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"INFORMAL PLURALISM" AND LDP GUIDANCE
EXAMINATION OF JAPAN'S PROTECTIONISM OF RAW SILK IMPORTATION

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ABSTRACT

The central questions of this paper are: Is Japan authoritarian or pluralistic? If it is a pluralistic state, what kind of pluralism is? Is it similar to "American pluralism"? By conducting a case study on Japan's protectionism of raw silk importation, the author has examined the "tripod" of Japan's ruling circle consisting of a bureaucracy, the ruling party---Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and big business (interest groups).

The monopoly of policy-making by the bureaucracy has been broken. Both the ruling party and interest groups have increased their influence tremendously. The guiding role of the LDP vis-a-vis the bureaucracy has not only emerged but become entrenched. This development, however, has not damaged the process of pluralism. On the contrary, Japanese society has become more pluralistic. "Informal pluralism" can be applied to Japan's political system. Compared to pluralism in the United States, Japan's "informal pluralism" is less institutionalized, more irregular and ambiguous. The differences between the two, therefore, are mainly in style, methods, as well as pluralistic degree of the society.

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Like a kaleidoscope, or a Chinese opera, there are many colors and actors in Japanese politics; making its analysis difficult. Partly as a result of its economic miracle, during the 1980s Japan has tried very hard to work its way from an economic power to a political power. Therefore Japanese politics has become a focus among scholars of international relations and comparative politics.

Among Japan watchers there are few debates on the capitalist nature of Japan society. Instead, focus often centers on the pluralist process, or lack thereof of Japanese politics.

VARIOUS SCHOOLS ON THE NATURE OF JAPAN SOCIETY

A popular view among scholars (including the Japanese) is that Japan's ruling circle is like a tripod consisting of a bureaucracy, the ruling party---Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and big business (interest groups). In recent years, the way in which these three forces operate and interrelate has drawn considerable attention. A few scholars have tried to explore the nature of Japanese society, namely how the pluralist process works, and to determine which force, if any, plays the leading role.

The various arguments concerning Japanese politics can be divided mainly into two schools. The first may be described as "Bureaucracy leads politics". They argue that although there are constant changes in Japanese politics, the bureaucracy has always been able to maintain a certain stability and relative independence. Through government agencies, the bureaucracy produces most of the legislative bills, policies, and laws, and gives "administrative guidance" to the whole nation's economic life. This hypothesis posits a bureaucratic political monopoly. This group of scholars assume that Japan is still an authoritarian state: at least a "soft authoritarian system".¹ One of the representatives of this school of thought is Chalmers Johnson of the University of California, Berkeley.²

¹ Chalmers Johnson, "political Institutions and Economic Performance: The Government Business Relationship in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan," in Robert Scalapino, etc., ed., *Asian Economic Development--Present and Future*, Berkeley, California: Institute of East Asian Studies, UC Berkeley, 1985, pp. 69-70.

² Representative arguments of this school are presented in Chalmers Johnson's book, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1982.

The second school is, "Pluralism due to the breaking-up of the monopoly of bureaucratic power". This argument is popular among some scholars, such as Michio Muramatsu of Kyoto University, and Takashi Inouguchi and Seizaburo Sato of the University of Tokyo. Although there are different qualifications to the notion of "pluralism", such as "bureaucratic and mass inclusionary pluralism" (Takashi Inouguchi),³ "channelized pluralism", (Seizaburo Sato and Tetsuhisa Matsuzaki),⁴ and "patterned pluralism" (Michio Muramatsu and Ellis Krauss),⁵ the main arguments are similar. They all state that for the last two decades or so, the monopolistic role of the bureaucracy in the policy-making process has been broken, while the roles of politicians and mass participation in Japan have become increasingly prominent. This view holds that, Japanese politics has already entered a pluralist stage.

The difference between these two schools is obvious. Here, we will focus on the nature of modern Japanese society: Is it an authoritarian regime or a pluralistic system? To answer this question, it is necessary for us to look into the degree of democracy or pluralistic process in Japan. In order to clarify the issue, we need to first examine the development of the notion of "pluralism", and then to look at the historical background of Japan.

HOW THE CONCEPT OF "PLURALISM" DEVELOPED

Discussions on pluralism in non-western societies are a somewhat fashionable yet often uncertain matter. The term "pluralism" needs to be well defined. First of all, it is necessary to briefly review the theoretical development of the notion of "pluralism."

Pluralism, coined in England during the first quarter of the twentieth century, was first used as a philosophical concept against Hegelian Monism.⁶ These pluralist philosophers paid much attention to flux and diversity in the world and argued that things should be seen "in

³ See Takashi Inouguchi's *Gendai Nihon Seiji Keizai-no Kozu* (Contemporary Japanese Political Economy), Tokyo: Toyo Keizai Shinposha, 1983.

⁴ See Seizaburo Sato and Tetsuhisa Matsuzaki, "Jiminto Etchoki Seiken-no Kaibo" (Autopsy on the Super-long-term Reign of the LDP), *Chuo Koron*, November 1984.

⁵ See Michio Muramatsu and Ellis Krauss, "The Ruling Coalition and Its Transformation," paper presented at the Japan political Economy Conference, Honolulu, January 7-11, 1985.

⁶ See Jean Wahl, *Pluralist Philosophies of England and America*, London: Open Court, 1925.

their disorderly struggle and in their free harmony."⁷ It was soon transferred from a pure philosophical notion into the field of political science. By using "pluralism" as a new concept, British political scientists sharply criticized the traditional view of the state as legal, political and moral sovereign. They argued that there was no single source of authority in any given society; there were always pluralistic social groups that had a legitimate right to exist and to be independent outside of the power of the state.⁸ The main consideration of the early pluralists was to secure the autonomy and rights of non-political forces or groups.

Pluralism did not become a popular theory in American political science until the middle of the 1950s. Then it was discovered that the term "pluralism" fit nicely into the study of American politics. It provoked tremendous interest in the study of the role of groups in American political life. Who ever studied "groups" believed in "pluralism". The theory seemed to fit the fragmentation of American political structure. Another reason for the popularity of the concept of pluralism was that its basic notions of group, society, and state, rightly reflected Madisonian democracy, a classic idea in American political life. In the Madisonian view, because of the various and unequal distribution of property, there should be groups in a society. Therefore, the most important thing is not to try to remove these groups, but to control them.⁹ In other words, political as well as non-political groups' right to exist has long been discussed and acknowledged by American thinkers.

It is believed that pluralism can help understand fundamental issues of American politics. The heated debate, for example, between the school of pluralism and the school of stratification on the issue of community power has sparked keen interest in the notion of pluralism among political scientists in the United States.¹⁰ The development for the passed three decades has demonstrated the prevailing position of the notion of "pluralism" in the field of

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

⁸ David Nicholls. *The Pluralist State*, London: Macmillan, 1975, pp. 36-54.

⁹ See *The Federalist Papers*, #10, New York and London: the New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1961, pp. 77-84.

¹⁰ One of the best literature of the school on pluralism in this debate is Nelson W. Polsby's *Community Power and Political Theory* (second, enlarged edition), New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980: For the school of stratification, see G. William Domhoff's *Who Rules American Now?* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1983.

American politics. The central theme of this pluralistic notion is, as Robert Dahl points out, "the evolution of a political system in which all the active and legitimate groups in the population can make themselves heard at some crucial stage in the process of decision."¹¹ One can conclude that pluralism emphasizes conflict and conflict resolution through bargaining among groups and coalitions organized around shared interests.¹² Again, attention has been paid to the relationship among groups, society, and the state. This central theme, I believe, has bridged "American pluralism" with "British pluralism".

