition party won up until 1990. However, since 1993 the LDP has had difficulty in maintaining an advantage over the first opposition party. In fact, in 2003 the vote share of the LDP in the PR system was lower than that of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). However, a landslide victory of the LDP under PM Koizumi's leadership in 2005 reversed the trend of the

LDP's declining vote share. This paper does not intend to explain why and how the LDP captured such a landslide victory in 2005, as this requires another separate paper and this is out of the scope of this paper.

Figure 1. Vote Share of the LDP and the 1st Opposition Party, 1958-2005



Institutional Explanation: Explanation based on Electoral Institution

We now examine three existing explanations for the LDP dominance in the Japanese postwar period. First, the rather traditional or general institutional explanation suggests that the Japanese SNTV electoral system with multimember districts fostered the LDP dominance in the general elections. However, according to Ichiro Miyake (1989), this electoral system existed since 1925. Even before World War II, Japan had a two-party system. Also, Sweden which has a PR electoral system has experienced a one-party dominance system. Therefore, one cannot conclude that Japan's SNTV with MMD electoral system caused the LDP dominance in postwar elections.

Another argument maintains that malapportionment of seats over different districts created an advantage for the LDP. While the numbers of eligible voters (i.e., population) in urban districts are much larger than those in rural districts, the numbers of seats for urban districts were only 1 or 2 seats more than those for rural districts. As a result, the LDP, which is popular in rural districts, has been able to win seats with fewer votes. This holds some validity. However, "only a limited of elections had malapportionment effects sufficient to explain the LDP's ability to channel a submajority of vote into a majority of seats" (Scheiner, 2006, p.58; also see Christensen and Johnson, 1995).

One last critical case is that the LDP lost the governing power in 1993, and that happened under the SNTV with MMD electoral system. Therefore, the explanation based on postwar Japanese electoral institution has some validity in explaining the LDP dominance, but it cannot fully explain why the LDP stayed in power from 1955 to 1993, and why the LDP managed to stay in power even after 1993.

Political Culture Explanation

The second explanation for the LDP dominance is the political culture explanation. Analysts have believed that the Japanese voters were raised in traditional Japanese political culture that socialized them into acquiescence with authority. Therefore, Japanese voters who subscribe the traditional cultural values are more likely to entrust the incumbent government and less likely to throw the incumbent party out of the government.

To examine the validity of this political culture explanation, this paper has analyzed data from various national public opinion surveys over time. According to Table 1, those Japanese who would entrust a prominent political leader were more likely to vote for the LDP than those respondents who would disagree.⁴ This suggests that those Japanese who would be more submissive to political authority were more likely to vote for the LDP at least in 1976 and 1983. This provides some supportive evidence for the political culture explanation.

Table 1. Submissiveness to Authority By Voting for the LDP, 1976 & 1983.

Party Voted	1976 Entrust prominent political leaders			Total
	Entrust prominent political leaders	It depends	Not Entrust	
LDP	52.9%	52.1%	35.9%	46.1%
Other Party	47.1%	47.9%	64.1%	53.9%
Total	348	376	449	1173
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Correlation: Tau-C = 0.16 $P < .005$

Party Voted	1983 Entrust prominent political leaders			Total
	Entrust prominent political leaders	It depends	Not Entrust	
LDP	69.3%	57.8%	46.0%	56.4%
Other Party	30.7%	42.2%	54.0%	43.6%
Total	397	370	544	1311
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Correlation: Tau-C = 0.21 $P < .005$

Data Source: JABISS in 1976, and JES in 1983.

Note: Question wording is "In order to make Japan a better country, if we have a prominent political leader, it is better to leave national decision-making up to him/her, rather than people argue or dispute each other over issues."

The choice of answer is as follows: (1) better to entrust the prominent leader(s). (2) It depends. (3) Not good to leave everything to those leader(s).

However, according to survey data of the Japanese National Character Study by the Statistical Mathematics Institute, which has been asking the same question since 1953, the percentage of Japanese who are submissive to political authority has constantly declined from 1953 until 2003. A cohort analysis of the Japanese National Character Study data clearly demonstrates generational change in attitudes regarding this question (see Table 2). In Table 2, the same age-cohort moves one step down toward the right-hand side of the table every 5 years. For example, those Japanese who were 20-24 years old in 1953 became 25-29 years old in 1958, 50-54 years old in 1983, and so on. When we trace this cohort, their submissive attitudes toward political authority changed from 30% in 1953 to 31% in 1958, to 37% in 1983. But, the younger

age-cohorts, such as those who were 20-24 years old in 1983, started with 23% and went down to 18% in 1988, 22% in 1993, and 12% in 2003. Thus, the younger the generation, the less submissive to political authority that generation becomes.

Table 2. Cohort Analysis of Submissiveness to Authority, 1953-2003.

age-cohort	1953	1958	1963	1968	1973	1978	1983	1988	1993	1998	2003
20-24	30	26	22	22	16	19	23	17	20	26	24
25-29	33	31	24	25	13	21	19	18	16	31	21
30-34	41	32	25	30	19	26	24	24	22	15	14
35-39	44	35	27	26	25	29	32	22	16	14	18
40-44	53	34	24	25	21	35	34	26	22	17	12
45-49	51	32	29	34	24	39	35	26	20	20	17
50-54	52	46	33	29	25	40	37	43	20	27	16
55-59	51	42	36	34	27	32	34	35	31	26	15
60-69	54	43	42	41	35	41	47	38	33	29	23
70以上	71	44	45	46	43	52	54	54	34	44	40

Data Source: Statistical Mathematical Institute, National Character Surveys, 1953-2003.