Beginning in the early 1970s, political scientists seemed somewhat weary with the notion of pluralism. New or old concepts, such as political economy, choice theory, corporatism, neo-elitist theory, were introduced or re-applied into the discipline of political science.¹³ Nevertheless, although no longer a prevalent notion, the theory of pluralism continues to be one of the main themes in the field of American politics.

An important development of the notion of pluralism was its introduction into the field of Soviet studies beginning in the middle of the 1960s, when the concept was experiencing a notable decline in intellectual enthusiasm in the study of American politics. Some Sovietologists tried to regard Soviet "pluralism" as an extension beyond its original concept in the field of American politics. Therefore, it became necessary to qualify the original concept. We can see numerous defined models of "pluralism" in the field of Soviet studies.

In his study of the Soviet "ministerial-party-scientific complexes", Jerry Hough suggests a notion of "institutional pluralism". He stresses the diversity in Soviet society and "a diffusion of real political power."¹⁴ In his discussion, Hough makes a clear distinction between the Soviet model and the American model: in the Soviet model of institutional pluralism, those

¹¹ Robert Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1956, p. 137.

¹² Theodore J. Lowi, "American Business, Public Policy, Case-studies, and Political Theory", in *World Politics*, 1964, Vol. 16, p. 680.

¹³ G. David Garson, *Group Theories of Politics*, Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1978, pp. 140-152.

¹⁴ Jerry F. Hough, *The Soviet Union and Social Science Theory*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1977, pp. 9-11.

who want to give input into the policy-making process have to work within existing institutions, whereas the American notion of pluralism allows citizens to organize new pressure groups other than in pre-existing institutions, to advance their own interests.¹⁵

There are other defined notions of pluralism in the field of Soviet studies, such as "bureaucratic pluralism", "limited pluralism", "quasi-pluralism", and "a pluralism of elites". All these models, on the one hand, have tried to differentiate themselves from the American model of pluralism by saying "The USSR is not a truly pluralistic system";¹⁶ On the other hand, attention has been paid to group activities in Soviet society. Many of these arguments are still under discussion today. They have, many people believe, strengthened the field of comparative politics.

Yet the application of "pluralism" to the study of Soviet politics has drawn criticism. William E. Odom, for example, contends that the group concept applied to Soviet politics runs the danger of neglecting the importance of dictatorship. "As a comparative concept," Odom continues, "it introduces errors in logic as well as myriads of ambiguities in definition and taxonomy." Therefore, "it is more likely to obscure than to clarify the dynamic character of the Soviet system."¹⁷

Because of this dilemma, some scholars have begun to look for other concepts to replace the notion of "pluralism". The concept of "corporatism" is one of these efforts. Although it is not a new concept, "corporatism" was used as the inverse of "pluralism". Philippe Schmitter draws a clear line between the two concepts:

Corporatism can be defined as a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports.

¹⁵ Jerry F. Hough, "The Soviet System: Petrification or Pluralism," *Problems of Communism*, #21, March-April, 1972, pp. 25-45.

¹⁶ Darrel Hammer, *USSR: The Politics of Oligarchy*, Hinsdale, Illinois: Dryden, 1974, pp. 223-224.

¹⁷ William E. Odom, "A Dissenting View on the Group Approach to Soviet Politics", in *World Politics*, July 1976, p.566.

Pluralism can be defined as a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into an unspecified number of multiple, voluntary, competitive, non-hierarchically ordered and self-determined (as to type or scope of interest) categories which are not specially licensed, recognized, subsidized, created or otherwise controlled in leadership selection or interest articulation by the state and which do not exercise a monopoly of representational activity within their respective categories.¹⁸

The notion of "corporatism" was quickly applied to the field of Soviet studies. Here again scholars have placed certain qualification on the theory of "corporatism", just as they did with the concept of "pluralism". There are various qualifications, such as, as Charles Ziegler labeled, "state corporatism", and "societal corporatism". "State corporatism", for example, emphasizes "a much greater role for the state in recognizing problems, placing issues on the public agenda, and adjusting policies to suit changing circumstances."¹⁹ It was therefore concluded that "the state corporatism" model has greater utility in conceptualizing interest representation within the Soviet political system than either the totalitarian or pluralist models."²⁰

Thanks to the introduction of "corporatism", we now have better ideas about "pluralism" and its difference from either corporatism or authoritarianism. The main differences are, first, whether power in a society is multi-centered or monopolized by a single force; second, whether non-political groups have a legitimate right to exist; and third, whether there is a coercive leading force to dominate the society.

Beginning in the early 1980s, the concept of pluralism was applied to the study of Japan, another major non-western state. I have discussed the two main schools at the beginning of this chapter. Now, the central question is: Is Japan authoritarian or pluralistic? If it is a pluralistic state, what kind of pluralism is? Is it similar to "American pluralism"?

¹⁸ Philippe Schmitter, "Still the Century of Corporatism," in *Trends Towards Corporatist Intermediation*, Philippe Schmitter, ed., Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1979, pp. 13-15.

¹⁹ Charles E. Ziegler, "Issue Creation and Interest Groups in Soviet Environmental Policy", in *Comparative Politics*, January 1986, p. 172.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

AN "INFORMAL PLURALISM" MODEL

In this paper, I will argue that Japan has indeed entered a pluralist stage. Yet this pluralist status is somewhat different from its American counterpart. I will define Japanese politics as a model of "informal pluralism". Here for the purpose of differentiation and comparison, I have borrowed the methods of Sovietologists by qualifying the concept of "pluralism".

By using the term "pluralism" I mean (1) there is no single source of authority; therefore there is no concentration of power in the sense of the absolutist state; (2) there is a legitimate right for non-political groups to exist and to influence the state; and (3) these groups must be, as Schmitter points out, "organized into an unspecified number of multiple, voluntary, competitive, non-hierarchically ordered and self-determined categories."²¹

What is meant by "informal"? If we look at the Oxford English dictionary, the definition of "informal" is: "not formal; irregular; without ceremony or formality."²² This is, I believe, the norm of Japanese politics in many ways, especially when compared to American pluralism. I will elaborate these points in the concluding part of this paper.

After having introduced the above two schools of thought and my own notion of Japanese politics, this paper will give a detailed examination on the Japanese government's protectionist policy toward raw silk. Through this examination, I shall analyze the triangular relationship among the LDP, the bureaucracy, and various interest groups. Special attention will be paid to the increasing influence of the LDP vis-a-vis the bureaucratic power. In conclusion I will reach my interpretation of Japanese politics.

SINO-JAPANESE TRADE AND JAPAN'S PROTECTIONISM OF RAW SILK

China reached a record deficit of \$6 billion in the 1985 Sino-Japanese trade. This has cast a considerable shadow on the economic exchange between China and Japan. To solve

²¹ Schmitter, "Still the Century of Corporatism", p. 15.

²² A. S. Hornby, etc., *The Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, London: Oxford University Press, 1963, p. 548.

this problem, the Chinese government and people in various circles have appealed to the Japanese asking that Japan further open its market to Chinese commodities. At the end of 1985, the director of the Japan Section of China's Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, published a specific article urging Japan "to eliminate man-made obstacles, and to provide favorable conditions for increasing the import of Chinese commodities." He took raw silk, silk piece goods, rice straw and its products as examples to demonstrate that "Chinese commodities are restricted in Japan."²³ What kind of restrictions have Chinese commodities received? Why have the Japanese set up these restrictions? How do these restrictions relate to Japanese politics? This paper will take the Japanese government's protectionist policy as a case study to examine operational processes of Japanese politics.

Traditionally, China and Japan have each been major raw silk production countries. For many years, the combined output of these two countries has accounted for more than 70% of the world total volume of raw silk. However, since the 1970s, Japan's raw silk production has continuously declined, while China's production has rapidly increased. In 1977, China's raw silk production bypassed Japan and became number one in the world.²⁴ In 1983, China's raw silk made up 57% of the total amount in the world, three times Japan's production (19%).²⁵

With regard to consumption of raw silk, Japan has held a leading position for many years. For example, in the middle of the 1970s, Japan's domestic consumption of raw silk accounted for 64% of total production, more than half of that used to make traditional style of Japanese clothes such as kimono.²⁶

As early as 1951, the Japanese government issued a protectionist statute entitled "Sta-

²³ Wei Xiaorong, "Kuoda Dui Ri Chukou shi Dangwu Zhiji" (To Expand Export to Japan Is the Most Urgent Matter), *Guoji Maoyi* (International Trade), Beijing: Institute of Foreign Trade, November, 1985, p. 17.

²⁴ Japan-China Association on Economy and Trade, *1985 nen-no Chugoku Nogyo* (Chinese Agriculture in 1985), Tokyo, 1986, p. 128.

²⁵ Ichiro Yano, ed., *Nihon Kokuzei Zue* (Survey of Japan's National Development), Tokyo, 1986, p. 321.

²⁶ Japan-China Association on Economy and Trade, *Ni-chu Boeki Kakudai Kinko eno Shiren* (Experiment for Expanding and Balancing Japan-China Trade), Tokyo, 1976, p. 157.

tute on the Stabilization of Raw Silk Prices," that in fact made it impossible for the importation of foreign raw silk.²⁷ This reflected the fact that in Japan the production of raw silk was larger than domestic consumption during that period. Thus, Japan was a pure raw silk export country until the early 1960s.

In 1962, the Japanese government abandoned the protectionist law on raw silk and started to adopt a free trade policy. There were two reasons for this change of policy. First, domestic demands on raw silk increased without a corresponding production increase. Therefore, demand started to bypass domestic production. Secondly, it is necessary for the Japanese to set up an image in the world of "supporting free trade policy", due to the need of Japan's export oriented economy.

The starting point for Japan's importation of raw silk from China was in 1962, when there was a symbolic shipment of about 8 tons of Chinese raw silk to Japan. In 1971, Chinese raw silk increased to 2,830 tons. In 1972, the year of normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations, the figure sharply increased to a record of 6,190 tons (see Table 1).

It bypassed soybeans and became the largest single item imported from China. The total value of raw silk accounted to almost a quarter all imports from China.²⁸ In 1973, the amount of Chinese raw silk exported to Japan remained at a similar level.

However, Japan's free trade policy did not last long. In August 1974, the Japanese Government passed the "Statute on Centralized Control of Imported Raw Silk" (it will be addressed herein as the "Statute on Centralized Control"), with the requirement that any raw silk imported from abroad must obtain prior approval from the Corporation on Stabilization of Raw Silk and Sugar Prices (CSRSSP), under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF).²⁹ Thus the statute placed strict quantity and price controls

²⁷ see the Corporation on the Stabilization of Raw Silk and Sugar Prices (CSRSSP), *Sansi-Sato rui Kaku Ante Jiguodan Ho Kankei-hoki Binran* (Guiding-book of Related Statutes on the Stabilization of Raw Silk and Sugar Prices), Tokyo, 1986.

²⁸ Japan-China Association on Economic and Trade, *Ni-chu Boeki Shin Tendai-Kano Sho-Mondai* (Problems of the New Development of Japan-China Trade), Tokyo, 1975, p. 13.

²⁹ CSRSSP, *Kankei-Hoki Binran*, p. 14.

Table 1: China's Raw Silk Exported to Japan (1969-1985)

Year	Amount (ton)
1969	1,260
1970	1,350
1971	2,830
1972	6,190
1973	5760
1974	2,620
1975	1,480
1976	1,500
1977	2,170
1978	3,220
1979	2,530
1980	2,080
1981	650
1982	1,670
1983	2,180
1984	1,590
1985	2,250

Source: Compiled from the statistics of the Japan-China Association on Economy and Trade.

over imported raw silk. The CSRSSP buys and stores raw silk. Then it puts raw silk into the market according to changes in supply and demand. By this method, the high price of raw silk in the Japanese domestic market can be maintained, so that the silkworm farmers' interests can be protected. However, in doing so, the government lost money. In order to keep a balance, the Corporation links raw silk and the more profitable sugar trade.³⁰

During the same year (1974) as the statute passed, the quantity of raw silk imported from China fell by more than one-half. From then on except for one or two years, the amount of raw silk imported from China has maintained a level of around 2,000 tons a year. Chinese raw silk exports to Japan never recovered to the level of pre-1974 (see Table 1).

As China has increased its exports of oil, coal, and other agricultural products and textile goods to Japan, raw silk's share in total of exports has declined very rapidly. In 1972 raw silk, as mentioned earlier, accounted for about one forth; in 1974 it fell to 4.1%, in 1975 to

³⁰ The need for protection of domestic produced sugar is much less than that of raw silk, since Japan has traditionally imported sugar from abroad. Therefore the government does not need to buy domestic sugar at high price and to store it.

2.9%, and in 1985 down to 0.8% of total exports.³¹ Indeed, in today's Sino-Japanese trade, raw silk has become insignificant. However, the Japanese government's protectionist policy on raw silk is quite significant and quite representative of a larger trend. From the following analysis we can see that the Statute on Centralized Control has a close connection with core parts of Japanese politics, namely the LDP, bureaucracy, and interest groups.

SILKWORM FARMERS AND RAW SILK PRODUCTION IN JAPAN

Since the beginning of the 1970s, the number of silkworm farmers and the amount of raw silk production in Japan has strikingly declined (see Table 2).

Table 2: Changes of Japan's Silkworm Farmers (SF)
(1944-1985)

Year	Number of SF households (1,000)	Percentage of all farmer households (%)	Total area in mulberry fields (1,000 ha)	Raw Silk production (ton)
1944	1,139	20.4	302	9,242
1950	835	13.5	175	10,620
1955	809	13.4	187	17,368
1960	646	10.7	166	18,048
1965	514	9.2	164	19,106
1970	399	7.5	163	20,515
1975	248	5.0	151	20,169
1980	166	3.6	121	16,166
1985	100	2.2	97	9,561

Source: Compiled from the statistics of the Bureau of Silkworm and Horticulture, the MAFF.

Let us examine the 15 years of 1970-1985 as an example. The number of silkworm farming households decreased from 399,000 to 100,000. The proportion of silkworm farmers to total farmers decreased from 7.5% to 2.2%, indicating that the decreasing rate of silkworm farmers was much greater than that of farmers as a whole. The total area in mulberry fields declined from 163,000 ha (hectares) to 97,000 ha. Raw silk production declined from 20,170

³¹ Japan-China Association on Economy and Trade, *1985 nen-no Chugoku Nogyo*, p. 236.

tons to 9,590 tons. All these items decreased two to four times, especially the number of silkworm farmers. Within 15 years, there were almost 300,000 households, accounting for 75% of the total, who switched to industries or changed to the production of other crops.³² The reasons for this decline are as follows.

First, because of the continuous and rapid growth of the Japanese economy beginning in the middle of the 1960s, a great number of farmers switched to the industrial and service trades. But, this reason does not explain why the decreasing rate of numbers of silkworm farmers was far greater than farmers as a whole.