Note: The question wording is the same as those in Table 1. The percentages indicated in the Table are the percentages of those who agreed to entrust a prominent political leader.

Note: The age-cohort of 60-69 years old as well as another cohort of 70-79 years old did not have 5 year break-down; therefore, the age-cohort of 55-59 years old will fall into two cells of 60-69 years old in 5 years later and in 10 years later.

This pattern indicated in Table 2 suggests that younger voters are less submissive to political authority, and therefore that they would be less likely to vote for the LDP. As time passes, the fewer Japanese are submissive to political authority (and if the political culture explanation holds as shown in Table 1), then the public is becoming less likely to vote for the LDP. This means that the political culture explanation does not solve the puzzle of the LDP dominance over time, but it deepens the puzzle. That is, whereas even as younger Japanese were becoming less submissive to political authorities in the 1980s, the LDP managed to stay in power for some reason, which the political culture cannot explain.

Political Economy Explanation: Clientelism with Centralized Fiscal Structure

The third of explanation for LDP dominance is that the party delivered pork to the supportive constituencies, and attracted votes in return. Ethan Scheiner (2006) persuasively demonstrated that the LDP as the incumbent party has been able to control budget allocation, subsidies allocation, and policy making. Consequently, the LDP could allocate benefits to loyal LDP supporters to attract their votes. Kent Calder (1988) presented a similar theme in terms of macro-level phenomena. But, Scheiner (2006) analyzed the micro-level (individual-level) survey data, and showed that the LDP attracted votes from those Japanese who would receive benefits (or pork) from the LDP's allocation of money or policies made by the LDP. Scheiner argued that the LDP has tried to implement specific policies that are beneficial only to the districts/areas or to particular industries such as agriculture or retail-stores. This pork-barrel politics was also pointed out by Ramsayer and Rosenbluth (1993) earlier, but they tried to argue that the Japanese electoral system of SNTV with MMD fostered the pork-barrel politics of the LDP. Scheiner (2006) rejected this connection, as he maintained that the LDP retained the same strategy even after the new electoral system was introduced in 1996 (i.e., the single-member district system with proportional representation).

While Scheiner's argument is very plausible and persuasive, this paper maintains that even his explanation cannot fully solve the puzzle of the LDP dominance for the following reason.

We can accept an assumption that the LDP would try to deliver benefits only to loyal LDP supporters, because the LDP should be rational enough to allocate its resource not to those who are unlikely to vote for the party but to those who would vote for the LDP. If we take the perspectives of the LDP supporters, those LDP supporters must try to influence the LDP Diet members or new LDP candidates to bring benefits back to their districts. This means, they must want the LDP to make specific policies beneficial to them, while caring less about programmatic policies that might be beneficial to all voters including non-LDP supporters.

This relationship can be best interpreted by introducing the principal-agent relationship. As Ramsayer and Rosenbluth (1993) pointed out, those royal LDP supporters function as principals to have the LDP Diet members, as agents, bring benefits back to their districts.

Then, it can logically be assumed that those royal LDP voters must have some kind of connections or channels to influence the LDP Diet members. Those channels are generally organizational ties with the LDP Diet members, typically membership of candidate supporters' association, agricultural cooperatives, retail-store owners' association, or chamber of commerce etc. Because it is impossible for every single LDP supporters to have personal connection to each of the LDP candidates, they depend on their organization to influence their LDP candidate.

Then, those loyal LDP supporters must be members of any of those organizations supporting the LDP. Now, we can take a look at how the percentage of the organized voters changed over time. I analyzed the post-election the national surveys of Fair Election League (Akarui Senkyo Suishin Kyokai) from 1972 to 2003 in order to measure the proportion of the organized voters, especially the proportion of those voters who belong to those organizations favoring the LDP.

Changes in proportions of voters who belong to organizations that possibly mobilize votes for a particular party in are shown in three ways in Figure 2. First, the figure shows the proportion of voters who belong to any 6 organizations (groups) regardless of whether that organization favors the LDP or other opposition parties. Second, the figure displays the proportion of voters who belong to any 4 organizations (groups) that support the LDP. Third, the figure shows the proportion of voters who belong to any 2 organizations (i.e., labor unions and religious groups) that support the opposition parties.⁵ According to Figure 2, the proportion of voters who belong to any of six organizations has declined since 1979, and the decline became very sharp since 1990. Similarly, the decline in the proportion of those who belong to groups favoring the LDP is almost identical with the pattern for all six organizations. The proportion who belong to labor unions and/or religious groups⁶ also declines over time, although the trend is much less. The declining pattern of the organized voters in Japan from 1979 to 2003 suggests that the LDP was clearly losing its mobilization ability, as the proportion of the organized voters favoring the LDP went down from 36.6% in 1990 to 21.1% in 2003 (see Figure 2). While opposition parties were also losing its mobilization ability, its decline is much milder than that of the LDP.

When we compare the proportion of the four organizations supporting the LDP with the vote share of the LDP (the proportion of votes gained by the LDP over the total number of eligible voters), those two patterns are closely related (see Figure 3). When I calculate the correlation between the LDP vote share and the proportion of the organized voters favoring the LDP, the correlation in the period of 1972-2003 was .66, and that became .81 in the period of 1990-2000 (.95 for 1990-96). The pattern in Figure 3 suggests that the LDP was losing votes at the House of Representatives elections in the 1990s mainly because the LDP was losing its organizational base to mobilize its supporters.