Second, with regard to Japan's domestic consumption of raw silk, there was a cyclical change. Starting in the middle of the 1960s, the high growth of the economy brought about an upsurge of high consumption. The demand on traditional Japanese style clothing such as "kimonos" steadily increased, and finally reached a historical record. This explains why Japan began to import raw silk. However, this trend did not last long. Beginning in the middle of the 1970s, the demand for silk began to fall rapidly due to three reasons: (1) Japan's economic growth began to slow down because of the "oil shock". (2) Westernization of people's living style, i.e. the kimono was gradually phasing out as a common item of daily apparel. (3) Both the absolute number and the percentage of young females decreased in terms of the total population since the "baby boom" generation of post-World War II has entered its middle-age stage. (4) The kimono's rapid acceleration in price due to a trend towards higher standards and variety.³³

Third, the cost of raw silk in Japan increased considerably as the standard of living increased. Therefore Japanese raw silk became much more expensive than foreign raw silk, especially Chinese raw silk. The difference sometimes can be as high as two times.³⁴ This made Japanese raw silk lose its ability to compete. Naturally, Japan's silkworm farmers were

³² Bureau of Silkworm and Horticulture, the MAFF, *Saikin-no Sanshi-gyo-o Meguru Joho* (Recent Situation of Silkworm and Raw Silk Industry), Tokyo, 1986.

³³ Interviews with officials of the Silkworm Section, MAFF, 1986.

³⁴ Bureau of Silkworm and Horticulture, the MAFF, *Saikin-no Sanshi-gyo-o*.

hit badly by imported raw silk.

Because of these reasons, Japan's silkworm and raw silk industry declined rapidly. A larger number of silkworm farmers switched to industrial pursuits or changed to other crops such as rice. But there were still a few silkworm farmers who were concentrated in the mountain areas which are not conducive to growing other crops. Besides, most of those who remained were older silkworm farmers. It was difficult for them to switch to other types of work. Therefore, to maintain this group of silkworm farmers' basic livelihood became an urgent issue.

ACTIVITIES OF INTEREST GROUPS

Generally speaking, tactics of interest groups are designed to influence policy-makers in two interrelated ways, "by obtaining access (to policy-makers) and by influencing decisions."³⁵ Activities of silkworm farmers were certainly no exception. Farmers organized together to work for their own interests. On the one hand, they appealed directly to the society by drawing public attention to "Japan's declining agriculture;" on the other hand they frequently put pressure on the LDP and government agencies. The farmers used various pressure techniques: rallying with local dietmen in huge groups of silkworm farmers at the front of the MAFF building, and requesting the Association for Cooperative Agriculture, one of the biggest single organization in the country, to pressure the LDP headquarters.³⁶ In response, the Statute on Centralized Control came into being.

There are always two sides to any matter: if there is a force supporting one thing, there must be other forces opposing it. For a long period both during and following the Statute's passage, opposing interest groups worked very hard to try to either block or cancel it.

In the case of the Statute on Centralized Control there was the force of the silkworm farmers on one side and the opposing force on the other consisting of the raw silk import

³⁵ Norman J. Ornstein and Shirley Elder, *Interest Groups, Lobbying and Policymaking*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1978, p. 82.

³⁶ Interviews with officials of the CSRSSP, 1986.

trading companies and kimono manufactures, namely small and medium size enterprises.³⁷

The implementation of the Statute sharply reduced raw silk imports from abroad, directly hitting the raw silk trading companies. Meanwhile, it raised raw silk prices on the domestic market. That in turn raised the cost for silk, silk piece goods, and kimonos. It further reduced the domestic demand for raw silk, and caused a series of manufacturers to go bankrupt.³⁸ The law inevitably created a vicious circle.

The lobbying activities of the small-medium businesses were no less active than their agricultural counterparts. As early as 1976, the Association for Importing Chinese Raw Silk and Silk Yarn sent a letter to Shintaro Abe, then Minister of the MAFF, Toshio Momoto, then Minister of the MITI (Ministry of International Trade and Industry), and Kiichi Miyazawa, then Minister of the MFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs). It argued that the Statute on Centralized Control violated the spirit of the 1974 governmental trade agreement. Therefore, the Statute should be abolished.³⁹

In 1980, three import organizations, Japan Raw Silk Import Company, Japan Fibre Import Company, and Japan Association for Promoting International Trade wrote a strong letter to the then four top leaders of the LDP: Masayoshi Ohira, President of the LDP, Yoshio Sakurachi, Secretary-General, Zenko Suzuki, Chairman of the General Council, and Shintaro Abe, Chairman of Policy Research Council. The letter argued that the Statute "has violated the principle of free trade," provoking bad reactions both domestically and abroad. Therefore, it should be abolished.⁴⁰

Regarding the Statute on Centralized Control, there were two obviously different interest groups. They all, as we discussed, put great pressures on the LDP and government agencies. Now let's turn to two other important actors on the stage of Japanese politics---the LDP and

³⁷ Interviews with officials of the MITI, 1986.

³⁸ Japan-China Association for Economy and Trade, *Chosei-ka-ni Sogo-izon-no Shinten-o Motomete* (Search on the New Development of Interdependence under Adjustment), Tokyo, 1980, p. 177.

³⁹ Japan-China Association on Economy and Trade, *Ni-chu Boeki Cho-ki Antei no Jitsugen-o Mezashite* (Aiming on Long Term Stability of Japan-China Trade), Tokyo, 1977, pp. 184-185.

⁴⁰ Japan-China Association on Economy and Trade, *Byodo Gokei to Sogo-izon no Jitsumu Kankei-o* (Develop a Mutual Benefit, Interdependent and Realistic Relationship), Tokyo, 1981, p. 387.

bureaucracy.

THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY

The LDP has been the ruling party in Japan, ever since its establishment in 1955, when the two conservative parties, the Liberal Party and the Democratic Party, merged together. From then on, any single opposition party, such as the Socialist Party, the Democratic Socialist Party, the Komeito, or the Communist Party, has never been strong enough to challenge the ruling position of the LDP. The internal disputes among opposition parties have made it virtually impossible for them to unite together to defeat the LDP in a national election.

More than twenty years ago, Robert Scalapino and Junnosuke Masumi, two leading political scientists from the United States and Japan, referred to this phenomenon of single party domination as the "one-and-one-half-party system." The LDP, the ruling party, is one party; opposition parties who have never been in power can be regarded as only "one-half-party."⁴¹ At the same time, they pointed out that the social bases of the LDP come mainly from big business and agricultural areas. The former provides money, and the latter provides votes.⁴² These analyses are still accurate today.

In the 1960s and the early part of the 1970s, the LDP encountered a strong challenge from the opposition parties in most urban areas, and as a result, lost a number of Diet seats. However, they managed to maintain or even strengthen a bit their superior position in the rural areas.⁴³ This made the support from the rural areas all the more important for the LDP. From Table 3, we can see that in the rural areas the seats taken by the LDP and associated independents were won by more than 70%, while in the urban area, only about 30%.

Were the votes from rural areas still important to the LDP as the rural population declined? The answer is "yes." The importance of agricultural interests within the LDP

⁴¹ Robert A. Scalapino and Junnosuke Masumi, *Parties and Politics in Contemporary Japan*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962, p. 53.

⁴² *ibid.*, pp. 88-90.

⁴³ Stockwin, *Japan: Divided Politics in a Growth Economy*, London and New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982, p. 117.