Figure 2. Percentages of Different types of Organized Voters, 1972–2003

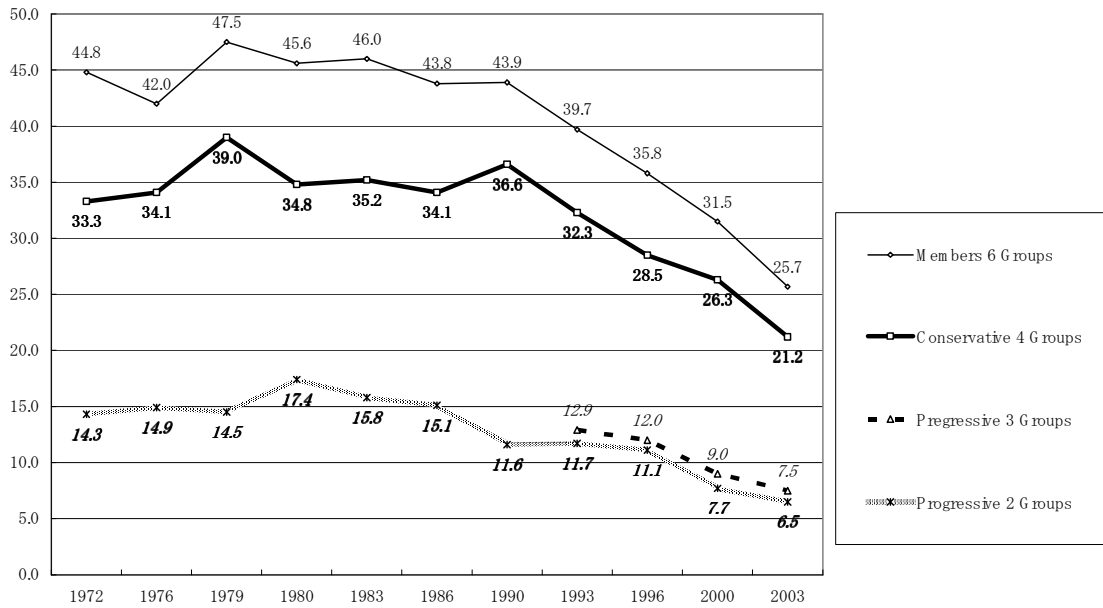
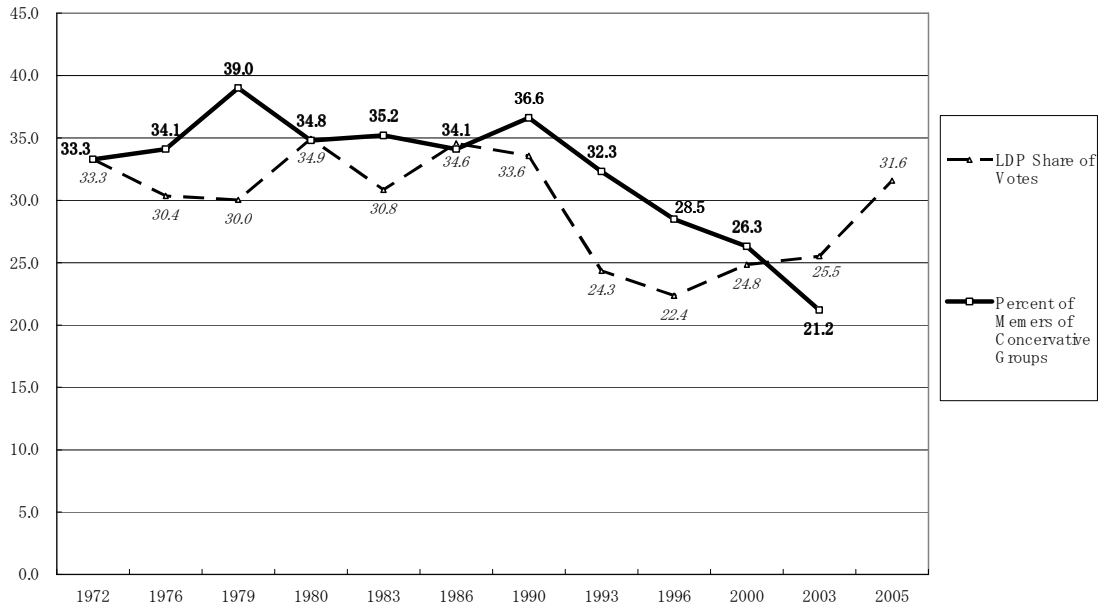


Figure 3. Decline in Proportion of Organized Voters and that in the LDP vote share, 1972–2003



Considering the patterns shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3, we can suggest the following two points. First, the LDP’s electoral success was closely related with the size of organized voters who would favor the LDP. Second, the LDP was losing its organizational base or ability to mobilize the organized voters who would support the LDP.

These speculations suggest that those organized voters who support the LDP, namely the principals, would be losing their control of the LDP Diet members, namely the agents, because the LDP was forced to reach out to other voters to maintain its governing power. Therefore, we need another explanation, or at least a supplementary explanation, to fill the gap between the shrinking organization of the LDP supporters and the persistence of the LDP government.

System Support Hypothesis: A New Scenario to Explain the LDP Dominance

Now, we need another explanation for the persistence of the LDP government. A scenario this paper tries to offer is the following. A majority of Japanese voters in the pre-1993 period, namely between 1955 and 1993, are more likely to be supportive of its political system itself, but they may not support the LDP itself. However, those Japanese who are supportive of Japan's political system are very likely to have a hard time to find any other option to vote than the LDP, because the Japan Socialist Party that is the constant second party was advocating the socialist state as a model, which implicitly denied free-market economy and liberal democracy. Consequently, most Japanese voters did not have other options than the LDP to entrust the administration of Japan's political system. Therefore, system support attitudes to some extent generated the LDP dominance in postwar Japanese party system.