Table 3:

Number and Percentage of Seats Held by LDP in 1976,
1979 and 1980 House of Representatives Elections,
According to Type of Constituency

Year	Seats & share	Urban	Semi- urban	Medium	Semi- rural	Rural
	Total No. of seats	138	86	135	101	51
1976	LDP seats	40	44	75	60	30
	LDP (%)	29.0	51.2	55.6	60.4	58.8
	LDP & ind.	46	45	76	67	36
	LDP & ind.(%)	33.3	52.3	56.3	66.3	70.3
1979	LDP seats	38	43	75	59	33
	LDP (%)	27.6	50.0	55.6	58.4	64.7
	LDP & ind.	39	44	80	66	37
	LDP & ind.(%)	28.3	51.2	59.3	65.3	72.5
1980	LDP seats	48	47	85	65	39
	LDP (%)	34.8	54.7	61.5	64.4	76.5
	LDP & ind.	50	49	87	67	39
	LDP & ind.(%)	36.2	57.0	64.4	66.3	76.5

Source: Stockwin, *Japan: Divided Politics*, p. 118.

remained disproportionate. There are four reasons:

First of all, for a long time the national gerrymander was favorable to the rural areas. In his excellent study, Pempel vividly illustrates this point:

[...] even after the 1975 redistricting it was possible for a JCP candidate in the metropolitan third district of Osaka to be defeated although he received 115,000 votes, while in rural Ehime an LDP candidate who received only 37,000 could be elected. In 1980, one JCP candidate in Hokkaido's first district received 126,000 votes and lost, while in the second district of Kagawa barely over one-quarter this number was sufficient to elect an LDP candidate. In the 1977 upper house election, 187,000 votes secured a victory in Tochigi, while 549,000 votes in Osaka was not enough.⁴⁴

Secondly, the percentage of eligible voters who voted was much higher in rural than in urban areas. As Scalapino and Masumi point out, "the higher voting rate is reflective of a higher degree of discipline and social pressure."⁴⁵ This certainly worked for the interests of

⁴⁴ Pempel, *Policy and Politics in Japan*, p. 38.

⁴⁵ Scalapino and Masumi, *Parties and Politics in Contemporary Japan*, p. 109.

the LDP.

Thirdly, although the population of farmers declined, the trend from countryside to city slowed down since the middle of the 1970s.⁴⁶ In contrast to this, there was even the return of some people to their home towns from the big cities. Instead of moving to big cities, more and more farmers became semi-farmers who devoted part time working at local manufacturing. This new trend stabilized the seats in the rural areas.

Fourthly, many high-ranking officials of the LDP were from the rural areas. This background naturally bound the LDP together with the interests of the rural areas.

In return, the LDP always paid careful attention to agrarian interests. Every year, for instance, the LDP regime fixed the price of rice and decided financial aid for agricultural research. In short, the LDP was able to provide farmers concrete, material advantages.

Then, were there common interests between the LDP and silkworm farmers? It is said that not only did the two have a connection, but that the relationship was very deep. Japan's silkworm production concentrated on the Kanto, Tohoku, and Kyushu areas. The top ten prefectures' silkworm cocoons accounted for more than 80% of the total numbers. The top two prefectures, Gunma and Fukushima, produced almost half of the whole silkworm cocoon production in 1985.⁴⁷ Coincidentally, two presidents of the LDP (the present one and the previous one), Yasuhiro Nakasone, and Takeo Fukuda, came from Gunma Prefecture. The biggest group within the powerful Agriculture and Forestry Division, an agriculture policy-making organ under the LDP's Policy Research Council, came from Fukushima Prefecture.⁴⁸ This made a small issue such as raw silk connect directly to the highest level of Japanese politics.

Japan's silkworm and raw silk industry, as previously mentioned, gradually declined. Every silkworm prefecture's share of the total amount decreased, except for Gunma and

⁴⁶ Ichiro Yano, ed., *Nihon Kokuzei Zue*, pp. 70-71.

⁴⁷ Bureau of Silkworm and Horticulture, the MAFF, *Saikin-no Sanshi-gyo-o*.

⁴⁸ Inouguchi, *Kokusai Kankei no Seiji Keizigaku*, pp. 40-41.

Fukushima. From 1975, shortly after the Statute on Centralized Control went into effect, until 1985, in terms of shares of the whole country's production of silk cocoons, Gunma's production went from 24.3% up to 27.9%, and Fukushima's from 12.2% up to 16.8%.⁴⁹ Thus, these two prefectures took full advantage of being major silkworm bases. This was an obvious benefit of the protectionist policy of the LDP.

A bill cannot be passed in the Diet without approval from the LDP, due to the LDP's majority position. LDP's policy-making organs are more important than committees of the Diet. The most important of these organs is the Policy Affairs Research Council (PARC). The chairman of the PARC is one of the four highest officials in the party (the other three are president, secretary general, and chairman of the Executive Council). PARC is subdivided into 17 divisions that connect to the respective ministries and to correlative standing committees in the Diet. In addition, PARC has a large number of less formal investigative and special committees. An executive committee of the PARC collects recommendations from all sections and sends them to the party's Executive Council.

PARC is important not only because it is a policy-making organ, but also because it has produced some very powerful political figures, called "zoku". We can roughly translate "zoku" as "tribe members" or "family members". The PARC and its policy divisions are very influential. The committees of these divisions are even more powerful. Those who are able to maintain responsible positions, such as chairman or vice chairman, or those who can manage to stay in a certain committee for more than ten years, combine political influence with profound and accurate knowledge of the administrative fields in which they specialize. Because they have various functional areas of expertise, they are identified as "zoku". All zoku are LDP dietmen. Zoku include both ex-bureaucrats and pure politicians, though the number of the latter is larger. Although there are different patterns, normally they have progressed in service through one or more of the following stages for a particular policy field: parliamentary vice-minister, PARC section chairman or vice-chairman, Diet standing committee chairman,

⁴⁹ Bureau of Silkworm and Horticulture, the MAFF, *Saikin-no Sanshi-gyo-o*.

and occasionally minister or director general.

Zoku have various emphases. There are "agriculture and forestry zoku", "construction zoku", "commercial and industry zoku", "foreign affairs zoku", "culture and education zoku", "financial zoku", and "transportation zoku", etc. The "agriculture", "construction", and "commercial" groups are the most desirable, therefore the biggest ones. People call them "gosanke" (the three royal families).⁵⁰ One of the reasons for the popularity of the "gosanke" is that it is able to "influence" government policies that will provide certain benefit to the dietmen's constituencies. In return, "gosanke's" zoku normally enjoy strong "koenkai" (a local supportive organization) in their constituencies. This in turn creates a bigger chance of reelection. Because of their long time service in a specific policy area, zoku's influence on bureaucracy is enormous.

In order to solve the problem of raw silk, PARC set up a special committee called the Special Committee on the Silk and Silk Yarn Industries. Chairman of the Committee Takashi Sato was an agriculture zoku. Graduated from Tokyo Agriculture University, he first joined the government working as an agriculture expert for 17 years. Then he took part in the LDP and became a dietman who worked in various agriculturally related sections. Like most zoku, he was also a parliamentary vice-minister of the MAFF.⁵¹ Among five vice-chairmen of the Committee, four came from the silkworm areas. Yoshiro Mori, the only non-silkworm vice-chairman, openly opposed the Statute on Centralized Control. The result was foregone. Mori's opinion never got the upper-hand. The passage of the Statute on Centralized Control within the LDP was quite smooth.⁵²

The interests of small-medium business and the labor unions are mainly represented by the opposition parties. The main stream of the opposition parties was against the Statute.⁵³ But their minority position in the Diet made it impossible to block the passage of the Statute.

⁵⁰ Inouguchi, *Kokusai Kankei no Seiji Keizaigaku*, p. 43.

⁵¹ Yu qingao, Hua Jue, etc., ed., *Xiandai Riben Mingren Lu* (Dictionary of Famous People in Contemporary Japan), Beijing: Shishi Chubanshe, 1984, p. 147.

⁵² Interviews with officials from the MAFF, 1986.

⁵³ Interviews with dietmen from opposition parties, 1986.