This situation continued up until 1993 when new conservative parties, which advocate free-market economy and liberal democracy but became critical of the LDP's pork-barrel politics, emerged. After 1993, we will need other scenarios to explain the LDP dominance. Let me show those scenarios in later sections.

Consequently, system support was a source of the LDP dominance in Japanese party system up until the 1993, mainly in the 1970s and the 1980s.

Concept of System Support and Its Sources

Before we examine the system support hypothesis, the concept of system support should be defined conceptually as well as operationally. In this paper, the concept of "system support" is used interchangeably with the concept of "legitimacy of political system". Linz (1978) defines legitimacy as "the belief that in spite of shortcomings and failure, the existing political institutions are better than any others that might be established"(p. 6). In the same vein, S. M. Lipset (1959, 1960) states "legitimacy involves the capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society (1959, p.86)". According to Lipset's definition of the legitimacy of a political system, the system members' supportive attitudes for their political system is equal to how legitimate a political system is perceived by its system members, namely the concept of system legitimacy.

According to Lipset's famous typology of political systems in terms of system legitimacy and system effectiveness, political systems are the most stable when they have both legitimacy and effectiveness. The effectiveness of a political system means "actual performance (of the political system), the extent to which the system satisfies the basic functions of government (Lipset, 1960, p.64)." In other words, when a political system satisfies the needs of its members, the system is perceived to be effective.

Lipset argues that stability of a political system can be obtained by legitimacy and

effectiveness, and he suggests that a political system with legitimacy but without effectiveness is more stable than a political system with effectiveness but without legitimacy. A system without either legitimacy or effectiveness is the least stable. However, if we regard system effectiveness as system performance, effectiveness could foster legitimacy of a political system. In fact, West Germany or Japan demonstrated in the 1980s that prolonged satisfactory performance of a political system (in terms of economy in these two cases) seemed to foster supportive attitudes toward the system. This causation from adequate system performance (i.e., system effectiveness) to system support (i.e., system legitimacy) is also pointed out by Easton (1965, 1975) and later by Norris and her colleagues (1999a).

This leads to a hypothesis below:

If members of a political system are satisfied with the performance of the political system in a generalized sense for a relatively long period of time, those members will develop supportive attitudes toward the political system (i.e., system support).

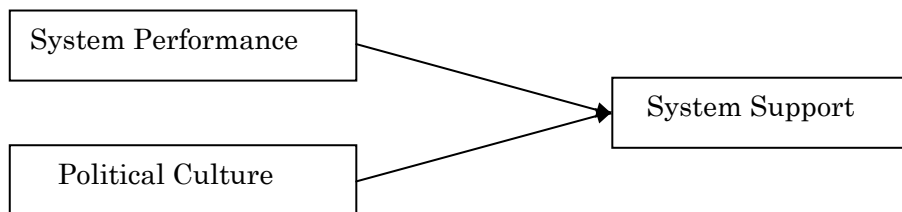
At the same time, Lipset (1959, 1960) argued that the legitimacy of a political system could be fostered by political culture over a long period of time. Similarly, Almond and Verba (1963) argued that the members of a political system would develop some psychological attachment to the system itself (they call it “system affect”) based on the political culture.

Accepting these arguments, we can formulate the following hypothesis:

Formation of supportive attitudes toward a political system largely depends on the values and norms of the political culture into which members of the political system have been socialized.

These two rival hypotheses are conceptualized in an arrow diagram shown in Figure 4. To put it in a simple way, system performance (system effectiveness) and political culture are two major sources of system support (system legitimacy). However, we have to consider two other aspects of system support, namely objects (targets) and dimensionality of system support, both of which are interrelated.

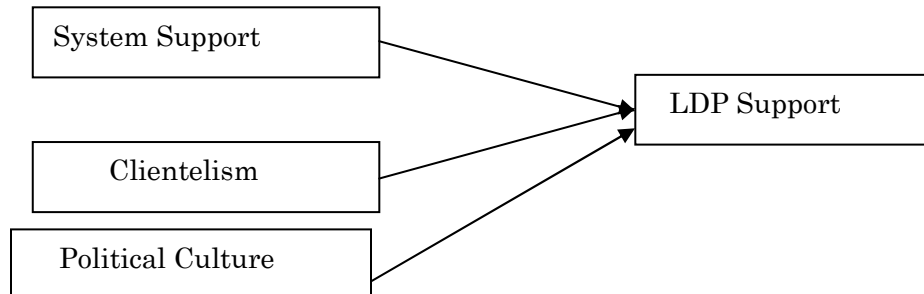
Figure 4. Two Major Sources of System Support: a Theoretical Model



When we regard the concept of system support, which is the dependent variable in Figure 4, as an independent variable that affects support for the LDP, then LDP support can be the dependent variable in a new diagram (see Figure 5). Since I have examined causal pathes from system performance and political culture to system support (Tanaka, 1984, 1996, 2000), I will skip empirical examinations of these causal linkages. Also, let us put off the examination of the path from system support to the LDP support for a while, and discuss the nature of system

support first.

Figure 5. Major Sources of the LDP Support: a Theoretical Model



System Support Attitudes: A Theoretical Consideration

When we try to measure system support in a political system, we immediately face a question of the conceptual distinction between support for the incumbent government and support for the political system. This conceptual distinction raises a question of whether the incumbent government or the political system are separate object of political support, as well as whether we are focusing on specific support or diffuse support.