GOVERNMENTAL BUREAUCRACY

Since the Meiji Restoration of the late nineteenth century, Japan has kept a tradition of a strong central bureaucracy. The Statute on National Examination for Government Bureaucracy of 1947 maintained the basic spirit of the previous system of examination for the senior civil service. This system guaranteed that the best personal resources flowed into the government bureaucracy year by year. Its superior position with regard to information and specialty strengthened bureaucracy's social status. Furthermore, the bureaucracy was aided by "amakudari", a long time practice in the government that enabled retired bureaucrats to go to the private sector or public corporations to hold responsible positions. This made it possible for the bureaucrats to maintain close connections with leaders of industries and big business. Therefore, bureaucracy enjoyed an image of being specialized, independent, capable, and powerful. It was the bureaucracy that for a long time actually made governmental policy.

During the period of rapid economic growth of the 1960s to the middle of the 1970s, the role of Japanese bureaucracy was prominent. Middle and high level bureaucrats of the MITI and the EPA (Economic Planning Agency) made strategic plans for all of industry's development. They also provided direction for industry and commercial leaders through "administrative guidance." This kind of governmental leadership was very striking to the western world. Naturally, it drew scholars' attention all over the world.

Today, there are still many people who believe that in the system of Japanese politics, bureaucracy makes most of decisions, initiates virtually all legislature, and controls national budget.⁵⁴ Therefore, bureaucracy plays a monopolistic role.

Michio Muramatsu, who holds an opposite opinion, examines this issue from another angle. He surveyed politicians and bureaucrats, asking them which force in Japan was the most influential in terms of policy-making process. Answers were as follows. Among high level bureaucrats (vice-minister and bureau directors), 47.3% said politicians, 45.5% said

⁵⁴ The typical argument is given by Johnson's book, *MITI*. He examines the history of MITI's fifty years development and set up the school of "bureaucracy leads politics." See p. 20.

bureaucracy. Among middle level bureaucracy (section chief), 44.9% said politicians, 40.3% said bureaucracy. Among dietmen of the LDP, 68.0% said politicians, 30.0% said bureaucracy. Among dietmen of opposition parties, 43.1% said politicians, 41.2% said bureaucracy. Other answers (around 10%) were big business, news media, interest groups, etc.⁵⁵ We can see that most people regarded "politicians" and "bureaucracy" as the most influential forces in Japan. Answers from all groups put more emphases on "politicians". This was especially true among LDP politicians.

In his *Gendai Seiji* (Contemporary Politics), Junnosuke Masumi argues that beginning in the late part of the 1960s, the influence of the LDP began to increase. In the 1980s, one can hear more and more people saying that "the central government is the LDP's headquarter, or the PARC."⁵⁶

One of the important reasons for the LDP's rise is the severe internal struggle within the bureaucracy itself. As Johnson points out, "the interest of one agency of the government can and often does conflict with the interest of another agency, particularly in a government that has a vertically structured division of labor and is as pervasive as that of the Japanese capitalist developmental state." He concludes that "in such a system the greatest threat to the security of a bureaucrat comes from other bureaucrats. The core of any bureaucratic interest becomes the protection of one's separate jurisdiction; and conflicts of jurisdiction are the most significant events in the lives of state bureaucrats."⁵⁷

As social economic life becomes increasingly complex, internal struggles among bureaucrats increase. It is not unusual for one policy to fall into several different jurisdictions. This has forced bureaucrats to turn to outside forces for arbitration. On most occasions, the LDP can fit into this role.

⁵⁵ Michio Muramatsu. *Sengo Nihon no Kanryosei*, p. 27.

⁵⁶ Junnosuke Masumi. *Gendai Seiji* (Contemporary Politics), Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai (University of Tokyo Press). 1985. p. 409.

⁵⁷ Chalmers Johnson. "MITI, MPT, and the Telecom Wars", a chapter in Berkeley Roundtable on the International Economy, ed., *Creating Advantage: American and Japanese Strategies for Adjusting to Change in a New World Economy*, (forthcoming).

It is not difficult to find this type of inter-departmental dispute among bureaucrats regarding the case of raw silk. Three ministries were involved with the issue of the Statute on Centralized Control: namely MAFF, MITI, and MFA. The MAFF was strongly in favor of the Statute, and was eager to push it into effect. The MITI and MFA's attitude toward the Statute was somewhat negative. There are three reasons.

First, there were different jurisdictions. There are four stages of production for silk and its goods: silkworm cocoon, raw silk, silk, and silk garments. The first two stages were under the jurisdiction of the MAFF, and the later two were MITI's jurisdiction. The Statute means that the first two stages received protection, but the later two were damaged.⁵⁸ Naturally, the MITI was not happy with the Statute.

Second, interests represented were different. Understandably, the MAFF represented interests of farmers, the MITI represented, mostly, interests of commerce and industry. Surely they could not hold the same opinion toward a statute that benefited farmers while damaging small-medium business. The MFA did not want to damage Japan's image of "free trade" in the world; thus it went along with the MITI.⁵⁹

Third, pressures came from the LDP and its politicians. Influence on the MAFF from LDP's two organizations, Division of Agriculture and Forestry and the Special Committee on the Silk and Silk Yarn Industries, was very obvious. When the Statute on Centralized Control was in the process of deliberation, LDP politicians kept close contact with related bureaucrats in three ways: (1) face-to-face formal discussion; (2) informal discussions over meals, and (3) telephone calls virtually every day. In addition, connections with the LDP were also one of the most important conditions for the promotion of a MAFF official. Therefore it is not surprising when one hears of a MAFF official referring to an opinion from the LDP as "instructions".⁶⁰ Tadao Kuraishi, then MAFF's minister from the silkworm area, gave an active push to the Statute. Under such circumstances, the LDP's Division of Agriculture and

⁵⁸ Interviews with officials of the MITI, 1986.

⁵⁹ Interviews with officials of the MFA, 1986.

⁶⁰ Interviews with officials from the MAFF, 1986.

Forestry suggested the cessation of the importation of all raw silk. By using this as a bargaining counter, the MAFF put pressure on the MITI and MFA to let the Statute go into effect.

Therefore, one can regard the passage and implementation of the Statute as a victory for the LDP and the MAFF. But on the other hand, it was also a compromise among the bureaucracy of various ministries.

INTERNATIONAL PRESSURES AND SINO-JAPANESE NEGOTIATIONS

By keeping all trading partners except oil producing nations in a deficit position, Japan's protectionism of agricultural products such as raw silk has drawn broad international criticism. The "beef war", "rice war," and "orange war" are quite typical cases. The United States, Western Europe, and Northeast and Southeast Asian Countries, are all unhappy with Japan's practice.

The first negotiation on raw silk between China and Japan was held in January 1976. Despite China's strong demand for abolishment of the Statute on Centralized Control, the Japanese government insisted on keeping raw silk under a strict control.⁶¹ From then on, the two sides held negotiations every year to set up quotas for raw silk imported from China. This, in fact, put China's raw silk in a minimum level in the Japan market.

In general, the Japanese government never gave up their stance on protectionism of raw silk in any of the negotiations. Nevertheless, the Japanese made some compromise with minor changes. For example, in 1974, the year of issuing the Statute, China's raw silk share in the Japan market fell from 67.0% to 44.2%, while South Korea's raw silk went up from 21.8% to 39.5%. The Chinese made a strong protest of this "unequal treatment". The next year, China's raw silk's share recovered to 60.7%, while South Korea fell to 27.3%.⁶²

Here is another example. In 1981, Chinese raw silk exported to Japan fell by 69% compared to the previous year. At the Sino-Japanese Cabinet Conference of December 1981,

⁶¹ Interviews with officials from China's Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, 1986.

⁶² Ibid.

Zheng Tuobin, China's minister of foreign trade urged Shintaro Abe, then Japan's minister of the MITI to "restore and expand the importation of China's raw silk."⁶³ The result was that in 1982 exports of Chinese raw silk to Japan increased 1.6 times.