The latter question derives from Easton’s conceptualization of political support (Easton, 1965). Specific support is a type of political support that the citizens show when they are satisfied with what the government or the political system offers. In other words, specific support is formed by satisfactory performance of the government or political system for instrumental reasons. Diffuse support is a type that the citizens provide to the government or to the political system based on enduring psychological attachment (or a “reservoir of good will,” as Easton calls it). According to our intuition, the former type of support is more closely related to the incumbent government support, while the latter type of support is closely related to system support. However, in some cases, the citizens form their supportive attitudes toward their political system because of good performance of the system rather than performance of a specific administration. Conversely, other individuals develop enduring psychological attachment toward the incumbent government or political authorities in general. Thus, a particular object of support (for example, the incumbent government) is not automatically connected with a particular type of support (for example, specific support).

Introducing the concept of dimensionality of system support (or political support), we can theoretically organize the conceptual relationship between objects of support and types of support. In a recent major contribution to the study of system support in a comparative perspective, Pippa Norris (1999a) proposes five dimensions of system support. She first indicates five objects of political support: (1) political community, (2) regime principle, (3) regime performance, (4) regime institutions, (5) political actors. Then, she suggests a tendency in which the political community as the object of support is more closely related to diffuse support while political actors are more closely related to specific support. But, these relationships are shown as mere tendency but not as the one-to-one fixed correspondence (Norris, 1999b).

These five objects of support also derive from Easton’s theory of political support, in which

he indicates (a) political community, (b) regime, and (c) authorities as objects of support (Easton, 1965). However, Norris further divides (b) regime into three dimensions (2) regime principle, (3) regime performance, and (4) regime institutions (Norris, 1999b). Thus, introducing the concept of dimensionality of system support, we can obtain a theoretically consistent and systematic scheme to analyze system support.

Table 3. Dimensionality of System Support: A Conceptual Scheme

		Diffuse Support
<u>Easton (1965)</u>	<u>Norris(1999)</u>	<u>Tanaka(2000): <i>Operational Measures</i></u>
(a)Pol Community	①Pol Community	(A) Pol Community / System Affect: <i>Trust in Democracy or Local Politics</i>
(b)Regime	②Regime Principles ③Regime Performance	<i>Satisfied with the way democracy works in this country</i>
		(B) Institutional Support: <i>Election, Deit, Parties help people's voice reach politics</i>
(c)Authority	④Regime Institutions ⑤Political Actors	(C) Trust in System Responsiveness: <i>Politics is run not on behalf of people. Politicians neglect people's interests.</i>
		Specific Support

Source: Easton, 1965; Norris, 1999a; Tanaka, 1984, 1985.

The dimensionality of system support and its conceptual relationship to Easton’s classification of objects of support and typology of support are shown in Table 3. Table 3 includes my own conceptualization of dimensions of system support, which will be discussed in the next section.

System Support Attitudes in Japan: An Empirical Inquiry of Dimensionality

The concept of system support has multidimensionality in theory, as the previous section has discussed. At the same time, some empirical analyses of system support also show the multidimensionality, according to Klingemann (1999) or Tanaka (1984, 1985).

Hans-Dieter Klingemann (1999) demonstrated some convincing evidences of multidimensionality of system support through a factor analysis of the pooled survey data of the World Value surveys from 37 countries in the mid 1990s. Table 4 shows the results of the Klingemann’s factor analysis. In this analysis, he empirically identifies three dimensions that Norris theoretically pointed out, namely (1) political community, (2) regime principle, and (3) performance of the regime. He identified this three dimensional structure by a factor analysis of all the survey data from 37 countries pooled together. While the dimensional structure of system support would vary to some extent depending on which measures to tap the citizens’ attitudes toward their political system, Klingemann’s analysis clearly confirms that system support is a multidimensional concept.

Table 4. Multidimensionality of System Support in a Global Perspective

	(1) Political community	(2) Democracy as an ideal form of Government	(3) Performance of the Regime
Fight for country	.81	-.06	.03
National Pride	.71	.12	.15
Democracy: Good way of Governing	.02	.83	.10
Democracy: Best form of Governing	.03	.84	.04
Performance of system	.01	.14	.69
Performance of people in National Office	.07	.10	.67
Performance of Parliament	.09	.01	.77
Performance of government	.12	-.04	.82

Eigenvalue	1.20	1.46	2.24
% of Total variance	15%	18%	28%

Source: Klingemann, Hans-Dieter (1999), Table 2.1.

Table 5. Dimensionality of System Support Attitudes in Japan, 1976

(Factor Analysis: Varimax Rotation)

Label of Factor Variables	Local Political Support	Institutional Support	Trust in Political Authorities
Pride in political system	.121	.117	.356
Politicians not stop thinking people	.037	.090	.421
Politics is run on behalf of people	.032	.039	.456
Politicians are not dishonest	.102	.115	.450
Politicians/parties neglect people's interests	.081	.013	.499
Trust National Politics	.373	.074	.520
Trust Prefecture Politics	.845	.118	.182
Trust Local Politics	.797	.117	.156
Parties help people's voice be heard in politics	.097	.604	.145
Elections help people's voice be heard in politics	.082	.714	.074
The Diet help people's voice be heard in politics	.066	.762	.119

Eigenvalue	1.54	1.53	1.33
% of Total variance explained (40.0%)	14.0%	13.9%	12.1%

Data Source: the 1976 JABISS Study data.