In fact, some Japanese with breadth of vision have already recognized that protectionist policies such as the Statute on Centralized Control have caused much damage to the society as a whole, despite the protection of certain sectors such as the farming community. First, they claim, protectionism can only increase farmers' dependence on the government, adding to governmental expenditures endlessly. Second, agricultural goods including raw silk have gradually lost ability to compete in international markets. Third, the high price of raw silk has made silk, silk goods, and kimonos more expensive. This, on the one hand, has damaged the interests of importers and manufacturers as well as consumers; on the other hand, it has decreased the domestic demand for raw silk. This development has become a vicious circle. Fourth, as an export oriented economic super-power, Japan needs the policy of "free trade" badly. This policy has certainly been damaged by Japan's own protectionist policies. This far-sighted group has suggested many times that Japan should abolish protectionism of agricultural goods.⁶⁴ In 1979, a vice-minister of the MITI even openly published an article suggesting that the remaining silkworm farmers should switch to other activities, so that the Statute could be abolished. This article drew a storm from silkworm farmers and the LDP.⁶⁵

After a careful study, however, one can conclude that the development of China's raw silk in the Japanese market was rather successful. In the 1960s and 1970s, China's main rival was South Korea. The two countries' raw silk accounted for 80-90% of the whole Japanese market (see Table 4). But China's raw silk was more competitive than South Korean raw silk in terms of price and quality.⁶⁶ Beginning in the 1980s, China's share further increased. In

⁶³ Japan-China Association on Economy and Trade, *Jitsumu Kyoryoku eno Kiso Gatame-o Mezashite* (Aiming on a Solid Foundation for a Mutual-help and Realistic Relationship), Tokyo, 1982, pp. 399-400.

⁶⁴ Interviews with officials of the MITI, and the MFA, 1986.

⁶⁵ Interviews with officials of the China's Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, 1986.

⁶⁶ Japan-China Association on Economy and Trade, *Ni-chu Boeki, Aratana Hiraku eno Kadai* Issues of New Leap of Japan-China Trade, Tokyo, 1979, pp. 272-273.

Table 4:

Shares of Raw Silk in Japan		
China and South Korea		
Years	China's Share (%)	South Korea's Share (%)
1969	42.5	39.4
1970	34.1	48.5
1971	47.8	35.0
1972	61.2	27.9
1973	67.0	21.8
1974	44.2	39.5
1975	60.7	27.3
1976	69.7	16.8
1977	64.7	27.0
1978	64.0	31.7
1979	69.6	24.4
1980	69.8	18.7
1981	70.6	0.06
1982	72.9	10.9
1983	76.5	17.5
1984	82.4	2.2
1985	86.7	0

Source: Compiled from the statistics of the Japan-China Association on Economy and Trade.

1985, China's share was up to 86.7%, with Brazil the second (12.4%), and North Korea the third (0.9%).⁶⁷ South Korean raw silk's market share continually fell until it was totally out of the raw silk market of Japan by 1985.

The decrease in absolute quantity of Chinese raw silk in Japan, was mainly due to the sharp drop in Japanese domestic demand. China already occupied 86.7% of the import raw silk market in Japan in 1985. Therefore there was not much room left for the China's raw silk to develop.

The difficulties of silkworm farmers, the decrease of domestic demand, overstocking of government storage, and more importantly politicians' need for support from rural areas are all behind Japan's protectionist policy for raw silk. It is also true that protectionism for agricultural goods is widely practiced by many countries in today's world. All these factors have made it difficult for the Japanese government, at least for the near future, to abandon the

⁶⁷ Japan-China Association on Economy and Trade, 1985 *nen-no Chugoku Nogyo*, Tokyo, p. 237.

Statute on Centralized Control.

The key problem of the trade imbalance, as two Chinese scholars have recently pointed out, is due to the "relatively large differences in the two countries' level of industrial structures." They further argue that "China's ability to export to Japan cannot be raised very rapidly. But China's demand for imports from Japan will last for a long period."⁶⁸

To solve the issue of trade imbalance and to urge Japan to abolish or to loosen its protectionism and to expand its domestic demand, it is very useful for related countries to better understand the internal dynamics of Japanese politics. This is simply because most protectionist policies are closely connected to the interests of the LDP, that has remarkably increased its influence in Japan's political life.

"INFORMAL PLURALISM" AND LDP GUIDANCE

From the above examination of the Japanese government's protectionism of raw silk, we can see that Japanese politics is, in a relative sense, pluralist. This single case study (formation of a protectionist policy) may naturally bring up the question of "uniqueness". Therefore, if necessary, I will limit my conclusion to the fields of economic or agricultural policies. But I believe that this study has, to a certain extent, explored a trend in a broader sense. The monopoly of policy-making by the bureaucracy has been broken. Both the ruling party and interest groups have increased their influence tremendously. With regard to the issue of the Statute on Centralized Control, both sides, namely silkworm farmers and the small-medium business, had lobbying activities and policy inputs to the LDP and top bureaucracy. The result in favor of farmers only reflected the imbalance of these forces. In fact, one would rather regard this settlement a compromise of various forces.

Let's first look at the role of the LDP. It is not too early to assume, I believe, that the guiding role of the LDP vis-a-vis the bureaucracy in contemporary Japanese politics has not

⁶⁸ Guo Zhongxin and Bi Zhiheng, "Yatai Diqu de Maoyi ji Chanye Tiaozheng" (Trade in the Asian Pacific Area and Industrial Adjustment), *Riben Wenti* (Japan Issues), Beijing: Institute of Japan Studies, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 1986, #4, p. 22.

only emerged but become entrenched.

First of all, thirty some years after its establishment, the LDP has maintained its de facto one-party rule. The party continues to hold the highest executive power: the prime ministership and its cabinet. This allows for the highest level of the country's leadership to maintain stability and continuity. Psychologically, the LDP has been able to maintain its "superiority" in the minds of the Japanese people. All these factors have made Japan different from other democracies that have two major parties holding powers in turn, such as the United States and the Great Britain.

Secondly, because of its long-time majority or near majority position, it is not difficult for the LDP to control the legislative branch---the Diet. This made it possible for the ruling party's policy-making organs, notably the PARC, to become more important than the various policy committees of the Diet.⁶⁹

Thirdly, because of the rising influence of the "zoku", the gap between LDP politicians and bureaucracy in terms of information access and specialization has been reduced considerably. The following upward trends have strengthened this influence: (1) more "zoku" who becoming ministers or parliamentary vice-ministers in ministries; and (2) retired or retired-in-advance ex-bureaucrats continuously joining the party, and eventually becoming "zoku".

Fourthly, for many years, the LDP has been able to receive steady support from the two biggest conservative forces in the Japan society: big business and the rural areas. This has made it possible for the LDP to maintain a strong conservative alliance. The traditional weak position of labor unions and the decrease of radical ideology have given the LDP great help. The landslide victory of the LDP in the double elections in the summer of 1986 has indicated that LDP's position in Japan's political life has even been heightened.

The guiding position of the LDP has not damaged the process of pluralism. On the contrary, Japanese society has become more pluralistic. The guidance of the LDP means (1) the

⁶⁹ Francis R. Valeo and Charles E. Morrison, ed., *The Japanese Diet and the U.S. Congress*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1983, p. 29.

monopoly of the bureaucracy has been broken. This development has provided more channels for policy input; (2) the LDP gives general direction, or we can say that the LDP sets the tone; and (3) the LDP does not necessarily involve in the concrete process of policy initiation and policy implementation.