In Japan, partially due to the differences in available questions to measure system support attitudes, I found a somewhat different attitudinal structure of system support that is still very similar to Norris's theoretical framework in its basic structure. The factor analysis of a battery of questions tapping political trust-distrust or institutional support was conducted with the JABISS national sample survey in 1976.⁷ This factor analysis produced a solution shown in Table 5. Support for democratic institutions (i.e., political parties, elections, and the Diet) form

an independent dimension.

The wording of these three questions is “political parties (elections, or the Diet) make(s) it possible for people’s voices to be heard in politics,” and “do you agree this or disagree?” These questions are apparently measuring the citizens’ attitudes toward democratic regime institutions. This is very similar to what Klingemann (1999) has found with the World Value Survey data of 37 countries in the 1990s.

But, the Japanese displayed a somewhat very distinctive pattern in Table 5. In 1976, the feeling of political community (i.e., pride in their political system) were mixed with attitudes toward political actors (i.e., politicians and political parties); both of these questions had relatively high loadings on Factor III. .

The factor analysis of the 1983 JES (Japan Electoral Study)⁸ data indicates a different attitudinal structure (Table 6). In 1983, institutional support is independent of other dimensions of support, and “trust in political actors” formed a separate dimension from “trust in political community.” In addition, “trust in national politics” and “trust in local politics” as well as “pride in their political system” are on the same dimension (Factor I). Again, institutional support is on a separate dimension in 1983.

Table 6. Dimensionality of System Support Attitudes in Japan, 1983
(Factor Analysis: Varimax Rotation)

Label of Factor Variables	Trust in Political Community	Institutional Support	Trust in Political Authorities
Pride in political system	.236	.148	.160
Politicians not stop thinking people	.082	.098	.529
Politics is run on behalf of people	.125	.088	.398
Politicians are not dishonest	.139	.091	.531
Politicians/parties neglect people’s interests	.082	.032	.597
Trust National Politics	.506	.170	.368
Trust Prefecture Politics	.864	.074	.148
Trust Local Politics	.747	.093	.088
Parties help people’s voice be heard in politics	.147	.600	.102
Elections help people’s voice be heard in politics	.096	.766	.077
The Diet help people’s voice be heard in politics	.077	.728	.145
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Eigenvalue	1.70	1.57	1.30
% of Total variance explained (41.6%)	15.5%	14.3%	11.9%

Data Source: the 1983 JES data.

Furthermore, the factor analysis of the JEDS96 (Japanese Election and Democracy Study in 1996)⁹ demonstrates that the attitudinal structure of system support in 1996 basically remains unchanged from 1983. As Table 7 shows, “institutional support” makes an independent dimension (Factor I), and “trust in political actors (responsiveness)” and “trust in political community” respectively form independent dimensions (see, Table 7).

Table 7. Dimensionality of System Support Attitudes in Japan, 1996
(Factor Analysis: Varimax Rotation)

Label of Factor Variables	Institutional Support	Trust in Political Authorities	Trust in Political Community
Satisfaction with democracy works	.01	-.11	.66
Parties help people's voice be heard in politics	.79	.08	.04
Elections help people's voice be heard in politics	.84	.05	.08
The Diet help people's voice be heard in politics	.83	.05	.09
Politicians not stop thinking people	.14	.68	.16
Politics is run on behalf of people	.05	.74	.07
Politicians/parties neglect people's interests	-.02	.75	.02
Trust National Politics	.14	.32	.72
Trust Local Politics	.12	.18	.76
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Eigenvalue	2.08	1.73	1.58
% of Total variance explained (59.8%)	23.1%	19.2%	17.5%

Data Source: The 1996 JEDS96 data.

In 1976, Japanese perceived support for politicians and political actors as the same type of support as political community. While the former support is supposed to be closer to specific support, the latter support is related to diffuse support (Norris, 1999b). In this sense, Japanese system support attitudes appear to differ from the American or European theoretical framework. However, the structure of Japanese system support attitudes has changed from 1976 to 1983, and furthermore the attitude structure of Japanese system support in 1996 is very similar to what Norris (1999a) and Klingemann (1999) suggested.

Another important aspect of this changing attitudinal structure is that the change did not coincide with party system change or the major political event in the last half century. The ruling LDP (Liberal Democratic Party) was kicked out of the governing power in 1993, and it has had to govern with a coalition partner since then. Despite of this political change, the system support attitude structure did not change from 1983 to 1996. But, it changed from 1976 to 1983. This suggests that citizens' attitudes toward the political system have very different structure from their attitudes toward the incumbent government, namely the LDP-leading government.

Finally, while Norris (1999b) and Klingemann (1999) assume that regime performance as one dimension of system support, as Lipset (1960) theorizes that system effectiveness (performance) could be a source of system support (legitimacy). If so, it may be better not to analyze the regime performance as a dimension of system support.

Test of the System Support Hypothesis

Now, we are ready to test the system support hypothesis. Based on factor analyses of system support attitudes from 1976 through 2003 (see previous section), I constructed factor scores for each survey. Among the three dimensions, I focused on the dimension of democratic institutional support.

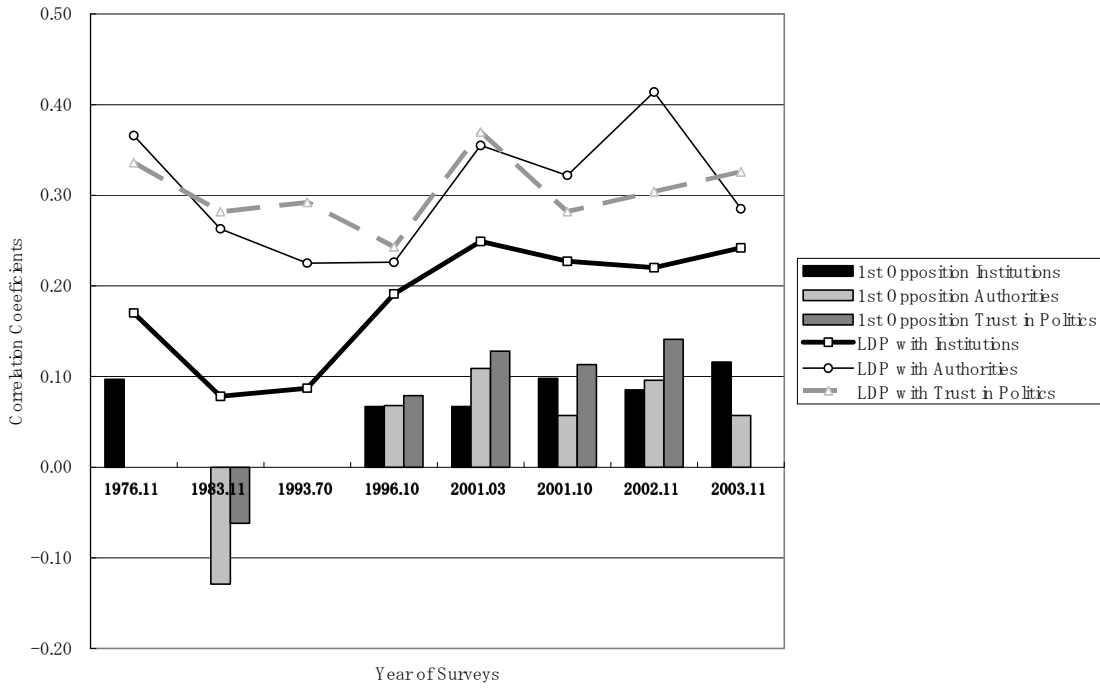
Then, I looked at the correlations of democratic institutional support and affect toward the LDP. Democratic system support attitudes are operationally defined by the factor scores of the dimension interpreted as “democratic institutional support”. Two other dimensions of system support, namely “trust in politics” and “trust in political authorities” are also measured by the factor scores of each dimension. Affect toward the LDP was measured by the feeling thermometer scale of the LDP. Similarly, affect toward the first opposition party (the second party) was defined by feeling-thermometer scale of the JSP from 1976 to 1993, that of the New Frontier Party in 1996, and that of the DPJ in 2000 and 2003.

Figure 6 presents the correlations (Pearson’s r) between feeling thermometer scores for the LDP and three different factor scores, namely democratic institutional support, trust in political authorities, and trust in politics (or support for political community) respectively. According to Figure 6, the correlations between affect toward the LDP and all the three dimensions of system support are positive throughout the period of 1972-2003. However, the correlation with the first opposition party was negative in 1983, when the LDP was very popular and perceived to be stable. From 1996 on, the first opposition party came to have positive correlations with democratic institutional support, trust in politics, and trust in community, while the first opposition party had not positive correlation with them before 1996, except with democratic institution in 1976. The patterns in Figure 6 suggest that those who have system support had warm feeling toward the LDP but not with the first opposition party before 1996, but it changed after 1993.

In 1976 and 1993, most system support dimensions had no correlation with LDP support. In these two years, the LDP was facing real chance of alternation of power, and it actually happened in 1993. Therefore, those Japanese voters who support their political system would be satisfied with the high possibility that alternation of power between the LDP and the first opposition party would take place.

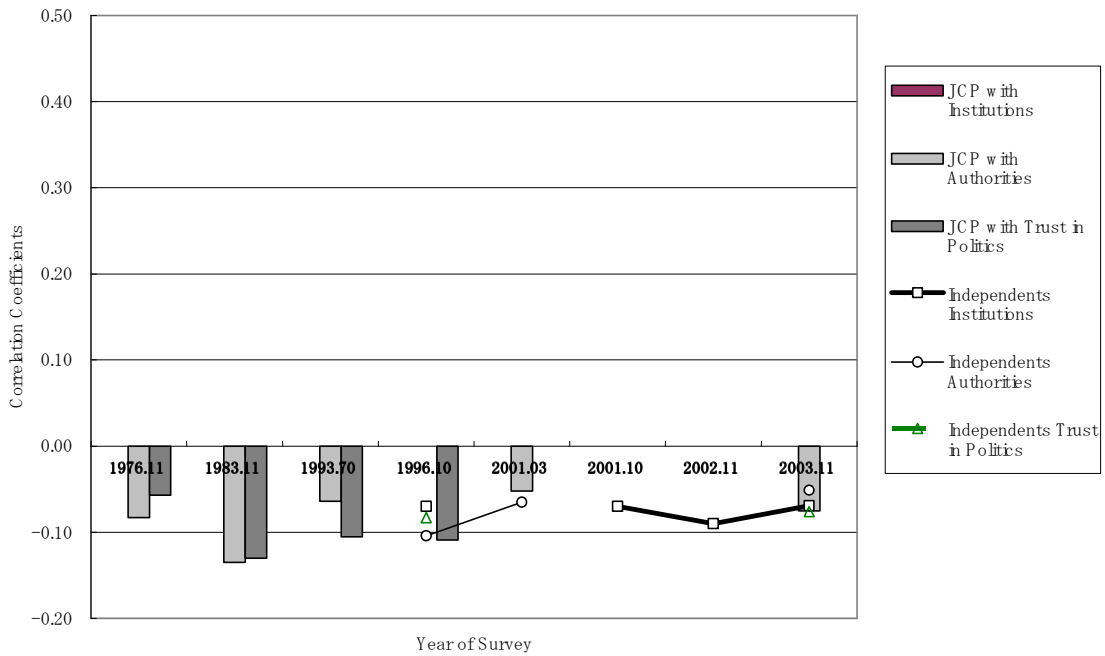
Figure 7 shows the similar relationship between feeling thermometer scores for the Japan Communist Party (JCP) and the three dimensions of system support attitudes from 1976 through 2003. All the correlations of the JCP with system support scales are negative without exception from 1976 through 2003. Since the JCP has clearly been an anti-system party, it can be easily speculated that those who have warm feeling toward the JCP do not have any positive support for the political system support.