A primary goal of political parties in any democracy is to seek re-election.⁷⁰ LDP politicians are no exception. Money and votes are basic conditions for re-election. This means that politicians must listen to the voices of their constituents to obtain necessary votes. They are also responsive to big business in order to receive political donations. Therefore interest groups, such as big business and agricultural groups, that can provide money and votes, have been able to maintain enormous influence over the LDP. These influences are often far beyond their proportion of the population. A certain policy brought under such influence, therefore, sometimes reflects interests of a relatively small group, and not necessarily the majority of the society. Protectionism of rice under the leadership of Kakuei Tanaka who comes from the Niigata rice production area, and the continuity of the Statute on Centralized Control under the leadership of Yasuhiro Nakasone who comes from the Gunma silkworm area, are typical cases of influence from agricultural constituencies.

Despite LDP's strong influence upon domestic and foreign policies, the detailed initiation and implementation of these policies depend almost entirely on governmental bureaucracy. The LDP has no ability to fulfill these functions. After all, the bureaucracy is an independent entity. It has first rate personnel and excellent executive and informational systems. Their traditional influence over policy-making, although diminished, has mostly remained. On many occasions, the bureaucracy tries to achieve a balance of various interests, including those of the LDP, to institute policies that will accurately reflect the "national interests".

Overall, the relationship between the LDP and the bureaucracy is not necessarily one of "instruction", as a MAFF official admitted, but rather one of "consultation". The process is

⁷⁰ Richard Fenno, *Congressmen in Committee*, Boston: Little Brown, 1973, p. 1.

more complex than ever before. We can see a development of further integration of the LDP and the bureaucracy. Each has tried to use the other to fulfill its own political purpose. In the case of raw silk, we see that the MAFF took the demand from the LDP as a bargaining chip to win its battle over the MITI and the MFA. On the other hand, after the passage of the Statute on Centralized Control, some LDP dietmen claimed that they supported the free trade policy in order to please the small-medium business. They excused themselves by saying that it would be very difficult to change the policy in a short time since it has become a law issued by the government.⁷¹ Here, the LDP politicians skillfully separated themselves from the bureaucracy.

In the second half of the 1970s, the LDP twice lost its majority position, and had to make alliances with non-LDP forces, thereby compromising several of its policies with opposition parties, such as legislative and fiscal measures.⁷² Although in the 1980s the LDP has recovered its dominant position in the Diet, it is always possible that opposition parties will grow again or will even, theoretically at least, make a successful alliance. It is still true that it's quite difficult for opposition parties to defeat bills from the LDP. But at least they have the power and right to check and to criticize openly any of LDP's policies. In any given election, the LDP would naturally become the "top object" of criticism. All these factors have made LDP leaders unable to totally ignore opinions from opposition parties.

The pluralist nature of Japanese politics comes also from intervention in political life by the news media. The resignation of primary minister Kakuei Tanaka in 1974 due to the Lockheed scandal surely was the result of an internal power struggle within the LDP. But the role of the news media in "creating" the scandal is also apparent.⁷³ Another new development in the recent two decades is the participation in politics of scholars and specialists. The role of various kinds of "thinktanks" has begun to draw public attention.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Interviews with staff members of the PARC, the LDP, 1986.

⁷² Valeo and Morrison, *The Japanese Diet and the U.S. Congress*, p. 19.

⁷³ Masaya Ito, *Jiminto Sengokushi* (History of the LDP Warring States), Tokyo: Asahi Sonorama, 1982. See the section "The Fall of the Tanaka Regime."

⁷⁴ The detailed elaboration of the development of thinktank in Japan is in an article written by this author. See Zhao Quansheng, "Xuezhe he Zhinangtuan" (Scholars and Thinktank), *Riben Wenti* (Japan Is-

Furthermore, there are no coercive forces that dominate society in Japan's political life today. It is unlikely that the Self-Defense Force of Japan might, like the pre-war Japanese military or the current military in South Korea or Chile, come to claim an independent position free from the cabinet control. I believe that, instead of being an authoritarian regime, Japanese politics is pluralistic in nature.

Nevertheless, Japanese politics has its own norm, namely "informal" pluralism. There are at least three ways to analyze the notion of "informal pluralism". First, one can look at the structure of the system. In any political system there are "formal powers" and "informal powers". This is particularly true in Japanese politics.⁷⁵ In theory, the Diet is the highest legislative organ. Thus, the Diet has a "formal power". But in reality, the most influential organ in terms of policy-making in Japan is the LDP's PARC and its zoku due to the de-facto one-party rule. PARC and zoku's "informal" power is larger than the "formal" power of the Diet.

Secondly, the working style is noteworthy. In Japan, the method of "nemawashi" (making contact informally before-hand) has been widely used within and without the government to coordinate different positions. Through this informal and non-legislative way, it is relatively easier for the Japanese to reach a consensus among themselves.

Thirdly, the methods of conflict solving are also important. In his comparative study of budgeting process, Aaron Wildavsky notices that in Japan "Ministries can practice avoidance. They can sidestep outright conflict by rarely dealing directly with one another." He further explains that, "Avoidance may account for the use of newspapers and reporters to carry messages from one ministry to another---communications that are at once public and depersonalized because no one has sent word directly to any other."⁷⁶ This method of "avoidance" is popular in Japanese society.

sues), Beijing: Institute of Japan Studies, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 1986, #5, pp. 68-70.

⁷⁵ Takashi Inouguchi, *Kokusai Kankei no Seiji Keizaigaku*, p. 14.

⁷⁶ Aaron Wildavsky, *Budgeting, A Comparative Theory of Budgetary Processes*, (Revised edition), New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction, Inc., 1986, p. 119.

"Informal pluralism" can be applied to Japan's political system. This system, in nature, is very close to the Western democracies. That is to say there is no single source of authority, hence there is no concentration of power in the sense of the absolutist state. Groups, without any doubt, are very active in the political system of "informal pluralism" just like in any other democracy. Compared to pluralism in the United States, however, Japan's "informal pluralism" is less institutionalized, more irregular and ambiguous. The differences between the two, therefore are mainly in styles, methods, as well as pluralistic degree of the society.

There are, of course, interpretations of this "informal" style. On the one hand, one can regard this "informal pluralism" as being not fully developed, or still in the process of development. On the other hand however, this is indeed Japan's own pattern for development. As a late comer in world economy, Japan has adopted a strategic economic oriented policy. The economic development is the top priority, and political development is secondary. Many Japanese believe that they must seek political stability and long-term predictability of the system so that the economic growth will not be jeopardized.

This way of seeking consensus and stability can also find its root in Japanese culture. In traditional Japanese society, harmony is the ideal, even if this means compromise or ignoring controversy. Chie Nakane, a Japanese sociologist, argues that in Japan the criterion for judgment is that "any decision should be made on the basis of a consensus which includes those located lower in the hierarchy... It should leave no one frustrated or dissatisfied."⁷⁷ Another important culture legacy is the system's highest possible degree of reciprocal interaction, in which "each participant anticipates the actions of the other, no one, not even those directly involved, can say who makes the decisions."⁷⁸ This kind of ambiguity is quite common in Japanese society. One can even find it in Japanese language.

In summary, politics in Japan today has entered a period of "informal pluralism". As the representative of conservative forces (big business and rural groups, etc.) the LDP has

⁷⁷ Chie Nakane, *Japanese Society*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970, pp. 144-145.

⁷⁸ Wildavsky, *Budgeting*, p. 129.

made further progress in cooperation with government bureaucracy and has increased its guiding role in the policy-making process. At the same time, other interest groups, opposition parties, and news media, have maintained various channels to both openly and covertly express their opinions to the highest circle of the LDP and top bureaucracy as well as to the Japanese people. As Japan's economy further develops, its society will advance continually in the direction of pluralism. Thus, one can conclude that "informal pluralism" and the guiding role of the LDP vis-a-vis the bureaucratic power will be two distinguishing characteristics of Japan's political life for a long time to come.

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