Figure 6. Correlation between System Support and Party Feeling Them on eters, 1976-2003



Data Source: JABISS 1976, JES 1983, JESII 1993, JSS 2001-02, JSS-GLOPE 2003.

Figure 7. Correlations between Negative System Support and Feeling Them on eter of Independents and JCP, 1976-2003



Data Source: JABISS 1976, JES 1983, JESII 1993, JSS 2001-02, JSS-GLOPE 2003.

Conclusion

This paper has examined possible reasons for why the LDP has stayed in power for so long. I empirically examined three different explanations, namely the political culture explanation, the political economy explanation (or the Clientelism with centralized fiscal structure), and the system support explanation.

While the political culture and the political economy explanations have some validity, neither one cannot exclusively explain the LDP dominance in the postwar party system. Then, the system-support explanations provided evidence that support that those Japanese who support Japanese political system are more likely to support the LDP. Thus, the LDP's linkage to system evaluations may be an other answer to this puzzle of LDP dominance that has been overlooked in previous research.

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Endnotes

¹ A previous version of this paper was delivered at the Waseda University 21-COE GLOPE International Conference on “New Directions in Political Economic Experiments and Behavioral Research” at the University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands October 30-31, 2006. This paper was written while I was a research fellow at the Center for the Study of Democracy (CSD), University of California, Irvine. The first draft was based on my presentation at the CSD workshop on February 15, 2006. I appreciated the sponsorship of the CSD and its director, Professor William Schonfeld. Also, I thank academic comments and advices from Professors Russell Dalton, Marty Wattenberg, Robert Uriu, Bernard Grofman, Anthony McGann, Rein Taagepera, and David Easton.

² This paper is an extract from my book manuscript in the Japanese language, based on accumulation of my analyses of public opinion survey data from 1972 to 2003. The book manuscript is expected to be completed and be published near future. For more complete discussion, please read that book.

³ Vote-share in Figure 1 is relative vote-share, which is calculated by dividing the number of votes gained by the party in question by the number of all the turned-out voters. The first opposition party was the JSP (Japan Socialist Party) from 1958 to 1993, was the NFP (New Frontier Party) in 1996, and was the DPJ (Democratic Party of Japan) from 2000 on. From 1996 on, each party has one vote-share for the SMD (single-member district) system and another for the PR system.

⁴ The question wording is: “In order to make Japan a better country, if we have a prominent political leader, it is better to leave national decision-making up to him/her, rather than people argue or dispute each other over issues.” Choices of answer are as follows: (1) better to entrust the prominent leader, (2) It depends, and (3) Not good to leave everything to the leader.

⁵ The six groups includes (i) candidates’ association groups (Koenkai), (ii) agricultural cooperatives (Nokyo), (iii) commercial or industrial occupational associations, (iv) traditional community groups such as women’s club, young-adults’ club, (v) labor unions, and (vi) religious groups. The four conservative groups include (i) to (iv), and (3) 2 organizations supporting opposition parties are (v) and (vi). The dotted-line in Figure 2 indicates the proportion of the organized voters for citizens movement and/or residential movement in addition to labor unions and religious groups.

⁶ Actually, not all the religious groups support opposition parties, as Rissho-Koseikai or Seicho-no-Iye favor the LDP while Sokkagakkai clearly supports the Komei (the Clean Government Party, CGP). But, as mobilization of Sokkagakkai members for the Komei has consistently been very strong, the pattern (3) represents this tendency.

⁷ The JABISS Study was a nationwide sample survey conducted in 1976 by the joint US-Japan team, namely Scott C. Flanagan, Shinsaku Kohei, Ichiro Miyake, Bradley M. Richardson, and Joji Watanuki.

⁸ The JES Study Study was a nationwide sample survey conducted in 1983 by the Japanese team, namely Joji Watanuki, Ichiro Miyake, Takashi Inoguchi, and Ikuo Kabashima.

⁹ JEDS96 stands for Japan Election and Democracy Study 1996, which was conducted by the joint-research team between the United States and Japan, in which the author participated. Bradley M. Richardson of the Ohio State University and Mitsuru Uchida of Waseda University are the leading principle investigators of this study. The study was mainly funded by National Science Foundation (NSF Grant No. SBR-9632113). We are grateful to NSF and all of our colleagues on this joint-research team, namely Fumi Hayashi, Kenichi Ikeda, Kazuhisa Kawakami, Dennis Patterson, Susan Pharr, Bradley Richardson, Etsushi Tanifuji, and Mitsuru Uchida. JEDS96 has the sample size of 1,535 as valid sample for the pre-election wave, and 1,327 for the post-election, and the 1,244 as valid sample for both waves. And, JEDS96 has a total of about 150 questions and over 500 variables.